

# *Russia Accuses U.S. of Bombing Syrian Civilians*

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Moscow, January 13 (RHC)-- An airstrike carried out by the United States killed a number of civilians in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Russian Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov said that an airstrike from a U.S. B-52 Bomber killed 20 civilians on January 3. "The latest example of this is the airstrike when a B-52 bomber -- without warning the Russian side -- hit a target in the town of Sarmada, Idlib Province, which is covered by the cessation of hostilities agreement," Gerasimov said.

In an earlier statement, Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said that initial assessments of the air strike "killed more than 15 al-Qaida militants and destroyed six vehicles and nine structures." The Pentagon has made no further statement on the incident, and Russia did not elaborate any further on the accusations.

Gerasimov also made reference to a wayward U.S. airstrike in September, which he said killed Syrian government forces and led to an advance by the Islamic State group. The Russian general also added that the U.S.-led coalition in Syria had recorded large numbers of civilian and Syrian government casualties and so far its military strategy has not achieved "any meaningful results."

Gerasimov said the bombing campaign that Russia started in September "has turned the tide of the

Syrian war.” Moscow announced last week that it would be winding down its military presence in the conflict that has raged since 2011. A nationwide ceasefire -- while fragile -- appears to be holding up, which only a few violations.

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