

# *NATO warships moving closer to Syrian shores amid looming U.S. airstrikes*

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Moscow, September 18 (RHC)-- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is reportedly beefing up its naval presence in the eastern sector of the Mediterranean Sea amid indications that the United States and its allies would use a staged chemical attack in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib to launch airstrikes on government forces.

Russia's Sputnik news agency, citing Western websites monitoring naval activity in the region, reported that military vessels from the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) are inching closer to the Syrian coast.

The report added that the flotilla just off Syrian shores include Dutch HNLMS De Ruyter frigate, Canadian Halifax-class HMCS Ville de Québec frigate as well as Greek frigate Elli. Informed sources, seeking anonymity, also said Los Angeles-class submarine USS Newport News has cruised into the Mediterranean Sea to join a U.S. naval task force there. The submarine is said to be armed with long-range and subsonic Tomahawk cruise missiles.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has censured the U.S. threats to use military force

against Syria as part of Washington's blackmail policy. "Unlike the United States, Britain and their allies, Russia provides particular facts on a daily basis through its Defense Ministry, the Foreign Ministry as well missions in New York, The Hague and Geneva. We particularly name geographical points, where preparations are underway for certain terrorist groups backed by the US and its allies to carry out provocations," Ryabkov said on September 11.

The top Russian official noted: "Our military has been assessing the military situation on a round-the-clock basis, without any breaks. Constant information exchange is going on with our colleagues in Turkey and Damascus. We have also established secure channels with the U.S. military in order to prevent the repetition of such incidents. We cannot let Idlib remain a terrorist stronghold."

Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported on August 30 that terrorists had kidnapped 20 children over the past few weeks in a bid to use them in the expected chemical farce.

The sources noted that the attack would be carried out in Jisr al-Shughur, emphasizing that toxic materials have recently been transferred to the designated site through the al-Hassaniyah border crossing, which links the city to Turkey.

The crossing is controlled by the Western-backed White Helmets aid group, which has been repeatedly accused of cooperating with Takfiri terrorists and staging false flag gas attacks. The U.S. has warned it would respond to a chemical weapons attack by Syrian government forces with retaliatory strikes, stressing that the attacks would be stronger than those conducted by American, British and French forces back in April.

On April 14, the U.S., Britain and France carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria over a suspected chemical weapons attack against the city of Douma, located about 10 kilometers northeast of the capital Damascus.

Washington and its allies blamed Damascus for the Douma attack, an allegation rejected by the Syrian government.

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