



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 14, 2017

Putin Says U.S. Planning Fake Gas Attacks to Justify Missile Strikes Against Syria

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on April 11, while meeting in Moscow with Italian President Sergio Mattarella, that his country had information that the United States was planning to launch new missile strikes on Syria, and that the United States or its allies would fake chemicals weapons attacks there to justify the strikes.



Reuters news, which reported Putin's assertions, stated that when Putin was asked whether he expected more U.S. missile strikes on Syria, he said:

We have information that a similar provocation is being prepared ... in other parts of Syria including in the southern Damascus suburbs where they are planning to again plant some substance and accuse the Syrian authorities of using [chemical weapons].

Reuters reported that Putin did not offer any proof for his assertion.

Britain's *Mirror* newspaper, which also reported Putin's statement, predicted on April 11 (the day before Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's visit to Moscow) that Tillerson "is set to warn Russia to abandon its support for Syria's President Bashar Assad — insisting there is no future for his regime following the latest chemical weapons attack his own people."

On April 12, the State Department posted a transcript of Tillerson's press briefing in Moscow, held jointly with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. During that briefing, Lavrov recapped his talks that day with both Tillerson and Putin. He stated:

In the context of fighting international terrorism, we [the United States and Russia] have talked about Syria, of course. We have touched up on the incident that took place after February 4th when, in the environs of Idlib in Syria, chemical weapons were used. We obviously paid a lot of attention to Syria and we obviously spent some time discussing the incident of the 4th of April, the Idlib incident [inaudible] where chemical substances were used, and then the subsequent U.S. missile strikes on the 7th of April.

Lavrov said that Russia has insisted "that we have a very thorough investigation of all that. The Russian Federation has said that what we want to do is to apply to the OPCW in Hague so that they have the full competences to initiate such an investigation and we have drawn attention also to the letter which has been sent to Syria and the UN about the ban on chemical weapons to make sure that they give permission to the investigators to carry out an impartial, unbiased investigation in Idlib and also at the airfield which underwent the attack."

Lavrov said that Tillerson supports this kind of investigation.

When Tillerson addressed the briefing, he noted he and Lavrov had just come from a productive two-hour meeting with Putin. Summarizing that meeting, he said:



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We spoke extensively about Syria, and in some areas we share a common view. Specifically, we both believe in a unified and stable Syria, and we agree we want to deny a safe haven for terrorists who want to attack both of our countries....

We have agreed to establish a working group to address smaller issues and make progress toward stabilizing the relationship, so that we can then address the more serious problems. Foreign Minister Lavrov and I agreed we would consider further proposals made about the way forward in Syria, including consulting with our allies and coalition members. And we will continue discussions about how to find a solution to the Syrian conflict.

During the question-and-answer portion of the briefing, Tillerson included this statement as part of his answer about Trump's characterization of Syria's leader, Bashar al-Assad, as "an animal.":

Well, I think the perspective from the United States, supported by the facts that we have, are conclusive that the recent chemical weapons attack carried out in Syria was planned and it was directed and executed by Syrian regime forces, and we're quite confident of that. This is just the latest in a series of the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime,

During his reply, Lavrov said that "this subject is one we diverge on, inasmuch as Russia is insisting on an objective investigation."

He continued to state Russia's position that the matter requires further investigation and that Russia is not convinced that the U.S. charge that Assad used chemical weapons against civilians is an established fact:

So the media hysteria which was unleashed as a result of this incident — we have to make sure that we are impartial now in investigating this whole business by sending international expert groups to the site and to that particular place where the chemicals were used, and, of course, the airfield which was used for sending out aircraft with chemical substances. We have seen no confirmation that that was the case, all the more so because the TV images showed that there were people on the airfield immediately after the strike and there were absolutely no evidence of — which would allow us to talk about the use of some kind of poisonous substances.

To sum up the respective positions of the Trump and Putin governments, therefore, the Trump administration says it has proof that the Syrian government launched an attack using chemical weapons against civilians in Idlib, Syria, an attack that justified retaliation by the United States by means of a missile strike on the Syrian airbase where the planes allegedly delivering the poison chemicals were based. The Russian position, in contrast, is that it is impossible for either the United States or Russia to know with certainty who was responsible for the use of chemical weapons at this point, and that the incident must be investigated by sending teams of international experts to "that particular place where the chemicals were used, and, of course, the airfield which was used for sending out aircraft with chemical substances."

