
III. First-Hand Report from Syria

STATE SEN. RICHARD BLACK

‘No Chance That Was a Poison Gas Attack by the Syrian Government’

The following LaRouche PAC interview with Virginia State Senator Richard Black took place on April 10.

Matthew Ogden: We are joined today by State Senator Richard Black, who is from the 13th District of Virginia. He is also a combat veteran, served with the U.S. Marine Corps in Viet Nam, from 1963 to 1970, and then served in the Army as Judge Advocate General from 1976 to 1994. We are very happy to have you join us here today, Senator.

Sen. Richard Black: I’m very pleased to be with you today.

Ogden: Now I should tell our viewers that a little over one year ago, you personally visited Syria in the spring of 2016. While you were in Syria, you had the opportunity to meet with the leading members of the Syrian military; you toured the country, you visited the liberated city of Palmyra, the ancient city which was liberated from ISIS forces by the Syrian government, and you also ultimately had the chance to meet directly with President Bashar al Assad, along with his wife, the first lady of Syria. You had the interest to visit Syria, to visit the country, to be on the ground, to witness first-hand what the reality of the situation was there.

Now, in the days following the missile strike last week that was ordered by President Trump on the Syrian airbase in response to the alleged chemical warfare attack on civilians by the Syrian government, you have

been very vocal in your opposition to those attacks and your warnings about what the implications of further escalation could mean.

I want to display on the screen right now a tweet that you sent out immediately following those attacks, which has been retweeted over 3,000 times. That tweet reads as follows:

“If we go into Syria, we are entering World War three based upon information provided by terrorists. If we topple Assad, we help ISIS.” And you directed that to President Donald Trump.

So, to begin our discussion here today, I would just like to invite you to elaborate on the point you made in that tweet.

Black: Just today, word has come out in the press that Russia and Iran made a very clear statement that they will no longer simply stand aside when we decide that we are going to go in, and we are going to attack. They are going to respond. We are moving quite rapidly toward a

potential showdown between the United States and Russia. There are some people I believe who are looking for that to happen, and are trying to make it occur. And of course, it would be a monumental disaster. The people who are willing to risk that are basing it on the assumption that we can beat Russia militarily, and I think what they better remember is that both sides have roughly 1,500 fully operational, ready to go thermonuclear missiles, enough to essentially obliterate both Russia and the United States; so we are in a time of enor-



mous recklessness. You never would have seen this during the Cold War, when Americans down to the level of children, recognized the tremendous danger that the world faced from a thermonuclear war. We need to wake up very quickly.

Ogden: LaRouche PAC recently posted a statement on our website which contains a warning from Mr. LaRouche personally about who it is that is attempting to draw the United States back into this confrontation with Russia. It reads:

“Lyndon LaRouche warned today that there is a British run coup d’état in process against the Trump administration in the United States, which threatens to parlay the stupid and dangerous April 6th air-strike against Syria into a full-fledged thermonuclear confrontation with Russia and China... It’s the British bastards who duped Donald Trump into attacking Syria with their lies and false intelligence. We have to destroy this operation and all the British interests in the U.S.,” Mr. LaRouche stated. “We have to rally the U.S. to get back on the trajectory Trump had begun to chart for the country, of cooperation with Russia and China around American System economic policies, including FDR’s 1933 Glass Steagall.” And then the call to action is the following: “Trump and Putin should immediately hold a summit meeting to address the crisis, and thereby short circuit the whole British operation.”

What’s your response to that, Senator?

Black: I agree with it. I noticed that the British Foreign Minister has called on us to show a united front with respect to Russia. I don’t want a united front; I want the United States to talk with Russia. I don’t want some globalist cabal to do this. I think President Putin is a man who is very rational; he is not given to emotional outbursts or anything of that sort. He is very methodical, and I think Donald Trump probably needs to sit down with him, not in some sort of contentious thing, but simply look at things in an analytical fashion. *We do not need the British trying to push us into additional confrontation with Russia.* We are already far too far down that line where we are engaging in unnecessary confrontational behavior toward Russia, with absolutely no rational justification.

