

# Syria and Chemical Weapons: 2013

20130102

**2 January 2013** A political adviser to the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Bassam al-Dada, tells the Turkish state-run Anatolia news agency that the Syrian opposition is capable of putting together components of chemical weapons and using them if necessary, but they would not use them first.[1]

A day or so later a senior officer from the FSA, Brigadier Selim Idris, tells the Anatolia news agency that news reports that the FSA has chemical weapons are not true. Idris is quoted as saying: 'In our faith, we can't use such a weapon', and: 'we will not try to acquire them, will definitely not produce them or facilitate their production'.[2]

[1] [No author listed], 'Free Syrian Army claims chemical weapons capability', *Russia Today*, 2 January 2013; Atul Aneja, 'Can assemble chemical arms - Syrian rebels', *The Hindu*, 4 January 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'FSA denies claims it has chemical weapons', *World Bulletin*, 4 January 2013.

20130104

**H 4 January 2013** [Allegation of use in Adra (sometimes reported as Daraya), not widely reported, not clear who made the initial allegation.]

20130104

**4 January 2013** Patriot missiles from NATO allies are being deployed to Turkey [see 4 December 2012] to help defend against potential attacks by missiles or aircraft from Syria. The US European Command says troops and equipment have started arriving in southern Turkey with Germany and the Netherlands making preparations to transport their Patriot batteries in the coming days. Six battery units are scheduled to be operational by the end of January.[1]

[1] [No author listed], 'Nato deploying Patriot missiles to Turkey-Syria border', *BBC News*, 4 January 2013

20130108

**8 January 2013** In the UK, the *Independent* reports that General Sir David Richards, head of the British armed forces, has raised concerns at the prospect of Syrian chemical weapons falling into the hands of what the paper describes as 'extreme Islamists'. The newspaper reports that an exercise carried out by US and Jordanian special forces relating to stockpile security was attended by members of the SAS [UK special forces] as observers.

The newspaper also makes reference to the alleged attack in Homs [see 23 December 2012] and suggests that General Adnan Sillu, a defector [see 19 September 2012], described in the article as 'the former head of the Syria's chemical weapons programme', has claimed that Sarin was the agent used there. The article quotes Dr Sally Leivesley, described as 'an independent chemical and biological analyst', saying: 'If there really was an attack involving Sarin, then one would expect a significant number of fatalities. From what one hears about the symptoms it's possible that a harassing agent rather than a nerve agent was used'.[1]

[1] Kim Sengupta, 'Britain and US fear Syrian chemical weapons could fall into the hands of extreme Islamist groups', *Independent* (London), 8 January 2013.

20130110

**10 January 2013** In London, on the floor of the House of Commons, the UK Foreign Secretary makes a statement about the situation in Syria. In the question and answer period that follows he is asked whether, while engaging with the

opposition forces, 'have we sought to extract an undertaking from them that any store of chemical weapons discovered will be handed over for destruction so that it cannot possibly fall into the hands of al-Qaeda?' The Secretary of State's response includes: 'We have made it very clear to the national coalition that we would expect any future Government of Syria to join and to adhere to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. ... I hope that one thing that will happen in a future Syria will be the destruction and disposal of those weapons.'[1]

He adds, in response to another question: 'it was quite right that the United States—and we joined them in this—sent a particularly strong message to the regime about the use of chemical weapons. It may be that the communication of such a strong message helped to inhibit the use for now of such weapons, so it is right that we send a particularly powerful message on that'.[2]

There is a further exchange on chemical weapons: 'There are reports that at the end of November the findings of Israeli intelligence led the United States, Russia and China to put pressure on President Assad to cease his programme of arming missiles with chemical weapons. Does the Foreign Secretary

Please note that this is a snapshot of an unfunded work in progress. It has been circulated in draft form in order to assist understanding of developments in Syria as they unfold. Entries are updated on a regular basis, therefore, *please check with the author before quoting or citing as more information on any particular event may have become available*. Comments are welcome. Copies of the chronology will be made available via <<http://www.cbw-events.org.uk/syria.html>>.

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## Entry formatting

As this is a working draft there are a number of types of entry: finished entries, based on the information available at the time; those have been put in place as a holding entries; and those containing something that needs checking or adding to. The entries in the above categories appear thus:

**00 XXXXXXX 0000** An entry considered ready for publication — i.e., with content and cross-referencing complete, although still subject to change if new information becomes available.

**H 00 XXXXXXX 0000** [Holding entry, essentially rough information to help build the details of the chronology and needing further work — text is included in square brackets.]

**Q 00 XXXXXXX 0000** An entry containing something needing checking factually (or further information to be obtained), or which contains suggested edits to be considered. May also include changes or corrections that should be entered into the *CBW Events* source files.

think that programme will resume?’ The Foreign Secretary responds: ‘The [questioner] knows that I cannot comment on intelligence matters in the House, but I can say that at the end of November the United States did issue the warning we discussed earlier, and indeed I brought it up in the House as well [see 4 December 2012]. As I made clear at the time, we had a reason to do that and to give a specific warning against the use of chemical weapons. I know that, due to the history in relation to Iraq, whenever Governments assert that there is no doubt about the existence of chemical or other weapons, people are entitled to their scepticism, but there can be no doubt about the existence of such weapons in Syria or that the Assad regime has deliberately manufactured and stockpiled large quantities of such weapons. If there was any chance that the Assad regime would survive in future, I am sure that it would continue that manufacturing and stockpiling’.[3]

Asked ‘Is there currently any assistance the UK could provide to Syrian groups to detect or guard against the use of chemical or biological weapons?’, his response includes: ‘We are currently unable to supply chemical detection equipment to opposition groups in Syria because of the terms of the [EU] embargo. That is a good illustration of an area where flexibility might be needed in future’.[4]

[1] William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 10 January 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 556, c491-92, in response to a question from Julian Lewis MP.

[2] William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 10 January 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 556, c492, in response to a question from Mike Gapes MP.

[3] William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 10 January 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 556, c495, in response to a question from Louise Ellman MP.

[4] William Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 10 January 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 556, c495, in response to a question from Andrew Stephenson MP.

20130110

**10 January 2013** In Washington, DC, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin E. Dempsey host a press briefing.[1]

Asked whether there was anything the US could do militarily to stop the Assad regime from using chemical weapons, General Dempsey’s response includes: ‘the act of preventing the use of chemical weapons would be almost unachievable ... [because] you would have to have such clarity of intelligence, you know, persistent surveillance, you’d have to actually see it before it happened, and that’s, that’s unlikely, to be sure. On the other hand, you know, our collaboration with regional partners, Turkey, Israel — I talked to my Lebanese counterpart yesterday, Jordan. We’ve got a planning element in Jordan. You know, messaging, such as our president did, that — that the use of chemical weapons would — those that would be responsible would be held accountable. I think that Syria must understand by now that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. And to that extent, it provides a deterrent value. But preventing it, if they decide to use it, I think we would be reacting’.

Asked ‘And do you still believe that the sarin would expire after 60 days, after mixed?’, General Dempsey’s response includes: ‘That’s what — what the scientists tell us. I’d still be reluctant to handle it myself’.

[1] United States, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), ‘Press Briefing by Secretary Panetta and General Dempsey in the Pentagon Briefing Room’, News Transcript, 10 January 2013

20130115

**15 January 2013** A blog on the *Foreign Policy* website claims that a key source of US government information about an alleged chemical weapons attack in Homs [see 23 December 2012; see also 8 January] was a cable from U.S.

consul general in Istanbul, Scott Frederic Kilner. This cable was sent a week or so before and was revealed to the journalist by an administration official who described it as making a ‘compelling case’ that a material called ‘Agent 15’ had been used. The blog indicates that the consulate’s investigation was ‘facilitated by BASMA, an NGO the State Department has hired as one of its implementing partners inside Syria’.[1]

The blog report prompts a number of reactions. The same day, White House National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor is quoted: ‘The reporting we have seen from media sources regarding alleged chemical weapons incidents in Syria has not been consistent with what we believe to be true about the Syrian chemical weapons program’.[2]

Some ten days later another blog on the same site challenges the evidence presented, noting the sparsity of evidence that Agent 15 actually exists and that the types of information used in the cable from the consulate in Turkey may have been subject to the same biases that intelligence regarding Iraq a decade before had suffered.[3]

[1] Josh Rogin, ‘Exclusive: Secret State Department cable: Chemical weapons used in Syria’, *Foreign Policy* [‘The Cable’ blog], 15 January 2013.

[2] Arshad Mohammed, ‘U.S. plays down media report that Syria used chemical weapons’, Reuters, 16 January 2013; see also Michael R Gordon, ‘Consulate Supported Claim of Syria Gas Attack, Report Says’, *New York Times*, 15 January 2013

[3] Jeffrey Lewis, ‘Why everyone’s wrong about Assad’s zombie gas’, *Foreign Policy* [‘Buzz bomb’ blog], 25 January 2013.

20130130

**30 January 2013** Israeli military aircraft carry out an air strike on the territory of Syria, attacking a convoy of vehicles. The air strike comes soon after comments from senior Israeli sources about fears of movement of chemical weapons from Syria. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Silvan Shalom was widely quoted a few days before as saying ‘If there will be a need, we will take action to prevent chemical weapons from being transferred to Islamic terror organizations’.[1] This leads to speculation that the attacked convoy may have been carried items related to chemical warfare. An unnamed British government source is quoted as saying: ‘all the signs are that this was about Hezbollah moving arms and equipment and there was nothing to suggest any WMD link’.[2]

Later reporting suggests that the convoy was carrying anti-aircraft missiles and that a facility of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre [see June 2004], had been affected.[3]

[1] Jodi Rudoren (from Jerusalem) and Anne Barnard (from Beirut), ‘Israel Girds for Attacks as Syria Falls Apart’, *New York Times*, 27 January 2013.

[2] Harriet Sherwood (from Jerusalem), ‘Israeli air strike “hits Syrian arms convoy”’, *Guardian* (London), 31 January 2013, p 17.

[3] David E. Sanger, Eric Schmitt (from Washington) and Jodi Rudoren (from Jerusalem), ‘Israeli Strike Into Syria Said to Damage Research Site’, *New York Times*, 3 February 2013.

20130202

**2 February 2013** On the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, US Vice President Joe Biden and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meet in private. It is reported that Biden proposes that Russia and the USA should work together to maintain secure control of chemical weapons in Syria should the Assad regime fall.

[1] David Ignatius, ‘Involving Russia in Syria’, *Washington Post*, 4 February 2013.

20130208

**H 8 February 2013** [*Daily Beast* on social media — Eli Lake, ‘Can Social Media Disarm Syria’s Chemical Arsenal?’, *Daily Beast*, 8 February 2013.]

20130223

**H 23 February 2013** [DTel article on US-UK plan to secure SY stocks — Sean Rayment, ‘US and British plans to seize

Syria's chemical weapons', *Daily Telegraph* (London), 23 February 2013.]

20130306

**H 6 March 2013** [UK decision to send CW testing kit to SY opposition forces]

20130312

**12 March 2013** In Washington, DC, James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, gives testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on the topic of 'Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community. His prepared statement includes the following text under the heading 'WMD Security in Syria':[1]

We assess Syria has a highly active chemical warfare (CW) program and maintains a stockpile of sulfur mustard, sarin, and VX. We assess that Syria has a stockpile of munitions—including missiles, aerial bombs, and possibly artillery rockets—that can be used to deliver CW agents. Syria's overall CW program is large, complex, and geographically dispersed, with sites for storage, production, and preparation. This advanced CW program has the potential to inflict mass casualties, and we assess that an increasingly beleaguered regime, having found its escalation of violence through conventional means inadequate, might be prepared to use CW against the Syrian people. In addition, groups or individuals in Syria could gain access to CW-related materials. The United States and our allies are monitoring Syria's chemical weapons stockpile.

Based on the duration of Syria's longstanding biological warfare (BW) program, we judge that some elements of the program may have advanced beyond the research and development stage and may be capable of limited agent production. Syria is not known to have successfully weaponized biological agents in an effective delivery system, but it possesses conventional and chemical weapon systems that could be modified for biological agent delivery.

[1] James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, Statement for the Record, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 12 March 2013.

20130319

**19 March 2013** In Syria, the government and opposition forces each claim that the other initiated an attack with chemical weapons in Khan al-Assal [in some reports spelled al-Asal], in the administrative area of Aleppo. A separate allegation that government forces used chemical weapons in Ataybah near Damascus is also made but there is some ambiguity of the suggested date of this alleged attack.

The BBC cites the Sana news agency as reporting 'Terrorists launched a missile containing chemical products into the region of Khan al-Assal in the province of Aleppo, killing 15 people, mainly civilians'.[1] Syrian Information Minister Omran al-Zoabi is quoted as saying rebels fired 'a rocket containing poison gases' from the city's southeastern district of Nairab, part of which is held by opposition forces. 'The substance in the rocket causes unconsciousness, then convulsions, then death', the minister is reported to have said.[2] Russia's foreign ministry is reported as saying it had information that rebel units had used chemical weapons captured from the government.[3]

Qassim Saadeddine, described as senior rebel commander and spokesman for the Higher Military Council in Aleppo, attributes the alleged use of chemical weapons to government forces, and is quoted as saying, from Aleppo, 'We were hearing reports from early this morning about a regime attack on Khan al-Assal, and we believe they fired a Scud with chemical agents'.[4]

An unidentified Reuters photographer is cited as saying that victims he had visited in Aleppo hospitals were suffering breathing problems and that people had said they could smell chlorine after the attack.[5]

Ambassador of Syria to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari, writes to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council,[6] stating:

At 0730 hours this morning, in a dangerous escalation of the crimes that the armed terrorist groups are committing in the north of Syria, those groups fired a rocket from the Kafr Da'il area towards Khan al-Asal in Aleppo governorate, some 5 km away. The missile fell in a civilian-populated area, some 300 metres from a Syrian Arab army position. Its impact was followed by a thick cloud of smoke, which left unconscious anyone who inhaled it. The explosion of the missile and the gases that were emitted have so far caused the death of 25 persons and the injury of more than 110 civilians and soldiers, who have all been taken to hospital in Aleppo.

The letter repeats allegations made by the Ambassador three months previously that rebel forces had obtained chemical weapons from sources in Turkey [see 10 December 2012]. The letter goes on to say:

The Syrian Arab Republic, while reiterating the commitment that it has made on scores of occasions, through the diplomatic channel and in public, and which it has conveyed to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, to the effect that it would never use any chemical weapons which it may have against its own people, will proceed with its constitutional obligation to pursue the terrorists and their supporters, out of concern for the security and safety of its people. Syria calls upon the international community to take serious and determined action to prevent those terrorist groups from continuing to commit their dangerous crimes against the Syrian people, by halting the financial, military, logistical, political and media support which is provided by the States that support the terrorist groups, in particular, Turkey, Qatar and certain Western States, without any thought for the consequences of that support for innocent Syrian civilians, whose blood is being spilled by those terrorist groups.

The Secretary-General's spokesperson Martin Nesirky, while stating that the UN is not in a position to confirm reports of possible chemical weapons use in Syria, tells reporters 'What I can say is that the Secretary-General has repeatedly said that any use of chemical weapons by any side in Syria would be a grave violation of international humanitarian law and would also be an outrageous escalation of an already bloody conflict'.

The following day, the UN Secretary-General receives a communication from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic which he describes as 'requesting a specialized, impartial and independent mission to investigate the incident of 19 March 2013 involving an alleged use of chemical weapons in Kafr Da'il region in Khan al-Asal area in Aleppo governorate, Syrian Arab Republic'.[8] This communication is not published at this time, but is distinct from the letter quoted above which does not contain a specific request.

The allegations of attacks with chemical weapons on this date prompt considerable international reaction in the coming days and weeks. They are specifically referred to in the letter to the Secretary-General from the governments of France and the United Kingdom on 21 March; the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic published on 4 June; and a letter from US Ambassador Susan Rice to the UN Secretary-General on 14 June.

[1] [no author listed], 'Syrians trade Khan al-Assal chemical weapons claims', BBC, 19 March 2013.

[2] Oliver Holmes and Erika Solomon (from Beirut), 'Alleged chemical attack kills 25 in northern Syria', Reuters, 19 March 2013.

[3] Damien McElroy, 'Syria: regime accuses rebels of killing 25 in chemical weapons attack', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 2013.

[4] Oliver Holmes and Erika Solomon (from Beirut), 'Alleged chemical attack kills 25 in northern Syria', Reuters, 19 March 2013.

[5] Oliver Holmes and Erika Solomon (from Beirut), 'Alleged chemical attack kills 25 in northern Syria', Reuters, 19 March 2013.

[6] Syria, *Identical letters dated 19 March 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations*

addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, S/2013/172, 19 March 2013.

[7] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban reiterates concerns about possible chemical weapons use in Syria', press release, 19 March 2013.

[8] United Nations Secretary-General, *Letter dated 22 March 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/184, 25 March 2013.

20130321

**21 March 2013** In New York, the United Nations Secretary-General announces an investigation into allegations of use of chemical weapons in response to a request from the Government of Syria. In making this announcement, the Secretary-General makes reference only to the request from the Government of Syria, received on 20 March [see 19 March] but no other formal requests from governments.

The Secretary-General tells the press:[1]

If requested by a Member State, I have a mandate to consider conducting an investigation on alleged uses of chemical, biological and toxin weapons pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/37 C of 1987 and reaffirm [*sic*] by Security Council resolution 620 of 1988.

With this in mind, I would like to announce that I have decided to conduct a United Nations investigation on the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria.

My senior advisers are working on the modalities in close consultation with the relevant bodies, including the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

These include detailed issues such as: overall mandate, mission composition, and operational conditions including safety and security.

I have also been in close contact with OPCW Director-General Mr. Ahmet Uzumcu and WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan. They have both assured me of their full support and cooperation.

It is my hope that the mission would contribute to ensuring the safety and security of chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria.

The investigation mission is to look into the specific incident brought to my attention by the Syrian Government. I am, of course, aware that there are other allegations of similar cases involving the reported use of chemical weapons.

In discharging its mandate of an investigation mission, full cooperation from all parties will be essential.

I stress that this includes unfettered access.

He goes on to say 'There is much work to do and this will not happen overnight. It is obviously a difficult mission. I intend for this investigation to start as soon as practically possible.'

The Secretary-General formally informs the Security Council of his decision the following day.[2] This letter contains the first reference by the Secretary-General of the letter from France and the United Kingdom.

[1] Ban Ki-moon, 'Secretary-General's Press Encounter on Syrian Government Request', 21 March 2013.

[2] United Nations Secretary-General, *Letter dated 22 March 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/184, 25 March 2013.

20130321

**21 March 2013** Britain and France despatch a joint letter to the UN Secretary-General alleging the use of chemical weapons by Syrian government forces. This appears to have been received by the Secretary-General after his announcement of an investigation [see 21 March] in response to a request from Syria. The letter is not made public at this time but some journalists suggest they have seen the text.

