Assad: Idlib attack 100% fabricated, Syria destroyed all chemical weapons

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The chemical incident in Idlib province blamed on Damascus was a “100 percent fabrication” as the Syrian military has already dismantled chemical weapons stockpiles, President Bashar Assad told AFP.

“Definitely, 100 percent for us, it's fabrication... Our impression is that the West, mainly the United States, is hand-in-glove with the terrorists,” President Assad told the French news agency in his first interview since the retaliatory US missile strike on a Syrian airbase in Shayrat.

“They fabricated the whole story in order to have a pretext for the attack,” he said.

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According to Assad, the Syrian military dismantled all of its chemical weapons arsenal in 2013.

“There was no order to make any attack… We gave up our arsenal a few years ago. Even if we have them, we wouldn’t use them,” he added.

The Syrian leader said it was *“not clear”* if the alleged chemical attack in Khan Shaykhun, Idlib

province, even took place.

“You have a lot of fake videos now. We don't know whether those dead children were killed in Khan Shaykhun. Were they dead at all?” he said.

Assad said the US Tomahawk strike on the Shayrat airbase was anything but efficient as it had little impact on the country’s military capabilities.

“Our firepower, our ability to attack the terrorists hasn’t been affected by this strike,” he said.

Assad urged the international community to launch an inquiry into the alleged Khan Shaykhun chemical attack, but added Damascus would only allow an “impartial” external investigation.

“We can only allow any investigation when it’s impartial, when we make sure that unbiased countries will participate in this delegation in order to make sure that they won’t use it for politicized purposes,” he said.

The Syrian leader also lashed out at the Trump administration, saying peace talks that would ensure a lasting truce in Syria have stalled because the US has no interest in ending the war.

“The US is not serious in achieving any political solution. They want to use it as an umbrella for the terrorists,” he said.

On Wednesday, Russia vetoed a draft UN Security Council resolution which called for a speedy investigation into the Idlib incident.

Vladimir Safronkov, Russia’s deputy envoy to the UN, called the draft *“unfounded,”* and urged instead for an independent fact-finding mission to be dispatched to rebel-held Khan Shaykhun.

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Reports of dozens being killed in an alleged chemical attack emerged on April 4. Despite no investigation being carried out, the US and its Western allies put the blame for the incident on the Assad government.

Damascus denied its involvement, with Russia saying that the chemicals could have been released due to a conventional strike hitting a militant arms depot which contained *“toxic substances.”*

However, US President Donald Trump ordered a retaliatory airstrike on Friday, with 59 Tomahawk missiles fired at the Shayrat airbase in Homs province.

The attack killed 14 people, including nine civilians, and destroyed a material storage depot, a training facility, a canteen, six MiG-23 aircraft in repair hangars and a radar station.

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The Russian Defense Ministry said that the American strike was *“low efficiency,”* and that only 23 missiles reached the targeted base.