Let me just mention, just for your listeners to know: I am not a professional anti-war activist; I was wounded fighting in Viet Nam; my radio men were killed right



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Al Nusra Front executions. Image, as released by Al Nusra Front, posted at Threat Matrix.

beside me fighting with the First Marine Regiment. I was also a pilot, and I flew 269 combat missions, came back with bullet holes in the plane on four of those missions. I’ve probably seen as much combat and as fierce combat as anybody in Congress and most of the people in the Administration. So I come at it from a very rational and very logical standpoint, and I see the United States on an utterly suicidal path right now. My objective is to save the lives of not only Americans, but also of people in the Mideast. We are wiping the Christian communities out—communities that have been there for 2,000 years—and I don’t want to see Christians wiped out; I don’t want to see Muslims wiped out. I want to see a return to peace.

What Motive?

And so as I looked at this, you know, I was the top prosecutor in the Pentagon; I was the chief of the Criminal Law Division, and I got there through a career of prosecutions; and I’ll tell you that one of the things that a prosecutor does is he looks at a motive. If you’re looking at someone’s wife who has been killed, you ask, “did he just take out an insurance policy on her life?” What is the reason? There is something that always prompts these types of things. So, when I look at it, I look at it from the standpoint of a prosecutor. What would have been a possible motive for President Assad to launch a poison-gas attack on the terrorist positions?

Well, first of all, he didn’t launch them on the terrorist positions. The bombs that were dropped were targeted on a warehouse that was owned by the terrorists, and, assuming that the truth is that there were people killed in a gas attack—and I’m inclined to believe that, that there was gas released—the question is, what

would be the reason for President Assad to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory? He is winning the war on virtually every front. Now, if he were to use poison-gas—and we know that most of it was evacuated from the country—but if he were to use it, why would he use it on a handful of civilians walking out in the street? Why would he not use it against enemy armored formations, or against heavily entrenched terrorists? Those are the people that his troops are fighting against daily and taking casualties daily—why would he instead turn around and say, “Oh, we don’t have the weapons to use against the enemy troops; we’ll kill some women and kids.” This is so childishly irrational that you would think that any responsible person would understand it.

Another thing we know is that, under the protocols established between Syria, Russia and the United States, there is an agreement that Syria will advise the United States of any flights, so there is an arrangement that exists to prevent inadvertent problems. The Syrians notified the United States before they made their flight. Look: If you’re going to commit a war crime, you’re certainly not going to notify the other side and say, hey, by the way, we’re about to launch this attack. This was a standard bombing attack on a terrorist warehouse. What makes us think that the gas was not released from chemical weapons that were stored in the warehouse that Syria was bombing? Why did we suddenly jump to the conclusion that it was the bombs that released gas rather than the warehouse that was being bombed?

Now, some people say, “well we know it’s the Syrians who have gas.” Well, first of all, we don’t know for a fact that Syrians have gas any longer. What we do know for a fact is that CNN reported on September 13, 2016, which is just five months ago, that the U.S. had launched a major bombing attack on an ISIS poison gas factory in Mosul. This was such a large attack that we used B-52 bombers in doing it. We know without question, that the terrorists have poison gas. They have been using it throughout the war; they used it in a false flag attack on Damascus back in 2013, the one people keep referring to as the red line [violation], but in fact the [violation was done by] the terrorists working together with Turkish intelligence. So we know. I mean, just five months ago the U.S. bombed an ISIS poison gas factory in Mosul; and so how is it that we make our conclusion that this was an attack of gas from the Syrians? It just does not make any sense.

Also, something that as a prosecutor you look at is, “what’s the source of the evidence?” “What is the credibility of witnesses?” *All of the witnesses are terrorists*

that are associated with ISIS and Al Qaeda. There are no neutral people on the ground there. There are no Syrian government troops who are present where this bombing took place. Part of the evidence came from a group called the White Helmets. The White Helmets are an element of Al-Qaeda. And Americans need to remember: It was Al-Qaeda that killed 3,000 Americans on 9/11. How credible are witnesses who were involved in attacks that brought down the Twin Towers and part of the Pentagon on 9/11? You look at the people who are celebrating the [U.S. strike]: Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, the Saudi Arabians, John McCain—people who have been integrally involved in a whole series of wars that have inflamed the Mideast and have caused death and destruction of Sunnis, of Shi’ites, of Christians, people of a number of nations. These are the people who are cheering on the attack. And I think it’s very unfortunate. I oppose these attacks unequivocally. *I think there is no chance whatsoever that there was a poison gas attack launched by the Syrian government.*

The Battle Within the Trump Administration

Ogden: Now, during the campaign and even in his opening days as President of the United States, Donald Trump was clear, questioning why should we trust an intelligence community that got it so wrong with weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? What credibility do they have?

