



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 31, 2013

Israel Strikes Convoy in Damascus While U.S. Offers Aid to Syrian Rebels

Israeli warplanes [targeted](#) a truck convoy in the Syrian capital of Damascus on Wednesday, Syrian and Western sources confirmed. The attack was compelled by fears that missiles were being transferred to rebel anti-Israeli groups. The military strike comes shortly after President Obama [announced](#) that he would be sending more than \$100 million in "humanitarian aid" to the rebels.



Israel's attack on Syria's convoy followed various [warnings](#) that Israel would launch an attack on Syria in the event that weapons were transferred to Hezbollah or al-Qaeda-inspired Syrian rebel groups. Reports indicate that Israel's strike targeted a convoy believed to be carrying weapons for Hezbollah.

A Western official who spoke on condition of anonymity said the airstrike hit a truck convoy believed to be carrying antiaircraft weapons for Hezbollah in neighboring Lebanon. The shipment was thought to have included Russian-made SA-17 missiles, the official said. If such weapons were obtained by the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, it could weaken Israel's regional military power and hinder its ability to launch airstrikes in Lebanon.

Sources in Syria denied that the Israelis targeted a weapons shipment and instead claimed that the warplanes struck a military research facility and an adjacent building. Syrian state media reported that two people were killed and five were injured.

The military action is believed to be Israel's most aggressive since Syria's civil war began and has provoked fears that it may draw other nations into the conflict, most notably Iran, Syria's closest ally. "Syria has a very basic and key role in the region for promoting firm policies of resistance.... For this reason an attack on Syria would be considered an attack on Iran and Iran's allies," said Ali Akbar Velayati, an aide to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, according to the Mehr news agency.

"If the Syrian President Bashar Assad is toppled, the line of resistance in the face of Israel will be broken," Ali Akbar Velayati, who is seen as a potential contender in Iran's June presidential election, [said](#) in an interview broadcast on Sunday. "If Assad falls, Iran and Iraq are next in line," he added.

The airstrike comes just one day after President Obama announced new aid for the Syrian rebels. He released a video on the White House website wherein he announced his decision to send \$155 million in humanitarian aid to the rebels.

"I want to speak directly to the people of Syria," Obama said in the video. "This new aid will mean more warm clothing for children and medicine for the elderly; flour and wheat for your families and blankets, boots and stoves for those huddled in damaged buildings."

"It will mean health care for victims of sexual violence and field hospitals for the wounded," he continued. "Even as we work to end the violence against you, this aid will help address some of the immediate needs you face each day."



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The president's announcement is reportedly compelled by criticism from the GOP that the United States has not done enough to assist the rebels.

In the White House video, which features Arabic subtitles, the president states, "The relief we send doesn't say 'Made in America,' but make no mistake — our aid reflects the commitment of the American people."

According to Yahoo News, the new aid will bring total U.S. investment in the Syrian civil war to \$365 million.

But while President Obama's announcement was intended to appease members of Congress who believe the United States has not done enough to assist the rebels, some critics [assert](#) that the rebel forces may be as bad as the regime they are attempting to overthrow.

Increasing evidence indicates that the "rebels" are indiscriminate terrorists who seek to overthrow the Syrian government at the expense of civilian lives. The rebels have been guilty of terroristic activities, such as the four suicide [bombings](#) in Aleppo last October that killed approximately 40 civilians and wounded many more, prompting the United Nations Security Council to [condemn](#) the perpetrators.

The *Daily Mail* explained that the square targeted by the suicide bombings is in a government-controlled district in western Aleppo. According to the *Mail*, "Rebels have resorted to bomb attacks in areas still controlled by President Assad."

Jebhat al-Nusra, a group linked to al-Qaeda, has taken credit for the bombings.

The bombings in Aleppo are just several of the many examples of violence against civilians conducted by the anti-Assad forces. For instance, the rebels were also responsible for the massacre of over 90 people in [Houla](#) last year, though blame for that massacre was initially assigned to Assad's forces by the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany, all of which expelled Syria's ambassadors from their countries in protest.

At the time, the United States unquestioningly blamed Assad's regime for the slaughter. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland stated,

We hold the Syrian government responsible for this slaughter of innocent lives. This massacre is the most unambiguous indictment to date of the Syrian government's flagrant violations of its U.N. Security Council obligations.

A number of U.S. lawmakers began using the Houla killings as a means to push for military engagement in Syria. For instance, Senator John McCain expressed [outrage](#) at the news and called for greater international intervention. Calling Obama's policies in Syria "feckless," he declared, "This is a shameful episode in American history."

Later reports, however, pointed to evidence that the massacre was in fact carried out by anti-al-Assad rebel forces. Some members of Congress remain opposed to providing assistance to the Syrian rebels.

Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, who will serve on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has openly [criticized](#) the United States' backing of rebels in Syria because many of them have been tied to jihadist organizations such as al-Qaeda.

"There's about a million Christians in Syria. One of the largest populations of Christians are in Syria. They are not necessarily siding with the rebels because many of the rebels are extremist radical Islamists such as Al-Nusra elements of al-Qaida. And there is concern that the Christians will not be



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tolerated, will be wiped out if the rebels win," Paul said.



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