



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on April 18, 2018

Journalist Disputes Syrian Chemical Attack in British Publication

Dr. Assim Rahaibani, a Syrian doctor, has told journalist Robert Fisk, writing for the British publication, *The Independent*, that last week's alleged chemical gas attack by the Assad government on civilians in Douma did not happen. The alleged chemical attack was the pretext for a combined bombing raid by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom.

"I was with my family in the basement of my home three hundred meters from here on the night but all the doctors know what happened," Rahaibani told Fisk. "There was a lot of shelling [by government forces] and aircraft were always over Douma at night — but on this night, there was wind and huge dust clouds began to come into the basements and cellars where people lived."

According to Rahaibani, "People began to arrive here suffering from hypoxia, oxygen loss. Then someone at the door, a 'White Helmet,' shouted 'Gas!,' and a panic began. People started throwing water over each other."

This was a video that was shown around the world, but Rahaibani explained what really happened. "Yes, the video was filmed here, it is genuine, but what you see are people suffering from hypoxia — not gas poisoning."

The "White Helmets" described by Rahaibani are what most Americans would call medical "first responders." Russia has charged that the Douma incident was "staged" by this volunteer rescue organization. Fisk noted that the White Helmets are funded by the British Foreign Office.

Americans have become increasingly skeptical of U.S. government assurances that Assad actually used chemical weapons "against his own people." First of all, it is quite illogical that Assad would resort to gas warfare on civilians, when almost all observers believe that he is on the verge of victory in the multi-year Syrian civil war. Assad would have to know that the one thing that he could keep him from winning the war, at this point, is intervention by the British, the French, and especially America. And the only thing that would cause the U.S. public to support yet another military adventure in the Middle East would be gruesome pictures of the aftermath of just such a chemical attack.

In 2003, Americans were fed a steady diet of "information" from their government that Iraq's dictator, Sadaam Hussein, was in possession or was developing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), such as chemical weapons, biological weapons, and even nuclear weapons, and that he was likely to use those weapons on American forces in the region, or he was going to give them to some Islamic terrorist group that would use them. Additionally, Americans were told that Hussein was a particularly brutal man,





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keeping “rape rooms,” and the like.

While Hussein was no doubt a brutal dictator, it is hard to argue that his removal from power has improved the civil liberties situation either in Iraq, or in the region. It certainly has contributed to the increased significance of the Iranians in the region.

President Donald Trump won the Republican nomination in 2016, at least in part, because he condemned the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq, based on the WMD claim, which U.S. forces were unable to find after the war was over. Now, Trump has been persuaded to bomb targets in Syria to punish Assad for his use of chemical weapons.

But did Assad really use chemical weapons? Very little evidence has been presented to prove that contention. In fact, it has been nine days since the alleged gas attack in Douma, Syria, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has still not been given access to the site.

Russian officials have visited the site, leading Kenneth Ward, U.S. ambassador to the OPCW, to question whether the Russians may have “tampered” with the site. “It is our understanding the Russian Federation may have visited the attack site. We are concerned they may have tampered with it with the intent of thwarting the efforts of the OPCW fact-finding mission [FFM] to conduct an effective investigation. This raises serious questions about the ability of the FFM to do its job.”

Peter Wilson, the British ambassador to the OPCW, echoed Ward’s suspicions. “Since 2016, Russia has sought to undermine every OPCW investigation into allegations of regime chemical weapons use. Yet again, Russia is spreading conspiracy theories and misinformation designed to undermine the integrity of the OPCW’s fact finding mission.”

For their part, the Russians strongly reject such accusations. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that his government is not doing anything to hamper the OPCW. Instead, Ryabkov said the delays in the OPCW reaching Douma is because of “the illegal, unlawful military action” — the airstrikes conducted by the U.S., France and Britain last Friday.

Some local Arabs told Fisk that the Islamists had forcibly taken over Syrian homes to avoid bombing by the Syrian government and the Russians. The local population hates these radicals — the forces that would likely take over the country were Assad fall from power.

For more than a century, dating back to the sinking of the USS *Maine* in 1898, which led to a U.S. declaration of war against Spain in 1898, Americans have been persuaded to support military action by incidents in which the whole truth of the matter is disputed, e.g., Germans allegedly eating babies in Belgium before American entry into the First World War; the supposed attacks upon American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin; WMDs in Iraq; and other debatable incidents. Now, Americans are being told that a civil war in Syria is of vital interest to our country.

Perhaps the time has come to demand proof. As President Ronald Reagan said of taking the Soviets at their word — we should “trust, but verify.” Sadly, we need apply the same skepticism to our own government’s assertions before we launch bombing attacks inside another country.

Image: Screenshot of a YouTube video [released by the U.K. Independent](#)



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