

Defence Minister says Britain will back any US action in Syria

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Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon has said that Britain will support any response by the US to the Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons.

He was speaking after the Trump administration claimed that it had "potential" evidence the Syrian military is preparing another chemical attack against rebel forces "that would likely result in the mass murder of civilians, including innocent children." Sean Spicer, the White House spokesperson, threatened that Syria would pay a "heavy price" if it went ahead.

Fallon did not question the existence or explain the nature of any such evidence, but told the BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, "If the Americans take similar action again, I want to be very clear—we will support it."

Referring to the US missile strikes on Syria's Shayrat airfield last April, following false allegations that the Syrian regime had launched a sarin gas attack, he added, "As always in war, the military action you use must be justified, it must be legal, it must proportionate, it must be necessary. In the last case it was."

Fallon acknowledged that the US had not shown the British government any specific evidence relating to the "preparations" for a future chemical attack. But such trifling matters did not deter Her Majesty's Government from supporting US military escalation in Syria, even though it has the potential to trigger a far wider conflagration with Iran and a nuclear-armed Russia.

He added that Britain had not been asked to participate in any such military strike and that there were "currently" no plans to seek parliamentary approval for UK strikes.

None of the British media have questioned whether

the White House's allegations were credible, even though they are so transparently spurious that the issue was not discussed at NATO's summit last Thursday. Allegations of a chemical attack by Syrian regime forces last April were so baseless that they provoked opposition from within sections of the US military and intelligence apparatus. The veteran journalist Seymour Hersh cited one officer as saying, "None of this makes any sense. We KNOW that there was no chemical attack..."

In the run up to the Iraq war in 2003, Tony Blair's Labour government went to great lengths to manufacture evidence of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's non-existent weapons of mass destruction to justify joining the US invasion of Iraq.

In 2017, Theresa May's Conservative government is prepared to go to war regardless of whether allegations of such "preparations" are true or false. May told the Cabinet that stopping the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime was "an important objective."

The UK is already up to its neck in the US-led operation to topple the Assad regime, including covert and illegal military operations on the ground, with the aim of carving up Syria into ethno-religious enclaves.

In April, May announced that British military personnel would be sent to Jordan to help with "training" for anti-ISIS missions. The Ministry of Defence has admitted that "the operational costs of the counter-ISIS mission," up to the end of March 2016, were £238.8 million, likely a pale reflection of the actual costs.

The US-led war to topple Assad via proxy forces largely financed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and the CIA is aimed at undermining the regional influence of Syria's allies, Iran and Russia.

The British government has long been involved in the

war, which has killed nearly 500,000 people and displaced almost half the Syrian population, covering up its activities with a campaign of lies, deceit and disinformation. It supported the armed insurgency in Syria knowing it was dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaida in Iraq, which wanted to establish a Salafist state in eastern Syria. This aim coincided with the US-UK plan to isolate the Assad government and dismember Syria.

Britain has been training Syrian rebel forces since 2012 from bases in Jordan and providing intelligence from its Cyprus bases on Syrian regime movements to Turkey to be passed on to the “Free Syrian Army” and other “rebel” forces. According to numerous reports, the Special Air Service (SAS) has been “slipping into Syria on missions” and working alongside the insurgents.

Britain’s spy agency MI6 cooperated with the CIA in facilitating a “rat line” of arms transfers from Libya to the Syrian rebels in 2012, following the NATO-led toppling of the Libyan regime and the brutal murder of its leader, Muammar Gaddafi.

While parliament voted in September 2014 to support offensive military action against ISIS alongside the US in Iraq, this did not include offensive operations in Syria. In practice Prime Minister David Cameron ignored this distinction, arguing it made no sense to stop the fight against ISIS at the Iraqi-Syrian border since ISIS did not accept the border.

British planes carried out surveillance missions over Syria, including MQ-9 Reaper drones based in Cyprus, at a frequency that soon accounted for 30 percent of all the coalition’s aerial surveillance in Syria.

SAS personnel deployed to northern Iraq in August 2014 against Islamic State were sent to Syria. They also mounted raids deep into eastern Syria, assisting the New Syrian Army from its base in Jordan and providing training, weapons and equipment.

British forces took part in airstrikes in Syria, alongside US and Canadian forces, and carried out a secret drone warfare programme. Reaper drones were used to kill two British ISIS fighters in Syria, the first such targeted assassination of Britons, which Cameron justified as a “lawful act of self-defence.”

Britain sent forces to train the Peshmerga belonging to the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, to Turkey and “other nearby countries” for operations in

Syria.

All this was well before any authorisation to intervene in Syria and in defiance of the 2013 House of Commons vote against military intervention in Syria, which Cameron had promised to honour, much to Washington’s fury.

In December 2015, parliament voted to support an air campaign against Islamic State in Syria, but did not authorise the use of ground troops or special forces.

Since the vote, Britain has carried out nearly 100 airstrikes in Syria, second only to the US, and continually increased the size of its “training” teams in the region, ostensibly for anti-ISIS operations in Iraq and Syria, which now number around 1,500.

Britain’s special forces operate alongside their US counterparts from a base at al-Tanf, which they use to train Syrian opposition forces with the aim of sending them north up the Euphrates River valley to Deir al-Zour. Their objective is to control Syria’s eastern border with Iraq, cutting off Iran’s land route into the country and beyond it to Lebanon and the Mediterranean.

The Syrian army is preparing to take Deir al-Zour, home to Syria’s biggest oil industry, following the establishment of four “deconfliction” zones in Idlib, Homs, Deraa and Aleppo, and the surrender of other “rebel” forces in Damascus, which have effectively halted fighting between regime and “rebel” forces, freeing up regime forces to move east.

The US has warned that it will not tolerate any advance by Syrian regime forces on its base at al-Tanf, which could trigger a confrontation with Syria and its allies, Russia and Iran.



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