

Network TV Supports War on Syria: “Journalists Don’t Need Proof”

By [Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting \(FAIR\)](#)

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By Peter Hart

The public [doesn't seem to support](#) going to war in Syria—but some high-profile Sunday morning TV journalists are either declaring their support for the war, or professing faith in the case for going to war.

On NBC's Meet the Press ([9/8/13](#)), anchor [David Gregory](#) stated that the White House is releasing new video of the aftermath of the August 21 suspected chemical weapons attack:

This is video the administration showed members of Congress this week in order to make the case for military strike. It appears to show victims of the August 21 attack by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that killed more than 1,400 people.

The videos show horrible suffering and death—but they do not actually show that the victims were attacked by Assad's forces, or the number of Syrians killed.

This is the leap that the White House has made, and one they assure us is well-founded on intelligence that they will not share with the American public (AP, [9/8/13](#)). Journalists should be pressing the White House to make their case; instead, too many journalists are just believing what they're told.

That theme was repeated later on in the broadcast during this exchange between Gregory and NBC correspondent [Chuck Todd](#):

GREGORY: I remember how Democrats went after the Bush administration for raising the specter of weapons of mass destruction being used against our own troops to make a case for war. That never happened because there were no WMDs there. Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff, just said that here. He said, “We don't want our own troops being targeted by these awful weapons.”

TODD: But David, but these weapons are there. I mean, this is a completely different case. The weapons were used, we have the film, we have all kinds of intelligence that suggest who used them. It's a much different thing.

If Todd has seen solid intelligence that the Syrian government was behind the attack, he

should share it with the world. Associated Press reporters Zeina Aram and Kimberly Dozier ([9/8/13](#)) have a different take, writing:

Yet one week after Secretary of State John Kerry outlined the case against Assad, Americans—at least those without access to classified reports—haven't seen a shred of his proof.

They add:

The Obama administration, searching for support from a divided Congress and skeptical world leaders, says its own assessment is based mainly on satellite and signals intelligence, including intercepted communications and satellite images indicating that in the three days prior to the attack that the regime was preparing to use poisonous gas.

But multiple requests to view that satellite imagery have been denied, though the administration produced copious amounts of satellite imagery earlier in the war to show the results of the Syrian regime's military onslaught. When asked Friday whether such imagery would be made available showing the August 21 incident, a spokesman referred the Associated Press to a map produced by the White House last week that shows what officials say are the unconfirmed areas that were attacked.

The Obama administration maintains it intercepted communications from a senior Syrian official on the use of chemical weapons, but requests to see that transcript have been denied. So has a request by the AP to see a transcript of communications allegedly ordering Syrian military personnel to prepare for a chemical weapons attack by readying gas masks.

That's what journalism that is skeptical of government claims looks like. But then there's CBS Face the Nation host [Bob Schieffer](#), who gave this endorsement for war on the Sunday show ([9/8/13](#)):

The president of the United States drew a line in the sand, a red line. At this point, that may be the only good reason left for Congress to give him the authority he now asked for to respond to Syria's use of chemical weapons. When the president of the United States says something, the rest of the world, our friends and our enemies, pay attention. If we do not follow through, what impact will that have on North Korea or Iran the next time we warn them of dire consequences if they press on with their nuclear weapons programs? More important, how will it be viewed by our strong allies like Japan? We have treaties that promise we will retaliate if they are attacked by nuclear powers. Will they now question our resolve? I don't like anything about where we are, but in a dangerous world when the United States takes a stand, and then goes back on its word, we're left in an even more dangerous place.

So the best case for war is that Obama made a comment about a red line, and that the US must carry out acts of violence whenever it suggests that it might? And while he's at it, Schieffer throws in a [bogus reference](#) to Iran's "nuclear weapons program."

It's a remarkable call for war, based on no particular issue other than maintaining US dominance. It might explain the Sunday shows' [cavalier attitude about evidence](#), though; if you're chief concern is that Washington carry out its threats, why should you demand proof

that those threats had any justification to begin with?

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