

Syrian attack: Trump's Cuban Missile Moment

Written by Eric Walberg Эрик Вальберг/ Уолберг □□□□□ □□□□
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Claims that Assad is using chemical weapons are like a barometer: when the Syrian army is doing well, they surface, notably in 2013, 2015 and now, just as the Syria government looks close to some kind of 'victory'. Both times in the past the intelligence came from Mossad and the claims fizzled out, though the propaganda that it was 'likely' by the Syrian Army stuck in western perception. The current chemical 'attack', instantly hailed by Israel, occurred just as peace talks were beginning in Geneva. The source of the claim is, again, most likely Israel, though that's not part of the media fireworks. Tillerson might have checked with the Russians, as Russian military were stationed at the airport.

That is the background to the bombing of the air base April 6, in retaliation for a suspected chemical weapons attack on civilians in rebel-held Idlib province two days before. National security adviser General Herbert McMaster solemnly declared, "We could trace this murderous attack back to that facility." Secretary of State Rex Tillerson accused Russia of being either complicit or incompetent in failing to keep its 2013 promise of completely destroying Syria's chemical weapons supply.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called it "an act of aggression against a sovereign country violating the norms of international law, and under a trumped-up pretext at that. Washington's move substantially impairs Russian-US relations, which are in a deplorable state as it is." Russia said it had suspended deconfliction channels with Washington, set up to avoid air collisions over Syria, though the Pentagon said it continued to use the channel.

Why would Assad launch chemical weapons when he was winning? The most plausible explanation was that the Syria air force hit a supply depot in rebel-held territory. That Assad would have ordered the use of chemical weapons was dismissed by Russian deputy UN

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ambassador, Vladimir Safronkov, who vetoed the usual US-sponsored Security Council resolution condemning Assad, suggesting it was altnews. "We have not yet any official or reliable confirmation" of what took place or who was responsible, said the UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, at a press conference after the incident. The EU echoed this, though European countries either supported the US strike or kept mum.

Safronkov warned the US, "If military action occurred, it will be on shoulders of those who initiated such doubtful and tragic enterprise. Look at Iraq, look at Libya." Olof Skoog, Sweden's ambassador to the United Nations, sounded a similar note. "I remember Hans Blix. Of course I'm concerned" about the possibility of a US attack in Syria." Bolivia, a current member of the Security Council, requested an emergency session to address, and perhaps condemn, the US missile attack in Syria.

What makes the accusation doubly doubtful is the fact that Syria joined the international chemical weapons treaty in 2013, agreeing to renounce all use of chemical weapons, and through the mediation of Russia, to dispose of all that were in their hands. The deadline for destruction was 2014. Syria gave the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons an inventory of its chemical weapons arsenal and started its destruction in October 2013, 2 weeks before its formal entry into force. Idlib, the site of the current 'attack', has moved back and force, and has been in rebel hands since 2015, and all the weapons were not yet removed.

As if scripted, ISIS stormed the Syrian army checkpoints in the nearby strategic town of Al-Furqalas.

Fate worse than death?

More civilians caught up in the Syrian conflict were killed by US-led coalitions than by ISIS or Russian-led forces in the last month, according to figures released by the Syrian Network for Human Rights. ISIS killed 119 civilians in Syria in March, with Russian forces believed to have killed 224 civilians in the same month. The SNHR found the international coalition forces, led by the US, killed 260 civilians.

At the same time as the US was loudly denouncing Syria's supposed chemical attack, which killed 80, the US was responsible for killing 85 (an airstrike on a school west of Raqqa killed at least 33 people, just after a separate US strike on a mosque complex in the north-west of the country killed 52). But it is the chemical attack claim--hotly disputed by the Russians, who are the most privvy to Syrian affairs--that gets the headlines, though unless I'm mistaken, a wartime death is a wartime death. Each one a tragedy.

The upsurge in civilian deaths has been so sharp that it's overwhelmed Airwars.org. The site had to scale back its monitoring of Russian airstrikes in Syria and focus instead on bombings carried out by the US and its allies. At its peak, ISIS controlled about 40% of Iraqi territory; now it controls about 10%. In both Iraq and Syria, the battles are now in cities, making bombing raids lethal to civilians. The easier part of the war, which involved targeted airstrikes in less densely populated areas, is over, and deaths are bound to increase with 'boots on the ground'.

