

# US media blacks out Seymour Hersh exposé of Washington's lies on sarin attack in Syria

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The American media has blacked out an account by Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh demonstrating that President Barack Obama and the US government lied when they claimed to have proof that the Syrian government carried out a sarin gas attack last August on areas near Damascus held by US-backed “rebels.”

Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, US ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power and other top officials declared categorically that the August 21 attack on Eastern Ghouta, which reportedly killed hundreds of people, had been carried out by the Syrian military. They, along with the leaders of Britain and France, sought to use the gas attack to stampede public opinion behind their plans to attack Syria, cripple the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and install a puppet government.

In the end, internal differences over the launching of direct military action combined with broad popular opposition to another unprovoked war in the Middle East led the administration to pull back and accept a Russian plan for the dismantling of Syrian chemical weapons. This was followed by the opening of talks with Iran, Syria's main ally in the region.

Hersh's article, entitled “Whose sarin?,” was published Sunday by the *London Review of Books*. Based on information provided by current and former US intelligence and military officials, Hersh showed in great detail that Washington manipulated intelligence to create the impression that it had tracked the Syrian military preparing to launch a poison gas attack in the days leading up to the sarin strike on Eastern Ghouta. In fact, US intelligence had no advance warning of the attack.

Even more damning, Hersh documents that Obama and other top officials deliberately ignored and

concealed a series of military and intelligence reports over the preceding months warning that Al Qaeda-affiliated jihadist groups that formed the backbone of imperialist proxy forces in Syria, including the al-Nusra Front, had access to sarin and the ability to weaponize it. (See: “Seymour Hersh exposes US government lies on Syrian sarin attack”).

The previous May, Carla Del Ponte, a member of the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria, had reported “strong, concrete” evidence that earlier gas attacks had been carried out by Western-backed forces.

In his article, Hersh documents as well the complicity of the US media in uncritically accepting and promoting the government lies, reprising its role as a propaganda arm of the state in the run-up to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. He singles out in particular the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

The response of the American media to Hersh's authoritative exposure of US government criminality has been to bury it. In Britain, only two major newspapers, the *Daily Mail* and the *Telegraph*, have thus far reported on it. In the US, there has been a total blackout by major newspapers and broadcast and cable news networks.

This is a highly conscious operation. Hersh is an internationally known and respected journalist. He gained worldwide recognition in 1969 for exposing the My Lai massacre in Vietnam and its cover-up, for which he received the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting.

Just how conscious the major media outlets are in deciding to black out Hersh's article is underscored by an article published Monday on the *Huffington Post* web site. The article reports, based on an email

exchange with Hersh, that both the *New Yorker* magazine, where he is a staff writer, and the *Washington Post* rejected his article when he submitted it to them for publication.

According to the *Huffington Post*, “Hersh wrote that he was told by email that [*Washington Post*] Executive Editor Marty Baron decided ‘that the sourcing in the article did not meet the *Post*’s standards.’”

This comes from a newspaper that published an editorial on August 22, before any investigation into the Ghouta attack had taken place to verify that poison gas was used, let alone determine the perpetrator, demanding that Obama order “direct US retaliation against the Syrian military forces responsible” and adopt a plan to establish a no-fly zone.

Joining in the silence of the major media organizations are the publications of pseudo-left groups such as *SocialistWorker.org* (the International Socialist Organization) and *International Viewpoint* (the organ of Pabloite groups such as the French New Anti-capitalist Party). They have chosen as well to ignore Hersh’s damning exposé, which comes as no surprise since it exposes their own complicity in promoting Washington’s lies as part of their pro-war and pro-imperialist policy.



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