

Video: White House ‘Declassified Report’ on Chemical Weapons Attack in Idlib: Propaganda or Incompetence?

By [South Front](#)

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On April 11th, the White House released a “declassified four-page report” on the alleged chemical weapons attack in the village of Khan Shaykhun in the Syrian province of Idlib.

The United States accuses the Syrian and Russian governments of providing disinformation and “false narratives” regarding the attack, adding that Washington is sure that the Assad government is responsible for the attack.

However, the report provides only a “summary” of the United States’ version of the situation. According to this version, the US possesses intelligence and evidence of the attack but cannot reveal it because of security classifications.

It is stated in the report that the Syrian government maintains the capability to conduct a chemical weapons attack to prevent “the loss of territory deemed critical to its survival”. Then, the “declassified” report just retells the story provided by hard-core “pro-opposition” media outlets and activists -in other words, supporters of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda) and Ahrar al-Sham (a radical Islamist group that had cooperated with ISIS until 2014). It should be noted that the report added some “fresh” facts to the opposition story – for example, it argues that some “personnel historically associated with Syria’s chemical weapons program” were at the Shayarat military airfield. However, this part lacks evidence.

Additionally, if the guys from the White House really believe that the “Assad regime” suffered some notable setbacks across the country or in northern Hama itself in early April, then they are hardly aware of current situational maps of the area.

By April 4th, pro-government forces had reversed nearly all gains of the “opposition forces” led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in northern Hama, a detail curiously omitted from the report. Since then, the situation has been more or less stable. Furthermore, Khan Shaykhun is far away from the current frontline. However, the report promotes the idea that the Syrian government was pushed to use some “chemical weapons” to save itself.

Then, the report once again refers to videos posted by the “opposition” and reports provided by “human rights organizations.” The document emphasizes that “the opposition could not have fabricated all of the videos and other reporting of chemical attacks” because

it is too complicated. We recall that the so-called White Helmets and media activists linked with them are the primary source of the initial reports.

The rest of the paper is dedicated to the blaming and shaming of Syria and Russia for a wide range of issues: from conducting a chemical attack to pushing false narratives about the attack. It's interesting to note that the document, as well as US diplomats, say nothing about the need of investigation of the incident by the international community. The proper investigation of the incident is especially important amid contradictory claims made by various sides interested in pushing their own agendas regarding the issue.

It is clear that the whole pretext and explanation of the Syrian government's desperate need to use chemical weapons against some target far away from the frontline, as well as the inability to provide any real confirmation of allegations as to who actually conducted the attack, looks very questionable.

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