



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 12, 2018

Trump Administration “Still Assessing the Intelligence” About Chemical Attack in Syria

Following a chemical weapons attack of unknown origin in the Damascus suburb of Douma on the night of April 7, President Trump was quick to cast blame on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, tweeting: “Many dead, including women and children, in mindless CHEMICAL attack in Syria” “Area of atrocity is in lockdown and encircled by Syrian Army, making it completely inaccessible to outside world. President Putin, Russia and Iran are responsible for backing Animal Assad. Big price....”



After Trump promised to fire missiles at Syrian government positions, Moscow’s ambassador to Lebanon, Alexander Zasytkin, warned on April 11 that any U.S. missiles unleashed at Syria would be shot down and the launch sites targeted.

In response to Russia’s warning, Trump tweeted: “Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and ‘smart!’ You shouldn’t be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!”

However, by April 12, Trump seemed to back off a bit and became very vague about the timing of any U.S. missile strikes against Syria.

“Never said when an attack on Syria would take place. Could be very soon or not so soon at all!” Trump said in his latest early-morning tweet.

Further evidence of some retreat from Trump’s original hard-line position was revealed on April 11, when Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters that the United States and its allies are “still assessing the intelligence” about the alleged chemical weapons attack on Syrian civilians this weekend.

In response to a question about whether U.S. military forces are “ready right now to conduct a retaliatory strike if ordered,” Mattis replied: “We stand ready to provide military options if they are appropriate as the President determines.”

Mattis’s statement indicates that the administration is not as sure that the Assad government was responsible for the alleged chemical weapons attack as was suggested by Trump’s earliest tweets.

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Trump was not alone among Western leaders who attributed the gas attack to the Assad government. French President Emmanuel Macron claims that France has proof the Syrian government carried out the attack.

“We have proof that last week ... chemical weapons were used, at least with chlorine, and that they were used by the regime of Bashar al-Assad,” Macron alleged in a recent statement to broadcaster TF1, without offering details of any evidence.



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Britain's Brexit minister, David Davis, while condemning the attack, urged careful deliberation before coming to any conclusions.

"The situation in Syria is horrific, the use of chemical weapons is something the world has to prevent," Davis said. "But also it's a very, very delicate circumstance and we've got to make this judgment on a very careful, very deliberate, very well thought-through basis."

Peter Ford, who was the U.K. ambassador to Syria from 2003 to 2006, during an interview with BBC Radio Scotland, maintained that we don't yet know whether the government of Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons, insisting that we have no evidence either way.

Ford questioned why Assad would launch a chemical weapons attack now: "How has Assad benefited from all this mayhem? In fact, it's rebounded against him. Why would he do such a thing when he was already winning? The battle for eastern Ghouta was virtually over. Why would he choose this moment to do the one thing that was guaranteed to pluck defeat for him from the jaws of victory?"

Ford also raised the possibility that opposition forces fabricated the attack, saying: "A child can see that the intention was to produce the hysteria and now the military action that we are on the point of taking, risking our own safety. What the jihadis have done is jerk our leash. And frankly, for one, I think it's pretty disgusting that we are allowing ourselves to have our own leash jerked by these Islamist fanatics."

A report from RT also quoted statements from Ford's interview with BBC Radio Scotland. The report noted that chemical-warfare inspectors from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons are preparing to make a trip to Douma to inspect the scene of the alleged chemical attack, but Ford doesn't think that Syrian leader Bashar Assad will be concerned about their analysis. Ford told BBC Scotland: "I don't think Assad is in the least worried that the inspectors will find out his guilt — he is probably not guilty on this occasion. We have to engage our brains as well as our emotions here, not be stampeded by those videos which are described as being unverified, but which by dint of being repeated over and over again come to acquire a spurious credibility. We have to ask ourselves what are the sources in this stampede to war?"

An article updated by *International Business Times* on April 12 lends credibility to Ford's suspicion that the chemical attack the West is so quick to blame on Assad may have been fabricated by opposition forces. The article was originally published almost exactly one year ago in response to the White House's assertion that Assad had perpetrated a chemical-weapons attack in Khan Sheikhoun, Syria, on April 4, 2017.

The *IBT* article cited a series of three reports written by Theodore Postol, a professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), refuting the government's findings:

"I have reviewed the [White House's] document carefully, and I believe it can be shown, without doubt, that the document does not provide any evidence whatsoever that the U.S. government has concrete knowledge that the government of Syria was the source of the chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun, Syria at roughly 6am to 7am on 4 April, 2017.

In fact, a main piece of evidence that is cited in the document points to an attack that was executed by individuals on the ground, not from an aircraft, on the morning of 4 April.

This conclusion is based on an assumption made by the White House when it cited the source of the sarin release and the photographs of that source. My own assessment is that the source was very



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likely tampered with or staged, so no serious conclusion could be made from the photographs cited by the White House.”...

The implication of Postol’s analysis is that it was carried out by anti-government insurgents as Khan Sheikhoun is in militant-controlled territory of Syria.

In an [article published](#) April 9, we noted that establishment neoconservatives, liberals, and globalists are reprising an old script to use against Assad and pressure Trump into going to war:

Previous chemical weapons attacks in Syria, after first being blamed on Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, were later shown to be probable “false-flag” attacks staged by establishment-backed jihadist rebels. More than a few voices have suggested the latest reported attack may again be deception, including a former United Nations weapons inspector. Foreign powers warned just last month that false flags were being prepared in Syria to justify military intervention. But some especially unhinged voices in Congress and the Swamp have actually blamed the attack on Trump, citing his refusal to obey globalist commands to keep America permanently embroiled in illegal war.

Photo of Trump Cabinet discussing Syria: AP Images

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