

Questions About Syria: False Flag? And Was Trump Baited?

As everyone not in a cave since the start of the month knows, on April 4 the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun, in the northern province of Idlib, suffered a chemical weapons attack. Over 80 people were killed, at least 25 of them children, with dozens more incapacitated by deadly sarin gas.

Syrian president Bashar al-Assad drew immediate blame for the attack, which would have violated international agreements. Assad's denial of responsibility went unbelieved in Western media. Also dismissed out of hand was Russia's suggestion that a conventional air strike hit a warehouse containing chemical weapons possessed by the insurgents the Assad regime has been fighting. This was all prior to any significant investigation into what really happened, something admittedly difficult under the present circumstances.

Early Friday morning Syrian time, April 7, [President Trump ordered an assault](#) during which 59 Tomahawk Cruise Missiles launched from the USS Ross and the USS Porter took out the larger portion of the Shayrat air field and nearby military infrastructure at Homs, destroying more than two dozen Syrian aircraft (over 20 percent of Syria's air force). [Here](#) is Trump's defense of the action. There are accounts of how Trump was moved to reverse his hands-off-Syria policy by such scenes as a distraught father holding his two dead children, twins, and Syrian children struggling to breathe.

Such scenes have great emotional power but do not tell us what really happened, or who was responsible. This should be common horse sense. It is a telling sign of the times that Trump received more praise for this action than anything else he's done to date.

Many of us have questions, however.

The first thought that went through my mind when I read about the attack and Assad's being blamed for it was: *why on Earth would he do something so stupid?*

Assad has struggled since 2011, the year the Syrian civil war began. He was blamed for a major chemical weapons attack in a major Damascus suburb on August, 2013, one which killed over a thousand Syrians. He denied involvement, blaming rebels who also had chemical weapons. No decisive proof was ever presented of Assad's responsibility. He was ordered to turn over his stockpile of chemical weapons to the UN and claimed to have done just that. Some of us were open to the idea that that Damascus attack was a false flag, carried out with tacit U.S. approval if not actual assistance, designed to discredit the Assad regime as a prelude to his being ousted from power via a U.S.-led invasion. Donald Trump was among those who criticized Obama administration overtures against the Assad regime following that incident.

The U.S. has been involved in [covertly arming and training Syrian rebels at least since 2012](#). Russia has been bombing strategic rebel strongholds since 2015.

The intelligence community blames Assad for the April 4 incident. Do I need to remind readers, this is the same intelligence community that claimed to have evidence, undisclosed and traceable only to anonymous sources, that some in Trump's campaign staff were involved with and might have been colluding with the Russians last year, and that it was the Russians who hacked the DNC. The intelligence community appears to have been playing its assigned role, trying to undercut the new administration's legitimacy. Trump's trusting them now thus also makes little sense, unless someone powerful – maybe more than one someone – had a private “chat” with him. I have no proof of this either, of course, but we are talking about people unlikely to leave paper trails, even electronic

ones.

Just recently after all, Trump administration officials had [declared](#) that Assad was not a priority. This was consistent with the America First stance Trump took during his candidacy last year and in his inauguration speech, but was not what powerful people wanted to hear.

Could the latter have orchestrated the April 4 attack to lure a Donald Trump they know who goes off experience, not ideology, into changing his priorities (which have now flip-flopped on more other things than I can count)? A sarin gas attack did occur; others in Syria besides Assad's government have access to such weapons; those others have received covert assistance from the U.S. They may not be able to make chemical weapons, as some will respond; but it hardly follows that they don't know how to use them.

Add up two and two and get four. Part of the original role of ISIS was to overthrow Assad, who had been making slow progress against the insurgency.

There can only be speculation on many of the specifics, but the fact remains: *Assad had no motive for gassing his own people.* None whatsoever. Not only that, it is unclear he was in a position to do so. Khan Sheikhoun is in an area under al Qaeda control (a fact mostly neglected in Western media). Which means that whoever was directly responsible for the attack acted with al Qaeda's approval, not Assad's.

The strongest evidence against Assad turns out to be [a flight map](#) released by the Pentagon the day of Trump's assault. The flight map shows a trajectory a Syrian flight might have taken – emphasis on the *might have*, in the sense that it was physically possible. But a careful reading of anti-Assad articles in places like [Bloomberg](#) shows reliance on the same kinds of “anonymous sources” we've come to expect – a four-page government document about which we learn next to nothing

– ultimately failing to disclose any real evidence tying the Assad government to these attacks.

Calls for real evidence seem to mean little in today's world, however.

Ron Paul (who may yet turn out to be the last actual statesman the U.S. had) believes the April 4 attack to have been a false flag. He stated on his weekly [Liberty Report](#) the following day that Assad's doing this made no sense: "Before this episode of possible gas exposure ... things were going along reasonably well for the conditions... Trump said let the Syrians decide who should run their country, and peace talks were breaking out, and al Qaeda and ISIS were on the run. It looks like, maybe, somebody didn't like that so there ance had to be an episode, and the blame now is we can't let that happen because it looks like it might benefit Assad. So Assad releases gas to kill a bunch of people."

Dr. Paul is not alone. More recently, weapons expert Theodor Postol, professor emeritus at MIT and past scientific advisor to the Department of Defense, [issued three reports](#) evaluating claims of Assad's responsibility. He stated unequivocally, "I have reviewed the [White House] 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 Sheikkoun, Syria, at roughly 6 am to 7 am on 4 April 2017."

He argued that the attack probably resulted from actors on the ground.

