



Everything We Know (And No One Has Said So Far) About The First Waves Of Air Strikes On Syria

Syria Air War Day 1 explained

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Engagement opérationnel

In the night between Apr. 13 and 14 aircraft from the U.S., UK and France launched a first wave of air strikes against ground targets in Syria. What follows is a recap based on [OSINT \(Open Sources Intelligence\)](#) since most of the aircraft involved in the raids could be tracked online via information in the public domain.

The "limited" action was preceded by intelligence gathering activity carried out by many of the assets that have been flying over eastern Mediterranean Sea lately. The first sign something was about to happen was the unusual presence of an RQ-4 Global Hawk drone tracking off Lebanon and Syria few hours before the first stand-off weapons landed on Syrian regime's chemical sites/infrastructure.

The RQ-4, callsign "Forte 10" flew for several hours west of Lebanon, likely pointing its IMINT and SIGINT/ELINT sensors at the Syrian Air Defense batteries in heightened readiness status. The drone then moved southwest, north of Egypt where it was joined by an RC-135V callsign Fixx74. It was about 23.20 GMT and it looked like the two ISR platforms, after collecting intelligence from a close position, were making room for the incoming bombers.

Among the aircraft coming in to conduct their bombing run from the Med, there were French Air Force Dassault Rafale jets from Saint Dizier AB, France, supported by C-135FR tankers and RAF Tornado GR4s with their Storm Shadow missiles, which launched from RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus. Whilst they did have their transponder turned off, the presence of the bombers and their accompanying tankers was leaked by their radio communications with civilian ATC agencies, such as Athinai ACC, that took place on unencrypted VHF frequencies broadcast on Internet on LiveATC.net.

Interestingly, at least two packages of fighters (each supposed to include 4x F-16Cs from 31FW and 4x F-15Cs from 48FW loaded with air-to-air missiles – actually, the second one included only 3 Vipers instead of 4) supported by KC-135 tankers, provided DCA (Defensive Counter Air) cover to the bombers and to the warships launching TLAMs.

After the first waves of attacks, that involved also U.S. Air Force B-1s from Al Udeid, another Global Hawk drone was launched from Sigonella, to perform BDA (Battle Damage Assessment).

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