

An Open Letter to “Science and Global Security”

Do Not Succumb to Political Censorship on Syria

By [Rick Sterling](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Militarization and WMD, US NATO](#)
[War Agenda](#)
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Dear Editors at Science and Global Security,

“Science and Global Security” (SGS) has been publishing technical articles on arms control and related issues since 1989. I urge you not to succumb to political censorship.

Recently it was announced you are **withholding** publication of an article titled *“Computational Forensic Analysis for the Chemical Weapons Attack at Khan Sheikhoun on 4 April 2017”*. The article presents evidence that a crater in the road in the town of Khan Sheikhoun (Syria) could have been caused by an “improvised rocket-propelled artillery round with a high explosive warhead” rather than an aerial bomb dropped by a Syrian plane. The paper was authored by seven scientists from prominent universities and laboratories in the USA and China and based on advanced modelling techniques and computer simulations.

According to the article [“Scientists clash over paper that questions Syrian government’s role in sarin attack”](#) a campaign to stop you from publishing the analysis was launched by Gregory Koblentz. He is a political scientist not an engineer or physical scientist. His criticism of the article is because of the conclusion.

The political bias of Koblentz is clear from his article titled [“Syria’s Chemical Weapons Kill Chain”](#). It accuses the Syrian government of using chemical weapons and speculates on the chain of command. It distorts the findings of the UN report on the attack of August 21, 2013. Actually, the UN lead investigator, Ake Sellstrom, [suggested](#) that it was a “fair guess” that the rockets carrying the sarin travelled 2 kilometers. This would have put the launch firmly in opposition held territory, directly contradicting Koblentz’s assertions that the Syrian government was to blame.

Facts and Investigations

You may not be aware of the following facts:

- The [report](#) of the Joint Investigative Mechanism was **not** definitive about the crater. On page 7/33 it says, “the Mechanism assessed that the crater was **most probably** caused by a heavy object travelling at a high rate of velocity, such as an aerial bomb with a small explosive charge... The Mechanism also examined whether an IED could have caused the crater. While this possibility **could not be completed ruled out**, the experts assessed that that scenario was **less likely.....**” (highlight added).

- Some of the most proven investigative journalists have concluded that the incident was staged by the opposition. For example, the late Robert Parry wrote an article titled [“Did Al Qaeda Dupe Trump on Syrian Attack”](#). He noted that “Buried deep inside a new U.N. report is evidence that could exonerate the Syrian government in the April 4 sarin atrocity.” As Parry wrote, “More than 100 patients would appear to have been exposed to sarin **before** the alleged warplane could have dropped the alleged bomb and the victims could be evacuated, a finding that alone would have destroyed the JIM’s case against the Syrian government. But the JIM seemed more interested in burying this evidence of Al Qaeda staging the incident ...”
- Seymour Hersh is another proven journalist. His research confirmed that no chemical bomb was used at Khan Sheikhoun. The Russians had even informed the US military ahead of time that they would be bombing an important meeting of groups that even the US defined as “terrorist”. Hersh’s conclusions are outlined in the article [“Hersh’s New Syria Revelations Buried from View”](#).
- Yet another proven journalist, Gareth Porter, did a detailed investigation including confidential interviews with scientists with close ties to the OPCW. His in depth report is titled [“Have We Been Deceived Over Syrian Sarin Attack? Scrutinizing the Evidence ...”](#). Among many points he debunks the notion that the crater could have been caused by a chemical weapons bomb which is designed to release chemicals and NOT burn them in a large explosion.
- Finally, yet another proven journalist, Robert Fisk, has written about bias at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). One year after the incident at Khan Sheikhoun, another chemical weapons incident happened in Syria. In his article titled [“The Evidence We Were Never Meant to See About the Douma Gas Attack”](#) Robert Fisk reports,

“there has emerged disturbing evidence that in its final report on the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in the city of Douma last year, the OPCW deliberately concealed from both the public and the press the existence of a dissenting 15-page assessment of two cylinders which had supposedly contained molecular chlorine ...The OPCW officially maintains that these canisters were probably dropped by an aircraft – probably a helicopter, presumably Syrian – over Douma on 7 April 2018. But the dissenting assessment, which the OPCW made no reference to in its published conclusions, finds there is a ‘higher probability that both cylinders were manually placed at those two locations rather than being delivered from aircraft.’ It is difficult to underestimate the seriousness of this manipulative act by the OPCW.”

Why SGS Should Publish the Article

On the SGS website you [question](#) “the value of publishing the article given the sensitive and contested issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.” That is precisely the reason that you SHOULD publish the article, to be relevant and contribute to important public debate.

Global security is being threatened by claims and counter-claims about weapons of mass destruction. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was based on such claims. The “intelligence community” was certain but wrong. Now, in Syria there are similar claims and counter-claims. Two nuclear armed countries, the US and Russia, are involved.

The US has already attacked Syria on the basis of media reports to the approval of people like Gregory Koblentz. The pattern of aggression on the basis of dubious or false evidence is very dangerous and could lead to much greater conflict.

Political censorship does not serve science or global security. Publish the article.

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Rick Sterling is a journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He can be contacted at rsterling1@gmail.com

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