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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

April 21, 2018

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23.04.2018

Chemical Inspectors Arrive in Syria's Douma, Collect Samples

Inspectors finally let into area after long delay over UN security concerns Posted on
Categories [News](#)Tags [opcw](#), [Syria](#), [UNDSS](#)

Two weeks after the alleged Douma chemical weapons strike, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) [arrived in Douma Saturday to investigate](#). The OPCW had been trying to reach the site all week, but had been blocked by security concerns expressed by the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

The OPCW entered the alleged chemical sites and gathered samples. [Officials say they are open to a second visit](#) for more samples as necessary. Russia and Syria have both guaranteed the team's security in the area.

The alleged Douma chemical attack was said to have happened on April 7. The US, Britain, and France have all accused Syria of the strike. The US led an attack on Syria on April 13, despite calls by Russia to wait for the investigation to complete before reacting. Allegations long swirled around the OPCW's delay. Britain blamed Russia, as usual. French officials on Friday also claimed Russia was "[obstructing access](#)" to the site. The OPCW, however, has [made clear for days](#) what is causing the delay.

On a Wednesday visit, the UNDSS visited two Douma sites, [but fled both times](#). They complained the first site was too crowded, and they were concerned about safety. There was a [shooting](#) incident at the second site, though the only casualty was a Syrian hired as extra security.

Either way, claims about security concerns appear to have been overstated. The Syrian government [managed to facilitate a visit by CBS reporters days ago](#) without incident. Many media groups seem to have no problem getting into Douma safely.

There have been numerous media attempts to turn conjecture into fact. One of the most egregious examples of war propaganda is a CNN reporter in Douma, handling and even sniffing supposed evidence.

There is no public proof that the April 7 strike took place, and a mounting amount of [doubt that it didn't, driven by inquiries from Robert Fisk](#). Residents within Douma have also expressed doubts about the strike.

OAN investigators weren't able to confirm any evidence of a chemical weapons attack on Douma, either. To the extent that [investigations](#) are happening, they suggest there was no chemical strike. AFP [journalists](#) who've had access to Douma have gotten quotes from locals who deny a chemical attack ever happened.

Clearly, Douma was attacked by Syrian forces on that day, and the day prior. However, the Syrian government says those were purely conventional strikes. There is little to suggest anything else, beyond claims from the White Helmets, and Western nations claiming to have secret proof.

Syria and Russia have long said they OPCW visit would reveal the truth. Now that the samples have been taken, it's just a matter of waiting for results. But don't expect any contrition from Western nations if the OPCW rejects the chemical attack theory.

The US, Britain, and France all seem to anticipate the OPCW probe not going their way. The US accused Syria and Russia of plotting to tamper with Douma. There's no evidence of tampering of any kind. Despite this, Western officials complain the UN DSS delays are making tampering easier. Others, including the French Foreign Ministry, are claiming that the evidence could just "disappear" because the OPCW waited so long.

Despite claims to support the OPCW now, it was Western officials who led the UN Security Council to reject a Russian proposal for an investigation in the first place. The US-led coalition attacked multiple sites in Syria before the investigation could happen.

The OPCW, then, is only there to investigate facts as a global chemical watchdog, and their conclusions aren't bound to be accepted by the UN. Still, it would be an extreme measure for the UN to try to ignore their findings.