

Trump Tells Putin to Agree to Immediate Cease-Fire in Ukraine After Syria's Assad Ousted

The president-elect issued the statement on Dec. 8 on social media.

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump (R) talk during a bilateral meeting at the G20 leaders summit in Osaka, Japan, on June 28, 2019. Kevin Lamarque/Reuters



By Jack Phillips

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President-elect Donald Trump sent a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin following the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria after Islamist opposition fighters captured Damascus. He called for an immediate cease-fire in Ukraine.

“Assad is gone. He has fled his country,” Trump wrote on Truth Social on the morning of Dec. 8. “His protector, Russia, Russia, Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, was not interested in protecting him any longer. There **Share** as no reason for Russia to be there in the first place.”



he incoming president also said that Moscow had “lost all interest in Syria because of Ukraine, where close to 600,000 Russian soldiers lay



wounded or dead, in a war that should never have started, and could go on forever.”



Trump then said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy “would like to make a deal” to end the nearly three-year-long war,



noting the loss of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians.

“There should be an immediate cease-fire and negotiations should begin,” Trump said. “Too many lives are being so needlessly wasted, too many families destroyed, and if it keeps going, it can turn into something much bigger, and far worse. I know Vladimir well. This is his time to act.”

Moscow, a backer of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, whom it intervened to help in 2015 in its biggest Middle East foray since the Soviet collapse at the end of 1991, is scrambling to protect its position, with its geopolitical clout in the wider region and two strategically important military bases in Syria on the line.

Russia has yet to respond to Trump's remark, although its foreign ministry confirmed that Assad left Syria amid the conflict.

“As a result of negotiations between B. Assad and a number of participants in the armed conflict on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, he decided to resign from the presidency and left the country, giving instructions for a peaceful transfer of power,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Dec. 8. “Russia did not participate in these negotiations.”

Russia operates the Hmeimim air base, in Syria's Latakia Province, which it has used to launch airstrikes against rebels in the past, and has a naval facility at Tartous on the coast. The Tartous facility is Russia's only Mediterranean repair and replenishment hub, and Moscow has used Syria as a staging post to fly its military contractors in and out of Africa.

The ministry's statement said Russia's two military facilities in Syria had been put on a state of high alert but played down an immediate risk to them.

“There is currently no serious threat to their security,” the ministry said.

Over the weekend, in a separate Truth Social comment, Trump said the United States should not intervene in the Syrian conflict. A top adviser in the Biden administration made a similar remark, stressing that the United States would not send troops to the restive Middle Eastern country.

“The United States is not going to ... militarily dive into the middle of a Syrian civil war,” President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, told reporters in California.

Sullivan stressed that the U.S. military would act out of necessity to keep the ISIS terrorist group from gaining a foothold in Syria should it happen.

The insurgents who took over Damascus are led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which the United States has designated as a terrorist group and

says has links to the al-Qaeda terror organization, although the group reportedly has since broken ties with al-Qaeda.

One of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's main leaders is Abu Mohammed al-Golani, or Muhammad al-Jawlani, who is **considered** a terrorist by the State Department and has been blamed for a number of terrorist attacks that have left civilians dead in Syria.

The Associated Press to this report.

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