



## Alleged 'Russian Airstrike' Against Idlib School a Hoax - Russian FM

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*Western accusations against Russia concerning its reported involvement in attacking a school in the Syrian province of Idlib are fabricated and based on a hoax story, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said.*

*"Currently a story is being spun concerning the October 27 attack on Idlib school, which is directed primarily against Russia and Syria. We are accused of being the ones who carried out strikes against this school," the foreign minister said during a joint press conference with his Syrian and Iranian counterparts.*

*"In response to these fabrications, Russia's Defense Ministry has released factual information that refutes these statements and shows the falsity of this hoax," Lavrov stated.*

'Drone photos show school in Idlib province in [#Syria](#) - not hit by airstrike' - Russian MoD <https://t.co/aapiGNQFpP> [pic.twitter.com/xBuytTw5SM](https://pic.twitter.com/xBuytTw5SM)

— RT (@RT\_com) [27 October 2016](#)

On Thursday, Russian Defense Ministry released photos made by an UAV dispatched to the area of the alleged airstrike that showed *"no signs of damage to the roof of the school, or craters from airstrikes around it."*

The ministry also said that a video published by opposition groups on the ground and circulated by a range of Western media outlets *"appears to consist of more than 10 different shots, filmed at different times of the day and in different resolutions, that were edited into a single clip."*

The findings of the Russian drone could easily be verified by the American side, as during its photo mission a US MQ-1B Predator UAV was in the same area, according to Moscow.

So far, all available evidence suggests that it was not an aerial attack, a former Pentagon official Michael Maloof told RT. Allegations of an attack, which is said to have claimed the lives of 22 children and six teachers, were first made on Wednesday by the controversial two-man Syrian Observatory for Human Rights based in London, and the Civil Defense

Network, also known as the White Helmets.

Following the initial reports, the US and France immediately accused Russia and Syria of conducting the strike on school, despite the lack of independent verification.

*"It's either the Syrians - the regime of Assad - or the Russians,"* French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault told the media in Paris at that time.

*"We know it was one of the two,"* White House spokesman Josh Earnest said during a press briefing in Washington the next day.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNICEF, the UN children's body, both issued statements condemning the reported attack and urging investigation into the incident. Moscow also urged an open and independent probe.

[#Putin](#) slams Western claims about 'Russian threat': 'We may lose patience over [#Syria](#) accusations' [@ValdaiClub](#) [pic.twitter.com/T7kJnNPeCn](https://pic.twitter.com/T7kJnNPeCn)

— RT (@RT\_com) [28 October 2016](#)

The behavior of Western, and in particular French, leaders is *"hypocritical,"* Marie-Christine Arnautu, a French Member of the European Parliament and National Front's vice-president for social affairs, told RT, adding that *"everyone says we should combat Syrian threat of Islamism but behavior on the ground is ambiguous as it fights against Assad - and not against Islamism."*

The true goal of the West is apparently *"is to defeat Bashar Assad,"* which according to Arnautu is *"a priority and their only aim, instead of fighting Islamism and resolving humanitarian crisis, which is absolutely urgent in Syria."*

Meanwhile, director of the Crisis Research Institute Mark Almond has raised questions concerning the West's inability to substantiate its claims with any proof.

*"Both Russia and the US have sophisticated satellites and other forms of reconnaissance. We have seen ... that Russians can produce pictures of how things are going in Iraq, so the US ought to be able to produce evidence for this various instances that have become scandalous in the western media in the recent three or four weeks,"* Almond told RT.

There is no evidence suggesting it was either Russia or Syrian government forces that carried out the strike, Almond said, adding that it *"is not completely impossible that the rebels... may be callous enough to shoot into their own territory to set Russia and Syrian government up."*

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