

STATE SEN. RICHARD BLACK

There Was No Chemical Attack in Syria

William Wertz of LaRouche PAC interviewed Virginia State Senator Richard Black on April 11, 2018. The transcript follows.

Will Wertz: I am Will Wertz with the LaRouche Political Action Committee. We are here today to interview Virginia State Senator Richard Black, who is a retired Colonel in the U.S. Army. He also served as a Major in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps, and later headed the Army's Criminal Law Division in the Pentagon.

He has had extraordinary experience in Syria, which he has visited a number of times. The purpose of this interview is to get Senator Black's views on the current crisis surrounding the allegation of a chemical weapons attack in East Ghouta, in the city of Douma, Syria.

Sen. Richard Black: I've been watching this very closely—I think all of us have. We are concerned because President Trump has surrounded himself by war cabinet. When he chose John Bolton as National Security Advisor—John Bolton is as extreme as anybody that you can find in the foreign policy arena—he chose someone who is very much an extremist when it comes to war. Bolton was one of the individuals who promoted the invasion of Iraq, which turned out to be based on false premises, and yet, here he is again. And he is an individual who is likely to call for war in many circumstances.

We have had this situation boiling up. It started several weeks ago, when the British began an hysterical media campaign, saying that the Syrian Army was going to use poison gas against the terrorists in the East Ghouta suburbs. This is a very large area, deep in the suburbs of Damascus, which is a sprawling city. The terrorists have held it since about 2012, and built a



Virginia State Senator Richard Black, left, and William Wertz.

LPAC TV

system of underground tunnels that they have used to keep control of the area. Whenever the Syrian government would try to restore order, the terrorists would emerge from their tunnels and ambush and slaughter anyone trying to restore order. So the terrorists have continued to hold it for all this time.

The British claimed that the Syrian Army, which had massed to finally eliminate the terrorist control of this Ghouta pocket, was going to use poisonous gas—and that it was going to happen imminently. As it turned out, the Syrian Army, led by the Tiger Forces, by the Republican Guard, and by other very elite groups, managed to burst through the enemy ranks by attacking from unexpected quarters, and rolled over the terrorists with such rapidity, that the Army was able to capture the major, terrorist-controlled chemical weapons facility. This apparently was the facility that was to be used to create incidents, in which the terrorists would fire on civilians, and then claim that it was the Syrian military forces attacking civilians. Once the terrorists lost this laboratory, they didn't have anything else to fight with.

Before long, a major part of the entire Ghouta pocket of terrorists simply evaporated. There was only one terrorist group left, Jaysh al-Islam, still holding the city of



SANA

Syrian Arab Army units in the southeastern countryside of Hama after defeating a group of Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists.

Douma. A little farther away there is another pocket, which is still totally held by ISIS. But all of the action right now is at Douma.

The Syrian Army attacked Douma and had similar success, breaking through all of the barriers that were there. Finally, Jaysh al-Islam agreed to conduct peace talks, and an agreement was reached that they would be permitted to relocate some of their people to other rebel-held areas. They asked that their severely wounded be evacuated by bus. The Syrian government sent in air-conditioned buses and evacuated the casualties first, followed by the fighters. They were not permitted to bring along their heavy weapons, but they could carry their side arms, automatic rifles, and so forth.

The evacuation was taking place: The battle for Ghouta was won. It was essentially over, and it was just a matter of arranging to evacuate the terrorist fighters. It has been the policy of Syria to cause as little damage to property and as little damage to human life as possible. And consequently, rather than duke it out to the bitter end, they simply allowed the terrorists to evacuate. They've done this throughout the war.

There have been a very small number of casualties; I think the United Nations estimate is about

sent four civilian aircraft into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, slaughtering 3,000 Americans on 9/11; that's what the White Helmets are part of. The White Helmets staged a provocative incident, portraying it as a poison gas attack. They claimed it was a sarin gas attack. Sarin gas is a colorless, odorless gas. If sarin gas were here in this room, today, we wouldn't know it, until we fell over. And yet, the claims are that people smelled chlorine.

