

Video: Author of Leaked OPCW Engineering Report on Douma Speaks at UN Security Council

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The UN Security Council [met in New York on Monday](#) to discuss the investigation by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) into an alleged chemical attack that was said to have taken place in April 2018 in Douma, Syria. The alleged attack was blamed on the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and the US, UK, and France responded with an airstrike against Syrian government targets.

A former OPCW employee spoke to the UN Security Council and accused OPCW management of ignoring and suppressing findings of the investigative team that was deployed to Douma.

The OPCW released their [final report](#) on the Douma attack in March 2019, the report concluded that a chlorine chemical attack likely occurred. Two cylinders were found at two separate locations in Douma that were said to be the source of the chlorine gas. The idea that these cylinders were dropped from an aircraft is central to the allegation that the Syrian government was responsible.

An unreleased [OPCW engineering assessment](#) was leaked to the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media and published in May 2019. The report was prepared by Ian Henderson, a long-time OPCW employee who was tasked with analyzing the cylinders. Henderson's assessment concluded, "observations at the scene of the two locations, together with subsequent analysis, suggest that there is a higher probability that both cylinders were manually placed at those two locations rather than being delivered from aircraft." Henderson's findings were excluded from the final OPCW report.

Since November 2019, [WikiLeaks has released multiple OPCW documents and internal emails](#) that not only support Henderson's claims but also deal with discrepancies in levels of chlorine found in the area of the alleged attack. Another OPCW employee that goes by the pseudonym "Alex" [spoke with journalist Jonathan Steele](#) more about the traces of chlorine. Other leaks address inconsistencies between the victims observed symptoms and a chlorine gas attack.

[Ian Henderson addressed the UN Security Council](#) by video on Monday. Henderson presented himself as a non-political professional who is concerned with the integrity of the organization he worked with for many years.

Henderson described himself as a "former OPCW inspection team leader who served for

about 12 years.” Henderson said he was invited by the Chinese Minister Counselor to the UN to attend the Security Council meeting, but due to “unforeseen circumstances” with Visa waiver status, he was unable to attend. Henderson provided the council with a written statement, along with his video statement.

Henderson said, “I hold the OPCW in the highest regard, as well as the professionalism of the staff members that work there, the organization is not broken I must stress that. However, the concern I have does relate to some specific management practices in certain sensitive missions. The concern of course relates to the FFM investigation into the alleged chemical attack on the 7th of April in Douma, Syria.”

Henderson explained that there were two teams deployed to investigate the alleged attack, “One team, which I joined shortly after the start of field deployments, was to Douma in Syria, the other team deployed to Country X.” WikiLeaks, and others, have speculated that “Country X” is Turkey, since OPCW investigators were deployed there to interview alleged witnesses.

Most of the information in Henderson’s statement has been revealed in the [documents released by WikiLeaks](#) over the past few months. One of the main gripes Henderson had was that the team only deployed to “Country X” had the most say in the final report, while the team deployed to Douma was largely ignored.

Henderson said, “The Findings in the FFM (Fact Finding Mission) report were contradictory, were a complete turnaround with what the team had understood collectively, during and after the Douma deployments.”

The OPCW published their [interim report](#) on the investigation in July 2018. WikiLeaks released the [original version of the interim report](#) last month, which drew a vastly different conclusion than the one the OPCW decided to publish. Henderson said, “By the time of the release of the interim report in July 2018, we had serious misgivings that a chemical attack had occurred.”

Henderson went on, “The (final FFM) report did not make clear what new findings facts, information, data, or analysis in the fields of witness testimony, toxicology studies, chemical analysis, engineering and/or ballistic studies had resulted in a complete turnaround in the situation from what was understood by the majority of the team, and the entire Douma team in July 2018.

“In my case, I had followed up with a further six months of engineering and ballistics studies into the cylinders. The results of which had provided further support for the view that there **had not been a chemical attack**. This needs to be properly resolved through the wringers of science and engineering. In my situation, it’s not a political debate.”

Henderson added a closing comment and said he led a “highly intrusive” investigation into the Barzah Syrian Scientific Research Center (SSRC), a laboratory outside of Damascus that was suspected of producing chemical weapons. The Barzah SSRC was the target of the coalition airstrike in April 2018 against the Syrian government in retaliation for the alleged Douma attack. Henderson said he wrote two reports on the SSRC before the attack and one report after. But Henderson said that “is another story all together,” and went on to end his video statement.

After Henderson's comments were aired to the Security Council, the representative for the Russian Federation mentioned that they invited the OPCW Director-General, and other OPCW officials to attend the meeting, but they chose not to participate.

Much of the blame for the lack of pressure on OPCW management after all these leaks, lies on the media outlets that refuse to report on it. Bellingcat – the investigative firm that [receives grants](#) from the US government-funded National Endowment for Democracy – bears most of the blame, since many mainstream outlets parrot what they say on Syria. Just a few days before this Security Council meeting, [Bellingcat published a smear job on Ian Henderson](#).

As of the writing of this story, the only major news outlets that covered this Security Council meeting are RT and Sputnik, so of course, it will be dismissed by many as Russian propaganda. Eliot Higgins, the founder of Bellingcat, even [accused Henderson](#) of appearing at the UN on "behalf of the Russians." But through his work, his words, and his modesty, Henderson proves to be a sincere and honest professional who is concerned about a supposedly neutral international body being used to promote a false narrative.

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