The Associated Press, which says it has 'obtained' the letter, states the allegations made are 'of chemical weapons use in two locations in Khan al-Assal and the village of Ataybah in the vicinity of Damascus on Tuesday [19 March], and in Homs on Dec. 23', and that the letter requests 'an urgent

investigation into all allegations as expeditiously as possible'.[1]

The UK's deputy UN ambassador Philip Parham is quoted as saying 'The facts need to be clarified' and went on to say 'If chemical weapons have been used, this would be abhorrent, it would be very grave, it would warrant a serious response by the international community'.[2]

The Secretary-General notes: 'On 21 March 2013, I received a letter from the Governments of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland requesting an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons in the locations of Khan al-Asal in Aleppo and Ataybah in the vicinity of Damascus, as well as in Homs on 23 December 2012'. The Secretary-General notes further: 'I have requested the Governments concerned to provide additional information pertaining to the incidents that they have reported to me. The provision of this information will be crucial in defining the terms of reference for the mission and the scope of its work with a view to verifying any alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic'.[3]

Further details of what is in the letter are not made public at this time. Some weeks later, the *Washington Post* reports unidentified 'senior diplomats and officials' saying that unpublished correspondence from France and the United Kingdom to the UN Secretary-General indicated that there was credible evidence of use of chemical weapons by government forces in Syria on more than one occasion since December and that 'soil samples, witness interviews and opposition sources support charges that nerve agents were used in and around the cities of Aleppo, Homs, and possibly Damascus'.[4] On the same day as the *Post* reporting, the *New York Times* suggests that France and the United Kingdom had written separately to the Secretary-General in correspondence which contains what the paper refers to as 'credible information' about chemical weapons attacks in Syria, according to unnamed diplomats. The paper says this correspondence had begun on 25 March.[5] At least one letter, a copy of which was 'obtained' by the paper, is said to report, in the words of the paper, 'that dozens of victims were treated at hospitals for shortness of breath, convulsions and dilation of the pupils, common symptoms of exposure to chemical warfare agents. Doctors reported eye irritation and fatigue after close exposure to the patients'.[6]

While there is consistency in reporting the date of the alleged attack in Aleppo, there is confusion on the date(s) of the alleged attack in Damascus. For example, at least one British newspaper suggests that the UK correspondence given the date of the Aleppo attack as 19 March and the Damascus one on 23 March;[7] notwithstanding that the allegation relating to the Damascus attack was made two days before that date.

[1] [no author listed], Associated Press, as in: 'AP source: Chemical weapons unlikely in attack', Yahoo News, 21 March 2013.

[2] Damien McElroy, 'Syria: Britain calls for UN inquiry into "multiple" chemical attacks', *Daily Telegraph* (London), 21 March 2013.

[3] United Nations Secretary-General, *Letter dated 22 March 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/184, 25 March 2013; see also United Nations Department of Public Information, 'UN chief and Security Council strongly condemn terrorist attack on Damascus mosque', press release, 22 March 2013.

[4] Colum Lynch (from UN New York) and Karen DeYoung (from Washington), 'Britain, France claim Syria used chemical weapons', *Washington Post*, 18 April 2013.

[5] Rick Gladstone (from New York) and Eric Schmitt (from Washington), 'Syria faces new claim on chemical arms', *New York Times*, 18 April 2013.

[6] Mark Landler and Eric Schmitt (from Washington), 'White House Says It Believes Syria Has Used Chemical Arms', *New York Times*, 24 April 2013.

[7] Peter Beaumont, 'Syria nerve gas claims undermined by eyewitness accounts', *Observer* (London), 28 April 2013, p 23.

20130324

**H 24 March 2013** [Allegation by opposition groups that two persons killed and others injured after use of phosphorus shells in the Adra area.]

20130326

**26 March 2013** Professor Åke Sellström of Sweden is appointed by the UN Secretary-General as head of the investigation mission in response to allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria [see 21 March]. He is described by the UN as 'currently a project manager at a Swedish research institute'. UN spokesperson Martin Nesirky tells reporters in New York that Sellström is 'an accomplished scientist with a solid background in disarmament and international security'. He goes on to say 'The terms of reference for the mission are being finalized in consultation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the World Health Organization (WHO). While the terms of reference are being finalized, work is already well under way so that the mission can be dispatched quickly'.[1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban appoints Swedish scientist to lead probe into alleged chemical weapons use in Syria', press release, 26 March 2013.

20130327

**27 March 2013** In The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is convened. It is briefed by OPCW Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü regarding the request by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for assistance in an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.[1]

The Chair of the Council, Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee of India, notes she has been 'approached by some delegations for a statement on the issue' and in response to these requests circulates a draft about which it is hoped 'that this statement will command a consensus'.[2]

The statement by the Chair is as follows:

The Council was informed today by the Director-General that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has conveyed to him a request for the OPCW to support an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Director-General also informed the Council that he had found this request to be consistent with paragraph 27 of Part XI of the Verification Annex of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in accordance with Article II(2)(c) of the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which cover alleged use of chemical weapons involving a State not Party or in territory not controlled by a State Party, and that he had authorised the placement of OPCW resources at the disposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Council expressed deep concern that chemical weapons may have been used in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Council underlined that the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances would be reprehensible and completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of the international community.

The Council also expressed its unequivocal support of the investigation that has been initiated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations with the support of the OPCW.

The Council called upon all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to extend their full cooperation to the investigation and to ensure that the investigation team is able to complete the investigation safely and effectively.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'Executive Council Briefed on UN Secretary-General's Request to Assist Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria', press release, 27 March 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Executive Council, 'Statement by the Chairperson of the Executive Council following the Thirty-second Meeting of the Executive Council 27 March 2013', EC-M-32/2/Rev.1, 27 March 2013.

20130406

**H 6 April 2013** [In an April 6 letter to Ban, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem suggested that his government might be willing to accept a more expansive investigation, but only under certain conditions — Colum Lynch (from UN New York) and Karen DeYoung (from Washington), 'Britain, France claim Syria used chemical weapons', *Washington Post*, 18 April 2013.]

20130408

**H 8 April 2013** [The Third Review Conference for the Chemical Weapons Convention opens in The Hague. UNSG speech. UNSG press conference. General Debate.]

20130413

**H 13 April 2013** [Alleged chemical weapons attack in the Aleppo area in the neighbourhood of Sheykh Maqsd cited in letter from Susan Rice to UNSG on 14 June 2013 and in the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic published on 4 June.]

20130418

**H 18 April 2013** [The Third Review Conference for the Chemical Weapons Convention closes in The Hague. Final document. Closing speeches.]

20130429

**H 29 April 2013** [Alleged chemical weapons attack in Saraqib, Idlib, referred to in the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic published on 4 June; but not cited in letter from Susan Rice to UNSG 14 June 2013.]

20130504

**Q 4 May 2013** Free Syrian Army spokesperson Louay Almqdad tells Al Arabiya that some residents of Qusayr had indicated that Hezbollah is using mustard-gas via artillery in the area. He is reported to say that the FSA is still investigating the reports before it makes a statement on the matter.[1] [*\*add more, including Hezbollah denials of activity in Syria and ref to earlier reports of Hezbollah AoU\**]

[1] [No author listed], 'FSA investigates residents' claims of chemical weapons' use in Qusayr', AlArabiya, 4 May 2013.

20130505

**H 5 May 2013** [Carla Del Ponte interview to Swiss TV – 'During our investigation for crimes against humanity and war crimes, we collect some witness testimony that made to appear that some chemical weapons were used, in particular nerve gas. And what was — what appear on — to our investigation that that was used by the opponents, by the rebels. And we have no indication at all that the government, Syria authority of the Syrian government had used chemical weapons.']

20130514

**H 14 May 2013** [Alleged chemical weapons attack in the town of Qasr Abu Samrah, which is north of Homs, cited in letter from Susan Rice to UNSG 14 June 2013.]

20130520

**H 20 May 2013** [William Hague in House of Commons – 'There is a growing body of limited but persuasive information showing that the regime used — and continues to use — chemical weapons. We have physiological samples from inside Syria that have shown the use of sarin, although they do not indicate the scale of that use. Our assessment is that the use of chemical weapons in Syria is very likely to have been by the regime. We have no evidence to date of opposition use. We welcome the UN investigation, which in our view must cover all credible allegations and have access to all relevant sites in Syria. We continue to assist the investigation team and

to work with our allies to get more and better information about these allegations’.]

20130523

**H 23 May 2013** [Alleged chemical weapons attack in Adra, cited in letter from Susan Rice to UNSG 14 June 2013.]

20130527

**H 27 May 2013** [*Le Monde* articles.]

20130604

**H 4 June 2013** [France announces results of laboratory tests indicating sarin had been used; includes positive detection of IMPA; NB chain of custody issues.]

20130604

**Q 4 June 2013** The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [see 22 August 2011 and 5 May] publishes an ‘Advance Unedited Version’ of its latest report to the UN Human Rights Council.[1] The report covers the period 15 January to 15 May 2013. The report notes: ‘Allegations have been received concerning the use of chemical weapons by both parties. The majority concern their use by Government forces’. It also notes: ‘It is possible that anti-Government armed groups may access and use chemical weapons ... though there is no compelling evidence that these groups possess such weapons or their requisite delivery systems’.

Section D on ‘Illegal Weapons’ reads as follows:

136. As the conflict escalates, the potential for use of chemical weapons is of deepening concern. Chemical weapons include toxic chemicals, munitions, devices and related equipment as defined in the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and Their Destruction. Also applicable is the 1925 Geneva Protocol which Syria has ratified. The use of chemical weapons is prohibited in all circumstances under customary international humanitarian law and is a war crime under the Rome Statute.

137. The Government has in its possession a number of chemical weapons. The dangers extend beyond the use of the weapons by the Government itself to the control of such weapons in the event of either fractured command or of any of the affiliated forces gaining access.

138. It is possible that anti-Government armed groups may access and use chemical weapons. This includes nerve agents, though there is no compelling evidence that these groups possess such weapons or their requisite delivery systems.

139. Allegations have been received concerning the use of chemical weapons by both parties. The majority concern their use by Government forces. In four attacks – on Khan Al-Asal, Aleppo, 19 March; Uteibah, Damascus, 19 March; Sheikh Maqsood neighbourhood, Aleppo, 13 April; and Saraqib, Idlib, 29 April – there are reasonable grounds to believe that limited quantities of toxic chemicals were used. It has not been possible, on the evidence available, to determine the precise chemical agents used, their delivery systems or the perpetrator. Other incidents also remain under investigation.

140. Conclusive findings – particularly in the absence of a large-scale attack – may be reached only after testing samples taken directly from victims or the site of the alleged attack. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that the Panel of Experts, led by Professor Sellström and assembled under the Secretary General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, is granted full access to Syria.

[*Note*: there is a footnote at the reference to the Geneva Protocol in paragraph 136 that reads ‘Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, which entered into force on 8 February 1928.’]

The report is re-issued in a final version some weeks later.[2] There are a number of minor edits between the two versions in relation to chemical weapons issues. The second

version of this text is reproduced here with locations of edits and formatting changes indicated by italicization:

136. As the conflict escalates, the potential for the use of chemical weapons is of deepening concern. Chemical weapons include toxic chemicals, munitions, devices and related equipment as defined in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and Their Destruction. *The Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, which the Syrian Arab Republic has ratified, is also applicable.* The use of chemical weapons is prohibited in all circumstances under customary international humanitarian law, and is a war crime under the Rome Statute.

137. The Government has in its possession a number of chemical weapons. The dangers extend beyond the use of the weapons by the Government itself to the control of such weapons in the event of either fractured command or of any of the affiliated forces gaining access.

138. *Anti-government armed groups could gain access* to and use chemical weapons. This includes nerve agents, though there is no compelling evidence that these groups possess such weapons or their requisite delivery systems.

139. Allegations *were* received concerning the use of chemical weapons by both parties. The majority concern their use by government forces. In four attacks – on *Khan Al-Asal (Aleppo), on 19 March; Uteibah (Damascus) on 19 March; Sheikh Maqsood neighbourhood (Aleppo) on 13 April; and Saraqib (Idlib), on 29 April* – there are reasonable grounds to believe that limited quantities of toxic chemicals were used. It has not been possible, on the evidence available, to determine the precise chemical agents used, their delivery systems or the perpetrator. Other incidents also remain under investigation.

140. Conclusive findings – particularly in the absence of a large-scale attack – may be reached only after *samples taken directly from victims or the site of the alleged attack have been tested.* It is therefore of utmost importance that the panel of experts, led by Professor Sellström and assembled under the *mechanism established by the Secretary-General to investigate into the alleged use of chemical and biological or toxin weapons, be granted full access to the Syrian Arab Republic.*

[1] A/HRC/23/58, dated 4 June 2013

[2] A/HRC/23/58, dated 17 July 2013

20130610

**H 10 June 2013** [First edition of GWU report, updated in July]

20130613

**Q 13 June 2013** In Washington, a statement is issued by the White House in the name of Deputy National Security Adviser Benjamin J Rhodes.[1] which includes:

Following a deliberative review, our intelligence community assesses that the Assad regime has used chemical weapons, including the nerve agent sarin, on a small scale against the opposition multiple times in the last year. Our intelligence community has high confidence in that assessment given multiple, independent streams of information. The intelligence community estimates that 100 to 150 people have died from detected chemical weapons attacks in Syria to date; however, casualty data is likely incomplete. While the lethality of these attacks make up only a small portion of the catastrophic loss of life in Syria, which now stands at more than 90,000 deaths, the use of chemical weapons violates international norms and crosses clear red lines that have existed within the international community for decades. We believe that the Assad regime maintains control of these weapons. We have no reliable, corroborated reporting to indicate that the opposition in Syria has acquired or used chemical weapons.

The body of information used to make this intelligence assessment includes reporting regarding Syrian officials planning and executing regime chemical weapons attacks; reporting that includes descriptions of the time, location, and means of attack; and descriptions of physiological symptoms that are consistent with exposure to a chemical weapons agent. Some open source reports from social media outlets from Syrian opposition groups and other media sources are consistent with the information we have obtained regarding chemical weapons use and exposure. The assessment is further supported by laboratory analysis of

physiological samples obtained from a number of individuals, which revealed exposure to sarin. Each positive result indicates that an individual was exposed to sarin, but it does not tell us how or where the individuals were exposed or who was responsible for the dissemination.

We are working with allies to present a credible, evidentiary case to share with the international community and the public. Since the creation of the UN fact finding mission, we have provided two briefings to Dr. Åke Sellström, the head of the mission. We will also be providing a letter to UN Secretary General Ban, calling the UN's attention to our updated intelligence assessment and specific incidents of alleged chemical weapons use. We request that the UN mission include these incidents in its ongoing investigation and report, as appropriate, on its findings. We will present additional information and continue to update Dr. Sellström as new developments emerge.

The President has been clear that the use of chemical weapons – or the transfer of chemical weapons to terrorist groups – is a red line for the United States, as there has long been an established norm within the international community against the use of chemical weapons. Our intelligence community now has a high confidence assessment that chemical weapons have been used on a small scale by the Assad regime in Syria. The President has said that the use of chemical weapons would change his calculus, and it has. Our decision making has already been guided by the April intelligence assessment and by the regime's escalation of horrific violence against its citizens. Following on the credible evidence that the regime has used chemical weapons against the Syrian people, the President has augmented the provision of non-lethal assistance to the civilian opposition, and also authorized the expansion of our assistance to the Supreme Military Council (SMC), and we will be consulting with Congress on these matters in the coming weeks. This effort is aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the SMC, and helping to coordinate the provision of assistance by the United States and other partners and allies. Put simply, the Assad regime should know that its actions have led us to increase the scope and scale of assistance that we provide to the opposition, including direct support to the SMC. These efforts will increase going forward.

During an on-the-record conference call later this day, Rhodes cites examples of 'incidents that we associate with this assessment'.[2] They include: 'a March 19th attack of this year in which we assessed that sarin was used in the Aleppo suburb of Khan al-Assal; an April 13th attack that was also in the Aleppo area in the neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsood; a May 14th attack, also this year, in the town of Qasr Abu Samra, which is north of Homs; a May 23rd attack in the eastern part of Damascus, in Adra'.

[1] [Statement made in the name of Benjamin J Rhodes], 'Text of White House Statement on Chemical Weapons in Syria', *New York Times*, 13 June 2013.

[2] 'On-the-Record Conference Call by Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes on Syria', White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 13 June 2013.

20130611

**H 11 June 2013** [Claimed chemical attack in Adra on the north-east side of Damascus. The Brown Moses blog, run by British-based blogger Elliot Higgins, contains photographs of rockets alleged to have been used at this location on this day. The rockets appear to be visually similar to those reported in Daraya on 4 January — Martin Chulov, Ian Sample, Angelique Chrisafis and Peter Beaumont, 'Syria deaths: powerful asphyxiant in strike was probably sarin, say experts', *Guardian* (London), 23 August 2013, pp 4-5.]

20130614

**H 14 June 2013** [UK PM speech at 10 Downing St]

20130614

**H 14 June 2013** [Susan Rice letter to the UNSG. Comments later at a press conference similar to Rhodes statement the day before.]

20130619

**H 19 June 2013** [Prime Minister David Cameron tells the House of Commons that one of the key points agreed by the G8 was 'the holding to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons'.]

20130701

**1 July 2013** In the UK House of Commons, the Foreign Office is asked if they will 'publish in full the evidential basis for the Prime Minister's statement [see 14 June] that the Syrian Government has used chemical weapons against Syrian people'. The Minister replies:[1]

We have physiological samples from inside Syria which have been tested at Porton Down and which have tested positive for sarin. We believe that chemical weapons have been used by the Assad Regime. However, the process of gathering more information is ongoing and we have been working with others to obtain more and better evidence.

Where we own important evidence or information ourselves, such as the samples received and analysed by UK officials, we have briefed the UN investigation team, shared the information with international partners, and made appropriate details public. We will look at further information and consider whether it is possible to do so again. However, we cannot publish details regarding samples or specific incidents where to do so could put our sources of information at risk.

The Prime Minister has tasked the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee to give the National Security Council frequently updated assessments of the information we and our allies have.

[1] Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Written Answer, 1 July 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 565, c509-10, in response to Paul Flynn MP.

20130704

**H 4 July 2013** [SNC claims use of 'toxic gases' by government forces to gain a tactical advantage in the the battle for Homs. Wassif Shemali, an SNC representative quoted: 'They are using weapons of mass destruction against Homs, while the international community does nothing' — Damien McElroy, 'Syria: West seeks to secure evidence chemical weapons used in Homs', *Daily Telegraph* (London), 6 July 2013.]

20130708

**8 July 2013** Syria's Ambassador to the UN, Bashar Ja'afari, claims that Syrian authorities have discovered a cache of toxic chemicals of about 280 containers filled with various toxic substances, 'enough to destroy a whole city, if not the whole country', in an area 'controlled and supervised by armed anti-government groups'.[1] The industrial chemicals, said to have been found on 7 July in the coastal town of Bania, were listed as 79 barrels of polyethylene glycol (PEG), 67 barrels of mono ethylene glycol, 25 barrels of mono ethanol (or ethanolamine) and 68 barrels of diethanolamine (DEA) and 42 barrels of triethanolamine (TEA).[2]

[1] [No author listed], 'Syrian Gov't Claims Massive Seizure of Toxic Chemicals', *RIA Novosti*, 8 July 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'Syria claims discovery of enough chemical weapons to "destroy a country"', *Xinhua*, 9 July 2013.

20130709

**Q 9 July 2013** Russia presents to the United Nations Secretary-General its analysis of one incident of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria [see 19 March].[1]

Russia's Ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, is reported as saying that Syria had asked Russian experts to examine evidence in relation to the alleged Khan al-Assal attack and that these experts had visited the location where it is suggested the projectile had landed; samples had been analysed at a Russian laboratory certified by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). He indicates that a report has been submitted to the UN

Secretary-General. He is further reported to say that the chemical agent was carried by a 'Bashair-3 unguided projectile', allegedly produced by the Bashair al-Nasr Brigade, one of the opposition units associated with the Free Syrian Army, and that the projectile involved is not a 'standard one for chemical use'. He is quoted thus: 'The results of the analysis clearly indicate that the ordnance used in Khan al-Assal was not industrially manufactured and was filled with sarin' and: 'Hexogen, utilised as an opening charge, is not utilised in standard ammunitions. Therefore, there is every reason to believe that it was armed opposition fighters who used the chemical weapons in Khan al-Assal'.[2] [Note: Hexogen is also known as RDX.]

