

# *Russia says it is ready to strike back if Russian forces in Syria under threat*

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Moscow, March 13 (RHC) -- Russia is ready to strike back if U.S. forces in Syria put the lives of Russian servicemen there under threat, Russian General Staff Chief General Valery Gerasimov said Tuesday.

"In the event of a threat to the lives of our servicemen, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation will retaliate against both missiles and carriers which will use them," Gerasimov said in a conference call shown by Russia 24 TV channel.

He said the Russian General Staff had reliable information that militants were preparing a provocation in the Eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus, staging the use of chemical weapons against civilians by the Syrian government forces.

According to Gerasimov, a large number of women, children and old people were brought to the area from other regions to play the "role of victims" of the chemical attack, as well as film crews with satellite video broadcasting equipment.

After the provocation, the United States would accuse Syrian government troops of using chemical weapons and carry out a missile and bomb strike on the government quarters in Damascus, Gerasimov said.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said Monday the United States was willing to take military action to end the Syrian bombing of civilians if the UN was unable to do so.

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