

White House Encouraged After Elephants Abstain From Climbing Trees

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

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Trump administration officials are walking back the [White House announcement](#) of its plans to fake another “chemical weapon attack” in Syria.

There are [plenty of reasons](#) why the U.S. would want to accuse the Syrian government of using chemical weapons but zero sane reasons for the Syrian government to use such. Russia and Syria have [long insisted](#) on sending chemical weapon inspectors to the airbase the Trump administration claims is at the center of its “chemical” fairy tale. The U.S. has held the inspectors back. The claims make thereby zero sense to any objective observer.

The walk back, as well as the statement itself, may not be serious at all. This White House seems unpredictable and the U.S. military, the intelligence services and the White House itself have no common view or policy. One day they claim the U.S. will leave Syria after ISIS is defeated, the next day they announce new bases and eternal support for the Syrian Kurds.

The way the White House statement came out, without knowledge of the relevant agencies and little involvement of the agency principals, was not cynical but [just dumb](#). It sounds like the idea was dropped by Netanyahu to his [schoolboy Jared Kushner](#) who then convinced his father in law to issue the crazy statement. Now officials are send out with the worst argument ever to claim that the White House “warning” made sense.

“The elephants did not climb up the trees. Warning them off was successful,” they say. “The trees were saved!”

“[It](#) appears that they took the warning seriously,” Mattis said. “They didn’t do it,” he told reporters flying with him to Brussels for a meeting of NATO defense ministers. He offered no evidence other than the fact that an attack had not taken place.

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“[I](#) can tell you that due to the president’s actions, we did not see an incident,” [U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki] Haley told the House Foreign Affairs Committee during a hearing Tuesday.[...]
[...]

“I would like to think that the president saved many innocent men, women and

children,” Haley continued.

Haley “would like to think” a lot of stuff – unfortunately she is not capable of such. A bit later she issued an egocentric [tweet](#) about UN peacekeeping that will surely increase U.S. political standing in the world (not):



I can even agree with Haley that UN peacekeeping has gotten way out of hand. To have UN mandated troops spreading [Cholera in Haiti](#) and [raping](#) their way [through various countries](#) does not help anyone. But the way to end this is to stop handing out mandates for such missions. To (re-)mandate undertrained/underpaid peacekeeping forces in the UN Security Council while cutting the budget for them is irresponsible. It will corrupt the troops and their behavior even more.

UN peacekeepers are often an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. By cutting them down the U.S. and Haley are limiting their own political options. The White House “warning”, which had to be defused within a day, has a similar effect. People will become less inclined to believe any U.S. claims or to follow up on U.S. demands. Both statements have limited future policy options.

Will the Trump administration come to regret such moves?

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