

# *Syrian Rebels Bomb Russian Embassy in Damascus*

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Damascus, October 14 (RHC)-- Tensions between Russia and the West deepened even further Thursday after Moscow's embassy in Damascus was subjected to heavy mortar shelling for nearly two hours.

None of the embassy staff members were injured, but some areas of the embassy compound are filled with debris, Russian authorities said. "We confirm that Russia's consistent policy of uncompromising fighting against terrorists in Syria will be continued," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

The statement comes just before Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's meeting with his U.S. counterpart John Kerry Saturday in Switzerland, and weeks after a ceasefire negotiated by the two Cold-War rivals disintegrated amid increasing acrimony that has led many global analysts to express concerns of a broader, global conflagration, if not nuclear war.

Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, said in an interview with the BBC earlier this week that he hoped some progress would be made at the talks but

admitted it would be difficult.

Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin characterized as "rhetoric" the allegations made by French President Francois Hollande and other Western nations that Russia has committed war crimes in its military support of the Syrian government. Earlier this week, Putin postponed a scheduled meeting with France.

Russia has been engaged in an aerial campaign against rebel militias in Syria since President Bashar al-Assad requested help from the country's longtime ally in 2015. Russia's superior military power has dealt heavy blows to the Islamic State group and other militants who are supported by the U.S. and other Western nations.

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