

News story: British diplomats have won the battle to name chemical weapons culprits: article by Boris Johnson

Within hours of the gas attack on the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun, the conspiracy mongers were out in force.

They claimed that nothing had happened and the whole incident had been a stunt, or perhaps the town had gassed itself in a bizarre act of self-immolation, or someone – anyone – was responsible for the atrocity other than Bashar al-Assad's regime.

This episode last April showed the convergence of two scourges of our age: the use of chemical weapons and the proliferation of fake news designed to hide the guilty.

There is only one rightful response to this pernicious combination. The international community must be able to uncover the truth by means of independent inquiry, empowered not only to say whether chemical weapons were employed but by whom.

And it is that vital power to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria that British diplomacy has just helped to restore.

Our efforts became necessary because of what followed the Khan Sheikhoun attack. In October 2017, a joint investigation by the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) found that one of Assad's military aircraft had dropped a bomb laden with sarin nerve gas on Khan Sheikhoun (contrary to the energetic outpourings of the conspiracy theorists).

This was the fourth time this joint investigation had named the Assad regime as responsible for chemical weapon attacks in Syria. The terrorists of Daesh were held culpable for two other incidents.

But Russia chose to respond by protecting Assad and vetoing the renewal of this investigation in the Security Council last November. We then entered a period when the OPCW's experts were able to investigate chemical attacks in Syria, provided they did not say who was responsible.

They were effectively asked to indulge a fiction whereby chemical weapons might descend from the sky of their own volition, without any agent or perpetrator. It was as if a vow of omerta had to surround the identity of the guilty party.

The OPCW reported that chemical weapons had been used twice more in Syria – in the towns of Lataminah in March 2017 and Saraqib in February this year. But they did not identify the perpetrator.

I sensed that a new and profoundly damaging taboo was slowly emerging, a taboo that applied not to the use of chemical weapons but to naming whoever was responsible. It was as if the real offence was not killing people with poison gas, but daring to identify the perpetrator of such wickedness.

Hence the importance of the change that was achieved this week. On Wednesday, a special conference of states parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adopted a British-drafted "Decision" to allow the OPCW to make full use of its powers to attribute responsibility for chemical attacks in Syria.

If you had joined me in The Hague, you would have shared my pride in the British diplomats who were lobbying scores of countries, convincing the waverers and countering the frantic efforts of Russia and Iran to scupper the plan.

Our network of embassies threw itself into this campaign, working alongside countries across the world. I spent much of the day meeting or calling dozens of my counterparts. In the end, our proposal carried the day by 82 votes to 24 – a better result than we had dared hope.

Thanks in no small measure to British diplomacy, the OPCW will be able to answer all the vital questions about any future incident: what happened when and where – and who was responsible.

We are placing the taboo back where it belongs: over the singular horror of using chemical weapons. If any such attacks happen again, there will once more be international investigators empowered to discover the culprit. You can be proud of the British diplomats who did so much to bring this about.

Find out more about the international community coming together to [strengthen the global ban against chemical weapons use](#).

Further information

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Press release: Media advisory notice – Hillsborough proceedings

Criminal proceedings against six individuals arising out of the investigations into the tragic events at Hillsborough on the 15th of April 1989 and its aftermath are currently active. The first of three criminal trials is due to start in 10 weeks' time.

The Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP wishes to draw attention to the requirement not to publish material, including online, which could create a substantial risk that the course of justice in these proceedings may be seriously impeded or prejudiced, thereby jeopardising the defendants' right to a fair trial.

In particular, the Attorney General draws attention to the requirement not to publish material that asserts or assumes, expressly or implicitly, the guilt of any of those who face trial, whether in relation to the events of the 15th of April 1989 or to subsequent events. That is an issue to be determined solely by the three juries on the evidence that they hear in court.

The risks may also arise by commentary which prejudices issues that witnesses may give evidence about or which asserts or assumes wrongdoing on the part of organisations by whom the defendants were employed.

The Attorney General's Office will be monitoring the coverage of these proceedings.

Editors, publishers and social media users should take legal advice to ensure they are in a position to fully comply with the obligations they are subject to under the Contempt of Court Act.

They are also reminded of the terms of the order made under section 4(2) of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 by Sir Peter Openshaw DL on 29th June 2018.

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Legal Services are GREAT launched in October 2017 to promote the UK's outstanding legal services worldwide. It has already been promoted in numerous countries, led two trade missions to Kazakhstan and China, and reached thousands of international business executives.

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News story: DIO restores much loved Wiltshire monument

Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has worked with partners Landmarc Support Services (Landmarc), the Army, the New Zealand High Commission and local volunteers to restore a kiwi carved into the chalk on Beacon Hill, above the town of Bulford in Wiltshire. Affectionately known as the 'Bulford Kiwi', it was created in 1919 by soldiers from New Zealand at the end of World War I as they awaited their return home.

The figure has recently become a scheduled monument, which means it is recognised as a nationally important archaeological site and it is now protected from destruction or change. The monument has been looked after by the New Zealand High Commission and various local groups and companies over the years.

As part of a conservation project to ensure the historic significance of the kiwi is preserved, 100 tonnes of chalk were dropped from an RAF Chinook helicopter and raked into place by volunteers from the 3rd (UK) Division Signal Regiment, Operation Nightingale – a project established jointly by the DIO and The Rifles, which sees ill and injured service personnel and veterans assisting archaeologists with excavations on the defence estate – Landmarc, the New Zealand High Commission and local conservation groups.

Sir Jerry Mateparae, the New Zealand High Commissioner said:

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with so many willing volunteers today. The links between the UK and New Zealand are still strong and it has been touching to see so many people involved in looking after and protecting the kiwi for generations to come.

It has been great to be involved in helping to protect and restore such a significant monument.

The kiwi stretches to 130 metres (420 feet) high across Beacon Hill and is a much loved monument locally, nationally and internationally.

A Chinook delivers bags of chalk to re-chalk the kiwi for the first time in 30 years. Crown Copyright.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Britain and New Zealand have deep and longstanding ties and it's important that we play our part in preserving valuable monuments like these for future generations.

The MOD is responsible for conservation of our land, allowing it to offer much needed habitats for a variety of flora and fauna to thrive, and for public enjoyment.

While we need to make sure our military training facilities prepare the armed forces for operations worldwide, we must never forget that conservation is extremely important.

The work is not just an act of conservation but recycling as well. The chalk has been made available because of the excavations on Salisbury Plain to build new housing and infrastructure under the Army Basing Programme. The conservation project has been undertaken by DIO, which plays a vital role in protecting and maintaining monuments across the MOD estate.

Richard Osgood, DIO archaeologist, said:

Thank you to everyone who has worked together to get the kiwi looking its best again. It has been a truly collaborative effort and we are also grateful for the involvement and support of the High Commissioner of New Zealand.

It has been a brilliant project to be involved in and is a perfect example of the work that DIO does to protect and maintain the many historic sites across the estate.