

This week, we are continuing our coverage on Syria. This is the second half of a piece focusing on the aftermath of the chemical attacks that took place in the Syrian town of Douma on April 7th. For those of you who were not here last week, let me open with a brief recap: Douma, formerly held by a Syrian rebel group, has been under siege since Assad's forces renewed their push into the Eastern Ghouta region last February. Facing daily artillery and airstrikes, along with a shortage of food and medicine, the situation in Douma was growing increasingly desperate with each day. And then, on April 7th, came the gas attacks.

Although the total number of casualties is still being determined, most groups believe the current number of dead as a result number in the mid-80s with many more affected, but not killed.

In response to the use of chemical weapons, widely believed to be by the Assad regime, the US, UK, and France launched a missile strike a week later, against three targets believed to be involved in either the creation or storage of chemical weapons.

Following these strikes, President Trump soon tweeted "A perfectly executed strike last night. Thank you to France and the United Kingdom for their wisdom and the power of their fine Military. Could not have had a better result. Mission Accomplished!" end quote.

But what exactly was accomplished with these strikes? Today, we'll be exploring the consequences both in Syria and abroad. This is Cameron Lallana, and you are listening to KDVS news.

Perhaps the most pressing question to pose now is: What effect will this have on the situation in Syria? Before I speak on that, let's listen to Amanda Sloat—a Robert Bosch senior fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution—speaking on the podcast Bombshell: ***Play audio from Bombshell***

In order to understand why Sloat thinks these strikes had so little effect, we must be honest about the fact that they will have no meaningful effect on the momentum of the war. Assad does not need chemical weapons to continue overcoming the rebel forces. They merely make the process easier. Only a few days after the chemical attack in Douma, Reuters reports that rebel militants agreed to turn the town over to the Assad government in exchange for being allowed to evacuate themselves and their families to rebel-held territories near Aleppo, in the north. If the Assad regime had not used chemical weapons, though, there would have been no physical barriers to bombing the town into dust. And as much of a tragedy every life lost in that attack was, we should keep in mind that at least hundreds if not thousands of civilians have been killed in the Eastern Ghouta region by conventional weaponry since early February. If

these same eighty people had been killed by barrel bombs, white phosphorus, or starvation, the Assad regime would have faced no consequences.

But even assuming that the Assad regime was fully deterred, chemical weapons have been responsible for only a minority of Syrian civilian casualties. In short, the average Syrian is no safer; and the outcome of the war is no less certain.

We cannot be certain, though that Assad has been deterred. It is also not clear how much willingness Western powers have to push this issue: although US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley did say ***Haley UN audio*** and later committed to sanctions against Assad, the White house later walked back her position in regards to sanctions.

Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain and President Emmanuel Macron of France have both faced deep backlash from the left and right in their own countries for participating in the attack. France 24 reports that both leaders were accused of excessive deference to the Americans, and many lawmakers in both countries were angry that both had taken the action without consulting their legislatures.

There have also been similar legal challenges to the attack in the US, arguing that whatever stance the administration took—be it under the 2001 or 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, or Article 2 of the constitution—the President does not have the authority to order a military strike when America is not in imminent danger. Whether or not that could deter the Trump administration from future actions, though, depends on political will to push the issue. Though Senators Tim Kaine and Bob Corker have introduced a new AUMF that they say is a bipartisan attempt to reassert legislative control over war-making abilities, their bill actually gives the Executive carte blanche to wage war against all groups the US is currently fighting without real limits. Of the three, it seems that the US has had the least amount of backlash to the strikes—but it is not clear what multinational, much less unilateral, one-off strikes in Syria will ultimately achieve.

Whatever victories are won against particular weapons, we should keep in mind the masses of Syrian civilians that remain ignored. In 2016, the US admitted well over 15,000 Syrian refugees. By comparison, in 2017 at the time of the retaliation strikes on the 13th, that number dropped to only 11.

This has been Cameron Lallana with International News.