

Haven't We Heard This Song Before?

Here are some of the responses to the Obama Administration announcement that there was now proof (which no one has yet seen) that the Assad government in Syria had crossed the "red line," and used lethal chemical weapons against the rebels. A number of commentators recalled the infamous, and false charge, by Secretary of State Colin Powell at the UN in 2003, that Saddam Hussein had used WMD in Iraq.

Russia

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, June 15: "The [Assad] regime, as the opposition itself is saying, is seeing military success on the ground. Why would the regime use chemical weapons, especially in such small quantities [as is being claimed]? Just to expose itself? From a military point of view, it makes no sense."

Yuri Ushakov, President Putin's top foreign policy advisor, June 14: "The Americans tried to present us with information on the use of chemical weapons by the regime, but frankly we thought that it was not convincing.... We wouldn't like to invoke references to the famous lab tube that Powell showed, but the facts don't look convincing in our eyes.... The alleged weapons of mass destruction program proved to be non-existent after the U.S. conquered the country in 2003."

Alexei Pushkov, head of the Foreign Policy Committee in the lower chamber of the Russian Duma, June 14: "Information about the use by Assad of chemical weapons has been fabricated in the same place as the lies about [Saddam] Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. Obama is taking the same path as George Bush."

Britain

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, June 15: "It's exactly the arguments we went through over Iraq.... This is no longer a civil war between factions within Syria.... We should be taking a more interventionist line."

Prime Minister David Cameron, June 13: "I discussed this with President Obama on my recent visit. Our intelligence agencies have been sharing information. We share their view that, as we put it, growing levels of information [exist] about chemical weapons used by the regime and no firm evidence that chemical weapons have been used by the opposition."

Foreign Secretary William Hague, June 14: The UK agrees "with the U.S. assessment that chemical weapons, including sarin, have been used in Syria by the Assad regime. The United Kingdom has presented evidence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria to the UN investigation, and we have been working with our allies to get more and better information about the situation on the ground. We condemn the deplorable failure of the Assad regime to cooperate with the investigative mission.... We should be taking a more interventionist line."

United Nations

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, June 15: "Providing arms to either side would not address this current situation. There is no military solution to this conflict. The military path points directly to the further disintegration of the country, the destabilization of the region and inflammation of religious and communal tensions.... The validity of information on the alleged use of chemical weapons cannot be assured without convincing evidence of the chain of custody."

United States

Former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 14: "We should be building an international coalition that poses some sort of solution, seriously negotiating with the Chinese and the Russians, involve the Japanese as well.... I don't see any real strategic guidance to what were doing. I see a lot of rhetoric, a lot of emotion, a lot of propaganda, in fact. Instead, we're essentially engaging in mass propaganda portraying this as a democratic war."

"Who is fighting for democracy? Qatar and Saudi Arabia are fighting for democracy?..."

"And why did the president issue that particular red line? On what basis? With what strategic concepts in mind? This is what's so baffling about this whole thing.... I do not see what the United States right now is trying to accomplish."