

**US MISSILE ATTACK ON SYRIA:
THE ACT AND ITS AFTERMATH**

John F COPPER

EAI Background Brief No. 1246

Date of Publication: 18 May 2017

Executive Summary

1. In early April 2017, US President Donald Trump ordered a missile attack on a Syrian air base in response to reports that the Assad regime had used poison gas as a weapon against local men, women and children.
2. The raid was very successful. It destroyed a number of aircraft and other facilities on the base.
3. There were profound domestic and foreign responses to President Trump's decision. Most were positive.
4. President Trump's popularity rose as most Americans approved of the action. Trump was seen as decisive and presidential. The move helped Trump politically.
5. Most foreign countries approved of the attack. Many lauded Trump's decision. The action enhanced President Trump's foreign policymaking reputation.
6. Russia, Iran and North Korea did not approve of the action and after the attack criticised and even threatened the United States.
7. China's President Xi Jinping was attending a meeting with President Trump at the time. The meeting went on. US-China relations subsequently improved.
8. Questions arose after the event concerning the Trump administration's strategy vis-à-vis Syria, particularly whether the United States sought regime change there, how this would affect US relations with Russia, Iran and North Korea, and generally what would come next.
9. North Korea was the biggest problem that emerged after the missile attack.