Syria: UN Mission Report Confirms that "Opposition" Rebels Used Chemical Weapons against Civilians and Government Forces

By Carla Stea
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First published on GR in April 2017, this article by GR's UN correspondent Carla Stea is relevant to recent developments in Syria regarding the alleged chemical weapons attack.

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There is no basis to the Trump Administration's accusations that the government of Bashar al Assad was involved in deliberately triggering a chemical weapons attack with a view to killing Syrian civilians.

This December 2013 article by Global Research's Correspondent Carla Stea at UN Headquarters confirms that the "Opposition" rebels were in possession of chemical weapons. According to the UN mission report, Syrian soldiers as well as civilians were in 2013 the target of chemical weapons attacks led by opposition rebels.

The US sponsored "rebels" had been trained in the use of chemical weapons by specialists on contract ot the Pentagon.

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, April 8, 2017

On December 13, [2013] UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon signed identical letters to the UN General Assembly and Security Council, stating:

"I have the honour to convey herewith the final report of the United Nations Mission to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic"

The letter of transmittal was signed by Professor Ake Sellstrom, Head of Mission, and Dr. Maurizio Barbeschi, signing for the WHO component.

On page 21 of this 85 page report is stated:

> "Khan al Asal, 19 March 2013: 111. The United Nations Mission collected credible information that corroborates the allegations that chemical weapons were used in Khan al Asal on 19 March 2013 against soldiers and civilians."

Page 22:

> "Jobar, 24 August 2013: 113. The United Nations Mission collected evidence consistent with the probable use of chemical weapons in Jobar on 24 August on a relatively small scale against soldiers…"

Page 114, this assessment is based on the following:

> (a) Interviews with survivors and clinicians and medical records confirm symptoms of organophosphorous intoxication:
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> (b) Blood samples recovered by the Syrian Government on 24 August 2013 and authenticated by the United Nations Mission using DNA techniques tested positive for signatures of Sarin;
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> (c) One of the four blood samples collected from the same patients by the United Nations Mission on 28 September 2013 tested positive for Sarin."

Page 23:

> "Ashrafiah Sahnaya, 25 August 2013 117. The United Nations Mission collected evidence that suggests that chemical weapons were used in Ashrafiah Sahnaya on 25 August 2013 on a small scale against soldiers. 118.

This assessment is based on the following:

> (a) Interviews with survivors and clinicians and medical records confirm symptoms of organophosphorous intoxication;
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> (b) Blood samples recovered by the Syrian government on 24 August 2013, authenticated by the United Nations Mission using DNA techniques, tested positive for signatures of Sarin."

The attacks of March 19, August 24 and August 25, 2013 upon Syrian government soldiers indicate that the rebels were in possession of sarin both before and immediately after the chemical weapon attack at Ghouta of August 21, 2013. It would have been virtually impossible for the rebels to acquire chemical weapons so quickly in late August had they not already previously been in possession of chemical weapons.

According to Seymour Hersh, December 19 (published in The London Review of Books),

> "already by late May, the senior (US) intelligence consultant told me, the CIA had briefed the Obama administration on al-Nusra and its work with sarin, and had sent alarming reports that another Sunni fundamentalist group active in Syria, al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), also understood the science of producing sarin. At the time, al-Nusra was operating in areas close to Damascus, including Eastern Ghouta. An intelligence document issued in mid-summer dealt extensively with Ziyaad Tarriq Ahmed, a chemical weapons expert formerly of the Iraqi military, who was said to have moved into Syria and to be operating in Eastern Ghouta. The consultant told me that Tariq had been identified 'as an al-Nusra guy with a track record of making mustard gas in Iraq and someone who is implicated in making and using sarin.' He is regarded as a high-profile target by the American

> military."
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> This would support the Russian Ambassador's claim, following the Security Council consultations of December 17, 2013 that: "Why would the Syrian government use chemical weapons on August 21? To cross the red line drawn by Washington and invite a missile strike upon itself? Why would the opposition use chemical weapons? Exactly because of the red line. To provoke foreign military intervention in the Syrian conflict…The Russian team's analysis concluded that 'home-made' sarin was used near Aleppo on March 19. It stated that the Sarin was likely delivered by a crudely made missile. The team also named the particular opposition group most likely behind the attack. At the time, the Syrian government immediately requested an international investigation of the March 19 incident, but then the United Kingdom and France all of a sudden recalled a Homs case, that had not bothered them for 3 preceding months, while the US started insisting on the need to investigate 'all incidents.' Why did those who accused the Syrian government of this act do their utmost to derail or at least delay such investigation?" The dragging UN probe was interfered with by the tragic events in Ghouta on August 21. "As our experts concluded, sarin used on August 21 was of approximately the same type as the one used on March 19, though of a slightly better quality. It means that over a few months, opposition chemists somewhat improved the quality of their product."

According to Seymour Hersh,

> "Theodore Postol, a professor of technology and national security at MIT, reviewed the UN photos with a group of his colleagues and concluded that the large calibre rocket was an improvised munition that was very likely manufactured locally. He told me that it was 'something you could produce in a modestly-capable machine shop.' The rocket in the photos, he added, fails to match the specifications of a similar but smaller rocket known to be in the Syrian arsenal."

MIT specialist, Professor Theodore Postol's analysis of the weapons used in the chemical attack on August 21, and the Russian team's analysis appear to point toward the opposition as the perpetrator of the August 21 attack in Ghouta. The US intelligence document, according to Hersh's article,

> "issued in mid-summer dealt extensively with Ziyaad Tariq Ahmed, a chemical weapons expert formerly of the Iraqi military, who was said to have moved into Syria and to be operating in Eastern Ghouta."

The chemical weapon attack in Ghouta on August 21 would, therefore, credibly point to Ziyaad Tariq Ahmed as among the perpetrators of that attack, particularly as the Assad government had no motive to use chemical weapons, especially with the UN inspectors already on the ground in Syria, and as the Syrian government was in a strong position militarily in its struggle with the opposition.

The opposition, on the contrary, had both the capacity to launch a chemical attack on innocent civilians, (as evidenced by several documented prior chemical attacks on Syrian soldiers), and the motive: to distract and disrupt investigations of previous chemical attacks that had victimized Syrian soldiers as well as civilians, and to garner international sympathy, which the sympathetic mainstream media's distorted reporting guaranteed.

Hersh's final paragraph should be taken seriously:

> "The UN resolution, which was adopted on 27 September by the Security Council dealt indirectly with the notion that rebel forces such as an-Nusra would also be obliged to disarm....No group was cited by name. While the Syrian regime continues the process of eliminating its chemical arsenal, the irony is that, after Assad's stockpile of precursor agents is destroyed, al-Nusra and its Islamist allies could end up as the only faction inside Syria with access to the ingredients that can create sarin, a strategic weapon that would be unlike any other in the war zone."

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