But now President Trump has ordered a missile strike against President Bashar al-Assad’s forces. We saw a complete pivot, a 180 degree turnaround. The question is what happened? What are your insights into what could possibly have happened behind the scenes to induce such a radical change in policy from the Trump Administration.

Black: I think there is a struggle going on within the Trump Administration. Probably the most valuable member of the Administration who was ousted was Michael Flynn. Michael Flynn was a very well informed, very intelligent individual. He was ousted for virtually no reason whatsoever; it was just all of these fallacious claims that were made, and they for whatever reason let him go. That was disastrous to Trump when it came to foreign affairs, because Michael Flynn understood—this would not have happened with him. I worry about the rapid turnover taking place in the Trump Administration. We’ve never seen any administration in my lifetime that has had this constant churning of people. K.T. McFarland has just been moved out of the White House. So I think we have this struggle going on between those who stand for peace and those who benefit from war.

There are certain things that earn enormous sums of money, and they are, essentially, war, oil and drugs. And the amount of money that flows from those things is just phenomenal. It is beyond the ability of most people to comprehend, but you're talking about tens, hundreds of billions of dollars that are made from wars, from the manipulation of the oil markets, and from the drug transactions flowing around the world. And so you have this group of people who are influenced by those people with the vast sums of money and influence.

On the other hand, on the side of peace, all you have is just ordinary citizens with social media and what little they can muster, and we use logic whereas they use the tools that Josef Goebbels used with the Nazis, the mass media, the things of that sort. They were saying that one of things that influenced President Trump was looking at an image of a small girl who had supposedly been killed by gas. Now that certainly is a sad thing; but I will tell you, I have seen, I have personally watched videos of at least a thousand Syrians beheaded, crucified, cannibalized, burned alive, all of these things. There are plenty of images. If you want images, I could show you an image, I don't care how hardened you are, it would certainly evoke an emotional response.

Muslim Brotherhood, Ambassador Ford

We have to get away from relying on propaganda and emotionalism to make foreign policy. We've got to come up with a rational foreign policy based on known facts, and we need to keep in mind also, there is the Deep State. During the years of Obama and Clinton, there have been people put in place within the Federal bureaucracy, and those people are ideologically committed. Many people were placed in intelligence positions and foreign policy positions who are associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. And so the Muslim Brotherhood has its impact on our foreign policy. This is a very, very bad thing. Interestingly, the President of Egypt, who is one of the finest leaders in the world, in my personal opinion, had a wonderful visit with Donald Trump a week ago, and it was very warm; it was a tremendous visit. He went back to Egypt. When Syria was bombed, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi put out a statement condemning the bombing. This shows he is a man who is driven by logic, by rational thought, and not by simple emotionalism or knee-jerk reactions. We have got to get a firm hand on foreign policy, or we are going to stumble our way into a nuclear war.

Ogden: The warning is coming from various quar-

ters that this so-called deep state apparatus that you just raised, stay-behinds from the Obama and other administrations, that this apparatus is now in the process of waging a slow motion soft coup against the Trump Administration, and that this is threatening to split the Administration apart and severely weaken it, if not bring it down. Is that something you see as a danger here? And I should say you were a supporter of President Trump during the campaign, perhaps because of his opposition to these regime-change wars, but so many of his supporters are very horrified at what they now see coming out of this Administration in terms of this radical change in military policy toward Syria.

