



U.S. Military Document: Syrian Rebels Had Chemical Weapons

Western officials and the Obama administration continue to insist, albeit without offering any proof thus far, that a chemical weapons attack near Damascus last month was perpetrated by the Assad regime. Officials from Syria and Russia, meanwhile, have claimed all along the deployment was probably the work of jihadist rebels — a “false-flag” attack meant to draw in foreign intervention on behalf of the opposition. Amid the confusion, however, evidence pointing to opposition forces as the culprits continues to mount.



As with most claims in war, the truth remains murky, but strong [doubts about the veracity of accusations](#) against Assad have only grown in recent weeks. Now, a classified U.S. military document obtained by WND [confirms](#) what had long been suspected: Al-Qaeda-led fighters with the rebel Jabhat al-Nusra Front in Syria are known to have been in possession of sarin gas, because some was confiscated from them earlier this year in Turkey.

Indeed, multiple news organizations [reported](#) in late May that Turkish officials — strong backers of the ongoing rebellion against the Syrian dictatorship — seized almost five pounds of the toxic gas from rebels during a raid on the Nusra front, a U.S. designated terrorist group fighting Assad. Authorities in Turkey later [tried to deny](#) the reports, but just last week, prosecutors [charged](#) Syrian rebels with trying to acquire deadly chemicals.

The U.S. military document obtained by WND, meanwhile, confirmed the seizure of sarin gas from opposition fighters, [reported](#) F. Michael Maloof, a former senior security policy analyst in the office of the secretary of defense. Classified as “Secret/NoFORN” (“Not for foreign distribution”), the document notes that the chemical weapons from al-Qaeda in Iraq went to Turkey and that even though some were confiscated, more could have been used in an attack earlier this year on civilians and Syrian troops in Aleppo.

“It revealed that AQI had produced a ‘bench-scale’ form of sarin in Iraq and then transferred it to Turkey,” wrote WND’s Maloof in an article about the document, which came from the U.S. intelligence community’s National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC). “The sarin gas was found in the homes of suspected Syrian Islamic radicals detained in the southern provinces of Adana and Mersia.”

An unnamed U.S. military source cited in the WND report said that there had been a number of interrogations and some clan reports as part of what the classified document described as “50 general indicators to monitor progress and characterize the state of the ANF/AQI-associated Sarin chemical warfare agent developing effort.” Indeed, according to the official American document, even though part of the plot may have been disrupted, rebel chemical schemes might still be underway.

“This (document) depicts our assessment of the status of effort at its peak — primarily research and



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procurement activities — when disrupted in late May 2013 with the arrest of several key individuals in Iraq and Turkey,” the NGIC document was quoted as saying. “Future reporting of indicators not previously observed would suggest that the effort continues to advance despite the arrests.”

Of course, the classified document is hardly the only evidence suggesting that rebel forces have been using chemical weapons in Syria. As *The New American* [reported](#) in May, for example, a preliminary investigation by the United Nations into a series of poison gas attacks — two in March, one in December — found strong indications that opposition forces were behind the deadly operations.

“Our investigators have been in neighboring countries interviewing victims, doctors and field hospitals and, according to their report of last week which I have seen, there are strong, concrete suspicions but not yet incontrovertible proof of the use of sarin gas, from the way the victims were treated,” said Carla Del Ponte, a former Swiss attorney general and a member of the UN independent commission of inquiry on Syria. “This was use on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities.”

WND also suggested that the classified U.S. military document bolstered allegations made in a report handed to the UN by Russian authorities concluding that rebels perpetrated the March attacks. While the Russian report has not been officially released, sources quoted by WND said the documentation pointed to the sarin gas having been manufactured in a Sunni-controlled region of Iraq before being transported to Turkey. Sunni jihadists with foreign backing, of course, are the primary force fighting Assad.

The more recent chemical attack near Damascus, meanwhile, also appears to have been carried out using a relatively unsophisticated “kitchen” variety of sarin — the type that multiple experts say would be expected from terrorist groups rather than a standing government with a professional military. Evidence seized from al-Qaeda-linked militants on multiple occasions — from Afghanistan and Iraq to Turkey — confirms that jihadist networks have the technology and know-how to produce such weapons. Assad, while hardly a credible source, reiterated those points in an interview with Fox News that aired Wednesday, again blaming rebel terrorists for the “despicable” chemical attack. “You cannot use sarin beside your own troops,” he said, adding that his regime [turned over evidence](#) that rebels used a crude “kitchen gas” that was relatively easy for terror groups to manufacture. “The whole story doesn’t hold together. It isn’t realistic.... We didn’t use any chemical weapons on Ghouta.”

As *The New American* [reported](#) in late August, shortly after the attack near Ghouta was seized upon by Obama and others to call for war against Syria, numerous experts were already coming forward to challenge claims that Assad’s regime deployed chemical weapons in his years-long battle. Video evidence from Middle Eastern sources was also making the rounds in Western news reports [showing rebel forces using WMDs](#).

Perhaps even more important is the question of who benefited — “cui bono?” Analysts say the dictatorship had no real reason to deploy poison gas. Consider: Assad was largely considered to be winning the war, UN inspectors had just arrived in the area, and the regime knew that using poison gas could be used as a pretext for more overt foreign military intervention. The rebels, on the other hand, would have had a strong motive to deploy chemical weapons in a bid to frame the regime and have the U.S. military openly join the conflict on their behalf.

After the attack, meanwhile, the Syrian government blamed foreign-backed al-Qaeda rebels and promptly demanded an international investigation to determine the facts. Rebel forces and the Obama administration, however, claimed the evidence implicating Assad was “undeniable” while suggesting



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that further probes were not needed. No proof was ever supplied by those accusing Assad, but the dictatorship at least claimed to be [providing proof](#) that the rebels were responsible to the UN and foreign governments.

Finally, as *The New American* has been documenting almost from the start of the foreign-fueled civil war, there have been multiple massacres and other attacks that Western officials and establishment media outlets originally blamed on the Assad regime. However, after more evidence emerged, many of those atrocities were later [shown conclusively](#) to have been perpetrated by [increasingly ruthless rebel forces](#).

While the truth is all but impossible to determine amid dueling propaganda wars being waged by the Assad regime and the various foreign-backed jihadist rebel factions, the Obama administration's claims do appear increasingly implausible to most serious analysts. Either way, though, the U.S. government should follow the Constitution and the advice of the Founding Fathers by properly declaring war when vital but staying out of foreign conflicts that do not threaten the American people.

Photo of Syrian rebel fighters: AP Images

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