



## New Evidence Suggests 2018 Chemical Attack in Douma, Syria Was Staged

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**Sharmini Peries (SP):** It's The Real News Network. I'm Sharmini Peries, coming to you from Baltimore.

An analysis of a leaked document from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons finds that the chemical weapons attack in Douma, Syria on April 7, 2018 was most likely staged. The analysis of the documents leaked show evidence that the attack may not only have been staged, but probably not conducted by the government of Bashar al Assad. Now, the Douma attack, west of Damascus on April 7 2018, killed at least 70 people and was a watershed moment in the coverage of the war in Syria, where we were shown numerous videos of children being washed and treated after the chemical attack.

Now, President Trump immediately used the attack to justify military strikes against the Syrian government's position. Back then, both Syrian President Bashar al Assad, as well as the Russian government, insisted that the chemical attack in Douma was staged to appear as if the Syrian Air Force bombed the apartment building. They suggested that it was possibly the rebels that controlled the town of Douma who conducted the attack, but there was no evidence proving that at the time. Initial reports by the UN and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons argued that Assad is to blame for the attack. However, recently, the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media released leaked internal documents of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that were previously kept secret. But now, these documents prove otherwise.

Now, MIT professor Ted Postol analyzed those new documents that were leaked and compared them with the official reports issued, and discovered that they contradicted the official report and that there is strong evidence to suggest that the attack was in fact staged. So we have with us today Ted Postol, who is a professor of science technology and national security policy at MIT. Ted Postol, thank you so much for joining us today.

**Ted Postol (TP):** My pleasure.

**SP:** Professor, what is it that you were doing at the time these documents were leaked, from the people working within the OPCW, and what did you find when you examined these documents that were leaked?

**TP:** Well, at the time I was in traveling to Washington, so that's when it happened, when I obtained the document. And I was traveling to Washington to talk to Representative Tulsi Gabbard on what appeared to be a falsified or compromised UN OPCW report on Khan Shaykhun. That is an attack that occurred almost to the day a year earlier, on April 4 2017. The Douma attack occurred on April 7 2018. So these are two attacks in two different locations where reports from the UN OPCW look like they have been severely compromised. Now, in the case of the leaked OPCW document, which is what I literally received as I was traveling, it was very clear that this document was produced by a highly professional team of two experts. And indeed, when you read the document as an expert, you immediately see that the data that they put in it, because there was a lot of data that they described, and also the technical calculations – they did calculations known as finite element calculations; where they literally create a slab of concrete with, in this case, steel rebar through it, on a computer and then they try to run the cylinder through it and see what they get. And if what they get matches what you see on the roof, then they conclude that the scene on the roof is in fact what people speculate it to be. And what they instead found was that the calculations always showed that the cylinder penetrated the roof, if it had been dropped as it appears to have been. Now, there were other irregularities in the actual report that make the issue of it being compromised even more clear and unambiguous. Once I finished my travelling, I had a chance to sit down and look at the actual OPCW report – not the leaked document, but the report itself – as it was transmitted to the UN Security Council. And in that report, first of all, they show physical evidence of the site where this cylinder supposedly fell, and they also show calculations that they claim show how the cylinder hit the roof and came to rest on the roof. The scene was basically a cylinder rested on the roof with its head sticking into the building. And had this been the actual situation, it would have been injecting chlorine at a very high rate into the upper story of the building.

So this is the scene that the OPCW report found to be credible. Unfortunately, their own calculations show that this was not the scene that they should have been observing. For example, the calculation shows that the size of the hole into the building should be about half the size of the hole that they actually observe. This seems like a minor detail, but it's not. It's like saying that I have a nail that I banged into the wood and then I just took the nail out of the wood, and then claiming that the evidence for the nail is a hole that's twice the diameter of the nail. This is not a minor issue. The nail should leave a hole that's approximately equal to its diameter.

So we have two documents that clearly and unambiguously show that the scene that was replicated mathematically by the OPCW, and the scene that was replicated mathematically, as described in the leaked document, both produce a result that indicates that the actual cylinder on the roof could not have been there. And the natural and quite reasonable solution to the problem is that the cylinder did not produce the hole. In fact, the hole appears to have been produced by the explosion of an artillery rocket or a mortar shell. The conclusion is clear; that the cylinder was placed near this hole that was already produced by a mortar shell or an artillery rocket in order to make it appear on the surface that this chlorine cylinder injected chlorine into the building. This is a staged event, no question about it, unambiguous.

**SP:** Interesting, Ted. Now, the CBS reporter Seth Doane was in Douma hours after the attack, and his report was consistent with the claim that the Syrian helicopter dropped a chlorine canister through the roof and that the gas spread down to the lower levels of the building, killing the residents. Yet you say that couldn't happen, according to your analysis. Explain why this discrepancy and his description isn't accurate.

