

# Fabricated and Staged Chemical Attacks in Syria? BBC Claims Chemical Weapons Helped Assad But Fails to Explain How

By [Tony Cartalucci](#)

Global Research, December 14, 2018

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Military Militarization](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*The BBC published an article in October titled, "[How chemical weapons have helped bring Assad close to victory](#)" in which it claims chemical weapons have been "crucial" to Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's "war-winning strategy."*

Superficially – the article appears impressive – loaded from top to bottom with colorful charts, graphs, and photographs of supposed victims in gas masks, expended munitions, and craters.

However, never once does the BBC provide an actual explanation as to how chemical weapons brought Damascus closer to victory. Even at face value, the article's entire premise is challenged in each paragraph by the statistics and events the article itself presents.

Alleged Chemical Weapon Casualties are a Drop in the Ocean

The article begins by claiming (emphasis added):

After seven devastating years of civil war in Syria, which have left **more than 350,000 people dead**, President Bashar al-Assad appears close to victory against the forces trying to overthrow him.

Yet further down in the article under a graph titled, "*Estimated number of casualties in the 106 attacks by location 2014-18*," the BBC admits that only 55 of the supposed 106 attacks the BBC accuses Syria's government of carrying out even resulted in any casualties at all, and admits that "*it was not possible to verify that the casualties reported were the result of exposure to chemicals.*"

The BBC would also admit that:

Although chemical weapons are deadly, UN human rights experts have noted that most incidents in which civilians are killed and maimed have involved the unlawful use of conventional weapons, such as cluster munitions and explosive weapons in civilian populated areas.

Thus, the BBC itself is undermining the entire premise of its own article – admitting that conventional weapons – not chemical weapons – are by far more effective and that its investigation makes it impossible to even determine if chemical weapons claimed any casualties at all.

But does the BBC try to convince readers chemical weapons still somehow played a role in Damascus' victory?

“Cheap and Convenient” Chemical Weapons?

The BBC cites Dr. Lina Khatib, head of the Middle East and North Africa program at corporate-financier-funded think tank – Chatham House.

Dr. Khatib would claim:

Sometimes the regime uses chemical weapons when it doesn't have the military capacity to take an area back using conventional weapons.

She would also claim:

Chemical weapons are used whenever the regime wants to send a strong message to a local population that their presence is not desirable.

In addition to chemical weapons being the ultimate punishment, instilling fear in people, they are also cheap and convenient for the regime at a time when its military capacity has decreased because of the conflict.

There's nothing that scares people more than chemical weapons, and whenever chemical weapons have been used, residents have fled those areas and, more often than not, not come back.

However, after citing Dr. Khatib, the BBC mentions the alleged attack on Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib where Western-backed militants – to this day – still occupy its territory. It claims it was the “*deadliest*” of the 106 attacks investigated by the BBC – yet the supposed attack failed utterly to drive civilians away or dislodge armed militants occupying the territory – a direct contradiction of Dr. Khatib and the BBC's claims. The closest the BBC comes to correlating alleged attacks to any sort of victory materializing on the battlefield was regarding Eastern Ghouta where the BBC claims:

Douma, the biggest town in the Eastern Ghouta, was the target of four reported chemical attacks over four months, as pro-government forces intensified their aerial bombardment before launching a ground offensive.

The last – and deadliest, according to medics and rescue workers – incident took place on 7 April, when a yellow industrial gas cylinder was reportedly dropped onto the balcony of a block of flats. The opposition's surrender came a day later.

Here the BBC dubiously links the April 2018 alleged attack the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) itself has not yet concluded involved chemicals, to the “*opposition's surrender*” the following day.

Yet the BBC admits the Syrian government was carrying out an extensive offensive. It claims there were *“four reported chemical attacks over four months”* with the largest allegedly killing 30 people. Would that be enough to “break” the opposition when between February and April of 2018 alone some 3,000 would perish in the fighting for Eastern Ghouta?

Even if one were to believe the Syrian government used chemical weapons four times killing several dozen people – it pales in comparison to the toll taken and gains admittedly made using conventional weapons – begging the question as to why the Syrian government would bother resorting to far less effective and much more politically dangerous chemical munitions.

The fact that the final of the four alleged attacks happened the day before militants surrendered in Eastern Ghouta seems to suggest a much more likely scenario – that attacks were being staged by the militants themselves to slow down, impede, or even altogether stop the effective government offensive that was clearly – according to even the BBC itself – advancing via the use of conventional weaponry.

#### Chemical Weapons Weren’t Crucial to Victory, Russian Military Aviation Was

Would using chemical weapons 106 times between 2014-2018 – risking and suffering multiple US-led military strikes in the wake of chemical weapon accusations – be worth it? The BBC’s own article itself exposes the minuscule number of unverified casualties these alleged attacks have produced compared to the 350,000 the article claims have perished altogether in the fighting since 2011.

