

The Skripal event and the Douma "gas attack" - two acts in the same drama?

by

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on

[Off Guardian](#)



The illegal air strikes on Syria by the coalition of the guilty (US, France, UK) have happened, to no one's great surprise. As such things go all current indications are that they were [more token than anything else](#). The [Russians are saying](#) around 100 missiles were fired at an unclear number of targets, of which around 70% were intercepted. Syrian General Staff are [reporting](#) 3 injuries and no deaths. Mattis was at pains to say this was a one-off, though adding the reckless caveat that any further evidence of chemical weapons usage by Assad might change that (thus giving every lunatic or CIA/neocon-controlled cell in Syria a pure gold motive for a false flag).

Compared to how bad this might have been, this is a fairly harmless result for the present.

We've resisted the temptation to do any kind of analysis of things so far, preferring to let them play out and to document developments and opinions. But maybe this is a good time to offer a tentative overview of what seems to have been going on in the past weeks.



1) the Douma "gas attack" was likely faked

The only evidence we have for any "gas attack" in Douma on April 7 is the [video](#) released on April 7-8, showing piles of corpses, mostly children, some with foam around their mouths. When, where or how the video was made is not verifiable. Who killed the children shown or how they died is not verifiable. Additionally we have images of [an alleged "gas canister"](#), again without any sourcing or verification, and which have been widely suggested to be implausible. And there is Bellingcat (Eliot Higgins), [contributing](#) his usual brand of "comparisons" of images and Google maps, adding nothing that could be described even loosely as verification of the salient claims.

In opposition to this the Russians are [claiming the event was staged](#). They allege their armed forces entered Douma shortly after the alleged attack and claim to have found no evidence of chemical weapons usage, no witnesses and no victims.

They have also released a [video statements](#) by two young men claiming to be doctors at the hospital. They describe people running in to the hospital screaming that there had been a chemical attack, inciting panic among the people there, and "unqualified" people administering to children, giving them "asthma inhalers." However, he says, there were no victims of such a chemical treated there, only victims of smoke inhalation from recent shelling and subsequent fires.

There is also the notable reluctance by US Defense Secretary, James Mattis to fully endorse the reality of this narrative. Even on [April 12](#), just hours before the air strikes were to be implemented, he was still publicly saying he had seen no evidence to show the gas attacks happened or who may have been responsible. Given his senior position on the Trump administration, and his previously gungho attitude to military adventurism, this is significant.

Of greatest potential significance is the claim by the Russian foreign ministry that [they have evidence](#) the UK government was directly involved in staging the fake attack or encouraging a false flag. So far they haven't released this data, so we can't comment further at this time. This *might* also tie in with vague rumours of British SAS troops being captured in Douma that briefly surfaced a week or so ago.

2) primarily UK initiative?

The neocon faction in the US is usually (and reasonably) regarded as the motivator behind much of the western aggression in the Middle East. Since at least 2001 and the launch of the "War on Terror" the US has led the way in finding or creating facile excuses to fight oil wars and hegemonic wars and proxy wars in the region. But this time the dynamics look a little different. This time it really looks as if the UK has been setting the pace of the "response".

The fact (as stated above) that Mattis was apparently telegraphing his own private doubts a) about the verifiability of the attacks, and b) about the dangers of a military response suggests he was a far from enthusiastic partaker in this adventure. Trump's attitude is harder to gauge. His tweets veered wildly between unhinged threats and apparent efforts at conciliation. But he must have known he would lose (and [seemingly has lost](#)) a great part of his natural voter base (who elected him on a no-more-war mandate) by an act of open aggression that threatened confrontation with Russia on the flimsiest of pretexts.

Granted the US has been looking for excuses to intervene ever more overtly in Syria since 2013, and in that sense this Douma "initiative" is a continuation of their longterm policy. It's also true Russia was warning just such a false flag would be attempted in early March. But in the intervening month the situation on the ground has changed so radically that such an attempt no longer made any sense.

A false flag in early March, while pockets of the US proxy army were still holding ground in Ghouta would have enabled a possible offensive in their support which would prevent Ghouta falling entirely into government hands and thereby also maintain the pressure on Damascus. A false flag in early



April is all but useless because the US proxy army in the region was completely vanquished and nothing would be gained by an offensive in that place at that time.

You can see why Mattis and others in the administration might be reluctant to take part in the false flag/punitive air strike narrative if they saw nothing currently to be gained to repay the risk. They may have preferred to wait for developments and plan for a more productive way of playing the R2P card in the future.

The US media has been similarly, and uncharacteristically divided and apparently unsure. Tucker Carlson [railed against the stupidity of attacking Syria](#). [Commentators on MSNBC](#) were also expressing intense scepticism of the US intent and fear about possible escalation.

The UK govt and media on the other hand has been much more homogeneous in [advocating for action](#). No doubts of the type expressed by Mattis have been heard from the lips of an UK government minister. Even May, a cowardly PM, has been (under how much pressure?) voicing sterling certitude in public that action HAD to be taken.

Couple this with the - as yet unverified - claims by Russia of direct UK involvement in arranging the Douma "attack", and the claims by Syria that the perps are in their custody, and a tentative storyline emerges. It's possible this time there were other considerations in the mix beside the usual need to "be seen to do something" and Trump's perpetual requirement to appease the liberal Russiagaters and lunatic warmongers at home. Maybe this time it was also about helping the UK out of a sticky problem.