The credibility of the Trump position has even been questioned in the United States. In an [article in The New American](#) on April 7, this magazine's foreign correspondent, Alex Newman, wrote:

While there is no proof yet either way, there are good reasons to at least consider the prospect that the sarin gas attack on civilians in Syria this week could have been a "false flag" operation. The last time Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad supposedly used chemical weapons, the [story quickly collapsed under scrutiny](#). The more likely scenario, [according to United Nations investigators and virtually every credible analyst who looked at the 2013 crime](#), was that [globalist-backed jihadist](#)



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[“rebels”](#) used the chemicals in a “false-flag” scheme. The goal: Blame Syrian authorities in a bid to trigger U.S. government intervention against Assad.

The article quoted a statement made by former Congressman and longtime non-interventionist Ron Paul, who declared that there was “zero chance” that Assad had ordered the chemical attack. “It doesn’t make any sense for Assad under these conditions to all of a sudden use poisonous gases,” Paul said, noting that the situation for Assad and his regime was looking better until the chemical attack this week. In a tweet that sparked headlines around the world, Paul called the attack a “false flag.”

The article noted:

Syrian officials were among the first to allege that a false-flag operation was underway in the chemical attack that killed over 100 civilians in northern Syria this week. In a statement released by the Assad regime’s Foreign Ministry, authorities denied responsibility for the deadly attack. Instead, the regime said the gruesome killings with banned weapons were actually a “premeditated action that aimed to justify the launching of a U.S. attack on the Syrian army.” The regime claims it destroyed all its WMDs under United Nations supervision years ago. Russian authorities, allied with Assad, agreed.

Of course, even if Damascus did use chemical weapons on civilians, it would be unlikely to admit that. But a simple analysis of motives — a basic first step in any serious investigation — would suggest that Assad had every reason to avoid the use of chemical weapons at all costs. On the other hand, jihadist rebels on the verge of annihilation had every reason to use them. After years of fighting [globalist-backed jihadists and terrorists](#), the dictatorship in Damascus was reportedly close to victory — at least until Trump intervened by firing dozens of missiles at Syrian targets.

Leaving the Syrian government’s statements out of the equation for the moment, since their claims are the least likely to be unbiased, we can still consider whose version of events is more likely to be accurate: the Trump administration’s or Putin’s.

We can easily have suspicions about either source. First there is Putin. Putin was a KGB foreign intelligence officer for 16 years, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel before retiring in 1991 to enter politics in Saint Petersburg (formerly Leningrad). During the Cold War, the KGB, the old Soviet Union’s spy agency, became proficient in assembling disinformation — the official lies and propaganda disseminated by the Soviet Union’s communist regime.

Since Putin was a professional intelligence agent for a regime built on falsehoods, he must be adept at promoting falsehoods — mustn’t he?

True, but the record of the U.S. government in using false propaganda to justify interventionist attacks on supposedly evil Middle East dictators also makes our government’s motives regarding Assad (who resembles Saddam Hussein in more respects than one) suspect.

The Senate report on Iraqi WMD intelligence (formally, the “Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq”) — was the report by the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence related to the U.S. intelligence community’s assessments of Iraq during the time leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The report, which was released on July 9, 2004, identified numerous failures in the intelligence used to justify the invasion.

While the report was lengthy, we will quote just one of its conclusions:

Most of the major key judgments in the Intelligence Community’s October 2002 National



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Intelligence Estimate (NIE), Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction, either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting. A series of failures, particularly in analytic trade craft, led to the mischaracterization of the intelligence

During the Republican presidential debate in South Carolina on February 13, 2016, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump pulled no punches about the Bush administration's "justification" for the invasion of Iraq — that the Saddam Hussein regime possessed weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. Trump's assessment of those claims in the debate was:

"They lied," he said. "They said there were weapons of mass destruction; there were none. And they knew there were none."

In an interview with *Face the Nation* after the debate, Trump expanded on his statement, taking some of the blame off Bush, personally.

"I am not blaming [President Bush], although ... the CIA said there was a lot of information that something like that was going to happen. I'm not blaming anybody. It's a tragedy."

"I'm just saying he went in there, he thought there were weapons of mass destruction, maybe or maybe he didn't," Trump added. "If he knew that there weren't weapons of mass destruction and if he used that as an excuse to go in and try to make up for some sins for previous years then it would be a lie."

At this point, we could not even speculate whether either Putin or Trump is telling the truth about Assad's alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria. However, given that Trump is aware of the consequences of Bush's actions in Iraq — whether due to misinformation or by deliberate deceit — one might think he would want to avoid making the same bad decisions.

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