

# Fake News, Propaganda and “False Flags”: Syria’s Gas Attacks and Washington’s Fake Intelligence Narrative

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*In the philosophical discipline of [epistemology](#), there does not even exist a generally agreed-upon [definition or “analysis” of knowledge](#). Undeterred by that, by the caution about knowledge claims that this would warrant or by basic epistemological as well as journalistic principles such as reliance on evidence or logical reasoning, especially U.S. mainstream media would have us believe that it is essentially ‘known’ or at least very very likely that the recent gas attacks that were perpetrated on April 4, 2017, in the Syrian town of [Khan Shaykun](#) were committed by the Assad regime.*

The actually quite plausible possibility that this could also have been a false flag attack such as the one [used by Hitler’s Germany in 1939 in order to attack Poland](#) or such as the one [used by the USA in 1964 in order to intensify their war against Vietnam](#) of course goes unmentioned since “false flag” is a big no-no term in mainstream-media just like “fake news” (remember how [Senator Bernie Sanders got cut off in a February 2017 CNN live feed after used the term “fake news” in jest](#)). The twin irony about the latter issue is that the [fake news debacle](#) from which the Washington Post and other mainstream media tried to [row back unsuccessfully](#) is largely self-inflicted and that it was instead successfully used by Donald Trump to become POTUS.

## Fake News and Propaganda

But make no mistake about that: Despite Trump using the term of “fake news” rather indiscriminately, the phenomenon of fake news is perfectly real and [has been around at least for decades](#). The perhaps best or at least most well-known explanation for this phenomenon was given by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in their legendary book of 1988: The primary function of mass or mainstream media is not to give the public objective information about events in the world but to [manufacture consent](#) about events in the world – as in “the type of consent or opinion that [the power elite](#) which runs the U.S. mainstream media would like there to be among the public.”

Especially when it comes to international conflicts such as Syria where the interests of different power elites clash with each other, one can virtually rest assured that the usual suspects among U.S. politicians and mainstream media are over large stretches not so much sources of information, but rather sources of sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant disinformation and propaganda.

Take, for example, a closer look at [this April 6 article](#) in the New York Times. The article is an

entirely uncritical but aside from that decent report of events. The problem with that, however, is that lack of criticism where criticism is due essentially already amounts to propaganda of the subtle sort in the form of [propaganda by omission or \(self-\)censorship](#) so as not to lose one's job or access. Take, for instance, the sentence "After being briefed on the chemical attack shortly after it occurred, American intelligence agencies and their allies worked quickly to confirm the source of the chemical weapons, administration officials said." A more critically-minded journalist could have pointed out the revealing oddity of using the term "confirm" (as in "confirm that an already predetermined to be guilty party did it") instead of "determine" (as in "determine which party actually committed the gas attack").

A more critically-minded journalist could also have pointed out that American intelligence agencies such as the "[rogue agency](#)" CIA are 'regime change agencies' which have toppled or helped topple democratically elected governments around the globe and replaced them with fascist dictatorships (see e.g. [Iran 1953](#) or [Chile 1973](#), the first 9/11). As such, one should not put it past them or others to, say, [get chummy with local terrorists a.k.a. 'moderate rebels' like Senator John McCain](#), to [produce false evidence like former 'secretary of offense' Colin Powell](#), or to [give false testimony like NSA director James Clapper](#). Little to nothing of that for true journalism essential criticism of power, however, can be found in such pieces of 'softcore propaganda' which revolve around the omission of the important bits and pieces, including the [omission to report on protests against the U.S. regime's actions in Syria](#).

Mainstream media 'hardcore propaganda,' on the other hand – think of the [1990 Nayirah baby incubator lie](#) that was used to find an excuse for the Iraq war or of the "[It was Putin's missile](#)"-hysteria back in 2014 after [flight MH17 crashed in Ukraine](#)–, generally hurls blatant and at best borderline plausible accusations at the intended victims of propaganda (also note the interesting reappearance of McCarthyism as '[Maddowism](#)').

The general objective in these hardcore cases seems to be to 'orwellianize' a sane "innocent until proven guilty" into an insane "guilty (through mere accusation by mainstream media or politicians) until proven innocent." In these cases, the appeal is not to reason (Aristotle's [logos](#)), but to reason-clouding emotions (Aristotle's [pathos](#)):

"Oh, the poor innocent children. Therefore, we must strike the VERY EVIL Assad regime which ONCE AGAIN used chemical weapons against its own people. MAGA!!!"