**TP:** The only way the cylinder could have not penetrated the roof is if the helicopter dropped the cylinder from 50 meters above the building. The impact speed that the OPCW claimed in their

analysis was a 30 meter per second impact speed of a cylinder that probably weighed a little bit over 100 kilograms. Now, a cylinder that weighs a little bit over 100 kilograms carrying chlorine, with a 30 meter impact velocity, might actually not penetrate the building. However, where has anybody seen a Syrian helicopter sitting 50 meters above a building that would do such a thing? For example, if you were 50 meters above the building, probably everybody with a handgun as well as an assault rifle would and could shoot at you. This would be a typical activity of people who are on the ground and who are soldiers. In fact, when you look at the operational altitude of typical Syrian helicopters when they're actually dropping barrel bombs and things of that nature, they're at an altitude of two kilometers. And that altitude of two kilometers is not an accident, it's chosen so they can be above the gunfire from the ground.

Now, disregarding the altitude of the helicopter. The predictions of the OPCW analysis were that rebar, these metal strands that run through the concrete, should have stopped the cylinder from completely penetrating the roof. In other words, their calculations show that the rebar would be in place. In fact, when you look at the photographs of the crater from the underside, you see the rebar has been totally blown out of place. The hole in the roof is the wrong diameter, the rebar is not in place as would have to be the case according to the calculation. And in fact, the rebar is not in place as would certainly happen if the hole was created by an explosion on the roof.

**SP:** So then, Ted, if the canisters were not dropped through the roof, but rather taken into the buildings – assuming that the attack actually took place in this building – it means that someone went to the trouble of fabricating the story that the Syrian army bombed Douma with chemical weapons. Now, this is rather serious. And what is the UN Agency for Chemical Weapons saying about these new analysis and findings that you have discovered?

**TP:** This report is severely compromised. And incidentally, the report on Khan Shaykhun has similar problems. In the case of the Khan Shaykhun report, which is an event that occurred a year earlier, they cite evidence that when you look at the evidence, it's also inconsistent with what they claim. For example, there are satellite photographs that they use to show ground damage from 500-pound or 1000-pound bombs that were dropped at specific locations. And when you when you go and look at the satellite photographs they cite, there is absolutely no evidence of bomb damage. How does that occur? How can you cite evidence where when someone looks at it, the evidence doesn't exist? So something is seriously wrong in the OPCW at this time.

**SP:** Now, the OPCW obviously has qualified engineers and forensic specialists. They could have done the analysis that you have now done, but obviously, either because these leaked documents now demonstrate what they might have known has been somehow suppressed by someone, who do you think is responsible for that?

**TP:** The leaked OPCW document is a highly professional document. There is no doubt that the people who produced that document knew exactly what they were doing, and they called it exactly correctly, and they provided all of the detailed reasoning and descriptions of the data, which are then verified by the actual photographs, to give you the result, the belief or the conclusion that the scene was staged. So this was a highly professional document. So from one point of view, this is a very good sign about the professionalism inside the working members of the OPCW staff. Somebody courageously leaked this document and somebody else above them – it has to be above them – compromised the analysis. They picked and chose information that was actually not correct. They actually had to describe the information differently from what it actually was, because we can verify what their calculations show. And their calculations show something completely different from what they claim is their finding.

So I would say this has to be at the political level. And now, who is involved? I can't say, I just don't know. But if you had some reporters go and ask the permanent members of the OPCW delegations who are in the Hague how this happened, you might actually get answers. The Director General is the person who is certainly responsible for this, and the Director General of the OPCW in The Hague needs to be able to explain how there are these unambiguous differences between the data that points to staging and this finding. There's just no argument to be had here.

**SP:** All right, Ted. We will certainly take up the political angle and send the right inquiries to the organizations at the United Nations, including the Security Council. And this is obviously not the first time the Security Council or other agencies within the UN have been provided misinformation, inaccurate information, and sometimes just plain lies, so we'll take that up.

**TP:** Well, this is quite serious. I mean, as you pointed out earlier, there were apparently 70 dead people according to the UN. Now, I don't know where that information came from, to be honest. But if there were 70 dead people and there's some verification of that, the question needs to be asked, who killed them? Because they weren't killed in these attacks. So that's an important question to be asking.

**SP:** Absolutely. Ted, I thank you so much for joining us. I've been speaking with MIT Professor Ted Postol. I will, I'm sure, come back to you as more of this story unravels. But for now, I thank you so much, Ted.

**TP:** Thank you very much.

**SP:** And thank you for joining us here on The Real News Network.

**END**