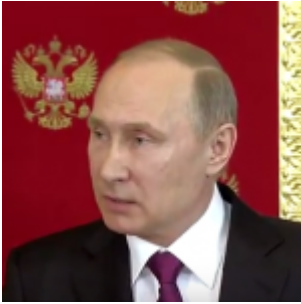


Russian President Putin Accuses 'Enemies Of Assad' Of Planning False-Flag Chemical Attacks



Russian President Putin declared that the recent chemical attack in Idlib, Syria, was a false-flag event, which is an operation staged by one government to make it look like it was committed by another. He said his intelligence sources report that anti-Assad militants are transporting toxic agents into several parts of Syria with the intent of blaming Assad and, thereby, justify more strikes from the US. The UK *Independent* reported that Putin accused the US of planning to drop chemical weapons in Damascus as a pretext for future aggression while blaming Russia for the chemical attack last week. –GEG

At a Tuesday press conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed last week's chemical weapons attack in the Idlib province of Syria was a "false flag" – a phony operation staged by enemies of Russia and Syria to discredit them. He said more such false flag operations were on the way.

"We have reports from multiple sources that false flags like this one – and I cannot call it otherwise – are being prepared in other parts of Syria, including the southern suburbs of

Damascus. They plan to plant some chemical there and accuse the Syrian government of an attack," said Putin, as reported by Russia's RT.com.

"President Mattarella and I discussed it, and I told him that this reminds me strongly of the events in 2003, when the US representatives demonstrated at the UN Security Council session the presumed chemical weapons found in Iraq," Putin continued, referring to Italian President Sergio Mattarella, who appeared with him at the press conference in Moscow.

"The military campaign was subsequently launched in Iraq and it ended with the devastation of the country, the growth of the terrorist threat and the appearance of Islamic State [IS, formerly ISIS] on the world stage," Putin declared.

According to RT.com, the Russian General Staff has prepared a report that claims "militants" among the Syrian rebellion are "transporting toxic agents into several parts of Syria."

"These actions are aimed at creating a new pretext for accusing the government of Syria of more chemical weapons attacks and provoking more strikes by the US," said Colonel-General Sergey Rudskoy, head of operations for the General Staff.

The Associated Press reports that Russia's General Staff has expressed a willingness to allow international inspectors to examine the Sharyat airbase in Syria for traces of chemical weapons, and offered to provide military security for the inspectors. Putin said he would appeal to the United Nations to investigate the incident.

The UK *Independent* reports that Putin more specifically accused the United States of planning to drop chemical weapons on Damascus and then blame the incident on Assad, although it does not provide a translation of the Russian president's precise words to that effect.

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