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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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J. Ditz

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Justice Dept Told Trump Syria Attacks Were ‘Legal’

In April, the US fired a large number of missiles at multiple sites across Syria, supposedly in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack. The Justice Department told president Trump before the attacks that this would be perfectly legal.



Syrian apartment complex struck by US missiles in April 2018.

New documents released on the matter [told Trump that he didn't need Congressional authorization](#) to attack Syria in April because attacking them was “in the national interest,” and Syria was so unlikely to retaliate that it wasn't technically a war.

A lot of this argument centers on an interpretation of what war “[in a constitutional sense](#)” actually means. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) said the legal argument was largely nonsense,

and had tried to “redefine war to exclude missile attacks” to further usurp Congressional authority.

Several recent administrations have argued that presidents can carry out unilateral military attacks without Congressional authorization, and this is just the continuation of the Justice Department signing off on this as legal.

While this has fueled some debate about the need for Congress to take back its war-making authority, the leadership has largely ignored the issue, and it is very rare for bills related to war powers even getting proper votes in either the House or Senate.