

# *Russia says White Helmets preparing false-flag chemical attacks in Syria*

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Moscow, November 27 (RHC)-- Russia has warned that members of the Takfiri Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorist outfit together with the so-called civil defense group White Helmets are planning to carry out chemical attacks across Syria in a bid to incriminate Syrian government forces and invent pretexts for possible acts of aggression on army troops.

“Via several channels, we received confirmation of reports that militants from the group of field commander Abu Malek, which is a part of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, jointly with the White Helmets organization, plan to carry out provocations involving staged air raids and use of chemical weapons in populated areas of the Idlib de-escalation zone,” Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement released on Tuesday. The statement added: “Militants have been selecting local residents who would participate in the filming of scenes depicting the consequences of airstrikes and use of poisonous agents.”

The statement further noted that the residents of the town of Sarmada in the extreme northwest of Syria had seen a group of unidentified people and three trucks transporting various containers with unknown chemicals arriving in the area earlier this month.

“One of the vehicles carried professional video equipment and fragments of air and artillery shells with Soviet and Russian identification marks,” the statement pointed out.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also highlighted that the militants are planning to make falsified footage of civilian facilities allegedly destroyed in airstrikes, artillery shelling and chemical attacks in Idlib province, and then publish the videos on social media to blame the Syrian government and Russia for their actions against civilians.

The United States has warned it would respond to any possible chemical weapons attack by Syrian government forces with retaliatory strikes, stressing that the attacks would be stronger than those conducted by American, British and French forces last year.

On April 14, 2018, the United States, Britain and France carried out a string of airstrikes against Syria over a suspected chemical weapons attack on the city of Douma, located about 10 kilometers northeast of the capital Damascus. Washington and its allies blamed Damascus for the Douma attack, an allegation rejected by the Syrian government.

On September 11 last year, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov censured the U.S. threats to use military force against Syria as part of Washington’s blackmail policy. “Unlike the United States, Britain and their allies, Russia provides particular facts on a daily basis through its Defense Ministry, the Foreign Ministry as well missions in New York, The Hague and Geneva. We particularly name geographical points, where preparations are underway for certain terrorist groups backed by the U.S. and its allies to carry out provocations,” Ryabkov said.

Western governments and their allies have never stopped pointing the finger at Damascus whenever an apparent chemical attack takes place. Syria surrendered its stockpile of chemical weapons in 2014 to a joint mission led by the United States and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which oversaw the destruction of the weaponry. It has also consistently denied using chemical weapons.

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