Some two months later, further details of the report are made public.[3] [\*add more\*]

[1] Robert H. Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Briefing to the Security Council On the Situation in the Middle East, 23 July 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'Russia claims Syria rebels used sarin at Khan al-Assal', BBC News, 9 July 2013. [\*primary source available??\*]

[3] [No author listed], 'Russia releases key findings on chemical attack near Aleppo indicating similarity with rebel-made weapons', Russia Today, 4 September 2013; Matthew Schofield, 'Russia gave UN 100-page report in July blaming Syrian rebels for Aleppo sarin attack', McClatchy Washington Bureau, 5 September 2013.

20130716

**16 July 2013** [In The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons convenes for its 73rd session. A number of statements are made regarding the situation in Syria.]

20130717

**17 July 2013** The report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic is re-issued in a final version. There are a number of minor edits in relation to chemical weapons issues compared with the 'Advance Unedited Version' released the previous month [see 4 June].[1]

[1] A/HRC/23/58, dated 17 July 2013

20130722

**22 July 2013** A further claim of use of chemical weapons is made. From Turkey, the Syrian Coalition releases a statement which includes: 'According to video footage uploaded by activists inside the capital of Damascus, Assad's forces are using chemical and toxic gas bombs to shell the Yarmouk Palestinian Camp. The strategic, systematic use of chemical weapons in order to achieve military gains only proves the desperate state that Assad's regime has reached'.[1]

[1] Syrian Coalition, 'Assad's Use of Chemical Weapons in the Yarmouk Palestinian Camp', media statement, 22 July 2013.

20130723

**H 23 July 2013** [The UN has thus far received 13 reports of allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria — Robert H. Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Briefing to the Security Council On the Situation in the Middle East, 23 July 2013]

20130724

**24 July 2013** The head of the United Nations Secretary-General's investigation into alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, Åke Sellström, and the head of the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, visit Damascus for talks on the work of the mission which has, thus far, been unable to enter Syria. They meet with Deputy Prime Minister Qadri Jamil, Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem, and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal Mekdad. The visit lasts two days and discussions are described as 'thorough and productive'.[1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Talks on chemical weapons probe "productive" – UN and Syria jointly say', press release, 27 July 2013.

20130802

**2 August 2013** From Istanbul, the Syrian Coalition issues a statement[1] on the possibility of an on-site visit as part of an investigation by the UN Secretary-General into allegations of use of chemical weapons:

The Syrian Coalition has sent a letter to the UN's Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, reiterating the need to immediately begin investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In the letter to the UN, the Syrian Coalition reiterates its offer of full cooperation with the investigation team, particularly in assuring their unfettered access into liberated areas.

As the Free Syrian Army has recently liberated the Khan al-Assal area, we urge the UN team to begin its investigation in this area and hope to welcome their arrival without any further delays.

The Syrian Coalition is firmly committed to upholding international humanitarian and human rights laws and demands that any individuals found to be involved in the deployment of chemical weapons in Syria be held accountable for these crimes.

[1] Syrian Coalition, 'The Syrian Coalition Urges the UN to Immediately Begin Investigations into the use of Chemical Weapons in Syria', Media Statement, Istanbul, Turkey, 2 August 2013.

20130805

**Q 5 August 2013** The Syrian National Coalition alleges an attack in Adra and Duma in the Damascus suburbs.[1] British television service ITV News interviews a Syrian doctor, Abu Ghafer, by telephone. He says: 'Locals believe the that regime forces dropped shells filled with Sarin gas onto neighbouring deserted fields and farms. The wind blew across remnants of the chemical. Many people began to panic in a highly populated area. Some had severe respiratory attacks and were given local drugs. The majority of people treated themselves with water and damp cloths. Symptoms included breathlessness, suffocation and blurred vision. Many also had panic attacks'.[2]

The Syrian government issues an official denial and calls the allegations 'lies and groundless'.[3]

The Brown Moses blog, run by British-based blogger Elliot Higgins, contains photographs of rockets alleged to have been used at this location on this day. The rockets appear to be visually similar to those reported in Daraya on 4 January and Adra on 11 June.[4]

[1] [\*CHK details of SNC claim\*]

[2] [No author listed], 'Syrian doctor describes aftermath of "chemical attack"', ITV News, 5 August 2013

[3] [No author listed], 'Syrian gov't denies using chemical weapons against citizens', KUNA, 6 August 2013.

[4] Martin Chulov, Ian Sample, Angélique Chrisafis and Peter Beaumont, 'Syria deaths: powerful asphyxiant in strike was probably sarin, say experts', *Guardian* (London), 23 August 2013, pp 4-5.

20130811

**11 August 2013** It is reported that the UN investigation team has delayed its trip to Syria owing to logistical issues. An unnamed source tells CBS news that the team was facing some 'technical hitches and would rather postpone the visit to Damascus for a while'.[1] The United Nations issues a denial that the investigation has been postponed. UN spokesman, Eduardo Del Buey, is quoted as saying: 'The team has gathered in The Hague, and logistics for their visit are being worked out with the Syrian authorities'.[2]

[1] George Baghdadi, 'U.N. chemical weapons experts postpone trip to Syria', CBS News, 11 August 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'UN Denies Chemical Weapon Experts Delayed Syria Trip', RIA Novosti, 12 August 2013.

20130812

**12 August 2013** The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin E. Dempsey, says the Syrian



government is moving chemical munitions 'from time to time', according to the *New York Times* today. It is suggested that this may be a reflection the Assad regime's concerns that if the stocks remain in one place they could be located and seized by opposition forces. General Dempsey, who is on a visit to the Middle East, is also quoted as saying: 'It appears the regime is moving it to secure it', adding, 'But that could change'.[1]

After referring the Obama 'red line' [see 20 August 2012], the paper says: 'The most feared outcome would be for the government's large stockpile of chemical arms to be seized by radical groups amid the chaos, and there appears to be a tacit assent for the Assad government to do all it can to secure those weapons, even if that requires shifting them around the country'.

[1] Thom Shanker (from Tel Aviv), 'Syrian War Shapes Trip by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff', *New York Times*, 12 August 2013.

20130813

**Q 13 August 2013** The United Nations announces: 'the team probing the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria has completed all the necessary logistical arrangements for its visit to the country and is now awaiting the Government's acceptance of the modalities for the mission' and: 'Once the Government of Syria confirms its acceptance of the modalities, the mission will depart without delay'.[1] There is press speculation regarding the on-going negotiations with the Syrian government.[2]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'With logistics complete, UN chemical weapons investigators await go-ahead from Syria', press release, 13 August 2013.

[2] [\*add\*]

20130814

**14 August 2013** In New York, the UN Secretary-General announces: 'the Government of Syria has formally accepted the modalities essential for cooperation to ensure the proper, safe and efficient conduct of the Mission. The departure of the team is now imminent'. The public statement continues: 'As agreed with the Government of Syria, the team will remain in the country to conduct its activities, including on-site visits, for a period of up to 14 days, extendable upon mutual consent'.[1]

[1] United Nations Secretary-General, 'Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic', 14 August 2013.

20130818

**18 August 2013** The team of UN investigators arrive in Damascus. The official announcement states: 'The United Nations team investigating allegations about the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic arrived in Damascus today, Sunday, 18 August. The mission will begin its work on Monday. Further updates may be given in due course from New York. Please note the team will not be speaking to the media'.[1]

The team is described in the press as containing 20 members.[2] Questions are raised as to whether there will be sufficient evidence remaining for the team to arrive at clear conclusions.[3]

[1] United Nations Secretary-General, 'Note to Correspondents in response to questions on the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic', 18 August 2013.

[2] Patrick J McDonnell, 'U.N. inspectors in Syria to begin probe into chemical weapons', *Los Angeles Times*, 18 August 2013; Ben Hubbard and Hwaida Saad (from Beirut), 'U.N. Team Arrives in Syria to Assess Possible Chemical Arms Use', *New York Times*, 18 August 2013.

[3] Aryn Baker (from Beirut), 'U.N. Chemical-Weapons Experts Arrive in Syria: Are They on a Fool's Errand?', *Time*, 19 August 2013.

20130819

**19 August 2013** General Dempsey, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, writes to Congressman Eliot Engel, in response to a letter sent by Engel on 2 August, asking for 'further clarification regarding the possible use of limited stand-off strikes' in Syria.

The letter from the General includes:

The specific point in your letter, there are certainly actions short of tipping the balance of the conflict that could impose a cost on them for unacceptable behavior. We can destroy the Syrian Air Force. The loss of Assad's Air Force would negate his ability to attack opposition forces from the air, but it would also escalate and potentially further commit the United States to the conflict. Stated another way, it would not be militarily decisive, but it would commit us decisively to the conflict. In a variety of ways, the use of U.S. military force can change the military balance, but it cannot resolve the underlying and historic ethnic, religious, and tribal issues that are fueling this conflict.

Syria today is not about choosing between two sides but rather about choosing one among many sides. It is my belief that the side we choose must be ready to promote their interests and ours when the balance shifts in their favor. Today, they are not. The crisis in Syria is tragic and complex. It is a deeply rooted, long-term conflict among multiple factions, and violent struggles for power will continue after Assad's rule ends. We should evaluate the effectiveness of limited military options in this context.

The letter is made public on 21 August.[1]

[1] General Martin E, Dempsey, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, letter to Congressman Eliot Engel, Ranking Democratic Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, 19 August 2013, as posted on the Committee website, 21 August 2013.

20130821

**21 August 2013** Opposition forces claim that chemical weapons have been used in the Gouta region which contains some suburbs of Damascus. Initial reports suggest attacks have killed 'dozens of people' by rockets with toxic agents[1] and that the grassroots Local Coordination Committee reports at least 30 bodies being brought to one field hospital in Kafr Batna neighbourhood a few kilometres east of central Damascus.[2]

The number of alleged casualties rises rapidly, with an opposition claim of 1300 fatalities being widely circulated by the end of the day.[3]

A large number of photographs and videos are circulated via the internet, although few have any indication of time or location they were taken. Early information available is inconsistent and initial expert commentary notes some initial anomalies. Jean Pascal Zanders, previously sceptical of claims of chemical weapons attacks in Syria writes: 'The footage from the current alleged attack(s) in the Ghouta district seems to offer more convincing evidence of poisoning through asphyxiation (witness the pinkish-bluish hue on the faces of some of the fatalities)'. However, he notes: 'I have not seen anybody applying nerve agent antidotes. Nor do medical staff and other people appear to suffer from secondary exposure while carrying or treating victims'; nonetheless, he concludes: 'It is clear that something terrible has happened'.[4] Paula Vanninen, director of Verifin, the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, is quoted early in the day as saying: 'At the moment, I am not totally convinced because the people that are helping them are without any protective clothing and without any respirators', adding: 'In a real case, they would also be contaminated and would also be having symptoms'.[5] As the day progresses there are reports of secondary contamination. For example, a British newspaper reports that a doctor, Abu Omar, has dealt with a number of casualties including nine rescuers who died. The paper quotes another Syrian doctor, Majid Abu Ali, reporting his words as: 'The injuries correspond with sarin gas – difficulty breathing, perspiration,

convulsions and loss of consciousness to the point of death'.[6]

The government of Syria denies it used chemical weapons and suggests that opposition forces are making false claims.[7] SANA reports a telephone call from the Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi to Syrian television and summarises the call in the following terms: 'what was reported about the use of chemical weapons on Wednesday morning never took place anywhere in Syria, and while the Armed Forces are carrying out operations against terrorist in several areas, the reports of some media outlets on this matter are illogical, untrue and completely fabricated'.[8] The Minister is quoted as telling the Lebanese Hezbollah-run al-Manar TV that the 'pictures that were shown were fabricated and the campaign was planned in advance'.[9]

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, declares himself to be 'shocked' by the allegations.[10] The head of the Secretary-General's investigation into alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, Åke Sellström, is quoted as telling Swedish media sources that the allegations 'sound suspicious' and that this 'sounds like something we need to look into'.[11] Later in the day there are indications that the team is negotiating with the government of Syria for possible access.[12]

The allegations prompt considerable international response.

The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Nabil ElAraby, is quoted as saying the UN investigation team should 'go immediately to Eastern Ghouta to see the reality of the situation and investigate the circumstances of this crime'.[13]

The European Union's Foreign Ministers are meeting in Brussels as the Foreign Affairs Council. Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, issues a statement which includes: 'I have seen with grave concern the reports of the possible use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. I reiterate that any use of chemical weapons, by any side in Syria, would be totally unacceptable. Such accusations should be immediately and thoroughly investigated by the United Nations expert mission which arrived recently in Syria. ... I have also noted invitations by the opposition for the mission to visit rebel-held areas'.[14] Outside the meeting, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague describes the allegations, 'if confirmed' as marking 'a shocking escalation in the use of chemical weapons in Syria'.[15]

A spokesman in Moscow for the Russian government is quoted as saying: 'This cannot but suggest that once again we are dealing with a pre-planned provocation ... We call on all those who can influence the armed extremists to make every effort to end provocations with chemical agents'.[16] Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich is separately quoted as saying that a homemade rocket 'with an unidentified chemical agent' was launched from positions held by rebels.[17]

In Washington, the White House issues a statement, noting that the United States is 'deeply concerned' by the reports and that it 'strongly condemns any and all use of chemical weapons. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. Today, we are formally requesting that the United Nations urgently investigate this new allegation. The UN investigative team, which is currently in Syria, is prepared to do so, and that is consistent with its purpose and mandate'.[18]

The Security Council meets in private session to discuss the allegations. Speaking after the meeting, Maria Cristina Perceval of Argentina, the current holder of the rotating Security Council Presidency, tells reporters: 'There must be

clarity on what happened and the situation must be followed closely' and that Council members 'welcomed the determination of the Secretary-General to ensure a thorough, impartial and prompt investigation'.[19]

[1] [No author listed], 'Syria conflict: "Chemical attacks" near Damascus', BBC News, 21 August 2013 (07.48 GMT).

[2] Dominic Evans, 'Syrian activists accuse Assad forces of using chemical agents', Reuters, 21 August 2013 (07.43 GMT).

[3] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Syria opposition says 1,300 dead in chemical attacks by army', Yahoo News, 21 August 2013.

[4] Jean Pascal Zanders, 'Apparently major chemical weapons attack near Damascus reported', The Trench, 21 August 2013.

[5] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Syria opposition says 1,300 dead in chemical attacks by army', Yahoo News, 21 August 2013; [No author listed], 'Q&A: Syria "toxic attacks" near Damascus', BBC News, 22 August 2013.

[6] [No author listed], 'Syria: Slaughter of the innocents as children among over 1,000 civilians gassed to death', *Daily Mirror* (London), 22 August 2013.

[7] Dominic Evans and Khaled Yacoub Oweis, 'Syria gas "kills hundreds"', Security Council meets', Reuters, 21 August 2013.

[8] [No author listed], 'Media source: Reports on chemical weapons use in Ghouta untrue', SANA, 21 August 2013.

[9] [No author listed], 'Q&A: Syria "toxic attacks" near Damascus', BBC News, 22 August 2013.

[10] United Nations Secretary-General, 'Secretary-General, "Shocked" by Reports from Syria, Reiterates that Any Use of Chemical Weapons Would Violate International Humanitarian Law', SG/SM/15227, 21 August 2013.

[11] Bassem Mroue (from Beirut), Associated Press, as in: 'UN team in Syria wants to probe gas attack claim', Yahoo News, 21 August 2013; Niklas Pollard (from Stockholm), Reuters, as in: 'U.N. inspector says reports of Syria gas attack should be investigated: TT news agency', Yahoo News, 21 August 2013.

[12] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Syria opposition says 1,300 dead in chemical attacks by army', Yahoo News, 21 August 2013.

[13] [No author listed], 'Syrian opposition: 1,300 killed in chemical attack on Ghouta region', *AlArabiya*, 21 August 2013.

[14] European Union, 'Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the latest reports of use of chemical weapons in Damascus', A 427/13, 21 August 2013.

[15] [No author listed], 'Syria conflict: "Chemical attacks kill hundreds"', BBC News, 21 August 2013 (16.19 GMT).

[16] Dominic Evans and Khaled Yacoub Oweis, 'Syria gas "kills hundreds"', Security Council meets', Reuters, 21 August 2013.

[17] [No author listed], 'Syrian Chemical Weapons Reports May Be "Provocation" - Moscow', RIA Novosti, 21 August 2013.

[18] US White House, 'Statement by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Josh Earnest on Allegations of Chemical Weapons Use in Syria', 21 August 2013.

[19] [No author listed], 'UN: Alleged Syria chemical attacks "serious escalation"', BBC News, 22 August 2013.

20130822

**Q22 August 2013** Reactions to the allegations of use of chemical weapons the previous day continue. Syria continues to deny that it had used such weapons.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sends an official request to the Syrian Government for the team of chemical weapons investigators to be granted permission and access to 'swiftly' investigate the alleged incident. A spokesman is quoted: 'The Secretary-General believes that the incidents reported yesterday need to be investigated without delay'. The Secretary-General instructs the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, to travel to Damascus.[1]

**[\*Further eyewitness reports emerge — add. Also add new expert commentary\*]**

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius discusses the situation in Syria in an interview with French TV channel BFM. He is quoted as saying that if the attack were to be confirmed, 'France's position is that there must be a reaction, a reaction that could take the form of a reaction with force', but rules out the use of ground troops in Syria.[2]

A Russian news agency quotes Foreign Ministry spokesman Lukashevich: 'It all looks like attempts to use any

means to persuade the UN Security Council to take the side of the opponents of the [President Bashar Assad] regime and to derail the preparation of the Geneva conference, led by high-ranking Russian and US experts whose meeting is planned for August 28 in The Hague'.[3] Lukashevich is separately quoted as saying Russia had 'an interest in the investigation into what happened happen objectively'.[4] During a telephone conversation, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State John Kerry express a 'common interest in carrying out an unbiased investigation by UN experts who are currently in the country into the reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons near Damascus', according to a statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry quoted in the Russian press.[5]

The UK notes that it and 36 other countries had formally referred the latest allegations to the US Secretary-General.[6]

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki tells reporters 'At this time, right now, we are unable to conclusively determine CW [chemical weapons] use' and adds: 'The President has directed the intel community to – here in the United States, to urgently gather additional information'. Referring to the President's 'red line' comments [see 20 August 2012], Psaki says that this had been crossed 'a couple of months ago' and that there were a range of options that Obama and his national security team were considering but no elaboration was given about what such options might be.[7] US Secretary of State John Kerry speaks via telephone with Syrian Foreign Minister Muallim. A few days later, Kerry comments: 'I made it very clear to him that if the regime, as he argued, had nothing to hide, then their response should be immediate – immediate transparency, immediate access – not shelling. Their response needed to be unrestricted and immediate access. Failure to permit that, I told him, would tell its own story'.[8]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria: Ban sending official request to allow UN probe of alleged chemical weapons use', press release, 22 August 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'Syria "chemical" attack: France says force may be needed', BBC News, 22 August 2013.

[3] [No author listed], 'Russia Says Syria Chemical Attack Claims May Target Peace Talks', RIA Novosti, 22 August 2013.

[4] [No author listed], 'Syria "chemical" attack: France says force may be needed', BBC News, 22 August 2013.

[5] [No author listed], 'Lavrov, Kerry Call for Unbiased Probe into Alleged Syria Attack', RIA Novosti, 23 August 2013.

[6] [No author listed], 'Syria "chemical" attack: France says force may be needed', BBC News, 22 August 2013.

[7] Jen Psaki, Daily Press Briefing, US Department of State, 22 August 2013; see also [no author listed], 'U.S. says unable to conclusively determine chemical weapons used in Syria', *Daily Star* (Lebanon), 22 August 2013.

