

OPCW Executives Praised Whistleblower and Criticized Syria Cover-up, Leaks Reveal

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Exclusive: Documents obtained by The Grayzone show that OPCW executives privately criticized the manipulation of a Syria chemical weapons probe, and supported a dissenting veteran inspector. One official, however, feared helping the “Russian narrative.” These private admissions further expose the public whitewash of the Douma cover-up, and undermine the ongoing attacks on the whistleblowers who challenged it.

Since the explosive revelation that an investigation by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in Syria was manipulated, a smear campaign has been waged against a pair of veteran OPCW scientists who challenged the cover-up.

The two whistleblowers have been dismissed as rogue, uninformed, and duplicitous actors. Their detractors include the current [OPCW director general](#); [NATO member state ambassadors](#); and anonymous, self-described OPCW officials laundering [fabricated claims](#) through [NATO member state-funded outlets](#).

OPCW documents and correspondence obtained by The Grayzone offer a stark contrast to these public attacks. Among several revelations, they show that before the attempts to discredit the whistleblowers, OPCW directors privately criticized the chemical watchdog’s suppression of the investigation, and supported the inspector who vocally protested it.

One of these executives, however, feared that raising alarm about the scientific fraud would help the “Russian narrative”— a tacit admission that the organization’s independence and impartiality have become subordinate to geopolitics.

The dissenting inspector, 16-year OPCW veteran Dr. Brendan Whelan, was a member of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) that investigated an alleged chemical attack in the Syrian city of Douma on April 7, 2018. The team’s findings raised major doubts about allegations of Syrian government culpability, the pretext for a US-led bombing of Syria one week later.

But senior OPCW officials, in conjunction with [a US attempt to influence](#) the investigation, censored the evidence and released unsupported conclusions. A [series of damning leaks](#) later exposed [the deception](#).

Rather than having their complaints addressed, Whelan and the other known dissenting inspector, 12-year OPCW veteran Ian Henderson, have been subjected to a second deceit:

false claims about them and their investigation.

Whoever is behind these public attacks, the private OPCW emails and documents obtained by The Grayzone further undermine them. In addition to revealing initial praise by OPCW brass for Whelan's attempt to protect the investigation, these leaks provide a new window into how other officials compromised it:

- One top official acknowledged the doctoring of the Douma evidence. But rather than order an investigation into how it occurred, this official sought to have an email protesting the censorship erased from the OPCW's servers.
- Another executive, who appears to have been deeply involved in the scientific fraud, sidelined the inspectors who collected the evidence in Syria. This same OPCW official also engineered a delay that ensured that the most vocal dissenter, Whelan, would no longer be in the picture.
- By contrast, two senior directors praised Whelan's opposition to the Douma probe subterfuge. (These directors are distinct from the Director General, whom they work under.) The first director criticized the censorship of evidence, and also signaled that it was politically motivated. Yet this same director was also hesitant to press the issue, out of fear that doing so would "feed... the Russian narrative."
- The second director lauded Whelan's contributions to the OPCW, as well as his effort to defend the Douma investigation from fraudulent behavior.

These documents show that internal concerns about the Douma cover-up went beyond members of the FFM team to even the highest levels of the organization.

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