

# US and imperialist allies launch strikes against Syria

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President Donald Trump announced Thursday night that he had ordered a US assault on Syria. French and British forces are actively participating, while US allies around the world are providing diplomatic support. Sites in Damascus and elsewhere in the country have been attacked already, it appears by cruise missiles.

The onslaught that has begun against Syria is an illegal act of aggression. The administrations of Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May are presiding over yet another imperialist war crime, which this time poses the immense danger of triggering a conflict with nuclear-armed Russia.

The pretext for the attack on Syria is unproven allegations that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's military forces used banned chemical weapons against US-backed rebel militias in the city of Douma. Russia, which has significant military contingents in Syria to support Assad's government in its seven-year civil war against predominantly Islamist-based militias, has categorically rejected the US and allied propaganda. It has openly accused British intelligence of pressuring Syrian rebel organisations to manufacture a video that purports to show victims of a chemical weapons attack.

A team from the ostensibly independent Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was scheduled to arrive in Douma to carry out an inspection of the alleged site this weekend. Trump's order to initiate strikes was calculated to pre-empt such an inspection and a confirmation by the OPCW that the entire pretext for any attack on Syria was a lie.

The fraudulent basis for the assault was underscored shortly after Trump's broadcast, during the subsequent press briefing by his defense secretary, General Jim Mattis. Mattis could not provide any coherent details as to the US accusations. Moreover, contradicting the president's vow of a protracted campaign against Syria, the general appeared to indicate that there would be no more action apart from the missile strikes that had already

taken place.

Underscoring the disunity, disarray and crisis of the entire administration, Trump's national address was made just hours after the US media had featured coverage of the allegations by former FBI director James Comey that the president is a serial liar, a sexual pervert and conducts his affairs in the manner of a mafia boss.

The extreme vitriol directed by Trump against Assad may indicate that one of the objectives of the attack is the Syrian president's assassination. If US imperialism succeeds in murdering Assad, as they did Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, it would be with the crude expectation that his elimination will clear the path for the reconstruction of the Syrian government in a manner favorable to US and European imperialism.

The homicidal character of the plans that have been set in motion was expressed in a column in Germany's *Die Welt*. It declared: "War against Assad should be guided by one goal... Can the Assad regime be exterminated (auslöschen) with a missile strike?" In using the term "auslöschung" to refer to the Syrian president, the German publication adopted a term associated with the extermination of the Jews under the Nazis—that is, it is using language that could have appeared in Hitler's *Völkischer Beobachter*.

The month-long propaganda campaign leading up to the attack was concocted to provide a pretext for a military onslaught long in the making.

Facing the prospect of a military rout of its Islamist proxy forces fighting to overthrow the Syrian government, the decision for an escalation was made in Washington and London, and it was left to the CIA, MI6 and their Syrian agents to manufacture a pretext.

On Friday, the Russian Ministry of Defense provided the most coherent and logical account given so far regarding the incident in Douma on April 7, which the Western press has unanimously proclaimed a chemical

weapons attack on civilians by the Assad government.

“We have irrefutable evidence that it was another staged attack, and the special services of a state which is in the forefront of the Russo-phobic campaign had a hand in staging it,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

The Russian Defense Ministry showed a video interview with two people, one of whom was a medical student working at Douma’s only operational hospital. The witnesses said that after a Syrian Army artillery barrage hit a building, people suffering from smoke inhalation were being treated at a hospital. Then, unknown individuals—later revealed to be associated with the CIA-backed Syrian rebel “White Helmets”—ran into the hospital screaming that there had been a chemical weapons attack. They encouraged the victims to douse each other with water, which they then proceeded to film.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov stated: “We know for certain that between April 3 and April 6 the so-called White Helmets were seriously pressured from London to speed up the provocation that they were preparing.”

RT.com reported: “According to Konashenkov, the group, which was a primary source of photos and footage of the purported chemical attack, was informed of a large-scale artillery attack on Damascus planned by the Islamist group Army of Islam, which controlled Douma at the time. The White Helmets were ordered to arrange the provocation after retaliatory strikes by the Syrian government forces, which the shelling was certain to lead to, he said.”

Despite vehemently denouncing the Russian claims, neither Washington nor London made any attempt to refute the Russian statements factually. In contrast to the categorical statements of the Russian government, backed up by video testimony, Theresa May has only claimed it was “highly likely” that Syria carried out the attack. But even that was more definite than the statements of Defense Secretary Mattis, who declared the United States is still “looking for the actual evidence.”

With the initiation of attacks on Syria, the US and its allies have signaled that the unravelling of the nominal reasons for war is irrelevant to them. Their onslaught is driven by far deeper causes than the lies used to justify them.

What is taking place is directly in line with the analysis of the imperialism made by the great 20th century Marxists, Lenin and Trotsky. World imperialism is undertaking a new re-division of the world. Britain and

France want to be recognized as full-scale participants of the new carve-up of the Middle East and its effective recolonization: their oil corporations do not want to be left out of the plunder.

All of the governments participating in this new onslaught are crisis-ridden and lack any electoral legitimacy. The vast gulf between them and their populations is expressed in the fact that none of them has been able to create any broad-based support for war. According to one YouGov poll, only 22 percent of the British population support a military strike on Syria.

Moreover, the launching of a major new military campaign is seen in London, Paris, and Washington as a means of implementing police-state rule, including mass censorship, to prop up their crisis-ridden governments in the face of mounting popular opposition and a growing strike movement by the working class.

There is no question that this new conflict will not stop with the attack on Syria, just as the expansion of war did not stop with the invasion of Iraq. The stage is being set for a confrontation with Iran, Russia and ultimately China. More and more, imperialist policy is acquiring a completely reckless and unhinged character.

So far, the ruling class has been able to rely on the absence of any organized resistance to war. But popular anti-war sentiment will inevitably take on active forms and meet up with rising opposition to austerity and the destruction of democratic rights. The *World Socialist Web Site* is dedicated to providing the necessary socialist perspective and leadership to an emerging international movement of the working class against war.

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