[8] John Kerry, 'Remarks on Syria', US Department of State, 26 August 2013

20130823

**23 August 2013** UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says: 'Any use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anybody, under any circumstances, would violate international law', adding: 'Such a crime against humanity should result in serious consequences for the perpetrator. Once again, I call for an immediate investigation of this latest incident'.[1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Use of chemical weapons in Syria would be "crime against humanity" – Ban', press release, 23 August 2013.

20130824

**Q24 August 2013** Syrian television shows footage accompanying a claim that authorities have discovered chemical substances in tunnels that are suggested to be part of an attempt by opposition forces to create chemical weapons. The authorities claim a number of soldiers are exposed to the substances while searching the tunnels and are subsequently

treated in hospital.[1] Reuters reports the footage in the following terms: 'A presenter said five blue and green plastic storage drums shown in video footage, along with rusty mortar bombs, grenades, domestic gas canisters and vials labeled "atropine", a nerve gas antidote, were proof that rebels had used chemical weapons'.[2]

A further report appears to suggest that Syrian soldiers suffered 'suffocation' in fighting around the suburb of Jobar.[3] The leader of the opposition Syrian National Coalition, Ahmad al-Jarba, and the head of the rebel Free Syrian Army, General Salim Idriss, deny that rebels had used chemical weapons.[4]

The Associated Press provides the following comment: 'State TV broadcast images of plastic jugs, gas masks, vials of an unspecified medication, explosives and other items that it said were seized from rebel hideouts. It did not, however, show any video of soldiers reportedly affected by toxic gas in the fighting in the Jobar neighborhood of Damascus.'[5]

[1] [No author listed], 'Syrian rebels use toxic chemicals against govt troops near Damascus - state media', *Russia Today*, 24 August 2013. [*\*primary source?\**]

[2] Oliver Holmes (from Washington) and Roberta Rampton (from Beirut), 'Obama weighs possible military response after Syria chemical attack', *Reuters*, 24 August 2013.

[3] [No author listed], 'Syria to allow UN to inspect "chemical weapons" site', *BBC News*, 24 August 2013.

[4] Oliver Holmes (from Washington) and Roberta Rampton (from Beirut), 'Obama weighs possible military response after Syria chemical attack', *Reuters*, 24 August 2013.

[5] Albert Aji (from Damascus), *Associated Press*, as in: 'Syria Accuses Rebels of Using Chemical Weapons', *RIA Novosti*, 24 August 2013.

20130824

**Q24 August 2013** Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an international medical humanitarian organization, issues a press release reporting that three hospitals it supports in Syria have indicated that they had received some 3600 patients 'displaying neurotoxic symptoms' in less than three hours on the morning of 21 August. Of these patients, 355 were reported to have died. Dr Bart Janssens, MSF director of operations, is quoted in the statement. 'MSF can neither scientifically confirm the cause of these symptoms nor establish who is responsible for the attack', he says, and adds: 'However, the reported symptoms of the patients, in addition to the epidemiological pattern of the events—characterised by the massive influx of patients in a short period of time, the origin of the patients, and the contamination of medical and first aid workers—strongly indicate mass exposure to a neurotoxic agent. This would constitute a violation of international humanitarian law, which absolutely prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons'.[1] [*\*Add follow-up press release\**]

[1] Médecins Sans Frontières, 'Syria: Thousands suffering neurotoxic symptoms treated in hospitals supported by MSF', press release, 24 August 2013; [no author listed], 'MSF-backed hospitals treated Syria "chemical victims"', *BBC News*, 24 August 2013.

20130825

**25 August 2013** UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announces that he has instructed the investigative mission led by Åke Sellström, currently in Damascus, 'to focus its attention on ascertaining the facts of the 21 August incident as its highest priority' and that these activities should start on the morning of Monday 26 August. The Secretary-General's statement notes: 'the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic affirmed that it will provide the necessary cooperation, including the observance of the cessation of hostilities at the locations related to the incident'.[1]

The announcement follows discussions between Angela Kane [see 22 August] and the Syrian authorities.

[1] United Nations Secretary-General, 'Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria', New York, 25 August 2013.

20130826

**H 26 August 2013** [Inspectors head to site of alleged use. Lead vehicle hit by sniper fire, so return to base. Team makes second trip with new vehicle and arrive at location. Interviews undertaken with people injured and some samples taken. Some three hours spent in the location of the alleged attacks. The presence of the inspectors at the location of the alleged attacks prompts a flurry of commentary as to whether there will be anything detectable by the investigators and what conclusions they may be able to reach [see also 18 August]. No further investigations activities are carried out the following day owing to safety and security concerns.]

20130826

**26 August 2013** International reaction to the allegations of use continue, with significant developments from the United States and from a Kurdish group in Syria.

US Secretary of State John Kerry holds a press conference in Washington on the recent events in Syria.[1] His comments include:

What we saw in Syria last week should shock the conscience of the world. It defies any code of morality. Let me be clear: The indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, the killing of women and children and innocent bystanders, by chemical weapons is a moral obscenity. By any standard it is inexcusable, and despite the excuses and equivocations that some have manufactured, it is undeniable.

The meaning of this attack goes beyond the conflict in Syria itself, and that conflict has already brought so much terrible suffering. This is about the large-scale, indiscriminate use of weapons that the civilized world long ago decided must never be used at all – a conviction shared even by countries that agree on little else.

He adds: 'We have additional information about this attack, and that information is being compiled and reviewed together with our partners, and we will provide that information in the days ahead'.

Noting his contact with Syrian Foreign Minister Muallim a few days before [see 22 August] and calls for immediate access for the UN investigation team, he comments:

Instead, for five days, the Syrian regime refused to allow the UN investigators access to the site of the attack that would allegedly exonerate them. Instead, it attacked the area further, shelling it and systematically destroying evidence. That is not the behavior of a government that has nothing to hide. That is not the action of a regime eager to prove to the world that it had not used chemical weapons. In fact, the regime's belated decision to allow access is too late, and it's too late to be credible. Today's reports of an attack on the UN investigators, together with the continued shelling of these very neighborhoods, only further weakens the regime's credibility.

His concluding comments are:

President Obama believes there must be accountability for those who would use the world's most heinous weapons against the world's most vulnerable people. Nothing today is more serious and nothing is receiving more serious scrutiny.

From Berlin, it is reported that the head of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), Saleh Muslim, doubts that the Assad regime was behind the attack. He is reported as saying 'The regime in Syria ... has chemical weapons, but they wouldn't use them around Damascus, 5 km from the [UN] committee which is investigating chemical weapons. Of course they are not so stupid as to do so' and to claim that the chemical attack was a set up.[2]

[1] John Kerry, 'Remarks on Syria', US Department of State, 26 August 2013.

[2] Alexandra Hudson (from Berlin), 'Syrian Kurdish leader doubts Assad would be "so stupid" as to carry out gas attack', Reuters, 27 August 2013.

20130827

**27 August 2013** An Indian press report suggests that the United Nations has asked laboratories in three countries to test any samples from the Syria investigation. The paper says that a laboratory in Gwalior with the Defence Research and Development Establishment is one of three labs in the world that secured the highest grade in the OPCW 21st International Proficiency Test. The paper notes, however: 'Questions remain whether a go ahead would be given. A ministry official said the testing may hurt diplomatic ties with Syria'.[1]

[1] P Naveen, 'Gwalior lab to test Syria chemical attack samples?', *Times of India*, 27 August 2013.

20130827

**Q 27 August 2013** In the UK, it is announced that Parliament will be recalled to debate the Syria situation on 29 August.[1]

Prime Minister David Cameron returns from holiday and states that any use of chemical weapons is 'morally indefensible and completely wrong'. Any military action taken 'would have to be legal, would have to be proportionate. It would have to be specifically to deter the future use of chemical weapons'. He adds: 'This is not about getting involved in a Middle Eastern war or changing our stance in Syria or going further into that conflict. It is nothing to do with that. It is about chemical weapons. Their use is wrong, and the world shouldn't stand idly by'.[2]

Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition government, is quoted as saying: 'If we stand idly by we set a very dangerous precedent indeed where brutal dictators and brutal rulers will feel they can get away with using chemical weapons. What we are considering is a serious response to that. What we are not considering is regime change, trying to topple the Assad regime, trying to settle the civil war in Syria one way or another'.[3]

Ed Miliband, leader of the opposition Labour Party, is quoted thus: 'The use of chemical weapons on innocent civilians is abhorrent and cannot be ignored. When I saw the prime minister this afternoon I said to him the Labour party would consider supporting international action, but only on the basis that it was legal, that it was specifically limited to deterring the future use of chemical weapons and that any action contemplated had clear and achievable military goals. We will be scrutinising any action contemplated on that basis'.[4]

[1] *Recall notice*

[2] UK Cabinet Office, 'Syria: transcript of PM's interview', press release, 27 August 2013.

[3] Nicholas Watt, Julian Borger, Nick Hopkins (from London) and Paul Lewis (from Washington), 'UK and US finalise plans for military strikes against Syrian regime', *Guardian* (London), 27 August 2013.

[4] Nicholas Watt, Julian Borger, Nick Hopkins (from London) and Paul Lewis (from Washington), 'UK and US finalise plans for military strikes against Syrian regime', *Guardian* (London), 27 August 2013.

20130828

**H 28 August 2013** [Inspectors on the road in Syria; UNSG suggests investigators will need 4 further days in Syria to complete their work; UNSG meets with OPCW DG in The Hague; UK NSC meets, suggestion from UK for UNSC resolution; US intelligence leak suggests an intercepted panic-toned telephone call between Syrian officials indicates the regime had used chemical weapons a week before.]

20130828

**Q 28 August 2013** Syria alleges that there have been uses of chemical weapons in in Jobar, Sahnaya and al-Bahariya on August 22, 24 and 25 [see 24 August]. [Note: this is how the locations are reported. It is not clear from the reporting if this is intended to mean that there was one attack at each location on the respective dates, or multiple attacks on the days.] The

allegations are forwarded to the UN Secretary-General by Syria's ambassador to the UN, Bashar Jaafari. He is reported to say: 'We are asking UN to incorporate 3 more locations where the Syrian soldiers inhaled the nerve gas also in the suburbs of Damascus. So the spectrum of investigation is increasing compared to the initial phase of investigation'. [1] *[\*add more, primary source?\**]

[1] [No author listed], 'Syria asks UN to immediately investigate 3 new "chemical attacks" by rebels', *Russia Today*, 28 August 2013 (edited 29 August 2013).

20130829

**29 August 2013** The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, speaking in Vienna, announces that UN investigative team will finish work in Syria on 30 August and will be reporting to him the following day, meaning he will be cutting short a visit to Austria, where he was due to give a speech that day. [1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'UN chemical weapons inspection team to leave Syria on Saturday, will brief Ban', press release, 29 August 2013; Fredrik Dahl and Eric Auchard (from Vienna), 'U.N. chemical weapons team to leave Syria by Saturday morning - Ban', *Reuters*, 29 August.

20130829

**Q 29 August 2013** In London, the UK government releases two documents, one an intelligence assessment of the events [1] and one on legal matters. [2] Debates are held in both Houses of Parliament.

The intelligence assessment takes the form of a letter to the Prime Minister from the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Jon Day [see 1 July]. The letter states that the assessment it contains is based on material presented to the National Security Council for its meeting the day before. The key judgements, are 'based on the information and intelligence available to us as of 25 August ... We have assessed previously that the Syrian regime used lethal CW on 14 occasions from 2012. This judgement was made with the highest possible level of certainty following an exhaustive review by the Joint Intelligence Organisation of intelligence reports plus diplomatic and open sources. We think that there have been other attacks although we do not have the same degree of confidence in the evidence. A clear pattern of regime use has therefore been established'. [Note: compare this with the statement from a United Nations source a month previously [see 23 July] that the UN had received 13 allegations of use by that date (of which at least one had to be from the Syrian government [see 19 March]) and with the letter by the UK and France [see 21 March] that alleged 3 attacks.] The letter continues: 'There is no credible intelligence or other evidence to substantiate the claims or the possession of CW by the opposition. The JIC has therefore concluded that there are no plausible alternative scenarios to regime responsibility ... Against this background, the JIC concluded that it is highly likely that the regime was responsible for the CW attacks on 21 August. The JIC had high confidence in all of its assessments except in relation to the regime's precise motivation for carrying out an attack of this scale at this time – though intelligence may increase our confidence in the future'.

The single-page assessment attached to the letter includes: 'A chemical attack occurred in Damascus on the morning of 21 August, resulting in at least 350 fatalities. It is not possible for the opposition to have carried out a CW attack on this scale' and: 'There is no immediate time limit over which environmental or physiological samples would have degraded beyond usefulness. However, the longer it takes inspectors to gain access to the affected sites, the more difficult it will be to establish the chain of evidence beyond a reasonable doubt'.

*[\*add from legal opinion document\**]

The Parliamentary debates total more than 15 hours. In the Commons there are eight hours of debate that conclude with both the government motion and the official opposition amendment to that motion being voted down. [3] The Lords there are just over seven hours of debate but it does not take a vote as is traditional in these matters. [4] *[\*add PM opening remarks\*]* [5]

At 10.30 pm, just after the votes, the opposition leader, Ed Miliband, raises a point of order asking if the Prime Minister could 'confirm to the House that, given the will of the House that has been expressed tonight, he will not use the royal prerogative to order the UK to be part of military action before there has been another vote in the House of Commons?' Mr Speaker allows the Prime Minister time to respond. David Cameron says: 'I can give that assurance. Let me say that the House has not voted for either motion tonight. I strongly believe in the need for a tough response to the use of chemical weapons, but I also believe in respecting the will of this House of Commons. It is very clear tonight that, while the House has not passed a motion, the British Parliament, reflecting the views of the British people, does not want to see British military action. I get that, and the Government will act accordingly'. [6]

A week later, a senior Cabinet Minister, Kenneth Clarke, tells Channel 4 News: 'the Americans wanted us to make this vote very quickly' but that the 'trauma' of Iraq led to the defeat of the call for action. [7]

[1] Letter from the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee to the Prime Minister entitled 'Syria: Reported Chemical Weapons Use', dated 29 August 2013.

[2] Her Majesty's Government, 'Chemical weapon used by Syrian regime: UK government legal position', 29 August 2013.

[3] *Hansard* (Commons), vol 566, 29 August 2013, c1425-1556.

[4] *Hansard* (Lords), vol 747, 29 August 2013, c1719-1826.

[5] *Hansard ref*

[6] David Cameron, Prime Minister, 29 August 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 566, c1555-56.

[7] [No author listed], 'Syria vote: Clarke suggests US wanted "quick" UK decision', *BBC News*, 4 September 2013.

20130830

**Q 30 August 2013** The UN investigation team complete their last day of work in Syria [see 26 August]. This prompts reporting about what may happen next, including what will be done with the samples taken during the mission. This is the first day in which there is public discussion that highlights the balance to be struck between a political need for a prompt report of the conclusions from the investigation mission and a technical need for enough time to ensure laboratory analysis can provide robust results.

The team visits a military hospital where the Assad government has stated that there are a number of members of the Syrian armed forces that have been affected by exposure to toxic chemicals during the operation that is said to have discovered toxic chemicals in a series of tunnels [see 24 August]. [1] [Note: if this is interviewing of soldiers exposed in the tunnel system, it is not clear where this fits within the investigation mandate which is about alleged use and not stored materials.]

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, starts consultations with Member States regarding the outcome of the investigation. 'UN Spokesperson' Martin Nesirky is quoted as saying: 'Dr. Sellstrom's team is doing its utmost to expedite the process of analysis, but while keeping this in mind, they also have to keep in mind something else which is the need for rigorous attention to maintaining the integrity of the process, in other words, the scientific side of this process'. He says that the samples will be taken for analysis in designated laboratories in Europe, without specifying which these would be other than that none are located in countries

represented by the permanent members of the Security Council. He also notes that Åke Sellström, as investigation team leader, will remain in Europe to oversee the analysis.[2] [Note: compare suggestion here that only European laboratories would be used with the earlier reporting that an Indian laboratory might contribute to the analysis, see 27 August.]

In expert commentary, Ralf Trapp is reported as talking of the testing being a painstaking process that will take several days and that the laboratories working on the samples won't sacrifice accuracy for the sake of quick results.[3]

[1] *[\*printed source? – this was what was said on the radio news\*]*

[2] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria: Ban begins consultations with UN Member States as chemical weapons team wraps up probe', press release, 30 August 2013.

[3] Mike Corder, Associated Press, as in: 'UN's Syria samples to undergo meticulous scrutiny', *Sun Herald* (Mississippi), 30 August 2013.

20130830

**Q 30 August 2013** In Washington, DC, the White House releases a document[1] intended to summarize the Administration's evidence of what it states is the culpability of the Assad regime in Syria in using chemical weapons. Later in the day, US Secretary of State John Kerry speaks in the Treaty Room in his Department to the document.[2] He describes chemical weapons as 'indiscriminate, inconceivable horror' and suggests that 1429 Syrians were killed in the 21 August attack, including at least 426 children.

The document says ... *[\*add\*]*

Kerry refers to the document's findings as 'clear as they are compelling' and states: 'Our intelligence community has carefully reviewed and re-reviewed information regarding this attack, and I will tell you it has done so more than mindful of the Iraq experience. We will not repeat that moment. Accordingly, we have taken unprecedented steps to declassify and make facts available to people who can judge for themselves. But still, in order to protect sources and methods, some of what we know will only be released to members of Congress, the representatives of the American people. That means that some things we do know we can't talk about publicly'.

He goes on to say: 'we know that the Assad regime has the largest chemical weapons program in the entire Middle East' and that the regime has used such weapons 'multiple times this year' and that: 'We know that for three days before the attack the Syrian regime's chemical weapons personnel were on the ground in the area making preparations. And we know that the Syrian regime elements were told to prepare for the attack by putting on gas masks and taking precautions associated with chemical weapons. We know that these were specific instructions. We know where the rockets were launched from and at what time. We know where they landed and when. We know rockets came only from regime-controlled areas and went only to opposition-controlled or contested neighborhoods'. He adds: 'We know that a senior regime official who knew about the attack confirmed that chemical weapons were used by the regime, reviewed the impact, and actually was afraid that they would be discovered' and that for all these things, the US intelligence community has 'high confidence'; further adding: 'This is common sense'.

*[\*CHECK quotes this para\*]* The Arab League pledged, quote, 'to hold the Syrian regime fully responsible for this crime.' The Organization for Islamic Cooperation condemned the regime and said we needed, quote, 'to hold the Syrian Government legally and morally accountable for this heinous crime.' Turkey said there is no doubt that the regime is responsible. Our oldest ally, the French, said the regime, quote, 'committed this vile action, and it is an outrage to use weapons that the community has banned for the last 90 years in all international conventions.' The Australian

Prime Minister said he didn't want history to record that we were, quote, 'a party to turning such a blind eye'.

*[\*edit down further??\*]* ... But as Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary General, has said again and again, the UN investigation will not affirm who used these chemical weapons. That is not the mandate of the UN investigation. They will only affirm whether such weapons were used. By the definition of their own mandate, the UN can't tell us anything that we haven't shared with you this afternoon or that we don't already know. ...

We also know that we have a President who does what he says that he will do. And he has said very clearly that whatever decision he makes in Syria, it will bear no resemblance to Afghanistan, Iraq, or even Libya. It will not involve any boots on the ground. It will not be open-ended. And it will not assume responsibility for a civil war that is already well underway. The President has been clear: Any action that he might decide to take will be a limited and tailored response to ensure that a despot's brutal and flagrant use of chemical weapons is held accountable. ...

