Russian, Syrian air forces cease airstrikes in Aleppo at 0700 GMT Tuesday – Defense Minister Shoigu

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The Russian and Syrian air forces halted strikes in Aleppo on Tuesday for a 48-hour humanitarian pause, Russia's defense minister announced. The ceasefire comes ahead of schedule.

The Russian military said earlier that it would halt airstrikes on Thursday, but on Tuesday Sergey Shoigu announced that the ceasefire would be introduced two days early in order to pave the way for further humanitarian action in Aleppo.

The humanitarian pause to allow civilians to leave Aleppo and the delivery of aid to the city was to start on Thursday, according to the Russian plan.

"The goal of this work is to separate the terrorist from the 'moderate opposition' and get them out of eastern Aleppo," the minister said.

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The minister said it was expecting nations with sway over militant groups opposed to the Syrian government entrenched in eastern Aleppo to put pressure on them to cease hostilities in return.

Russian envoy to the UN Vitaly Churkin said earlier that Al-Nusra Front has two options in Aleppo: leave the city or be defeated.

Syrian government troops, which control the western part of the city and have encircled the eastern part, will provide two corridors through which militants can leave Aleppo with their weapons, Shoigu announced.

“Every party genuinely interested in swift stabilization in Aleppo should take real practical steps towards it rather than drag their feet for political gains,” Shoigu said.

Some of the armed groups in Aleppo, including Fastaqim and the powerful Islamists Ahrar al-Sham, rejected Russia’s proposed ceasefire and withdrawal offer, Reuters reported.

The UN said it would not attempt to carry out any humanitarian effort in Aleppo unless a security guarantee is given by all sides.

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The Russian move is in line with a proposal Russia put forth to the UN Security Council earlier, which backed an initiative of UN special envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura, which would see members of the terrorist group Nusra Front leave eastern Aleppo under a guarantee of safe passage, which would presumably bring hostilities in the city to a stop.

The proposal was defeated by other members of the UNSC, who pushed for a no-fly zone to be declared. Russia objected to this, saying the move would, de facto, protect the terrorists who control eastern Aleppo and allow them to continue their attacks on government-held part of the city.