And with even your own daughter being oh so very "[heartbroken and outraged](#)" about the poor innocent gassed children (one wonders if poor Ivanka also cried big crocodile tears about the innocent civilians that her dad had killed in his '[successful' Yemen raids](#)) and especially with [militaristic war porn](#) being served as a delicious side order (also see [here](#) or [here](#)), the U.S. military strike against Syria on April 6 could not possibly have been yet another insane U.S. foreign policy decision, right? (irony off again).

The August 21, 2013, gas attacks in Ghouta

The main problem with the Western narrative of Assad having gassed his people "again" is that there exists highly credible evidence and testimony that it was not the Assad regime but rebel groups and state actors that were responsible for the 2013 Sarin gas attacks in Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus (not to be confused with the [Chlorine gas attacks in Syria in 2014 and 2015](#)). This version of events receives further support from the general situation

back then as outlined in [this April 11 CounterPunch article](#):

“In 2013, US-supported, anti-Assad forces were losing ground in the war in Syria. Assad claimed that the rebels were using chemical weapons in Aleppo in a last-ditch effort to hold territory. Assad asked the UN to investigate his claims, and they agreed, and began an investigation in Syria. Within days of the UN inspectors’ arrival, [another chemical weapon attack occurred](#) in Syria. Western media was quick to blame Assad, even though it defied logic that Assad would use chemical weapons when chemical weapons inspectors were inside Syria at his invitation.”

An extremely idiotic moment for Assad to use chemical weapons, but a very opportune moment for rebels and other parties to implement a false flag attack. This was also [the general conclusion of UN commissioner Carla del Ponte](#):

“‘Our investigators have been in neighbouring countries interviewing victims, doctors and field hospitals, and there are strong, concrete suspicions, but not yet incontrovertible proof, of the use of sarin gas,’ said Del Ponte in an interview with Swiss-Italian television.

‘This was use on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities.’”

Internationally renowned investigative journalist [Seymour Hersh](#) also reached that conclusion in [his very revealing and hugely important article](#):

“In the months before the attack, the American intelligence agencies produced a series of highly classified reports, culminating in a formal Operations Order – a planning document that precedes a ground invasion – citing evidence that the al-Nusra Front, a jihadi group affiliated with al-Qaida, had mastered the mechanics of creating sarin and was capable of manufacturing it in quantity. When the attack occurred al-Nusra should have been a suspect, but the administration cherry-picked intelligence to justify a strike against Assad.”

“[I]n recent interviews with intelligence and military officers and consultants past and present, I found intense concern, and on occasion anger, over what was repeatedly seen as the deliberate manipulation of intelligence. One high-level intelligence officer, in an email to a colleague, called the administration’s assurances of Assad’s responsibility a ‘ruse’. The attack ‘was not the result of the current regime’, he wrote. A former senior intelligence official told me that the Obama administration had altered the available information – in terms of its timing and sequence – to enable the president and his advisers to make intelligence retrieved days after the attack look as if it had been picked up and analysed in real time, as the attack was happening. The distortion, he said, reminded him of the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, when the Johnson administration reversed the sequence of National Security Agency intercepts to justify one of the early bombings of North Vietnam.”

Then there was also the curious case of [a Mail Online article that got pulled](#). Its first two paragraphs read as follows:

“Leaked emails have allegedly proved that the White House gave the green light to a chemical weapons attack in Syria that could be blamed on Assad’s

regime and in turn, spur international military action in the devastated country.

A report released on Monday contains an email exchange between two senior officials at British-based contractor Britam Defence where a scheme 'approved by Washington' is outlined explaining that Qatar would fund rebel forces in Syria to use chemical weapons."

Among more well-informed circles it is therefore really an old hat that it was not Assad but the [Al-NusraFront a.k.a.Jabhat al-Nusra](#)– "the official Syrian branch of [al-Qaeda](#)" (i.e. [the terrorist network created by the CIA](#)) – including a number of outside parties [such as the U.S. neocons](#) that wanted and still want Assad to be gone which are most likely responsible for the 2013 gas attacks in Ghouta, Syria. The overwhelming majority of the population has unfortunately never worn that hat even though they should really give it a try (Behold the nice fit! No sir/madam, it is entirely aluminum-free).

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