The White House document comes under some scrutiny, issues being raised include *[\*add\*]* ... [3] [4] [5]

Earlier in the day, a US newspaper reports that the 21 August attack may have been carried out by troops commanded by Assad's brother [Maher Assad], citing Kamal al-Labwani, described as a member of the Syrian opposition National Coalition's defence and security committee, who is quoted as saying in a telephone interview: 'The bombing [of Ghouta] came from the area controlled by Assad's brother and air force security'.[6]

[1] *WH doc*

[2] *Remarks*

[3] Lesley Clark, Anita Kumar and Hannah Allam, 'Citing "high confidence" of chemical weapons use, U.S. makes case for attack on Syria', McClatchy Washington Bureau, 30 August 2013

[4] Lindsay Wise and Hannah Allam, 'Kerry says U.S. credibility on the line in Syria', McClatchy Washington Bureau, 30 August 2013

[5] Lindsay Wise and Anita Kumar, 'Chemical weapons experts weigh in on Syria intelligence report', McClatchy Washington Bureau, 30 August 2013.

[6] Ashish Kumar Sen, 'Troops led by Assad's brother likely to blame for chemical weapons, Syrian activists say', *Washington Times*, 30 August 2013.

20130831

**31 August 2013** The UN investigation team [see 30 August] arrives in The Hague and is greeted by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Ahmet Üzümcü. The OPCW describes the team as being composed of nine OPCW personnel, three from the World Health Organization, together with Åke Sellström and as having travelled back to the Netherlands on board an aircraft provided by the German government.[1]

On the issue of laboratory testing, the OPCW states: 'The evidence collected by the team will now undergo laboratory analysis and technical evaluation according to the established and recognised procedures and standards. These procedures may take up to three weeks for completion in a systematic, orderly and objective manner. Every effort will be made to expedite this process. Their report will be submitted to the United Nations Secretary General by Dr Sellström'. The press release is reissued two days later without the reference to the three week timescale, to read thus: 'The evidence collected by the team will now undergo laboratory analysis and technical evaluation according to the established and recognised procedures and standards. Every effort will be made to expedite this process. Their report will be submitted to the United Nations Secretary General by Dr Sellström'.[2] However, the original paragraph and its subsequently removed line are widely quoted in the media.[3]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'UN Investigation Team Returns to The Hague from Syria', press release, 31 August 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'UN Investigation Team Returns to The Hague from Syria', press release, 2 September 2013.

[3] See, for example: Thomas Escriitt, 'Analysing Syrian chemical weapons evidence could take three weeks: agency', Reuters, 31 August 2013; Peter Cluskey, 'Analysis of Syrian attack evidence to take "up to three weeks"', *Irish Times*, 1 September 2013; and [no author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Three-week wait for UN's Syria analysis', *Australian*, 1 September 2013.

20130831

**H 31 August 2013** [Statement by Obama on Syria military action. He invites Congress to approve such action and, as Congress does not meet again until 9 September, implies that military action will be delayed until after that date. However, there are indications that some committees may be able to meet before the full Congress reconvenes.]

20130901

**1 September 2013** A UK newspaper suggests that two licences had been approved in January 2012 by UK authorities for exports of sodium fluoride and potassium fluoride to Syria, but no exports had taken place as EU sanctions had been applied before the goods had been shipped. The article makes no mention of types or quantities of the materials. Thomas Docherty MP is quoted by the paper: 'MPs will be horrified and furious that the UK Government has been allowing the sale of these ingredients to Syria' and: 'What the hell were they doing granting a licence in the first place?'[1]

Some information is provided to Parliament in the following week: 'The exporter and recipient company demonstrated that the chemicals were for a legitimate civilian end use — which was for metal finishing of aluminium profiles used in making aluminium showers and aluminium window frames. The licences were revoked following a revision to the sanctions regime which came into force on 17 June 2012. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) records show that no goods were exported to Syria under these licences before they were revoked'.[2]

'The consideration of the licence applications against the Consolidated Criteria included an assessment of the risk that they would be diverted to be used as precursor chemicals in the manufacture of chemical weapons. But there was no evidence that these exports would be so diverted, and the quantities concerned were consistent with their stated end use for commercial purposes. No subsequent evidence has arisen to cast doubt on the assessment made at the time'.[3]

Following further questions, it is revealed that the licences granted in January 2012 were for 1,000kg for each of the materials[4] and that six licences have been authorised for exports of sodium fluoride to Syria in the previous 10 years in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2012 with one licence being authorised over the same period for potassium fluoride in 2012. 'Retrieving the information on the amount of chemicals exported over the last 10 years could be provided only at a disproportionate cost'.[5] [Note: the long-term totals of transfers of relevant materials would be significant indicators as to whether there was potential for diversion and so it would seem odd that such a figure would be of 'disproportionate cost' to discover.]

A few days later, some further details of quantities are revealed, suggesting that five licences were approved between 2004 and 2010 for the export of more than 4,000kg of sodium fluoride to Syria. These details were apparently revealed by Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, in a letter to John Stanley, Chair of the House of Commons Committee on Arms Export Controls.[6]

[1] [No author listed], 'Britain sold nerve gas chemicals to Syria 10 months after war began', *Sunday Mail*, 1 September 2013 [Note: the *Sunday Mail* should not be confused with the *Mail on Sunday*.]

[2] Michael Fallon, Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Written Answer, 5 September 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 567, c521, in response to Katy Clark MP.

[3] Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Written Answer, 6 September 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 567, c572, in response to Caroline Lucas MP.

[4] Michael Fallon, Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Written Answer, 9 September 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 567, c642, in response to Chukka Umunna MP.

[5] Michael Fallon, Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Written Answer, 6 September 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 567, c536-37, in response to Angus Robertson MP.

[6] Dan Roberts (from Washington) and Julian Borger (from London), 'Syria crisis: US welcomes "significant" Russian proposal on chemical weapons', *Guardian* (London), 12 September 2013.

20130901

**H 1 September 2013** [Kerry claims US has samples that have tested positive for the presence of sarin and that this supports his government's suggestion that the Assad regime used chemical weapons on 21 August.]

20130902

**H 2 September 2013** [France releases *Synthèse nationale de renseignement déclassifié, Programme chimique syrien, Cas d'emploi passés d'agents chimiques par le régime Attaque chimique conduite par le régime le 21 août 2013* — its intelligence assessment of the events of 21 August; *Der Spiegel* reports that the German intelligence services have concluded that the chemical weapons used on 21 August were used by the Assad regime; NATO chief says he believes the 21 August attacks were carried out by the regime. It is not clear whether these statements derive from the same source material being exchanged through established intelligence sharing arrangements or whether these various statements are from nationally-derived information.]

20130902

**H 2 September 2013** [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, speaking at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, is reported to say: 'We were shown certain pieces of evidence that did not contain anything concrete, neither geographical locations, nor names, nor evidence that samples had been taken by professionals' — NYT.]

20130903

**3 September 2013** Press reports suggest that a defector has come forward with information that shows the Assad government carried out a chemical attack in Khan al-Assal, Aleppo, on 19 March. However, he is said not to have appeared at a press conference scheduled by opposition groups based in Turkey owing to security concerns. The story centres on Abdeltawwab Shahrour, described as the head of the forensic medicine committee in Aleppo who is said to have documents proving the attack took place.

[1] [No author listed], 'Syria Defector "Exposes Assad Chemical Attack"', Sky News, 3 September 2013.

20130903

**H 3 September 2013** [UNSG briefs non-permanent members of the Security Council; laboratories start receiving samples for analysis; two Syrian officials have travelled to Europe to follow the process of the analysis of the samples.]

20130903

**H 3 September 2013** [Meeting between Obama and senior Congressional figures. Later in the day Senate hearings with John Kerry; many of the points made are those made in his earlier statements [see 26 and 30 August].]

20130904

**H 4 September 2013** [Putin says he would support military action if there was proof that the Assad government had used

chemical weapons. House hearings with John Kerry. Senate Foreign Relations Committee vote. Obama speech in Stockholm. Questions raised on US casualty numbers, e.g., LAT.]

20130905

**H 5 September 2013** [G20 summit opens in Russia. Further press attention to 9 July report by Russia. UK claims clothing samples from 21 August test positive for sarin]

20130906

**Q 6 September 2013** On the margins of the G20 summit in St Petersburg, Russia, a statement is issued by eleven of the countries attending.[1] The leaders that sign up to the statement are from: Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain,[2] Turkey, the UK and the USA. The statement includes: *[\*edit down further??\*]*

We condemn in the strongest terms the horrific chemical weapons attack in the suburbs of Damascus on August 21st that claimed the lives of so many men, women and children. The evidence clearly points to the Syrian government being responsible for the attack, which is part of a pattern of chemical weapons use by the regime.

We call for a strong international response to this grave violation of the world's rules and conscience that will send a clear message that this kind of atrocity can never be repeated. Those who perpetrated these crimes must be held accountable.

Signatories have consistently supported a strong U.N. Security Council Resolution, given the Security Council's responsibilities to lead the international response, but recognize that the Council remains paralyzed as it has been for two and a half years. The world cannot wait for endless failed processes that can only lead to increased suffering in Syria and regional instability. We support efforts undertaken by the United States and other countries to reinforce the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

We commit to supporting longer term international efforts, including through the United Nations, to address the enduring security challenge posed by Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Signatories have also called for the UN fact finding mission to present its results as soon as possible, and for the Security Council to act accordingly.

... Recognizing that Syria's conflict has no military solution, we reaffirm our commitment to seek a peaceful political settlement through full implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. We are committed to a political solution which will result in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria. ...

The states at the G-20 summit not listed as signing this statement are: Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and South Africa. [Note: the 20th entity at the G-20 meetings is the European Union.]

A senior BBC correspondent notes: 'the statement was carefully crafted to omit the controversial crux of the American plan: punitive airstrikes on Syria, to be led by the US, quite possibly without UN backing'.[3]

A day later, Germany indicates it would sign the statement, suggesting that there had been a desire to reach an EU position in relation to Syria first.[4]

[1] US White House, 'Joint Statement on Syria', press release, 6 September 2013

[2] Spain, which signed the statement, is not formally a member of the G20 but attends the meetings as a guest.

[3] Bridget Kendall, 'Syria crisis: No clear winner in Russia-US G20 duel', BBC News, 7 September 2013.

[4] Arshad Mohammed, 'Germany backs G20 statement on Syria a day later', Reuters, 7 September 2013.

20130907

**Q 7 September 2013** The European Union issues a statement on the situation in Syria. *[\*edit down??\*]*

On 21 August, a large-scale chemical attack was perpetrated in the outskirts of Damascus, killing hundreds of people, including many women and children. That attack constituted a blatant

violation of international law, a war crime, and a crime against humanity. We were unanimous in condemning in the strongest terms this horrific attack.

Information from a wide variety of sources confirms the existence of such an attack. It seems to indicate strong evidence that the Syrian regime is responsible for these attacks as it is the only one that possesses chemical weapons agents and means of their delivery in a sufficient quantity.

In the face of this cynical use of chemical weapons, the international community cannot remain idle. A clear and strong response is crucial to make clear that such crimes are unacceptable and that there can be no impunity. We must prevent creating a dreadful precedent for the use of chemical weapons in Syria again, or elsewhere.

The EU underscores at the same time the need to move forward with addressing the Syrian crisis through the UN process. We note the on-going UN investigation on the 21st of August attack and further investigations on other chemical weapons attacks carried out in this conflict. It hopes a preliminary report of this first investigation can be released as soon as possible and welcomes President Hollande's statement to wait for this report before any further action. The EU urges the UN Security Council to unite in its efforts to prevent any further chemical attack. To that effect, it encourages the UNSC to fulfil its responsibilities and take all initiatives to achieve this goal. The EU and its member states intend to play a full and active part in that context.

The EU recalls the individual responsibility of the perpetrators of attacks of this type, who must be held accountable, and the role of the ICC in investigating and judging such acts.

Only a political solution that will result in a united, inclusive and democratic Syria can end the terrible bloodshed, grave violations of human rights and the far-reaching destruction of Syria. An encompassing diplomatic process leading to a political solution is now more urgent than ever. The initiative for a 'Geneva II' peace conference must move ahead swiftly. The EU is ready to provide all support needed to achieve a political settlement and work with partners and international actors, particularly the United Nations.

The EU will uphold its commitment, as the largest donor, to provide aid and assistance to those in need due to the Syrian conflict. It will maintain its readiness to help the recovery, rehabilitation and transition in Syria, in accordance with the needs of the Syrian people.

[1] *[\*REF\*]*

20130907

**7 September 2013** In Caracas, Venezuela, a special meeting of the Political Council of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) adopts a 'Special resolution on the situation in Syria'. The resolution includes:

To condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons and any other weapons of mass destruction, regardless of where they are used and by whom, and to reaffirm the full commitment of its member States to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction;

To categorically condemn any actual or intended foreign military intervention in Syria;

The resolution also includes:

To demand respect for the United Nations and its organs, especially the General Assembly and the Security Council, by the major imperial powers, which requested a transparent investigation into the alleged chemical attack against Syrian civilians that occurred on 21 August 2013 — leading to the establishment of a special commission to investigate and verify the facts and origin of the attack — but are now refusing to wait for the results of that investigation and are once again seeking to bypass the Security Council because they are unable to achieve a consensus in that body, thereby going against the opinion of the global community and the majority of Americans;

[1] The text of the resolution is annexed to: Venezuela, *Identical letters dated 9 September 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council*, A/67/986-S/2013/541, 11 September 2013.



**Q 9 September 2013** The day is dominated by discussion of proposals to have Syrian chemical weapons put under some form of international supervision. The situation is initially confused and it later becomes apparent that proposals had been discussed in the margins of the G20 summit a few days earlier.[1]

In Moscow, (approx 07:30 GMT) during a press conference held by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and his Syrian counterpart, Walid Muallem, there are hints that there may be a proposal for some sort of plan regarding chemical weapons.[2] Less than two hours later (approx 09:12 GMT) US Secretary of State, John Kerry, holding a press conference in London, says Syria could avert an attack if Assad 'could turn over every single bit of his chemical weapons to the international community'.[3] Some hours later Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, speaking in a further press conference says he has urged Mr Muallem to 'not only agree on placing chemical weapons storage sites under international control, but also on their subsequent destruction'.[4] Mr Muallem expresses support for the proposal and is quoted as saying: 'We are also confident in the wisdom of the Russian government, which is trying to prevent an American aggression against our people'.[5] During the afternoon, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, says: 'I'm considering urging the Security Council to demand the immediate transfer of Syria's chemical weapons and chemical precursor stocks to places inside Syria where they can be safely stored and destroyed'.[6]

During the afternoon, the US Department of State stresses that Kerry was making a rhetorical argument.[7] Jen Psaki, for the State Department, is quoted as saying: 'His point was that this brutal dictator with a history of playing fast and loose with the facts cannot be trusted to turn over chemical weapons, otherwise he would have done so long ago. That's why the world faces this moment'.[8] Later in the day, Mr Obama says a military strike is 'absolutely' on pause if Syria yields control of its chemical weapons.[9] The US Congress resumes today but it is not clear what the timetable of activities will be during the week as earlier plans appear to be amended in light of the international developments.

The UK Prime Minister tells the House of Commons: 'If Syria were to put its chemical weapons beyond use under international supervision, that would clearly be a big step forward and should be encouraged. We must be careful to ensure that this is not a distraction tactic to discuss something other than the problem on the table, but if it is a genuine offer, it should be genuinely looked at'.[10]

[1] *[\*add source\*]*

[2] Bridget Kendall, 'How feasible is Russia's proposal on Syria?', BBC News, 10 September 2013.

[3] [No author listed], 'Russia urges Syria hand over chemical weapons to intl control to avoid strike', Russia Today, 9 September 2013.

[4] [No author listed], 'Give up weapons, Russia urges Syria', BBC News, 9 September 2013.

[5] Matt Smith and Catherine E Shoichet, 'Syria chemical arms plan promising "if it's real," Obama says', CNN, 10 September 2013.

[6] Louis Charbonneau, 'U.N. floats plan to destroy Syrian chemical weapons stocks', Reuters, 9 September 2013. *[\*ADD FROM UN\*]*

[7] Patrick Wintour, 'John Kerry gives Syria week to hand over chemical weapons or face attack', *Guardian* (London), 9 September 2013.

[8] Matt Smith and Catherine E Shoichet, 'Syria chemical arms plan promising "if it's real," Obama says', CNN, 10 September 2013.

[9] Matthew Lee and Julie Pace (from Washington), Associated Press, as in: 'State Department: U.S. Will Take A "Hard Look" At Russian Proposal On Syrian Chemical Weapons', Huffington Post, 9 September 2013.

[10] David Cameron, Prime Minister, Oral Answer, 9 September 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 567, c704, in response to Tom Blenkinsop MP.

**9 September 2013** The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) adopts a communiqué on the situation in Syria.[1] The communiqué includes:

CELAC vigorously condemns the use of chemical weapons and any other weapons of mass destruction, regardless of where or by whom they are used. Its member States reaffirm their full commitment to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

CELAC therefore calls upon all those who have evidence of chemical weapons use in Syria and about those using them to provide that information to the United Nations investigation mechanisms in order to assist with full clarification of the facts and to prevent possible consequences.

It asks the Security Council, based on its authority and on the report of the United Nations investigation mission, to step up its efforts for peace in order to bring an end to the hostilities. CELAC is of the view that if chemical weapons use is verified, those responsible should not go unpunished. CELAC recalls that, under the Charter of the United Nations, only the Security Council can take action.

[1] The text of the communiqué is circulated by Cuba, in its capacity as President Pro Tempore of the CELAC, and is annexed to: Cuba, *Letter dated 10 September 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, A/67/985-S/2013/540*, 12 September 2013.

**H 10 September 2013** [France suggests it will put a resolution to the UN Security Council regarding the proposals to put Syrian chemical weapons under international supervision with a draft that puts blame for the 21 August attack on the Assad regime. Later in the day announcement that there would be a joint FR, UK & US res. RU implies it would draft a resolution. Scheduled informal UNSC meeting does not take place. Obama makes speech during evening US time.]

**H 10 September 2013** [Human Rights Watch releases a report — 'Attacks on Ghouta: Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria'.]

**H 11 September 2013** [Russia presents more details of proposals. Informal discussions continue in the UN Security Council. French proposal that Syria should give up its chemical weapons within 15 days, providing an 'exhaustive, complete and definitive declaration of the locations, amount and types of all items related to its chemical warfare programme', and that there should be a referral to the International Criminal Court. Late in the day even more details are given by Russia which prompts positive reaction from the US — 'The proposal they have put forward is very specific and the Syrian reaction is a total about-face. This is significant'. — Jay Carney, as quoted in Dan Roberts (from Washington) and Julian Borger (from London), 'Syria crisis: US welcomes "significant" Russian proposal on chemical weapons', *Guardian* (London), 12 September 2013.]

**12 September 2013** Vladimir Putin publishes an OpEd article in the *New York Times*. He states: 'No one doubts that poison gas was used in Syria. But there is every reason to believe it was used not by the Syrian Army, but by opposition forces, to provoke intervention by their powerful foreign patrons, who would be siding with the fundamentalists. Reports that militants are preparing another attack — this time against Israel — cannot be ignored.'[1]

[1] Vladimir V Putin, 'A Plea for Caution From Russia', *New York Times*, 12 September 2013, p A31.

