

## Lies and Deception in the Failed US Strike on Syria

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At 4am on April 14, the United States, France and the United Kingdom executed a strike on Syria. The Syrian Free Press reported:

*US Navy warships in the Red Sea and Air Force B-1B bombers and F-15 and F-16 aircraft rained dozens of ship- and air-launched cruise missiles down on the Syrian capital of Damascus, an airbase outside the city, a so-called chemical weapons storage facility near Homs, and an equipment-storage facility and command post, also near Homs. B1-Bs are typically armed with JASSM cruise missiles, which have a 450 kg warhead and a range of 370 kms. US Navy warships launched Tomahawks, which have 450 kg warheads and an operational range of between 1,300 and 2,500 kms. The British Royal Air Force's contingent for the assault consisted of four Tornado GR4 ground-attack aircraft armed with the Storm Shadow long-range air-to-ground missile, which the UK's Defense Ministry said targeted 'chemical weapons sites' in Homs. These weapons have a range of 400 kms. Finally, France sent its Aquitaine frigate, armed with SCALP naval land-attack cruise missiles (SCALP is the French military's name for the Storm Shadow), as well as several Dassault Rafale fighters, also typically armed with SCALP or Apache cruise missiles. According to the Russian defense ministry, the B-1Bs also fired GBU-38 guided air bombs. Undoubtedly weary of the prospect of having their aircraft shot down after Israel lost one of its F-16s over Syria in February, the Western powers presumably launched their weapons from well outside the range of Syrian air defenses, with all the targets located just 70-90 kms from the Mediterranean Sea, and having to fly through Lebanon first.*

Recapping the information on the strike, the US and its allies used the following assets:

- 2 destroyers (USS *Laboon*, USS *Higgins*)
- 1 US cruiser (USS *Monterey*)
- 1 French frigate (*Georges Leygues*)
- 5 Rafale jets
- 4 Mirage 2000-5F
- 4 British Tornado fighter-bombers
- *Virginia*-class submarine USS *John Warner*
- 2 US B-1B bombers

Their ordnance brought to bear consisted of the following:

- The cruiser *Monterey* launched 30 Tomahawk missiles
- The destroyer *Higgins* 23 Tomahawks
- The destroyer *Laboon* 7 Tomahawks
- The submarine *John Warner* 6 Tomahawks
- 2 B-1 bombers 21 JASSM missiles
- 4 British Tornado GR4 fighter bombers 16 Storm-shadow missiles.
- The French Languedoc fired 3 MdCN land-attack missiles.

The US Pentagon reports the strike group targeted:

- 76 missiles at the Barzah research center in Damascus:



(Source)

- 22 missiles at an undefined "chemical" structure:



(Source)

- 7 missiles against an undefined "chemical bunker":



(Source)

The Syrian anti-aircraft forces responded, firing a total of 112 air-defence missiles:

- the Pantsyr system fired 25 missiles and hit 24 targets;
- the Buk system fired 29 missiles and hit 24 targets;
- the Osa system fired 11 and hit 5 targets;
- the S-125 system fired 13 missiles and hit 5 targets;
- the Strela-10 system fired 5 missiles and hit 3 targets;
- the Kvadrat system fired 21 and hit 11 targets;
- the S-200 system fired 8 and hit no targets.



(Source)

The Russians have stated that the target of the raids and the effectiveness of the missiles have resulted in a big fiasco for the Americans:

- 4 missiles were launched targeting the area of the Damascus International Airport; these 4 missiles were intercepted.
- 12 missiles were launched targeting the Al-Dumayr Military Airport; these 12 missiles were intercepted.
- 18 missiles were launched targeting the Bley Military Airport; these 18 missiles were intercepted.
- 12 missiles were launched targeting the Shayarat Military Airport; these 12 missiles were intercepted.
- 9-15 missiles were launched targeting the Mezzeh Military Airport; 5 of them were intercepted.
- 16 missiles were launched targeting the Homs Military Airport; 13 of which were intercepted.
- 30 missiles were launched targeting targets in the areas of Barzah and Jaramani; 7 of which were intercepted.

The effectiveness of the attack is called into question, especially in light of the prompt reaction of the civilian population that took to the streets in support of Bashar al Assad and the Syrian government only a few hours after the US-led attack.



*(Celebrations the morning of the 14th of April in Umayyad Square, Damascus )*

What emerges immediately from the Syrian/Russian and American narratives are contrasting assessments of the outcome of the attack.