"In fact," he continued, "a main piece of evidence that is cited in the document point to an attack that was executed by individuals on the ground, not from an aircraft ... 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 was that the source was very likely tampered with or staged, so no serious conclusion could be made from the photographs cited by the White House.”

The photograph he refers to is that of a crater with a shell inside, which allegedly contained sarin gas. His analysis of the shell casing concludes that the damage to the casing is inconsistent with the effects of an aerial explosion. More likely, the explosive charge was laid on the shell containing sarin before the latter was detonated.



<- Khan Sheikkoun crater

He explained: “The explosive acted on the pipe as a blunt crushing mallet. It drove the pipe into the ground while at the same time creating the crater. Since the pipe was filled with sarin, which is an incompressible fluid, as the pipe was flattened, the sarin acted on the walls and ends of the pipe causing a crack along the length of the pipe and also the failure of the cap on the back end.”

He went on to criticize what he called the “politicization” of intelligence findings: “No competent analyst would miss the fact that the alleged sarin canister was forcefully crushed from above, rather than exploded by a munition within it. All of these highly amateurish mistakes indicate that this White House report, like the earlier Obama White House Report [from 2013], was not properly vetted by the intelligence community

as claimed. I have worked with the intelligence community in the past, and I have grave concerns about the politicisation of intelligence that seems to be occurring with more frequency in recent times ...”

Postol had used similar arguments back in 2013 based on a close inspection of what documented physical evidence he was able to study. Getting at the truth about what is really going on in Syria is difficult, however, and made worse by the likelihood that no one in U.S. government or media really wants the truth.

What should be clear: powerful people would like to see Assad gone. They have plans of their own for Syria (surprise, surprise: they involve oil, and a pipeline, can't you guess?). Some of these people are in Saudi Arabia. Some are in Washington.

We also know that the neocons who appear to be overwhelming the America Firsters in the Trump administration continue to promote limited war and chronic instability in the region, and one wonders if they will be satisfied when the entire Middle East (except for Israel, of course) is reduced to piles of ash and burned out rubble.

Or when unassimilable refugees have overwhelmed the West. Even Hillary Clinton weighed in expressing approval of Trump's action and stating that it should continue more broadly. Then she added, “I ... hope they will recognize that we cannot in one breath speak of protecting Syrian babies and in the next close America's borders to them.” This, from someone who has no problem with the deaths of millions of unborn babies at the hands of American abortionists.

If, under clear and obvious pressure from all quarters, Trump weakens and then reverses his initial determination to vet those seeking to enter the U.S., he will lose the support of many who voted for him. One result could be a 2018 disaster

for Republicans. But that is not the worst danger. Many of us rejected another Clinton presidency because, in addition to her support for abortion on demand, her raving-lunatic multiculturalism, and her belief in open borders, another Clinton presidency clearly meant collision with Russia – very possibly in Syria.

So again, was Trump lured, whether through his lack of a consistent worldview or just inexperience at dealing with the power politics of Washington and the Deep State? Was he compelled to go against his best instincts, which went against wars of choice and regime change? True, he once said he would “bomb the hell out of ISIS.” He called the foreign policy of the Bush II-Obama-Clinton axis a “complete and total disaster,” however, and he was right. I had hopes that he and Russian president Vladimir Putin could work together on a strategy to contain ISIS, presently the most murderous force in the Middle East – or, conceivably, the entire world, as not even Kim Jung Un’s barbarous regime puts Christians to death by hacking off their heads. (Syria’s Christian minority, incidentally, is grateful to Assad. His government has been the only thing preventing their suffering a likely brutal fate at the hands of ISIS militants.)

Such a strategy might begin by cutting off supplies of money and arms clearly coming from, shall we say, outside the region.

It won’t happen if Trump been lured, possibly as a survival strategy, into continuing the “complete and total disaster” of the Bush-Clinton-Obama axis. Their version of “America First” is not a government that goes where it is invited and otherwise minds its own business, but of a global empire ruled by the Exceptional Nation, imposing “liberal democracy” and the mass consumption culture on the world – by force, if necessary.

Meanwhile, relations between the U.S. and Russia have

deteriorated once again. They are now what they were when Obama was president and Hillary was rattling her saber.

As of this writing there has been no escalation in Syria – nor any sense that regime change in that troubled land could be in the offing. Could this, perchance, be due to Russia's having moved one of its state-of-the-art frigates into easy striking distance in the eastern Mediterranean where, to the best of my knowledge, it remains, watching quietly? While the present strategy seems to be to drive a wedge between Putin and Assad, trying to persuade Putin that support for Assad is “not in Russia's best interests,” the bottom line is, the two remain allies (again, as of this writing).

Assad is not, therefore, Saddam Hussein, who was a U.S.-instilled puppet from the get-go. Nor is Syria Iraq.

Putin does not appear to want war, especially with the U.S. He has tolerated being lied about and demonized in Western media (and no doubt, self-anointed guardians of the sacredness of mainstream thought about whom I [wrote previously](#) will cite such remarks as these as “evidence” *I* must be working for the Russians!). Surely if Putin wanted war, with the kinds of provocations we've seen in Ukraine where neocon-backed forces assisted in overthrowing a democratically elected government in 2014, as well as this latest incident in Syria, we would know it by now!

In fact, Putin has kept his head and acted with remarkable restraint against a steady stream of Washington-originating provocations. He doubtless sees the alternative as unacceptable.

I am sure, however, that like anyone needing to operate from a perception of strength, there is a point beyond which he will not allow himself to be pushed.

A U.S.-led invasion of Syria would do it, inviting an extremely dangerous escalation that could lead to World War

III!

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