**12 September 2013** Syria writes to the UN indicating its intent to be bound by the provisions of the CWC. The letter is sent by the Syrian Ambassador to the UN in New York to the Secretary-General which is said to transmit the information that a 'legislative decree' for joining the Convention has been signed by President Assad.[1] The formal instrument of accession is received by the UN treaties office on 14 September, meaning that the entry into force of the Convention for Syria is to be 14 October 2013.[2]

In The Hague, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Ahmet Üzümcü, receives a letter from Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid al-Muallem, informing him of the decision of the Syrian government to join the Convention. The following day, this is followed up with a call from Syrian Deputy Minister Mr Faisal Mekdad to the Director-General requesting technical assistance from the OPCW. The Director-General informs the Deputy Foreign Minister that the Syrian request for provisional application of the Convention to Syria prior to its formal entry into force has been forwarded to the CWC States Parties for consideration and that the request for assistance is also likely to come under review by the States Parties.[3]

In an interview yet to be broadcast in full, Assad is quoted as telling state-run Rossiya 24: 'Syria is placing its chemical weapons under international control because of Russia. The US threats did not influence the decision'.[4]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban welcomes Syria's letter on accession to treaty banning chemical weapons', press release, 12 September 2013.

[2] United Nations Secretary-General, Depository Notification C.N.592.2013.TREATIES-XXVI.3, 14 September 2013.

[3] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'OPCW to Review Request from Syria', press release, 13 September 2013.

[4] [No author listed], 'Syria crisis: UN receives Syria chemical treaty papers', BBC News, 12 September 2013.

**Q 14 September 2013** Agreement is reached in bilateral US-Russia talks in Geneva on Syrian chemical weapons, resulting in a 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons'.[1] [See separate entry, this date, for text of agreement.] The negotiations, led by US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, agree this on the third day of sitting.

The agreement itself has no legal force, but would be enacted through a decision by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and a resolution of the United Nations Security Council. The Framework document includes two annexes, one on the proposed OPCW Executive Council decision and the other on destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.

Under the agreement, the US and Russia 'expect Syria to submit, within a week, a comprehensive listing, including names, types, and quantities of its chemical weapons agents, types of munitions, and location and form of storage, production, and research and development facilities'. [*\*note on CWC requirements\**]

The two countries note that 'the most effective control of these weapons may be achieved by removal of the largest amounts of weapons feasible, under OPCW supervision, and their destruction outside of Syria, if possible'. The agreement recognises that the goals for removal and destruction of all categories of chemical weapons-related materials and equipment are 'ambitious' as the objective of completing such removal and destruction is 'in the first half of 2014'. The destruction/removal requirements not only cover chemical weapons themselves, but also stocks of chemical warfare agents, their precursors, specialized chemical weapons

equipment, chemical warfare munitions and 'facilities for the development and production of these weapons'. [*Note: the removal of chemical weapons from Syria to another State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention would constitute a transfer, contrary to the core obligations with Article I of the Convention, 'never under any circumstances' to 'develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone'. However, the definition of a chemical weapon is reliant on intent of use of the toxic properties of the material. If the intent of the recipient of the transfer is clearly the safe destruction and disposal of the toxic material, and this destruction and disposal is monitored and supervised by the OPCW to ensure non-diversion from the stated purpose, it could be argued that this would not constitute a transfer of a chemical weapon that would otherwise have been illegal under Article I.*]

The agreement further notes: 'to achieve accountability for their chemical weapons, the Syrians must provide the OPCW, the UN, and other supporting personnel with the immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites in Syria' and that the Executive Council decision and Security Council resolution 'should include a mechanism to ensure this right'. [*Note: it is not clear at this stage who the 'other supporting personnel' might be, nor what form the inspection rights mechanism might take, such as being based on the Challenge Inspection provisions of Article IX of the CWC.*]

While a deadline is set for elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment for 'the first half of 2014' there is an intermediate deadline 'by November' this year for completion of initial OPCW on-site inspections destruction of 'production and mixing/filling equipment'. [*Note: the November deadline would prove convenient for review as the OPCW's annual Conference of States Parties is scheduled to be held the week of 2 through 6 December in The Hague.*]

A background briefing on the deal is provided by two unnamed individuals from the US government. There are identified only as 'Senior State Department Official One' and 'Senior State Department Official Two'. Official two is quoted as telling the briefing 'In the U.S. view, there probably are at least 45 sites associated with Syria's CW program, nearly half of which, we previously assessed, housed exploitable quantities of CW materials. We note, however, that Syria may have removed exploitable chemicals from some of these sites. We have limited information regarding this activity, however'. Following questions about whether this assessment is in agreement with that of the Russians, official one is quoted as saying: 'They came to agreement with us on the amount and the types' [of weapons and materials] but on the sites these may be held: 'Not the number of locations, but we had very little discussion about it, quite frankly'.[2]

[*\*Add press reactions\**][3]

[1] The first published version of the agreement appears as: US Department of State, 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons', Media Note, 14 September 2013. It is reproduced in OPCW document EC-M-33/NAT.1, dated 17 September 2013, and joint UN General Assembly/Security Council document A/68/398 and S/2013/565, dated 24 September 2013.

[2] US Department of State, 'Background Briefing by Senior Officials on Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons', Special Briefing, 14 September 2013.

[3] Karen DeYoung, 'How the United States, Russia arrived at deal on Syria's chemical weapons', *Washington Post*, 16 September 2013.

**Q 14 September 2013** The 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons'[1] agreed today reads as follows: [see separate entry, this date, for analysis]

Taking into account the decision of the Syrian Arab Republic to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the commitment

of the Syrian authorities to provisionally apply the Convention prior to its entry into force, the United States and the Russian Federation express their joint determination to ensure the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons program (CW) in the soonest and safest manner.

For this purpose, the United States and the Russian Federation have committed to prepare and submit in the next few days to the Executive Council of the OPCW a draft decision setting down special procedures for expeditious destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons program and stringent verification thereof. The principles on which this decision should be based, in the view of both sides, are set forth in Annex A. The United States and the Russian Federation believe that these extraordinary procedures are necessitated by the prior use of these weapons in Syria and the volatility of the Syrian civil war.

The United States and the Russian Federation commit to work together towards prompt adoption of a UN Security Council resolution that reinforces the decision of the OPCW Executive Council. This resolution will also contain steps to ensure its verification and effective implementation and will request that the UN Secretary-General, in consultation with the OPCW, submit recommendations to the UN Security Council on an expedited basis regarding the UN's role in eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons program.

The United States and the Russian Federation concur that this UN Security Council resolution should provide for review on a regular basis the implementation in Syria of the decision of the Executive Council of the OPCW, and in the event of non-compliance, including unauthorized transfer, or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in Syria, the UN Security Council should impose measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

The proposed joint US-Russian OPCW draft decision supports the application of Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides for the referral of any cases of non-compliance to the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council.

In furtherance of the objective to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons program, the United States and the Russian Federation have reached a shared assessment of the amount and type of chemical weapons involved, and are committed to the immediate international control over chemical weapons and their components in Syria. The United States and the Russian Federation expect Syria to submit, within a week, a comprehensive listing, including names, types, and quantities of its chemical weapons agents, types of munitions, and location and form of storage, production, and research and development facilities.

We further determined that the most effective control of these weapons may be achieved by removal of the largest amounts of weapons feasible, under OPCW supervision, and their destruction outside of Syria, if possible. We set ambitious goals for the removal and destruction of all categories of CW related materials and equipment with the objective of completing such removal and destruction in the first half of 2014. In addition to chemical weapons, stocks of chemical weapons agents, their precursors, specialized CW equipment, and CW munitions themselves, the elimination process must include the facilities for the development and production of these weapons. The views of both sides in this regard are set forth in Annex B.

The United States and the Russian Federation have further decided that to achieve accountability for their chemical weapons, the Syrians must provide the OPCW, the UN, and other supporting personnel with the immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites in Syria. The extraordinary procedures to be proposed by the United States and the Russian Federation for adoption by the OPCW Executive Council and reinforced by a UN Security Council resolution, as described above, should include a mechanism to ensure this right.

Under this framework, personnel under both the OPCW and UN mandate should be dispatched as rapidly as possible to support control, removal, and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons capabilities.

The United States and the Russian Federation believe that the work of the OPCW and the UN will benefit from participation of the experts of the P5 countries.

The United States and the Russian Federation strongly reiterate their position on Syria as reflected in the Final Communiqué of the

G-8 Summit in Northern Ireland in June 2013, especially as regards chemical weapons.

The two sides intend to work closely together, and with the OPCW, the UN, all Syrian parties, and with other interested member states with relevant capabilities to arrange for the security of the monitoring and destruction mission, recognizing the primary responsibility of the Syrian Government in this regard.

The United States and the Russian Federation note that there are details in furtherance of the execution of this framework that need to be addressed on an expedited basis in the coming days and commit to complete these details, as soon as practicable, understanding that time is of the essence given the crisis in Syria.

#### Annex A is entitled 'Principles for Decision Document by OPCW Executive Council'

1. The decision should be based on para 8. Art. IV and para. 10 of Art V of the CWC.

2. The decision should address the extraordinary character of the situation with the Syrian chemical weapons.

3. The decision should take into account the deposit by Syria of the instrument of accession to the CWC.

4. The decision should provide for the easy accessibility for States Parties of the information submitted by Syria.

5. The decision should specify which initial information Syria shall submit to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in accordance with a tightly fixed schedule and also specifies an early date for submission of the formal CWC declaration.

6. The decision should oblige Syria to cooperate fully on all aspects of its implementation.

7. The decision should address a schedule for the rapid destruction of Syrian chemical weapons capabilities. This schedule should take into account the following target dates:

A. Completion of initial OPCW on-site inspections of declared sites by November.

B. Destruction of production and mixing/filling equipment by November.

C. Complete elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014.

The shortest possible final deadline, as well as intermediate deadlines, for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons capabilities should be included into the schedule.

8. The decision should provide stringent special verification measures, beginning within a few days, including a mechanism to ensure the immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites.

9. The decision should address the issue of duties of the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this situation and its need for supplementary resources to implement the decision, particularly technical and personnel resources, and call upon states with relevant capacities to contribute to this end.

10. The decision should refer to the provisions of the CWC obliging the Executive Council, in cases of non-compliance with the Convention, to bring the issues directly to the attention of the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council.

#### Annex B is entitled 'Joint Framework on Destruction of Syrian CW'

The Russian Federation and the United States of America agree on the need to achieve rapid elimination of Syria's chemical weapons, thus reducing the threat posed to the people of Syria. They are each prepared to devote high-level attention and resources to support the monitoring and destruction mission of the OPCW, both directly and in cooperation with the United Nations and other States concerned. They agree to set an ambitious goal of eliminating the threat in a rapid and effective manner.

Both parties agree that a clear picture of the state of Syrian chemical weapons could help advance a cooperative development of destruction options, including possible removal of chemical weapons outside of the Syrian territory. We agree on the importance of rapid destruction of the following categories:

1. Production equipment

2. Mixing and filling equipment

3. Filled and unfilled weapons and delivery systems

4. Chemical agents (unweaponized) and precursor chemicals.

For these materials, they will pursue a hybrid approach, i.e., a combination of removal from Syria and destruction within Syria,

depending upon site-specific conditions. They will also consider the possibility of consolidation and destruction in the coastal area of Syria.

5. Material and equipment related to the research and development of chemical weapons

The two parties agree to utilize the 'universal matrix', developed in the course of consultations by our two National Security Councils, as the basis for an actionable plan.

They agree that the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria should be considered an urgent matter to be implemented within the shortest possible time period.

The parties agree to set the following target dates:

A. Completion of initial OPCW on-site inspections by November.

B. Destruction of production and mixing/filling equipment by November.

C. Complete elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014.

The Russian Federation and the United States will work together closely, including with the OPCW, the UN and Syrian parties to arrange for the security of the monitoring and destruction mission, noting the primary responsibility of the Syrian government in this regard.

[1] The first published version of the agreement appears as: US Department of State, 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons', Media Note, 14 September 2013. It is reproduced in OPCW document EC-M-33/NAT.1, dated 17 September 2013, and joint UN General Assembly/Security Council document A/68/398 and S/2013/565, dated 24 September 2013.

20130915

**Q 15 September 2013** In New York, the report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic is handed over to the UN Secretary-General [see 31 August]. A note to media correspondents issued by the UN says the report 'was transmitted today ... to the Secretary-General by Professor Ake Sellström, the head of the Mission, and the Secretary-General will provide it to the Member States tomorrow morning'. The note also says that the Secretary-General will brief the Security Council on the report during closed consultations the next morning. Following that briefing he will speak to reporters.[1]

There is considerable press speculation about what might be in the report, with some expecting it to be neutral on the subject of who might have perpetrated the attack[2] and others speculating it will suggest the Syrian government carried out the attack.[3]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban receives report from team probing possible chemical weapons use in Syria, will brief Security Council on findings', press release, 15 September 2013.

[2] *[\*insert examples\*]*

[3] *[\*insert examples\*]*

20130916

**16 September 2013** In Paris, the Foreign Ministers of France, the UK and the USA meet to consider the situation in Syria. Included on the agenda is the drafting of the UN Security Council resolution needed to implement the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' [see 14 September].[1]

[1] [No author listed], 'France welcomes Syria deal but force "still an option"', BBC News, 16 September 2013; [No author listed], 'Syria crisis: France, US and UK want "strong" UN resolution', BBC News, 16 September 2013; [No author listed], 'Syria must be held to account, says William Hague', BBC News, 16 September 2013.

20130916

**Q 16 September 2013** In New York, the UN investigation team report [see 15 September] is published late morning.[1] The Secretary-General briefs the Security Council on the report.[2]

The report confirms the use of sarin on the morning of 21 August and does not specify any other agent as having been detected. The report contains a covering letter from Åke

Sellström (team leader), Scott Cairns (signing for the OPCW contingent in the team) and Maurizio Barbeschi (signing for the WHO contingent in the team). This letter includes: 'On the basis of the evidence obtained during our investigation of the Ghouta incident, the conclusion is that chemical weapons have been used in the ongoing conflict between the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic, also against civilians, including children, on a relatively large scale. In particular, the environmental chemical and medical samples, we have collected, provide clear and convincing evidence that surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent sarin were used in Ein Tanna, Moadamiyah and Zamalka in the Ghouta area of Damascus. This result leaves us with the deepest concern.'

*[\*impact points, trajectories\*]*

*[\*weather\*]*

*[\*political reaction\*]*

*[\*press reaction & expert comment\*]*[2]

[1] United Nations Secretary-General, *Report of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013*, S/2013/553, 16 September 2013.

[2] [No author listed], Associated Press, as in: 'UN Inspectors On Syria: "Clear And Convincing Evidence" Chemical Weapons Were Used On Large Scale', Huffington Post, 16 September 2013; [no author listed], 'Syria crisis: UN report confirms sarin gas "war crime"', BBC News, 16 September 2013; Louis Charbonneau and Michelle Nichols (from UN New York), 'U.N. confirms sarin used in Syria attack; U.S., UK, France blame Assad', Reuters, 16 September 2013.

20130917

**H 17 September 2013** [UNGA on the Sellström report.]

20130917

**17 September 2013** Human Rights Watch publishes a map showing the trajectories of the missiles used in the 21 August attack as listed in the Sellström report.[1] [Note: The Sellström report provides no information on range of the missiles used. In addition, the report notes that one of the relevant missiles had 'initially impacted the corner of the second floor of an adjacent apartment building to the east'.]

[1] Josh Lyons, 'Dispatches: Mapping the Sarin Flight Path', Human Rights Watch, 17 September 2013.

20130918

**H 18 September 2013** [Assad claims CW destruction would take a year.]

20130918

**Q 18 September 2013** *[\*needs expanding\*]* Syria passes to Russia evidence that it claims shows that the chemical weapons attack on 21 August was carried out by opposition forces.[1]

Russia 'denounces' Sellström report. Announcement that UN investigators would return to Syria.[2]

Further denial that the USSR had supplied Syria with chemical weapons, although careful words appear to have been used.[3]

[1] [No author listed], 'Russia will give UN "proof" of Syria rebel chemical use', BBC News, 18 September 2013; [No author listed], 'Syria Hands Russia Proof on Rebels' Use of Chemical Weapons', RIA Novosti, 18 September 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'Russia Denounces UN Chemical Report on Syria', Voice of America, 18 September 2013.

[3] [No author listed], 'Soviet Union Did Not Send Chemical Weapons to Syria - Official', RIA Novosti, 18 September 2013.

20130918

**H 18 September 2013** [German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle offers a voluntary contribution to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of 2 million Euro intended to be set against costs of the OPCW participation in the UN investigation mission in Syria.]

**Q 19 September 2013** Denmark forwards a letter to the UN Security Council on behalf of the Syrian Coalition. The letter is to be made available via the UN website.[1]

In a press release from his department, the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Villy Søvndal, is quoted as saying: 'Following the release of the UN inspectors' report, the Syrian Opposition Coalition urges the Security Council in a letter to take immediate action to secure and subsequently destruct Syria's chemical weapons. At the same time, the Coalition stresses the need to press harder for a political solution. These are constructive messages that Denmark generally supports. That's why we accommodated the request for Denmark to transmit the letter on behalf of the Coalition. Doing so is a natural continuation of our political support to the moderate Syrian opposition'. The release also notes that France, Germany, Italy and the UK have all previously forwarded letters in the same way.[2]

[1] *[\*ADD when text available\*]*

[2] Denmark, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Denmark transmits letter to the UN Security Council on behalf of the Syrian Opposition Coalition', press release, 20 September 2013.

20130920

**20 September 2013** In The Hague, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons receives 'an initial disclosure' from the Syrian Government regarding its chemical weapons programme, so the OPCW Technical Secretariat announces. It posts on its website, the following announcement which it indicates was made at 16.00 local time: 'The OPCW has received an initial disclosure from the Syrian Government of its chemical weapons programme, which is now being examined by the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation'.

A further announcement is made the next day on the website: 'OPCW has confirmed that it has received the expected disclosure from the Syrian government regarding its chemical weapons programme. The Technical Secretariat is currently reviewing the information received.'

[Note: the Geneva Framework called for 'Syria to submit, within a week, a comprehensive listing, including names, types, and quantities of its chemical weapons agents, types of munitions, and location and form of storage, production, and research and development facilities', a less detailed set of information required than under the Chemical Weapons Convention itself [see 14 September note on information requirements]. The use of the term 'disclosure' in this situation may be deliberate in order to distinguish the submission of information under the Geneva Framework from the formal 'declaration' process under the CWC.]

20130920

**H 20 September 2013** [Libya supply allegation.]

20130923

**23 September 2013** The Council of the League of Arab States meets at ministerial level in New York. It decides:

(i) To urge the Security Council to assume its responsibility by addressing the unfolding Syrian crisis and its repercussions in a comprehensive manner, not only by focusing on the effects of the Ghutah crime and Syrian chemical disarmament, but also by taking measures to impose a complete ceasefire on all Syrian territory; prohibiting the use of military aircraft, rockets and heavy weapons of all forms against civilians; establishing a mechanism to monitor the ceasefire under United Nations supervision; embarking on the process towards a political solution to the crisis; and building momentum for a second Geneva conference;

(ii) To stress that the Security Council should adopt a specific mechanism for the provision of humanitarian assistance, enabling international aid agencies to work freely and fulfil their functions without hindrance in all affected regions of Syria;

(iii) To stress that the chemical weapons crime in Ghutah was a war crime not subject to statutory limitations, and that its perpetrators must therefore be held accountable and handed over to the international criminal justice system.

This decision is communicated in a letter from the Chair of the Council of the League, Mohamed Abdulaziz, and the Secretary-General of the League, Nabil Elaraby. This letter is forwarded to the President of the Security Council by the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, Ahmed Fathalla.[1]

[1] League of Arab States, *Letter dated 24 September 2013 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/573, 25 September 2013.

20130924

**Q 24 September 2013** A number of senior political figures address the plenary session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

US President Barack Obama says that the Sellström investigation mission indicated 'overwhelming' evidence that proved that the Syrian government was behind the attack carried out on 21 August. He says: 'These rockets were fired from a regime-controlled neighborhood, and landed in opposition neighborhoods. It is an insult to human reason – and to the legitimacy of this institution – to suggest that anyone other than the regime carried out this attack'.

On Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, he says: 'The Syrian government took a first step by giving an accounting of its stockpiles'.

On further international measures to be taken, he says: 'Now, there must be a strong Security Council resolution to verify that the Assad regime is keeping its commitments. And there must be consequences if they fail to do so', adding: 'If we cannot agree even on this, then it will show that the United Nations is incapable of enforcing the most basic of international laws'.[1]

*[\*ADD comments by UNSG, Hollande, Rouhani, etc\*]*

[1] [No author listed], 'UN must enforce chemical weapons ban in Syria – Obama', *Russia Today*, 24 September 2013. *[\*add UNGA PV when available\*]*

20130925

**H 25 September 2013** [Second Sellström mission arrives in Damascus.]

20130925

**H 25 September 2013** [Interview with Sergei Lavrov published in the *Washington Post*.]

20130926

**26 September 2013** Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov is reported as confirming Russia would help guard the facilities in Syria where the weapons are being destroyed. He is reported as speaking during an arms exhibition in Nizhny Tagil and indicating that indicating he hopes other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) would also participate.[1]

[1] [No author listed], Associated Press, as in: 'Russia Willing to Help Guard Syrian Weapons Destruction', *RIA Novosti*, 26 September 2013.

20130926

**Q 26 September 2013** In New York, reports emerge that Russia and the United States have reached agreement on a text for a United Nations Security Council resolution in support of the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' [see 14 September]. A private meeting is scheduled for 20.00 local time (midnight GMT) for the full Council to consult on the draft.[1]

[1] [No author listed], 'Syria chemical weapons: US and Russia agree UN draft', *BBC News*, 26 September 2013; [no author listed], 'U.N. Security Council to meet on Syria resolution on Thursday', *Reuters*, 26 September 2013.

20130927

**27 September 2013** [Note: this day contains a potentially confusing sequence of events. During normal working hours, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopts a resolution on Syria. Late in the day in The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons meets to adopt its decision in support of the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' and this is followed by the adoption of a United Nations Security Council resolution. There are separate chronology entries for each of these events, dealt with in the sequence given above.]

20130927

**27 September 2013** In Geneva, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopts a resolution on 'The continuing grave deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic' which includes as paragraphs 5 and 6: '*Strongly condemns* all massacres in the Syrian Arab Republic, including most recently the massacre in the Al Ghouta region, which caused appalling civilian casualties' and '*Also strongly condemns* the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, which is prohibited under international law, amounts to a serious crime and has a devastating impact on civilians'.[1]

The resolution is adopted by a vote of 40 in favour to 1 against (Venezuela), with 6 abstentions.[2]

The countries sponsoring the resolution are: Albania, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Canada, Denmark, Djibouti, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Maldives, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, and Yemen.[3]

[1] *[\*INSERT REF with final resolution number\*]*

[2] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'UN welcomes Brazil's offer of humanitarian visas for Syrians fleeing conflict', press release, 27 September 2013.

[3] A/HRC/24/L.38, 24 September 2013 *[\*FULL REF\*]*

20130927

**Q 27 September 2013** In The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons meets to adopt its decision[1] in support of the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' [see 14 September]. [See separate entry, this date, for text of the decision.] This meeting had been originally scheduled for Wednesday 18 September,[2] then Friday 20 September,[3] then Sunday 22 September,[4] then subsequently postponed[5].

The meeting is initially announced as being at 22.00 local time (21.00 GMT)[6] but one member of the Executive Council is reported as needing confirmation of its position from its capital and is rescheduled to half-past midnight (22.30 GMT).[7] [Note: This is still taken to be Friday 27 September for the purposes of adoption of the decision, as noted on the decision document itself. While it is common to 'stop the clock' in a meeting to keep within the legally allocated time, this is the first time in the experience of this author that the clock has effectively been stopped before a meeting even started. However, the implication of not stopping the clock would have been that the Security Council, meeting in New York on 27 September, would have adopted a resolution following (and referencing) an OPCW decision of 28 September.]

*[\*Add analysis\*]*

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council, 'Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons', Decision, EC-M-33/DEC.1, 27 September 2013.

[2] *[\*ref\*]*

[3] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General, 'Notification of a meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-33/1/Rev.1, 18 September 2013.

[4] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General, 'Notification of a meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-33/1/Rev.2, 19 September 2013; [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Chemical weapons watchdog to meet Sunday on Syria: OPCW', Yahoo News, 19 September 2013.

[5] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General, 'Notification of a meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-33/1/Rev.3, 20 September 2013.

[6] The notification of the meeting was posted on the opening page of the OPCW website.

[7] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Syria disarmament talks stall at chemical watchdog: OPCW', Expatica, 27 September 2013.

20130927

**27 September 2013** The decision[1] agreed today by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in support of the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' [see 14 September] reads as follows: [see separate entry, this date, for analysis]

The Executive Council,

Recalling that following its thirty-second Meeting, 27 March 2013, the Chairperson of the Executive Council (hereinafter 'the Council') issued a statement (EC-M-32/2/Rev.1, dated 27 March 2013) expressing 'deep concern that chemical weapons may have been used in the Syrian Arab Republic', and underlining that 'the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances would be reprehensible and completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of the international community';

Recalling also that the third Review Conference (RC-3/3\*, 19 April 2013) expressed 'deep concern that chemical weapons may have been used in the Syrian Arab Republic and underlined that use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances would be reprehensible and completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of the international community';

Noting the 'Report on the Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in the Ghouta area of Damascus on 21 August 2013,' (S/2013/553, dated 16 September 2013) prepared by the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, dated 16 September 2013, which concludes that 'chemical weapons have been used in the ongoing conflict between the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic, also against civilians, including children, on a relatively large scale';

Condemning in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons;

Welcoming the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons agreed upon by the United States and the Russian Federation on 14 September 2013 (EC-M-33/NAT.1, dated 17 September 2013);

Noting also that on 12 September 2013, in its communication to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Syrian Arab Republic notified its intention to apply the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (hereinafter 'the Convention') provisionally;

Noting further that on 14 September 2013, the Syrian Arab Republic deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations its instrument of accession to the Convention and declared that it shall comply with its stipulations and observe them faithfully and sincerely, applying the Convention provisionally pending its entry into force for the Syrian Arab Republic, which was notified to all States Parties by the depositary on the same date (C.N.592.2013.TREATIES-XXVI.3), and taking into account that the depositary received no communications to the contrary from the States Parties with regard to this declaration;

Noting further that the Convention enters into force for the Syrian Arab Republic on 14 October 2013;

Recognizing the extraordinary character of the situation posed by Syrian chemical weapons and determined to ensure that the activities necessary for the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme start immediately pending the formal entry into force of the Convention with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic, and are conducted in the most rapid and safe manner;

Recognizing also the invitation of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to receive immediately a technical delegation from the OPCW and to cooperate with the OPCW in accordance with the provisional application of the Convention prior to its entry into force for the Syrian Arab Republic, and noting the designation by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter 'the Secretariat') of its National Authority;

Emphasising that the provisional application of the Convention gives immediate effect to its provisions with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic;

Noting further that the Syrian Arab Republic submitted on 19 September 2013 the detailed information, including names, types and quantities of its chemical weapons agents, types of munitions and location and form of storage, production, and research and development facilities;

Noting further that pursuant to paragraph 36 of Article VIII of the Convention, the Council, following its consideration of doubts or concerns regarding compliance and cases of non-compliance, shall, in cases of particular gravity and urgency, bring the issue or matter, including relevant information and conclusions, directly to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council;

Taking into account the Agreement Concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of 17 October 2000;

Strongly urging all remaining States not Party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it as a matter of urgency and without preconditions, in the interests of enhancing their own national security, as well as contributing to global peace and security; and

Recalling that, pursuant to paragraph 8 of Article IV and paragraph 10 of Article V of the Convention, a State acceding to the Convention after 2007 shall destroy its chemical weapons and its chemical weapons production facilities as soon as possible, and the Council shall determine the 'order of destruction and procedures for stringent verification' of such destruction;

Hereby:

1. Decides that the Syrian Arab Republic shall:

(a) not later than 7 days after the adoption of this decision, submit to the Secretariat further information, to supplement that provided on 19 September 2013, on the chemical weapons as defined in paragraph 1 of Article II of the Convention that the Syrian Arab Republic owns or possesses, or has under its jurisdiction or control, in particular:

(i) the chemical name and military designator of each chemical in its chemical weapons stockpile, including precursors and toxins, and quantities thereof;

(ii) the specific type of munitions, sub-munitions and devices in its chemical weapons stockpile, including specific quantities of each type that are filled and unfilled; and

(iii) the location of all of its chemical weapons, chemical weapons storage facilities, chemical weapons production facilities, including mixing and filling facilities and chemical weapons research and development facilities, providing specific geographic coordinates;

(b) not later than 30 days after the adoption of this decision, submit to the Secretariat the declaration required by Article III of the Convention;

(c) complete the elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014, subject to the detailed requirements, including intermediate destruction milestones, to be decided by the Council not later than 15 November 2013;

(d) complete as soon as possible and in any case not later than 1 November 2013, the destruction of chemical weapons production and mixing/filling equipment;

(e) cooperate fully with all aspects of the implementation of this decision, including by providing the OPCW personnel with the immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites in the Syrian Arab Republic;

(f) designate an official as the main point of contact for the Secretariat and provide him or her with the authority necessary to ensure that this decision is fully implemented.

2. Decides further that the Secretariat shall:

(a) make available to all States Parties, within five days of its receipt, any information or declaration referred to in this decision, which shall be handled in accordance with the Annex to the Convention on the Protection of Confidential Information;

(b) as soon as possible and in any case not later than 1 October

2013, initiate inspections in the Syrian Arab Republic pursuant to this decision;

(c) inspect not later than 30 days after the adoption of this decision, all facilities contained in the list referred to in paragraph 1 (a) above;

(d) inspect as soon as possible any other site identified by a State Party as having been involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme, unless deemed unwarranted by the Director-General, or the matter resolved through the process of consultations and cooperation;

(e) be authorized to hire, on a short-term basis, qualified inspectors and other technical experts and to rehire, on a short-term basis, inspectors, other technical experts and such other personnel as may be required whose term of service has recently expired, in order to ensure efficient and effective implementation of this decision in accordance with paragraph 44 of Article VIII of the Convention; and

(f) report to the Council on a monthly basis on implementation of this decision including progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of this decision and the Convention, activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic and its needs for any supplementary resources, particularly technical and personnel resources.

3. Decides further:

(a) to consider, on an urgent basis, the funding mechanisms for activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic, and to call upon all States Parties in a position to do so to provide voluntary contributions for activities carried out in the implementation of this decision;

(b) to meet within 24 hours if the Director-General reports delay by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of this decision or the Convention, including, inter alia, the cases referred to in paragraph 7 of Part II of the Annex to the Convention on Implementation and Verification, or a lack of cooperation in the Syrian Arab Republic or another problem that has arisen with regard to the implementation of this decision and at that meeting to consider whether to bring the matter, including relevant information and conclusions, to the attention of the United Nations Security Council in accordance with paragraph 36 of Article VIII of the Convention;

(c) to remain seized of the matter; and

(d) to recognize that this decision is made due to the extraordinary character of the situation posed by Syrian chemical weapons and does not create any precedent for the future.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council, 'Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons', Decision, EC-M-33/DEC.1, 27 September 2013.

20130927

**Q 27 September 2013** In New York, the United Nations Security Council meets to adopt its resolution in support of the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' [see 14 September] that follows on from the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons earlier in the day. [See separate entry, this date, for text of the resolution.] The members of the Council are mostly represented at ministerial level.

*[\*Add analysis\*]*

[1] resolution 2118

20130927

**Q 27 September 2013** The resolution[1] agreed today by United Nations Security Council in support of the 'Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons' [see 14 September], following on from the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons earlier in the day, reads as follows: [see separate entry, this date, for analysis]

The Security Council,

Recalling the Statements of its President of 3 August 2011, 21 March 2012, 5 April 2012, and its resolutions 1540 (2004), 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012),

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic,

Reaffirming that the proliferation of chemical weapons, as well as their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security,

Recalling that the Syrian Arab Republic on 22 November 1968 acceded to the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, signed at Geneva on 17 June 1925,

Noting that on 14 September 2013, the Syrian Arab Republic deposited with the Secretary-General its instrument of accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (Convention) and declared that it shall comply with its stipulations and observe them faithfully and sincerely, applying the Convention provisionally pending its entry into force for the Syrian Arab Republic,

Welcoming the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic (the Mission) pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/37 C (1987) of 30 November 1987, and reaffirmed by resolution 620 (1988) of 26 August 1988, and expressing appreciation for the work of the Mission,

Acknowledging the report of 16 September 2013 (S/2013/553) by the Mission, underscoring the need for the Mission to fulfil its mandate, and emphasizing that future credible allegations of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic should be investigated,

Deeply outraged by the use of chemical weapons on 21 August 2013 in Rif Damascus, as concluded in the Mission's report, condemning the killing of civilians that resulted from it, affirming that the use of chemical weapons constitutes a serious violation of international law, and stressing that those responsible for any use of chemical weapons must be held accountable,

Recalling the obligation under resolution 1540 (2004) that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons and their means of delivery,

Welcoming the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons dated 14 September 2013, in Geneva, between the Russian Federation and the United States of America (S/2013/565), with a view to ensuring the destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme in the soonest and safest manner, and expressing its commitment to the immediate international control over chemical weapons and their components in the Syrian Arab Republic,

Welcoming the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) of 27 September 2013 establishing special procedures for the expeditious destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme and stringent verification thereof, and expressing its determination to ensure the destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons program according to the timetable contained in the OPCW Executive Council decision of 27 September 2013,

Stressing that the only solution to the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, and emphasising the need to convene the international conference on Syria as soon as possible,

Determining that the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic constitutes a threat to international peace and security,

Underscoring that Member States are obligated under Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations to accept and carry out the Council's decisions,

1. Determines that the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security;

2. Condemns in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular the attack on 21 August 2013, in violation of international law;

3. Endorses the decision of the OPCW Executive Council 27 September 2013, which contains special procedures for the expeditious destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme and stringent verification thereof and calls for its full implementation in the most expeditious and safest manner;

4. Decides that the Syrian Arab Republic shall not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to other States or non-State actors;

5. Underscores that no party in Syria should use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, retain, or transfer chemical weapons;

6. Decides that the Syrian Arab Republic shall comply with all aspects of the decision of the OPCW Executive Council of 27 September 2013 (Annex I);

7. Decides that the Syrian Arab Republic shall cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations, including by complying with their relevant recommendations, by accepting personnel designated by the OPCW or the United Nations, by providing for and ensuring the security of activities undertaken by these personnel, by providing these personnel with immediate and unfettered access to and the right to inspect, in discharging their functions, any and all sites, and by allowing immediate and unfettered access to individuals that the OPCW has grounds to believe to be of importance for the purpose of its mandate, and decides that all parties in Syria shall cooperate fully in this regard;

8. Decides to authorize an advance team of United Nations personnel to provide early assistance to OPCW activities in Syria, requests the Director-General of the OPCW and the Secretary-General to closely cooperate in the implementation of the Executive Council decision of 27 September 2013 and this resolution, including through their operational activities on the ground, and further requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of the OPCW and, where appropriate, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, to submit to the Council within 10 days of the adoption of this resolution recommendations regarding the role of the United Nations in eliminating the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons program;

9. Notes that the Syrian Arab Republic is a party to the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, decides that OPCW-designated personnel undertaking activities provided for in this resolution or the decision of the OPCW Executive Council of 27 September 2013 shall enjoy the privileges and immunities contained in the Verification Annex, Part II(B) of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to conclude modalities agreements with the United Nations and the OPCW;

10. Encourages Member States to provide support, including personnel, technical expertise, information, equipment, and financial and other resources and assistance, in coordination with the Director-General of the OPCW and the Secretary-General, to enable the OPCW and the United Nations to implement the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme, and decides to authorize Member States to acquire, control, transport, transfer and destroy chemical weapons identified by the Director-General of the OPCW, consistent with the objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to ensure the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme in the soonest and safest manner;

11. Urges all Syrian parties and interested Member States with relevant capabilities to work closely together and with the OPCW and the United Nations to arrange for the security of the monitoring and destruction mission, recognizing the primary responsibility of the Syrian Government in this regard;

12. Decides to review on a regular basis the implementation in the Syrian Arab Republic of the decision of the OPCW Executive Council of 27 September 2013 and this resolution, and requests the Director-General of the OPCW to report to the Security Council, through the Secretary-General, who shall include relevant information on United Nations activities related to the implementation of this resolution, within 30 days and every month thereafter, and requests further the Director-General of the OPCW and the Secretary-General to report in a coordinated manner, as needed, to the Security Council, non-compliance with this resolution or the OPCW Executive Council decision of 27 September 2013;

13. Reaffirms its readiness to consider promptly any reports of the OPCW under Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides for the referral of cases of non-compliance to the United Nations Security Council;

14. Decides that Member States shall inform immediately the Security Council of any violation of resolution 1540(2004),



including acquisition by non-State actors of chemical weapons, their means of delivery and related materials in order to take necessary measures therefore;

15. Expresses its strong conviction that those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic should be held accountable;

16. Endorses fully the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 (Annex II), which sets out a number of key steps beginning with the establishment of a transitional governing body exercising full executive powers, which could include members of the present Government and the opposition and other groups and shall be formed on the basis of mutual consent;

17. Calls for the convening, as soon as possible, of an international conference on Syria to implement the Geneva Communiqué, and calls upon all Syrian parties to engage seriously and constructively at the Geneva Conference on Syria, and underscores that they should be fully representative of the Syrian people and committed to the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué and to the achievement of stability and reconciliation;

18. Reaffirms that all Member States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, and calls upon all Member States, in particular Member States neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic, to report any violations of this paragraph to the Security Council immediately;

19. Demands that non-State actors not develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, and calls upon all Member States, in particular Member States neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic, to report any actions inconsistent with this paragraph to the Security Council immediately;

20. Decides that all Member States shall prohibit the procurement of chemical weapons, related equipment, goods and technology or assistance from the Syrian Arab Republic by their nationals, or using their flagged vessels or aircraft, whether or not originating in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic;

21. Decides, in the event of non-compliance with this resolution, including unauthorized transfer of chemical weapons, or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic, to impose measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter;

22. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

Annex I to the resolution is the OPCW Executive Council decision taken earlier in the day [see separate entry this date] and Annex II is the Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué from 30 June 2012.

[1] resolution 2118

20130929

**29 September 2013** In The Hague, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons briefs journalists about what activities might be expected to be carried out in the initial stages of the OPCW's work in Syria. The briefing is led by OPCW head of media relations, Michael Luhan, and two officials who are unnamed. The initial OPCW team would be departing for Damascus the next day and would be roughly 20 strong.[1] The priority is for prohibited items to be rendered unusable within the specified timetable.

Luhan is quoted as saying: 'This isn't just extraordinary for the OPCW. This hasn't been done before: an international mission to go into a country which is involved in a state of conflict and amid that conflict oversee the destruction of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction which it possesses', and that: 'This is definitely a historical first'.[2]

The unnamed officials are quoted making a number of points. On relations with the inspected country: 'So far, our interactions with the Syrians have been very businesslike and efficient'.[3] On methods for destruction: 'We could fill reactors with concrete, perhaps, or they could smash them up if they're particularly delicate – if they're glass-lined reactors

for example. Or equipment can be destroyed with explosives or by having a tank drive over it'.[4]

[1] Fred Pals, 'Syria Said to Be Forthcoming in Preparing for Weapons Inspectors', Bloomberg, 29 September 2013; .

