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Idlib 'chemical attack' was false flag to set Assad up, more may come – Putin

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Russia has information of a potential incident similar to the alleged chemical attack in Idlib province, possibly targeting a Damascus suburb, President Vladimir Putin said. The goal is to discredit the government of Syrian President Assad, he added.

*"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,"* he said at a joint press conference with Italian President Sergio Mattarella in Moscow.

Damascus denied the allegations, noting that the targeted area may have been hosting chemical weapons stockpiles belonging to Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) or Al-Nusra Front jihadists.

The incident has not been properly investigated as yet, but the US fired dozens of cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase in a demonstration of force over what it labeled a chemical attack by Damascus.

*"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. 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,"* he added.

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It was the first time the US had targeted Syrian troops deliberately. The White House says it will repeat military action in response to any possible new chemical weapon attacks.

*"The sight of people being gassed and blown away by barrel bombs ensures that if we see this kind of action again, we hold open the possibility of future action,"* spokesman Sean Spicer said

Monday.

Putin reiterated the call to properly investigate what happened in Khan Sheikhoun, saying that the alleged use of chemical weapons demands one.

*"We are planning to address the corresponding UN structure in The Hague and call on the international community to thoroughly investigate all those reports and take appropriate action based on the results of such a probe," he said.*

A separate report of a potential false flag operation in Syria came from the Russian General Staff, which said militants were transporting toxic agents into several parts of Syria, including Eastern Ghouta, the site of the 2013 chemical weapons incident.

*"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, the head of Operations.

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