Black: I was perhaps as prominent as anyone in the state of Virginia in my support for Donald Trump. I gave the major speech for him in Richmond, right after his nomination. I gave the major speech for him in Leesburg, Virginia when he made his final swing the night before Election Day. I've been a strong supporter of his. But a portion of that was that I believed that he was going to draw back from the policy of regime change and incessant war that's bankrupted this country. We're \$20 trillion in debt. If we were a company, someone would call the debt and petition the bankruptcy court, and we'd be thrown into bankruptcy tomorrow. So we don't have the money to afford to be fighting, sending our military as mercenaries for Saudi Arabia and Qatar and Turkey and all of these other filthy regimes that are truly as brutal and barbaric as any on the face of the earth.

Something interesting: Ambassador Robert Ford was involved; he was actually instrumental in creating the revolution against the Syrian government. When there were demonstrations, he and the French ambassador broke diplomatic protocols. They went to one of the major cities where there was a demonstration under way. They circumvented the government forces that had blocked off the city, and they met with the demonstrators, and they pledged firm American support for the demonstrators, and this as much as anything turned peaceful demonstrations into an armed revolution.

Ambassador Ford was quoted in the newspaper just today, saying—now that we know that the terrorists have gotten away with another false flag attack, just as they did in 2013—he's predicting many more [attacks “by Assad”]... How does he know this? He knows this because he knows that once Al-Qaeda and ISIS get away with a false flag attack, and they know that the media will quickly pick it up, they're bound to do it again. And, unfortunately, I think some of these attacks are being planned with the help of elements within the covert intel-



Flickr/U.S. Department of State

U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford talks with Syrian refugees at Islahiye Refugee Camp in Turkey, January 24, 2013.

ligence communities of several countries, some of them Western countries. And I think Ambassador Ford understands our reaction to this; the rash reaction that we had was simply an invitation for the terrorists to stage another similar attack and to draw us into the war more deeply than we are now.

Stop Arming the Terrorists

Ogden: My final question for you calls for one more insight that I think you are uniquely positioned to give. What is the actual solution to the crisis in Syria? If you were to have the opportunity to sit down with President Trump right now and say, “What you did was a disaster. Here is the only way it can be cleaned up and fixed, and here is how we can actually bring peace to Syria and to that entire region of the Middle East and North Africa”—What would you say?

Black: The first thing is to recognize who the parties to the conflict are. There are essentially two parties. One is the Syrian government with its allies. The other is al-Qaeda with its allies. There are the terrorists and there is the legitimate, duly elected, popularly elected government of Syria. That is, the first thing is to understand who the enemy is. The enemy is not the President who has been elected by some eighty percent of the Syrian people. It is the terrorists. We need to recognize that in the six years we have been trying to overthrow their government, there has not been a single coup attempt against President Assad. Even though he is not heavily defended. He has rather light security. We need to recognize the people of Syria are totally loyal to him. There are terrorists out there that are on the other side, but probably eighty percent of Syria are under government control and are delighted to be there; and of the ones

under terrorist control, probably two thirds of them wish they could be under government control. So we need to understand who is the enemy, who is the legitimate government of Syria. That is number one.

Now, the United States, beginning around 2011, 2012, set up terrorist training camps in Jordan, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. We train terrorists from many different Islamic states; we pay them; we give them arms training, and then we send them to units, and essentially they go onto an open market. I recall reading a comment from an ISIS leader and he said, “Where do you think we get our people? They come from the training camps the Americans set up”! We are training the troops that are fighting against Syria and fighting against the world. We need to stop arming the terrorists. I have discovered that all of the Toyota vehicles that are used over there—they mount canon on them and it’s a rather inexpensive military vehicle—they’re made in San Antonio, Texas. They’re not made in Japan. We ship them over. There is one of the models that comes with a very heavy radiator suspension and so forth, and then they go to Croatia where they have canon mounted on them, and then back through Turkey, and then they’re fed out to all the terrorist organizations. We need to stop sending the trucks.

We also have been providing TOW anti-tank missiles. When Russia went in and sent their expeditionary forces there, it turned the war dramatically. The war would have probably been over in a year and a half. The United States rushed vast supplies of TOW anti-tank missiles and blunted the advance of Syrian military forces. If we hadn’t sent those TOW anti-tank missiles, the war would be over, the refugees would be flooding back to Syria, people would be rebuilding, the economy would be thriving. So we need to stop that.