Clearly, the terrorists don't entirely understand the

chemistry of what they're working with. They mix up what chlorine gas is, which has a very strong characteristic aroma, and sarin gas.

But they made this claim, and immediately, just on cue, all of the major NATO powers said, "We've got to attack Syria." They never said, "We need to find out whether an attack occurred; and if it did, who caused it." It was just automatic—"OK, we've got to attack Syria."

It's clearly a pretext. I suspect it was a pretext that the British were involved in, because of their hysterics several weeks before the chemical laboratory was captured by the Syrian Army.

Now, here we are, on the verge of attacking Syria, *and it's not even clear that there was a chemi-*



white_helmets.org

British-financed, terrorist-allied White Helmets.



cal attack! There is a very credible—and we don’t know for sure—but a very credible fellow, an English-speaking physician from the major hospital in Douma, who said, “We’ve never had any casualties brought in; we’ve never had any reports of poison gas, or anything of that sort.” Now, if a chemical attack had occurred, certainly you would have had a flood of casualties—even if, let’s say—their initial report was I think forty people had been killed. Even with that you’d have had a flood of people being brought into the hospital, and everybody would have known about it. Well, here’s this physician reporting that he hadn’t heard anything about such an event.

We don’t even know that this happened! This may just simply be, much like Khan Sheikhoun, which was a propaganda ploy to get the United States to fire missiles, which we did—President Trump fired missiles. It’s not clear, but we could be on the verge of attacking the good guys to help the bad guys. The final pocket of terrorists is being cleared out, and not by combat, but by emptying it out with buses, evacuating these people.

The residents, the people who live there, by the way, are ecstatic that they’re finally released! They’ve been held hostage since 2012. And they’re all reporting about how they were enslaved. Jaysh al-Islam was famous for

building steel cages, putting women in them, and wherever they were staging an attack on Damascus by firing mortars or artillery, putting these cages filled with these women hostages, so that the Syrian Army couldn’t respond in kind.

Now the terrorists are gone: The war for East Ghouta is over, and there remains only one small pocket still totally controlled by ISIS. And the United States is considering going in, and attacking the legitimate, duly elected, Syrian government, in order to prevent them from attacking this last pocket of ISIS in Damascus! *The idea that we would align ourselves with ISIS against the elected government, which clearly represents the people, is just astounding!*

British Lies and Manipulation

Wertz: Two questions: You mentioned the British role in this, and of course, the British were involved in the “dodgy dossier” that brought us to Iraq, under Tony Blair. We now have the Steele dossier which has been and is being used against the President of the United States, in the last year, which has unverified claims in it.

Black: False claims. I think most people, by this time, would say if you can’t verify it after all this time, they’re lies!

Wertz: Right. And then you have, the Skripal case, again involving the British, who refused to even allow a transparent investigation.

Black: And there is an international treaty that deals with how you deal with these things, and they refuse to abide by it. So it’s basically, “It’s our claim and you accept it. Don’t look behind the screen.” You know, “Ignore the man behind the screen.”

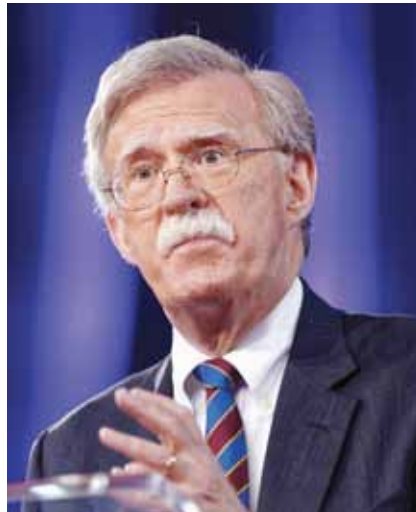
Wertz: What do you think is occurring in terms of the British role in all of these situations? Of course, what’s been pointed out, even by the Secretary General’s Special Envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, during the UN debate yesterday, are the international implications of a strike on Syria, when there are Russians present in Syria, who are vulnerable to such a strike. The Russians have warned that there will be consequences if there are Russian casualties, either accidentally or not. So, we’re at a very, very dangerous situation, and the British are playing a very perfidious role in this whole situation. What’s your sense of this?