The Skripal consideration

Probably the only thing we can all broadly agree on about the Skripal narrative is that it manifestly did not go according to plan. However it was intended to play out, it wasn't this way. Since some time in mid to late March it's been clear the entire thing has become little more than an exercise in damage-limitation, leak-plugging and general containment.

The official story is a hot mess of proven falsehoods, contradictions, implausible conspiracy theories, more falsehoods and inexplicable silences were cricket chirps tell us all we need to know.

The UK government has lied and evaded on every key aspect.

- 1) It lied [again](#) and [again](#) about the information Porton Down had given it
- 2) Its lawyers [all but lied to Mr Justice Robinson](#) about whether or not the Skripals had relatives in Russia in an unscrupulous attempt to maintain total control of them, or at least of the narrative.
- 3) It is not publishing the OPCW report on the chemical analyses, and the summary of that report reads like an exercise in allusion and weasel-wording. Even the name of the "toxic substance" found in the Skripals' blood is omitted, and the only thing tying it to the UK government's public claims of "novichok" is association by inference and proximity. Indeed if [current claims by Russian FM Lavrov](#) turn out to be true, "novichok" may indeed not have been found in those samples at all and the active substance was a compound called "[BZ](#)", a non-lethal agent developed in Europe and America. (more about that later).

None of the alleged victims of this alleged attack has been seen in public even in passing since the event. There is no film or photographs of [DS Bailey](#) leaving the hospital, no film or photographs of his wife or family members doing the same. No interviews with Bailey, no interviews with his wife, family, distant relatives, work colleagues.

The Skripals themselves were announced to be alive and out of danger mere days after claims they were all but certain to die. Yulia, soon thereafter, apparently [called her cousin Viktoria](#) only to subsequently announce, indirectly through the [helpful agency of the Metropolitan Police](#), that she didn't want to talk to her cousin - or anyone else - at all. She is now allegedly discharged from

hospital and has "specially trained officers... helping to take care of" her in an undisclosed location. A form or words so creepily sinister it's hard to imagine how they were ever permitted the light of day.

Very little of this bizarre, self-defeating, embarrassing, hysterical story makes any sense other than as a random narrative, snaking wildly in response to events the narrative-makers can't completely control.

Why? What went wrong? Why has the UK government got itself into this mess? And how much did the Douma "gas attack" and subsequent drive for a concerted western "response" have to do with trying to fix that?

Is this what happened?

If a false flag chemical attack had taken place in Syria at the time Russia predicted, just a week or two after the Skripal poisoning, a lot of the attention that's been paid to the Skripals over the last month would likely have been diverted. Many of the questions being asked by Russia and in the alt media may never have been asked as the focus of the world turned to a possible superpower stand-off in the Middle East.

So, could it be the Skripal event was never intended to last so long in the public eye? Could it be that it was indeed a false flag, or a fake event, as many have alleged, planned as a sketchy prelude to, or warm up act for a bigger chemical attack in Syria, scheduled for a week or so later in mid-March - just around the time Russia was warning of such a possibility?

Could it be this planned event was unexpectedly canceled by the leading players in the drama (the US) when the Russians called them out and the rapid and unexpected fall of Ghouta meant any such intervention became pointless at least for the moment?

Did this cancellation leave the UK swinging in the wind, with a fantastical story that was never intended to withstand close scrutiny, and no second act for distraction?

So, did they push on with the now virtually useless "chemical attack", botch it (again), leaving a clear evidence trail leading back to them? Did they then further insist on an allied "response" to their botched false flag in order to provide yet more distraction and hopefully destroy some of that evidence?

This would explain why the UK may have been pushing for the false flag to happen (as claimed by Russia) even after it could no longer serve much useful purpose on the ground, and why the Douma "attack" seems to have been so sketchily done by a gang on the run. The UK *needed* the second part to happen in order to distract from the first.

It would explain why the US has been less than enthused by the idea of reprisals. Because while killing Syrians to further geo-strategic interests is not a problem, killing Syrians (and risking escalation with Russia) in order to rescue an embarrassed UK government is less appealing.

And it would explain why the "reprisals" when they came [were so half-hearted](#)

If this is true, Theresa May and her cabinet are currently way out on a limb even by cynical UK standards. Not only have they lied about the Skripal event, but in order to cover up that lie they have promoted a false flag in Syria, and "responded" to it by a flagrant breach of international and domestic law. Worst of all, if the Russians aren't bluffing, they have some evidence to prove some of the most egregious parts of this.

This is very bad.

But even if some or all of our speculation proves false, and even if the Russian claims of UK collusion with terrorist in Syria prove unfounded, May is still guilty of multiple lies and has still waged war



without parliamentary approval.

This is a major issue. She and her government should resign. But it's unlikely that will happen. So what next? There is a sense this is a watershed for many of the parties involved and for the citizens of the countries drawn into this.

Will the usual suspects try to avoid paying for their crimes and misadventures by more rhetoric, more false flags, more "reprisals"? Or will this signal some other change in direction?

We'll all know soon enough.