Another thing we need to do. We have placed absolutely inhuman sanctions on Syria. Not only are they sanctions against what you can send, but we shut down the financial transaction system, so they can’t move money around, and as a consequence the Syrian people are being deprived of food. It costs half a week’s wages to buy one pound of potatoes for a family. So obviously, we’re causing widespread hunger, which is illegal under the Law of Land Warfare. Also, we are blocking medications from getting in. Cancer medications are blocked. Prosthetic devices are being blocked. Again, a clear violation of international law, but we do it because the Deep State is determined that they are going to bring down this small nation of twenty-three million people.

The Syrians have fought one of the most heroic wars in the history of mankind. Twenty-three million

people—and they have fought against the United States, Britain, France, NATO, the Gulf States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait. A huge array of the wealthiest countries on Earth, and they have withstood them for six years. They did not do that without having confidence in their government and in their army, and unity among the people. So we need to stop arming the terrorists. As you know, Representative Tulsi Gabbard, liberal Democrat from Hawaii, and Senator Rand Paul, conservative Republican from Kentucky, have each introduced a bill called the “Stop Arming Terrorists Act.” Can you imagine that we have to introduce legislation to stop our government from arming the people who brought down the Twin Towers on 9/11?

It is stunning. It is an act of treason of breathtaking magnitude, and we need to stop it.

We’ve Got to Win this Battle

Ogden: One year ago, LaRouche PAC produced a documentary called “Project Phoenix: the Program for the Reconstruction of Syria,” which lays out the vision for the economic development of Syria as a hub for economic activity for the entire region and as a bridge between cultures. One of the major aspects of this was that Syria is uniquely situated to join the New Silk Road economic development project which has been initiated by China and many other nations. This is something Syria should have access to.

Black: Yes, there is plenty of wealth to be made. If the global oligarchs want to become wealthy, they can back something like the Silk Road, but it won’t be just to the oligarchs; it will be to the common people, whether they be in the Middle East, Africa, the United States, or South America—but today one of our major exports is war. I look at the countries that make and create wars, and I’m sorry to say that ours is one of the principal ones. Probably after us, the one that threatens the greatest amount of warfare is our dear ally the Turks, who are trying to reconstruct the Ottoman Empire and who have flooded arms and vicious jihadists across their border into Syria. I really hope and I pray that we will have a change in the course that we have taken, because it leads ultimately to the third world war. I do not want my children dying in a war for the global oligarchs who will not send their children, but they will send our children off to die, to lose their arms, their legs, their sight. I’m finished with it. I’m not going to participate in that again.

I know a lot of people are shy about making a call to a Congressman’s office, but... we need to rise up. Do it for your children. Do it for your grandchildren. Do it for



Office of Representative Gabbard
Rep. Tulsi Gabbard at the ceremony of her promotion to Major on October 12, 2015.

your husband, your wife. We do not need to have the nation mobilized for the third world war. When you call your representative you’ll get the congressional switchboard, and you just say, “please give me Senator Tim Kaine,” or “give me Congressman Comstock’s office,” they will send you to that office. You will get one of the assistants in the office, and they’re not going to argue or fight with you. Simply say, “I want to register my strong opposition to the U.S. attack on Syria,” and they will say thank you very much, they will put an x on the box, and then that will go to the Congressman, and the Congressman will say, “Wow, there are a lot of people against this,” and it will have an effect.

Ogden: Do you have any concluding words for us?

Black: I applaud you for the work you are doing on the Silk Road. I think it’s a very good initiative—and thank you so much for mobilizing people. It is much easier to stop a war than it is to go through a war. I go down to Bethesda, Walter Reed Hospital, and it just breaks my heart. I walk past so many people: young, vibrant, men and women who are being wheeled around, and they’ve lost their legs, they’ve lost their arms, they’ve lost their eyesight—and for what? And I bless them, I love them all, I respect them. They followed their nation’s call, but when the wrong people are calling and they are calling for the wrong reasons, we’ve got to stop them.

So, thank you so much for letting me be on, today. And let’s all fight. We’ve got to win this battle. This is essential.