We can certainly try to dispute some statements. The Americans repeated that at least two chemical-weapons laboratories together with a chemical-weapons storage center were affected. As evidenced by the images shot by PressTV a few hours after the attack, the structure is destroyed but there are no chemical contaminations. To confirm this, the television operators were able to perform interviews and live footage a few meters from the site of the strike without experiencing any physical effects, which would have been impossible were the American version of events true, given that the release of chemical agents would have made the whole area inaccessible.

Further confirmation comes from Ammar Waqqaf interviewed on *The Heat* on CGTV, claiming that his relatives were about 500 meters from one of the alleged chemical-weapons research centers attacked by the Americans. Ammar says that even in this case, no chemical agent appears to have been released, thus disproving Washington's claims.

Another important consideration concerns the targets. For Washington, the targets were limited to research laboratories (Barzah and Jaramani) and storage centers. But Moscow revealed that the objectives also included military bases as well as the civilian Damascus International Airport, namely: Al-Dumayr Military Airport, Bley Military Airport, Shayarat Military Airport, Mezzeh Military Airport, Homs Military Airport. These were mostly unsuccessful attacks.

In light of the foregoing, we can assume that the operational goal of the Americans was twofold. On the one hand, it was aimed at the media, to show a response to the (false) accusations of a chemical attack in Douma (Robert Frisk has just dismantled the propaganda and RT reminds us of the various false flags perpetrated by the US in the past to start wars); on the other, it was used by the military to actually permanently damage the Syrian Air Force, as suggested by the warmongering neocon Lindsey Graham. The failure of this latter objective could be seen in the following hours when the Syrian planes resumed operational tasks.

What does all this information tell us? First of all, the American goal was not to hit the non-existent chemical weapons or their production sites. The aim was to reduce as much as possible Syrian Air Force assets at different military airports. The mission was a failure, as reported by the Russian military envoy in Syria thanks to the air-defense measures of the Syrian forces as well as probably a high electronic-warfare (EW) contribution from the Russian forces present in the country. Very little has been leaked out in technical terms from the Russian Federation, which officially states that it did not contribute towards defending against the attack. It is probable that Russia played a decisive role in terms of EW, with its little-known but highly effective systems as demonstrated in previous attacks in 2017.

Moscow has no interest in promoting its cutting-edge EW systems, and often does not confirm the reports issued by more or less government agencies, as in the case of the USS *Donald Cook* in 2014. Yet *Russia Beyond* explains EW as probably being fundamental in foiling the American attack:

*Before the electronic jamming system kicks in, the aircraft scans the radio signals in its zone of activity. After detecting the traffic frequencies of the enemy's equipment, the operator on board the aircraft enables the jamming system in the required bandwidth," a defense industry source told Russia Beyond. In addition to onboard systems, there are ground-based Krasnukha-4 EW complexes stationed around the Khmeimim airbase, Russia's key stronghold in the Middle East. Their purpose is to suppress enemy "eavesdropping" and weapons guidance systems. The Krasnukha-4 blinds enemy radar systems to targets at a distance of 250 km.*

The general public is yet to understand that the American attack was a complete fiasco, much to the irritation of Lindsey Graham, thereby confirming Damascus's narrative, which presented Syria's response as decisive and effective.

The logic of the matter must also be considered. We know that the US and her allies launched 105 missiles aimed at various targets, including some military bases, but none of them hit the targets indicated, except for two buildings already emptied previously and a non-existent chemical-weapons depot. The Pentagon amplified the military report with the lie that only two research centers and a chemical-weapons depot were intentionally bombed with something like 105 missiles; this in order to account for the number of missiles launched and to drown out other assessments that contradict the preferred narrative. But it is ridiculous to believe that the US used 76 missiles to hit three buildings. A much more plausible explanation is that there were many more targets but only three of them were hit, this measly success carrying zero tactical or strategic importance.

We should ask ourselves what the real goal of Washington was. First, let us split the story into two parts. On the one hand we have a PR exercise, and on the other an intended military strategy. In the first case, Washington was able to pursue its self-assigned role as "protector of the weak", like those victims of the alleged Douma chemical attack. The intended optics were those of a humanitarian intervention, in line with the West's self-assigned role of regent of the post-World War II neoliberal world order. In reality, we know very well that US hegemony is based on millions of deaths in dozens of wars scattered around the globe. According to the fictitious narrative of the media, it all boils down to good-guys-versus-bad-guys, and Assad is the bad guy while the US is the good guy punishing the regime for the use of chemical weapons.

The success of PR exercise depends very little on the military outcome and much more on the story as told by the media. It is based solely on the affirmation of the role taken up by

the US and her allies, that of being in the right and driven only by the noblest interests. But such a series of unreasonable lies has only served to drag the world into chaos, diminished the role of the mainstream media, and destroyed the credibility of practically the whole Western political class.