Black: Let me tell you, Will, right now, the Western world—and the British are certainly instigators in this, but we certainly are not without blame; the French are certainly not—we have maneuvered ourselves to a point, where I think the degree of risk is as high as it was when the Archduke of Austria was assassinated, causing an explosion into the First World War—enormous bloodshed, suffering, destruction. And the First World War, of course, was sort of just a prelude to and laid the groundwork for the Second World War, and the vast destruction that took place.

We outspend Russia 11 to 1 on defense. Our defense budget is so big, that it equals the combined total of the next fourteen largest nations in terms of defense spending: Russia, China, Germany, Korea, and France; it just goes on and on. We have a *gargantuan* defense budget, and so we are more than a match for the Russians. The Russians, while they have a fine army, and fine military, it's much smaller. It just can't compare.

However, where we do have equality with Russia is with nuclear power. What makes the situation even worse today than the First World War, is that both the United States and Russia have roughly 1,500 nuclear weapons that are set to go, like that. And there are roughly 7,000 on either side, which are capable of being used in short order. That is enough probably to destroy two-thirds of humanity. And certainly the Western world, as we know it, would be practically annihilated: All of our major cities. Right here in Virginia, Naval Station Norfolk, the biggest naval base on Earth, would simply be gone. This Loudoun County which has huge Internet traffic would be gone. The Pentagon would be gone. New York City totally gone! It would totally be erased from the Earth!

We have people like Na-



cc/Michael Vadon
U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton.

tional Security Advisor John Bolton, who are sufficiently reckless, to where, for their self-interest, they are willing to risk the death of perhaps 2 billion people, just simply purging them from the face of the Earth. It is incumbent on the President to recognize the extraordinary danger that we face.

We have been building up to this. Many of us elected Donald Trump on his promise that he was going to sort of normalize our relations with Russia; he was going to stop trying to overthrow President Assad, and work with the Syrians; he was going to downgrade the importance of NATO, and he was

going to give up regime change. Trump has done a lot of the things he promised to do, *but he has not done one thing that he promised to do in foreign affairs.*

Well, you could take the exception—he was always very hostile towards the Iranian deal, and so he was honest about that. That's probably the one thing that he's focussed on most. Gen. Michael Flynn had been to be President Trump's National Security Advisor. Michael Flynn would have been a godsend for this nation. He knew where the skeletons are buried, he understood what was going on, and I think he recognized the importance of drawing back from nuclear war.

We have come to a point, probably more dangerous than any time in my lifetime—and I'm counting the time, when as kids we used to have air raid drills, and we'd get under our school desks, and our teachers would tell us to cover our eyes, so we wouldn't be blinded by the blast, and cover the back of our necks, so something wouldn't hit us and break our necks. People understood nuclear war then, because we had dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, and they understood what it could do. Today, it's sort of vague, it's very distant.



U.S. Air Force/Staff Sgt. Jonathan Lovelady
U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

But the nuclear weapons that we have today make the ones we used on Japan look like firecrackers. They're nothing! So we are at a fantastically perilous juncture in our history, and someone needs to take control of it, and say, "Let's pull back from the precipice."

Pushing Trump into War

Wertz: You raised the case of General Flynn, and President Trump's intentions for better relations with Russia, and his opposition to regime change. It seems very much, that he's been thwarted from carrying that out, by the British-instigated coup attempt against his administration, which has been going on for over a year, really, as he said yesterday, going all the way back to shortly after he was nominated.

Black: You're right. The thing is, in evaluating, you have to remember that he was immediately placed on the defensive. They made these wild, unfounded claims that "Russia is coming! Russia is coming!" They claimed Russia spent \$100,000 on Facebook ads! Half of them for Trump and half of them for Hillary Clinton! Oh, that's going to change the world isn't it? My gosh, if that could determine the outcome of an election, you and I could go out and raise \$100,000 and we could change the outcome of an election!