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Trump confused

It is difficult to understand just what Trump has in mind to end the violence in Syria and Iraq. He promised not to increase US intervention abroad, but at the same time, vowed that as president he would "bomb the hell out of ISIS." US-led coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria have already killed 1,500 civilians in just Iraq and Syria this month alone, more than three times the number killed in President Barack Obama's final full month in office, according to Airwars.

Trump and his top aides had accepted in recent days the "reality" of Assad being in power, saying his ouster was no longer a priority, but the chemical weapons attack seemed to spur a rethink. When asked if this signalled a change in US policy, McMaster demurred. "I think what it does communicate is a big shift ... in Assad's calculus ... because this is ... the first time that the United States has taken direct military action against that regime or the regime of his father."

Trump insists that the mainstream media lies, but then buys into the mainstream version of the war against Syria. He is being manipulated by the very forces he claims to oppose. What should be a sign of decisiveness looks more like another Trump gaffe. While the mainstream political world and media approved of the sabre-rattling, Trump's own followers are against his bombing.

According to [vox.com](http://www.vox.com) , among them were

*Paul Joseph Watson, Infowars/ @PrisonPlanet. "I guess Trump wasn't 'Putin's puppet' after all, he was just another deep state/Neo-Con puppet. I'm officially OFF the Trump train. I'll be focusing my efforts on Le Pen, who tried to warn Trump against this disaster."

*Mike Cernovich, #NoMoreWars. " Today over 500,000 people have watched my videos and streams. 90% are @realDonaldTrump supporters, none want war with Syria."

*Radio host Laura Ingraham, @IngrahamAngle. "Missiles flying. Rubio's happy. McCain ecstatic. Hillary's on board. A complete policy change in 48 hrs."

*Author Ann Coulter, @AnnCoulter. "The beloved rebels [sic] we'll help by intervening in Syria: women forced into veils & posters of Osama hung on the walls."

*Max [Blumenthal](#) . "US intervention would be the last hope for Syrian rebels, and a shot in the arm to al-Qaeda, which has grown to record size thanks to America's military meddling across the Middle East. "

*Even the readers at Breitbart, which is known as the home on the internet for pro-Trump coverage, rebelled against the attack.

Pacts made in hell

The parallel between the Russia-Syria anti-Trump campaigns by the establishment is obvious. The Russian spying hysteria (Obama expelled 35 diplomats in December 2016) and the support for lame-duck Ukraine was to prevent a new detente with Russia, and so far has worked. Trump doesn't dare proceed with this key foreign policy objective. Originally, he tied relations with Russia with solving the crisis in Syria. " [Let Russia do it](#) ."

But in office, Trump instead strengthened ties with Saudi Arabia, signing a pact to work together

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in both Syria (Clinton's "safe zones") and Yemen. After a friendly White House meeting with Trump and Steve Bannon (the architect of Trump's Muslim ban), Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin [Salman hailed Trump](#) as "his Excellency," describing him as a "true friend of Muslims who will serve the Muslim world in an unimaginable manner, opposite to the negative portrait of his Excellency that some have tried to promote." The only real agreement with the Saudis is the obsession to attack Iran, a pact made in hell.

Historical parallels abound here. Just as Putin was understandably supportive of Trump's campaign for the presidency, Soviet Russia in its time very much wanted to be [friends with Hitler](#), the ultimate 'pact made in hell'. Israel Shamir argues it was a good idea given the times; the problem was that Hitler had other priorities, and the Russian desire for peace and friendship did not fit in. Things today have reached a head, not quite Hitler's Operation Barbarossa against Russia, although the economic sanctions against Russia are warfare by another name.

The current airstrike, which could have killed Russians, is more like the Cuban missile crisis. But there is no JFK (who was, in any case, assassinated for his desire for peace with the Soviet Union). What should have been a diplomatic triumph--the unfolding of peace with Russia and an end to the Syrian tragedy--has turned into renewed US support for ISIS and confrontation with Russia, both of which could spin out of control. Russian military personnel and aircraft are embedded with Syria's, and Iranian troops and paramilitary forces are also on the ground helping Assad fight the array of opposition groups hoping to topple him. And then there's [Ukraine](#).

[AHT](#)