From a military point of view, however, the goals, intent and results show a far more disturbing result for Washington and her allies. Soviet-era weapons that were updated by Moscow and integrated into the Russian air defense infrastructure network severely degraded the effectiveness of the American attack. Washington wanted to ground the entire Syrian air force, hitting air bases with precision, but failed in this objective. It remains to be seen whether this attack was a prelude to something bigger, with the USS *Harry S Truman* Carrier Strike Group currently heading towards Syrian territorial waters. Following the logic of deconfliction with Russia, it seems unlikely that a more intense attack will occur, rumors even circulating that Mattis dissuaded Trump from targeting Russian and Iranian targets, being well aware of the risks in a Russian response.

Let us focus for a moment on the risks in this kind of scenario. We are told that it would have brought about World War Three. This is probably true. But the consequences could also entail something much worse for Washington than for the rest of the world. The rhetoric that an American attack on Russian forces in Syria would trigger a direct war between the two superpowers is certainly true, but perhaps it is wrong in its interpretation. The danger seems to lie less in the possibility of a nuclear apocalypse and more in exposing the US's inability to go toe to toe with a peer competitor.

While we cannot (and hope not to) test this hypothesis, we can certainly join the dots. If Soviet-era systems, with a slight Russian modernization, can nullify an American attack, what could the Russian forces do themselves? They could probably even block an attack of the scale visited on Baghdad, where several hundred missiles were directed towards civilian and military targets. It would be highly unlikely in such a scenario for Washington to peddle the false propaganda of a successful attack with little in terms of bomb-damage assessment commensurate with the number of missiles launched.

Already in the April 14 attack, the explanation that 76 cruise missiles were directed against three buildings is ridiculous but is nevertheless sustained thanks to the lies of the mainstream media and the paucity of available information. However, when thinking of 500 Tomahawks launched with limited damage to the Syrian infrastructure, even that would be impossible to sell to a very ignorant and deceived public. It would be the definitive proof of the decline in American military effectiveness and the potency of Russian air-defense

systems. Just like during Putin's presentation of new weapons some months back, when the Empire feels its core (military power) is threatened, it simply dismisses such reports as false, in the process becoming a victim of its own propaganda.

Yet one would only need to listen to the words of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Michael Griffin, in a conference at the Hudson Institute where he explained how Moscow and Beijing capabilities are far more advanced in hypersonic and supersonic missile defense and attack capabilities. He openly explained that Washington takes about 16 years to implement a paper-to-service idea, while its rivals in a few years have shown that they can move from concept to practical development, gaining a huge advantage over rivals like Washington.

The problem is inherent for the United States in its need to keep alive a war machine based on inflated military spending that creates enormous pockets of corruption and inefficiency. Just look at the F-35 project and its constant problems. Although Moscow's spending is less than twelve times that of the United States, it has succeeded in developing systems like hypersonic missiles that are still in the testing phase in the United States, or systems like the S-500, which the US does not possess.

The S-300, S-400, P-800 anti-ship missiles and the 3M22 Zircon hypersonic missiles, in addition to EW, pose a fundamental problem for Washington in dealing with attacks against a peer competitor. The military in Washington are probably well aware of the risks of revealing the US to be a paper tiger, so they prefer to avoid any direct confrontation with Russia and Iran, more for the purposes of maintaining military prestige than out of a desire to avoid risking World War Three. If Russian forces ever were targeted by the US, in all probability Moscow would simply disable the electronics of the US ship rather than sinking it, leaving it to float in the Mediterranean uncontrolled for days.

The last fig leaf hiding the US military's inadequacy rests in Hollywood propaganda that presents the US military as practically invincible. Accordingly, some sites have spread stories that Russia had been forewarned of the attack and that the whole bombing event was the same sort of farce as a year ago. In the first place, it is important to clarify that Moscow had not been given advanced warning of the targets, and the reason for this is simple: the attack was real and, as explained above, did not succeed precisely because of Moscow and Damascus's effective parries and blocks.

In reality, Washington has failed in its military strategy, and the media have turned to the usual propaganda of chemical weapons and the need to enforce justice in the world and

proclaim a non-existent success. In the meantime, Moscow fine-tunes its weapons and prepares to deliver the S-300 to the Syrian state and its allies (Lebanon?), effectively limiting Washington's ability to attack in the Middle East. This is a fitting conclusion for a story that has only damaged the status of the United States and her allies in the Middle East, bringing Syria closer to a final victory.

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