It was just so absurd. And here, they have investigated and run this thing down *ad nauseam* to where people are utterly sick of it. But it immediately put Trump on the defensive. They knew that if General Flynn didn't go, that we would have tensions go down and that meant a lot of people who deal in the oil markets could potentially lose a lot of money, people who run drugs across the border could lose money there. And, most of all, the most profitable of all vices is war, and if we didn't have war there were people who were going to lose untold billions of dollars.

Almost every major corporation profits from war, and so Michael Flynn had to go because he was the most dangerous person to their agenda. And then they continued to make these allegations and put Trump on the defensive to where Trump had to appear to be hostile towards Russia. If he seemed friendly, they'd say, "Aha! We told you that he really was going to normalize relations with Russia. He must be in their pocket." Well, no, he wasn't "in their pocket," he just recognized that it's better not to have a nuclear war.

The United States has been at war in the Middle East for seventeen years. That is longer than the First

World War, the Second World War, and the Vietnam War combined. The grand total: We have been at war longer than the First World War, the Second World War and the Vietnam War combined. How long are we going to fight over there, and how can somebody demonstrate for you and for me one single thing that the people of the United States have ever gained from this? We've added seven trillion dollars to the national debt.

We made a big thing about how much President Obama added to the national debt. Fair enough. But nobody bothered to say, "Well, wait a minute. This wasn't all just his personal inclinations. Seven trillion dollars out of a \$20-21 trillion debt is from these useless, stupid wars that we've fought." And anybody who says, "Well, we had to do it because we had to suppress terrorism,"—when we started off, the terrorists amounted to hundreds of people. Before we were finished, they were launching 20, 30, 40 mechanized armored divisions. They were taking over capitals of countries; they had expanded, controlling an area larger than many countries, and slaughtering hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people.

Where is the benefit? What have we achieved? Believe me; nobody loves our troops more than I do. I've been wounded in action. I volunteered over and over again for front line combat and I have tremendous respect for the guys who go over. They believe in their country, they believe in what we're doing. God bless them! My heart breaks for the ones who suffer. But we get the prosthetic devices, we get the caskets, while Saudi Arabia gets the oil money and Great Britain gets the empire. What do the American people get? What do we get out of all this stuff? Nothing!

Ripping up the Constitution

Wertz: Two events have just occurred and you have been addressing both of these. One was the raid, organized by Special Counsel Robert Mueller on the office and home of President Trump's personal attorney. Trump said this was an attack on the country and the values we stand for. He, again, called it a witch-hunt, and said that the client-lawyer privilege is dead. This raid is part of this entire British operation against the President which you've described, and occurs at the exact same time as the crisis in Syria. As you said, President Trump has been put in a defensive position: He's attacked for even calling President Putin and congratulating him on his election victory, for wanting to have a summit with Putin and good relations with Russia.

DOJ: Michael Cohen 'under criminal investigation'

By Helga Koloski, Kara Scoworth and John Avon, CNN
Updated 10:43 AM ET Tue April 10, 2018



Michael Cohen, President Trump's attorney.

On the other hand, President Trump has been forced into a position where he says "I'm tougher on the Russians than my predecessor, Obama." He's being pressured to launch an attack, which is contrary to his own inclinations and contrary to the interests of the United States of America and of the world. And at the same time he comes under this attack from Mueller, which some people, including Alan Dershowitz, the attorney, who's a Democrat, are saying that this represents a dangerous day for American constitutional rights.

Black: This whole thing is a frontal attack on the U.S. Constitution. The Sixth Amendment to the Constitution guarantees people the right to counsel. The right to counsel, since the earliest days of the republic, has been assured by the idea of confidentiality. If you are going to have counsel, effective assistance of counsel, you have to share all of your information with them.

Alan Dershowitz is a Democrat. He has a reputation as a liberal Democrat from long ago. He was an Obama supporter, he was a Hillary supporter, but to his credit, he believes in the United States Constitution. He is absolutely distraught at what has happened. He said, "Where is the ACLU?" The ACLU would, he said, be screaming to high heaven, if this had this been a raid on the attorneys of Hillary Clinton, or Obama, or any other famous Democrat. You wouldn't be able to turn any radio or TV station without hearing somebody from the ACLU. It shows the very rapid erosion of the Constitution in the United States.