The BBC article even includes examples of where the Syrian government was accused of using chemical weapons on territory *still* to this day held by foreign-sponsored militants casting further doubts on claims chemical weapons have *“helped bring Assad close to victory.”*

Dr. Khatib of Chatham House insisted that the Syrian government resorted to chemical weapons because they were *“cheap and convenient for the regime at a time when its military capacity has decreased because of the conflict,”* yet the BBC’s own article admits to the scale of the conflict and its own numbers prove that even if all 106 alleged chemical attacks were actually carried out by the Syrian government, they still would not reflect a *“decreased military capacity”* being amply compensated for by *“cheap and convenient”* chemical weapons.

To put Dr. Khatib and the BBC’s claims into perspective – consider Russian military aviation’s role in the conflict which – [according to the Russian Ministry of Defense](#) – carried out some 28,000 combat sorties and conducted about 90,000 strikes by 2017.

Even according to the Western media, at various points of the conflict, Russian military aviation carried out on average of over 70 sorties a day.

The Daily Beast – a decidedly anti-Moscow publication – would describe the tempo of Russian air operations in Syria in its 2016 article titled, [“Russia Is Launching Twice as Many Airstrikes as the U.S. in Syria,”](#) claiming (emphasis added):

Five months after the first Russian warplanes slipped into Syria to reinforce the embattled regime of President Bashar al-Assad, **the Kremlin’s air wing near Latakia—on Syria’s Mediterranean coast in the heart of regime**

**territory—has found its rhythm, launching roughly one air strike every 20 minutes** targeting Islamic State militants, U.S.-backed rebels and civilians in rebel-controlled areas.

**“From Feb. 10 to 16, aircraft of the Russian aviation group in the Syrian Arab Republic have performed 444 combat sorties** engaging 1,593 terrorist objects in the provinces of Deir Ez Zor, Daraa, Homs, Hama, Latakia and Aleppo,” the Russian defense ministry claimed in a statement.

By comparison, not only do 106 alleged chemical attacks in which only 55 produced any casualties at all seem absolutely insignificant – there is no conceivable explanation as to how such a minuscule number of operations producing so few casualties *“have been crucial”* to Damascus’ *“war-winning strategy.”* Neither does it demonstrate a decreased military capacity in need of resorting to *“cheap and convenient”* chemical weapons.

It is clear that Russian military aviation – more than anything else – has been crucial to Syria’s victory. It allowed the supply lines of Al Qaeda and the self-proclaimed “Islamic State” to be targeted and neutralized. This led directly to militant-held areas being isolated and subsequently falling to Syrian forces.

Russian military aviation also lent Damascus the capability to carry out precision strikes against well-fortified positions Syria’s armor, infantry, and artillery could not effectively target. Russian military aviation – not chemical weapons – is what Damascus has been turning to when it *“doesn’t have the military capacity to take an area back using [its own] conventional weapons.”*

There is virtually no scenario in which chemical weapons used in the small quantities they have been allegedly used in would provide some sort of benefit to Damascus and its allies that conventional military aviation isn’t already demonstrably doing. And if there was – the BBC’s article categorically failed to mention it.

#### Fabricated and Staged Chemical Attacks Make More Sense

Conversely, chemical weapons used in such small amounts – just enough to produce headline-grabbing casualties and serve as a pretext for Western military intervention serves the strategy of Western-backed militants and their foreign sponsors fighting Damascus and its allies in Syria.

Already, the US has used the pretext of “chemical weapons” to invade and occupy Iraq. Accusations of human rights abuses also paved the way for a US-led NATO military intervention in Libya. Many of the fighters the US and its allies armed, backed, and provided air support to were literally transported to Syria to fight Washington’s proxy war there.

It stands to reason that accusations of chemical weapon attacks in Syria are simply the latest attempt to reuse the pretext for Western military intervention there. Staging the attacks seems to have been born of necessity – with allegations alone no longer being effective specifically because of Washington’s track record of fabricating claims to lead America and its allies to war.

The BBC once again exposes itself as not only war propaganda – but war propaganda produced by those particularly unskilled at their craft. An article titled, *“How chemical weapons have helped bring Assad close to victory,”* that fails to logically explain how,

indicates an unraveling narrative with the propagandists themselves unable to flesh out their repeated lies.

Instead it was hoped that colorful charts, graphs, and supposed photographs of victims coupled with a public the BBC assumes are lazy and ignorant was enough to prop up the article's entire premise. The West's failing fortunes in Syria and beyond seem to indicate it was not enough leaving one to wonder what – after fabricating chemical weapon accusations and staging chemical weapon attacks – comes next?

\*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

*Tony Cartalucci is a Bangkok-based geopolitical researcher and writer, especially for the online magazine [“New Eastern Outlook”](#) where this article was originally published.*

*Featured image is from NEO*

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Tony Cartalucci](#), Global Research, 2018

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Tony Cartalucci](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)