

Russian Naval Exercises Scheduled Off Syrian Coast Amid Expected U.S. Airstrike

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Alexey Pavlishak / TASS

The Russian Navy is reportedly scheduled to launch firing drills off the coast of Syria on Wednesday amid fears of an imminent U.S. airstrike against Syria following a suspected chemical attack.

Russia's ambassador to Lebanon said the Russian military would shoot down U.S. missiles and target launch sites if the U.S. attacked Syria on Wednesday. U.S. President Donald Trump later directly warned Russia that missiles were "coming" to Syria after blaming Damascus for an alleged deadly gas attack in the town of Douma.

Related article: [Missiles Are 'Coming to Syria,' Trump Warns Russia on Twitter](#)

The Cyprus civil aviation department's news bulletin listed an area off the coast of Syria as the location of Russian Navy firing exercises [scheduled](#) to start on Wednesday, April 11.

"Russian Navy exercise (rocket test firings) will take place in the area," reads the Cyprus department of civil aviation's navigation warning bulletin.

The drills are scheduled to close air traffic service routes around the area for eight hours on both April 11 and April 12, the bulletin said.

The Russian Defense Ministry, which maintains a naval base in Syria and according to Interfax currently [boasts](#) a task force of 15 warships and auxiliary ships in the eastern Mediterranean, has not officially announced the exercises.

The ministry said on Wednesday that it was closely watching the situation around Syria and was aware of the movements of a U.S. naval force in the area.

In an apparent response to U.S. President Donald Trump's comments about a possible U.S. missile attack on Syria, the ministry also said in a statement that Washington would do better to rebuild the destroyed Syrian city of Raqqa rather than talk about its readiness to carry out such strikes.

Meanwhile, Russian deputies have arrived to Syria for meetings with the country's leadership, disputing reports that Syria's president had fled the country in anticipation of the expected U.S. attack.

"Syrian President Bashar Assad is in Damascus, we plan to meet him," the state-run TASS news agency [quoted](#) State Duma deputy Dmitry Sablin as saying Wednesday.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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