I think it is very dangerous, and who knows?—if

they knew everything about you or me or any other American, they could find something that we have done. Years ago, back in the days of black and white TV, there was a TV show in which a bet was placed with a guy, the premise being, you'll get \$10,000 if you don't commit a crime for one week. And the guy went for a week and they had him on the next week, and they said, "Well, it looks like you beat us." This is back in the days when people smoked. They then asked the guy, "What do you plan to do with all your money?" The host offers the guy a pack of cigarettes. The guy shuffles one out and lights up. The guy says, "Well, I might do this or that." And the host says, "I don't think so, because you just broke the law." The guy's jaw dropped, and he said, "What do you mean?" The host said "Federal law says that when you open a pack of cigarettes you have to break the stamp."

Everybody, no matter how diligent they are, everybody breaks laws, because we are a nation where almost everything is regulated, everything you do, and everything you say. They *know*, if they get into information that's held by Trump's attorney, there is something, there *is* something. We've got a special prosecutor, who does not feel constrained to find out certain things, and if they're not there, then dismiss it. The assault on the Sixth Amendment is the most blatant. I've been a lawyer since the 1970s, and I've never seen this happen before; a raid on an attorney's office and a fishing expedition to get at the client.

The Sixth Amendment is being torn down, just as the First Amendment has been torn down, the Fourth Amendment has been torn down, and the Tenth Amendment is gone. So much of what we grew up with as constitutional protections are destroyed. What is going on, with the search of Trump's records, is clearly unconstitutional in my view, and is immoral, and it is an attack on the Constitution.

Final Advice

Wertz: As we conclude, I would like to to give you an opportunity, perhaps, to address President Trump. What would you say to him now, in terms of the Syria situation, in particular, but more generally as well?

Black: I think I would tell him, "Look, there are certain areas where I can give you tremendous credit." Some of the economic things he's done I think have been very shrewd, very wise. The worst thing of all, though, is foreign policy. He has let foreign policy lead

us to the brink of the third world war. His campaign promises *were exactly on point*. We don't really have any significant differences with Russia—I mean, not ones that are fundamental to the American national interest, except for stopping nuclear war.

That is the one national interest. NATO already spends four times as much as Russia does on its defense budget, and he's complaining they're not spending enough. Well, if four times isn't enough, how many times is? We need to diminish the role of NATO. Regime change

needs to be absolutely out. Right now the United States has occupied, with our forces, a third of Syria, and we've done it secretly. Remember no boots on the ground? We've now got about 6,000 troops on the ground; a couple of them were killed just yesterday or the day before. We have a minimum of 12 American bases on sovereign Syrian territory. We're trying to redraw the map of Syria in a way that will *absolutely guarantee* the next war.

He should go back to what he said: We will work with Syria; we will end the war and do away with regime change. All of the things he campaigned on were great ideas, but I would give him a zero on foreign policy right now: I think it's very poor. He has surrounded himself with,—he always said I know how to pick the very best people. He has the worst war cabinet. At this point we look at General Mattis as being the dove of the bunch.

We've got Nikki Haley. She's supposed to be our top diplomat. You never hear her when she's not screaming hysterically for war. What kind of a diplomat is doing that? A dip-



U.S. Navy/Ronald Gutridge
Trident missile launched from an Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine.

everybody else can go and run the family business. He needs to surround himself with people who want to carry out his agenda. The people he has in foreign policy right now are people who are dead set against his agenda. That's what I would tell him: "You need somebody who believes in what you campaigned on, and that person needs to be your top advisor, not somebody like John Bolton who hated everything that you ever said on the campaign trail."

So that would be my advice. I'm not the President, unfortunately!

Wertz: I want to thank you very much for this interview.

Black: Thanks very much. It's always good to see you, Will. I appreciate all the things you're doing. It's groups like yours, and all of the individuals who go out and network with their friends on social media. Spread the film that you're going to put out on line, that's where our power lies. I wish you the best.

Wertz: Same to you.



Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.