[2] [No author listed], 'OPCW: Dismantling Syrian chemical weapons an unparalleled mission', UPI, 30 September 2013.

[3] Michael Birnbaum, 'Chemical weapons officials say coordination with Syrian government has been "efficient"', *Washington Post*, 30 September 2013.

[4] Julian Borger, 'UN inspectors prepare to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons cache', *Guardian* (London), 29 September 2013.

20130930

**Q 30 September 2013** The UN Secretary-General's investigation mission, led by Åke Sellström, into allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria returns to The Hague.[1]

In New York, the Secretary-General's spokesperson Martin Nesirky is asked whether members of the investigatory mission has visited Khan al-Assal. He responds: 'They are now heading out of Syria with the aim of finalizing their report, and I will be able to provide details on where they have been, but not right at this moment. They have not visited Khan al-Assal to my knowledge, but, that does not mean that they have not been able to collect a large body of information, which they had been doing in any case in the lead-up to their initial visit and then to their return. And so, if I have any more details, I will let you know. And I know also that they will now be seeking to marshal all of the information that they do have with the aim of putting that report together by the end of October'.[2]

[1] [\*add\*]

[2] Martin Nesirky, *Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General*, 30 September 2013, as published by the United Nations Department of Public Information in a 'near-verbatim transcript'.

20130930

**H 30 September 2013** [Shimon Peres, speaking in The Hague while there on other business, indicates that Israel might consider ratifying the CWC.]

20131001

**1 October 2013** A joint Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations team arrives in Damascus to undertake preliminary activities in relation to the disclosures made to the OPCW by the Syrian authorities.[1] The team has travelled over land from Beirut[2] and is initially said to comprise 19 OPCW inspectors and 14 UN staff members[3], although later official reporting puts the number of UN staff members at 16.[4]

It is reported that some of the team members will double-check the disclosures made to the OPCW by the Syrian authorities of what weapons and chemical precursors it possesses and where they are located, while others will start planning the logistics for visits to each of the listed sites.[5] The purpose of this mission is described by the OPCW Director-General two days later in the following terms: 'The team has a three-pronged mission. Firstly: to enable a fuller and more precise disclosure to be made by the Syrian Arab Republic. Secondly: to conduct an assessment based on inspections at sites included in the disclosure in order to plan for destruction activities. And, thirdly: to assess and to carry out operations to render inoperable chemical weapons production facilities and those designed for mixing and filling'.[6]

The opposition Syrian National Coalition indicates that the Free Syrian Army would ensure that inspectors 'will be protected, and granted access to all locations' according to a quote attributed to spokesman Monzer Akbik.[7]

[1] [No author listed], Associated Press, as in: 'Syria's chemical weapons: inspectors arrive to begin dismantling', *Guardian* (London), 1

October 2013; Anne Barnard, 'Weapons Inspection Team Begins Work in Syria', *New York Times*, 2 October 2013.

[2] Martin Nesirky, *Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2013, as published by the United Nations Department of Public Information in a 'near-verbatim transcript'.

[3] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'OPCW-UN team arrives in Damascus and sets up operational base', press release, 1 October 2013 [this press release was issued jointly with the United Nations].

[4] United Nations Secretary-General, *Letter dated 7 October 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/591, 7 October 2013.

[5] Barbara Surk, Associated Press, as in: 'Weapons Experts Start Syria Mission Amid Clashes', *Time*, 2 October 2013.

[6] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 'Statement by the Director-General to the Executive Council at its Thirty-third Meeting on 3 October 2013', EC-M-33/DG.1, 3 October 2013.

[7] [No author listed], 'Syria conflict: Chemical arms experts cross border', BBC News, 1 October 2013.

20131002

**2 October 2013** The first full day of activity in Syria for the joint Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations team formed pursuant to the Geneva Framework Agreement is carried out.

The day's activities are described in the following terms: 'Joint work with the Syrian authorities has begun on securing the sites where the team will operate, especially in outlying areas. The team has also been considering the health and environmental hazards which they may have to confront. In addition, planning continues for one of the team's immediate tasks, disabling Syria's chemical weapons production facilities, which should begin soon. Meanwhile, discussions on the size of Syria's stockpiles are also under way, as well as long-term planning, so that deadlines unanimously imposed by the Executive Council of the OPCW and the UN Security Council are met'.

Specific emphasis is placed on the role of Syria itself: 'In their discussions with the authorities, the OPCW-UN team was keen to stress that the onus was on the Syrian Government to meet the verification and destruction deadlines. It was however reiterated that the joint mission will provide the necessary technical support to meet these obligations. Meeting the regular reporting requirements will be one indication of compliance'. [1]

The following day, the OPCW reports that the joint OPCW-UN team has made 'encouraging initial progress, following the first working day of meetings with the Syrian authorities'. During the first day of operations, Syrian authorities hand over further documents [see 20 September] which 'look promising, according to team members, but further analysis, particularly of technical diagrams, will be necessary and some more questions remain to be answered'. What are described as 'technical groups' are established by the joint OPCW-UN team with the participation of Syrian experts. These technical groups are working on three areas, described as: 'verification of the information handed over by the Syrian Government'; 'safety and security of the inspection teams'; and 'practical arrangements for implementing the plan, under which Syria's chemical weapons material and equipment are to be eliminated by mid-2014'. [2]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'Chemical weapons team gets down to work in Syria', press release, 2 October 2013 [this press release was issued jointly with the United Nations]. See also: Martin Nesirky, *Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General*, 2 October 2013, as published by the United Nations Department of Public Information in a 'near-verbatim transcript'; and United Nations Department of Public Information, 'UN inspectors begin mission to disable Syria's chemical production facilities', press release, 2 October 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'Syria Chemical Weapons Team Reports Encouraging

Progress, 3 October 2013 [this press release was issued jointly with the United Nations].

20131002

**Q 2 October 2013** In Strasbourg, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe debates the situation in Syria. [1] The debate is introduced by Björn von Sydow of Sweden, rapporteur of a report for the meeting. [2]

The Assembly unanimously adopts a recommendation [3] which 'condemns in particular the large scale use of chemical weapons on 21 August 2013 in the Ghouta area of Damascus, which reportedly resulted in many hundreds of deaths, particularly among civilians and including several hundred children' and 'insists that there can be no impunity for those who commit crimes against humanity, whoever and wherever they are. All allegations of violations and crimes committed throughout the Syrian conflict, by virtue of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical and biological weapons, must be properly investigated and their perpetrators, whoever and wherever they may be, brought to justice, including, as appropriate, before the International Criminal Court'.

Welcoming the Geneva Framework Agreement, the associated decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, resolution 2118 of the UN Security Council and the acceptance of the Syrian authorities of these, 'highlighted by Syria's accession' to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the recommendation states the Assembly is: 'well aware of the huge technical difficulties and legal obstacles on the way towards elimination of Syria's chemical weapons and of the fact that the ongoing civil war in the country increases them immensely. Strong political will is needed to work out the details of implementation, and strict compliance by both the Syrian authorities and the opposition are indispensable for its success. Pending cessation of the hostilities, ceasefires should be implemented to allow for inspections of chemical weapons sites, as well as for the transportation and destruction of chemical weapons'.

Paragraph 8 of the recommendation reads: 'In this respect, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers urge the governments of Council of Europe member States to: 8.1. put pressure on all sides so as to ensure respect for the ceasefires necessary for the implementation of the agreed plan; 8.2. provide additional resources to the OPCW to carry out its challenging task'.

[1] [\*debate transcripts\*]

[2] Björn von Sydow (Sweden), 'The situation in Syria', Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, Document 13320, 1 October 2013

[3] [\*recommendation 2026 (2013)\*]

20131003

**3 October 2013** Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, and presidential envoy on the Middle East, Mikhail Bogdanov, expresses fears that opposition groups may stage 'provocations' as the activities to eliminate chemical weapons are being undertaken in Syria. He is quoted as saying: 'Objectively speaking this cannot be ruled out, and we have certain understanding with our western partners in this respect that there are real risks and different kind of provocations because terrorists and extremists who are not interested in a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis might put different obstacles, quite serious, in the process to eliminate chemical weapons'. He is also said to have expressed concerns that 'it will not be easy to get to the places where chemical weapons or some components are located', asserting: 'In principle, chemical arsenals are under control of the Syrian government, but I think not all of them', adding: 'But one can get to the

depots that are controlled by the government only in crossing regions that are controlled by the opposition.

[1] [No author listed], 'Russia fears radical Syrian opposition provocations in elimination of chemical weapons', Itar-Tass, 3 October 2013.

20131003

**Q 3 October 2013** The thirty-third meeting of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons resumes and is legally a continuation of the one that adopted decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 [see 27 September] as the meeting was suspended rather than closed. Representatives of Syria are present. The decision to allow the presence of Syria while a non-State Party is described in the report of the meeting in the following terms: 'This decision neither has, nor is intended to create, a precedent and any possible future requests of a similar nature shall be considered on a case-by-case basis'.[1]

The Director-General describes the purposes of the initial mission to Damascus [see 1 October] and notes that the Syrian National Authority 'has identified a point of contact and detailed discussions have already been conducted regarding all three aspects of the current mission'. He indicates that discussions are also continuing on 'operational planning with the United Nations as a partner' and that a 'Special Coordinator' will be appointed to head the joint OPCW-UN mission. The Special Coordinator will have two deputies, one from the OPCW, the other from the United Nations. He states: 'Decision-making on matters of a nature specific to verification activities and related provisions of the Council decision and the UN Security Council resolution will be conducted under my direct supervision and authority'. He notes: 'United Nations support in areas such as security, security assessments, logistics, and contacts with Syrian opposition groups will be critical to the success of this mission'.[2]

The following Executive Council members make statements relating to the situation in Syria: Iran, Saudi Arabia, the USA, Nigeria (on behalf of the African Group), Canada, Peru, Ireland (on behalf of the European Union), the UK, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Pakistan, France, Senegal, Norway, Poland, Ecuador (and on behalf of Bolivia), Uruguay, China, Republic of Korea, Qatar, Japan, Argentina, Germany, India and Russia. Four observer states in the Executive Council also make statements: Cuba, Switzerland, Turkey and the Netherlands.[3] [Note: as of 2 November, all but the statements of Saudi Arabia, the USA, Canada, Senegal, Uruguay, China, Republic of Korea, Qatar, Japan, Argentina, Germany, India and Turkey are available on the OPCW website.] [\*add details from speeches\*]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Executive Council, 'Report of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-33/2, 3 October 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 'Statement by the Director-General to the Executive Council at its Thirty-third Meeting on 3 October 2013', EC-M-33/DG.1, 3 October 2013.

[3] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Executive Council, 'Report of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-33/2, 3 October 2013.

20131004

**4 October 2013** Syrian authorities submit additional information to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons updating their initial disclosure [see 20 September and 2 October]. This information is described as drawing 'in part on technical assistance provided by the OPCW team and will help the OPCW plan its future activities'.[1] [Note: It is not clear from what has been published whether the two sets of information from today and two days earlier are entirely separate or are related sets of

information.] Today is seven days since the adoption of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 [see 27 September] and thus the deadline for submission of the information in paragraph 1(a) of that decision.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'OPCW Deploys 2nd Team of Inspectors to Expand Verification and Destruction Activities in Syria', press release, 8 October 2013.

20131004

**H 4 October 2013** [NATO-Russia Council meets in Brussels]

20131006

**6 October 2013** Syrian officials start destroying certain Category 3 chemical weapons and destroying or disabling a range of items under the supervision of personnel from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, towards the goal of rendering unusable all production facilities and mixing and filling equipment by 1 November.[1]

These activities are described by the OPCW Director-General a few days later in the following terms: 'Under the verification of OPCW experts supported by the United Nations, Syria began to destroy its chemical weapons. Syrian personnel used cutting torches and angle grinders to destroy or disable a range of materials, including missile warheads, aerial bombs, and mixing and filling equipment'.[2]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'OPCW Deploys 2nd Team of Inspectors to Expand Verification and Destruction Activities in Syria', press release, 8 October 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Opening Statement by the Director-General to the Executive Council At its Seventy-Fourth Session', EC-74/DG.12, 8 October 2013.

20131006

**6 October 2013** An element of the advance team of the joint Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations mission returns to The Hague from Syria.[1] At least part of the activities of the OPCW personnel while in Damascus is described as a 'Technical Assistance Visit' in a briefing to the Executive Council the following week.[2]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'OPCW Team Completes First Week of Work in Syria', press release, 6 October 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'Briefing by the Technical Secretariat on the Technical Assistance Visit to the Syrian Arab Republic, EC-74/S/4, 10 October 2013.

20131007

**7 October 2013** The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, writes to the Security Council regarding the formal establishment of the joint Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations mission pursuant to the Geneva Framework Agreement [see 14 September] and subsequent legal decisions [see 27 September]. The total size of the 'Joint Mission in Syria' (JMIS) is anticipated to be some 100 personnel. The letter confirms that the Joint Mission will be headed by a civilian Special Coordinator [see 3 October], to be appointed 'in close consultation with the Director-General of OPCW, at the level of Under-Secretary-General'.

The Secretary-General writes: 'Within the Joint Mission, the United Nations and OPCW will operate in areas of their particular competencies, taking into account the necessary and complementary roles that each organization has in supporting and conducting the Mission. ... Owing to the specialist nature of the Joint Mission and stringent timelines that have been put in place for the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic, the role of the United Nations in facilitating strong support and assistance from

Member States is also necessary. While OPCW will serve as the lead technical agency, the United Nations is willing to play a strategic coordination role and serve as an operational enabler for the Mission'. The UN and OPCW would each be responsible for 'its own personnel, responsibilities and tasks'.

On logistic arrangements, the intention is that the Joint Mission will establish a 'light footprint' in Syria, 'deploying to Syria only those personnel whose presence is necessary' primarily in tasks related 'logistics, security and liaison, with limited numbers for support to the Special Coordinator, medical support, communications, administrative support and possibly other areas, as may be required. The Damascus office will thus serve as an operations base for the Joint Mission'. The main support base would be in Cyprus.[1]

[1] United Nations Secretary-General, *Letter dated 7 October 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/591, 7 October 2013. See also: United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban seeks 100-member joint mission to oversee destruction of Syrian chemical weapons', press release, 8 October 2013.

20131008

**Q 8 October 2013** In The Hague, the seventy-fourth session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is opened. The session continues until 11 October.

In his statement at the opening of the session, OPCW Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü describes some of the recent activities taking place in Syria [see 6 October] and notes that a second team of 12 OPCW inspectors 'has now departed for Cyprus' in order to 'deploy to Damascus via Beirut on 9 October'.[1]

Ambassador Darius Semaška of Lithuania, speaking on behalf of the European Union, notes: 'A number of European Union Member States have already committed additional financial resources to the OPCW, air transport for inspectors, technical personnel and equipment going to Syria and have expressed their willingness to support the OPCW with expertise and other necessary means in order to discharge the new mandate in the Syrian Arab Republic'.[2]

Ambassador Francesco Azzarello of Italy notes the provision by his country of a C-130 military transport aircraft for ten days with the hope that 'thanks to the necessary coordination of the Technical Secretariat, we will be able to have a planned rotation among States Parties ready to assist with vital air transport'.[3]

Ambassador Zelmys María Domínguez Cortina of Cuba suggests: 'For implementation of the Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic, the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the States Parties of this Organisation must make available to the Syrian National Authority all necessary resources, and must help it to comply with the provisions of the Convention, as well as with those of the decision adopted by the Executive Council on this matter'.[4]

**[\*CHECK if any further relevant statements have been made public\*]**

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Opening Statement by the Director-General to the Executive Council At its Seventy-Fourth Session', EC-74/DG.12, 8 October 2013.

[2] Lithuania, 'Statement on Behalf of the European Union Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Darius Semaška Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the OPCW at the Seventy-Fourth Session of the Executive Council', EC-74/NAT.5, 8 October 2013.

[3] Italy, 'Statement by H.E. Ambassador Francesco Azzarello Permanent Representative of Italy to the OPCW at the Seventy-Fourth Session of the Executive Council', EC-74/NAT.6, 8 October 2013.

[4] Cuba, 'Statement by H.E. Ambassador Zelmys María Domínguez Cortina Permanent Representative of Cuba to the OPCW at the Seventy-Fourth Session of the Executive Council', EC-74/NAT.6, 8 October 2013.

20131009

**Q 9 October 2013** OPCW major press conference. The Director-General provides an update on the OPCW's verification and destruction activities in Syria. This is followed by an on-the-record briefing by a panel of senior OPCW representatives comprising three Syria Advance Team members — Jun Wang, Director, OPCW External Relations and Team leader, Dominique Anelli, Head, OPCW Chemical Demilitarisation, Nihad Alihodjic, Head, OPCW Declarations unit — and Malik Ellahi, Political Adviser to the Director-General. **[\*Expand\*]** UN press release.[1] **[\*OPCW source??\*]**

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Chemical weapons watchdog urges cooperation in Syria to carry out UN-joint mission', press release, 9 October 2013.

20131010

**10 October 2013** In the UK House of Commons, a junior Foreign Office minister states in response to a specific question: 'We have seen no evidence that Saudi Arabia has supplied rebel groups in Syria with chemicals that could be weaponised'.[1]

[1] Hugh Robertson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Written Answer, 10 October 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 568, c357-58, in response to Paul Flynn MP.

20131010

**10 October 2013** In the UK House of Lords, further details are given regarding the licences granted for export of sodium fluoride and potassium fluoride to Syria [see 1 September]. A junior minister states: 'Two Standard Individual Export Licences (SIELs) were granted on 17 and 18 January 2012 authorising export of sodium fluoride and potassium fluoride. The licences were revoked on 30 July 2012 following the adoption of EU sanctions prohibiting the supply of these chemicals to Syria. No chemicals were exported under these licences before they were revoked'. [Note: the EU sanctions were introduced some six weeks before this date.]

The response also states: 'Ministers were not consulted by officials before these export licences were granted, as no specific concerns about end-use had been identified'.[1]

[1] Viscount Younger of Leckie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Written Answer, 10 October 2013, *Hansard* (Lords), vol 748, c45, in response to Lord Alton of Liverpool.

20131010

**H 10 October 2013** ['On 10 October, the Council heard a briefing in closed consultations from the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Susana Malcorra, on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013)' — report on the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the Republic of Azerbaijan in October 2013, as annexed to: Azerbaijan, *Letter dated 24 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/770, 26 December 2013, para 58. **[\*add details from para\*]**]

20131010

**Q 10 October 2013** After some days of rumours circulating, a blog post includes a reference to an approach to the government of Norway by representatives of the US government requesting assistance with destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.[1] **[\*expand\*]**

[1] Colum Lynch, 'New Syrian Weapons Disposal Plan: Send Them to Scandinavia', *Foreign Policy* [blog], 10 October 2013

20131011

**Q 11 October 2013** OPCW awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the citation reading: 'for its extensive efforts to eliminate

chemical weapons'.[1] Congratulations from UN.[2] Some commentaries in favour,[3] some against [4]. *[\*Expand\*]*

[1] Den Norsk Nobelkomite [The Norwegian Nobel Committee], 'The Nobel Peace Prize 2013', press release, 11 October 2013.

[2] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban lauds awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to international chemical watchdog', press release, 11 October 2013.

[3] Matthew Schofield, 'Why OPCW won this year's Nobel Peace Prize', McClatchy, 14 October 2013

[4] Henry Sokolski, 'This Year's Peace Prize: Not Up to Snuff', *National Review*, 12 October 2013.

20131011

**Q 11 October 2013** The United Nations Security Council agrees to the terms for establishment of the Joint OPCW-UN Mission in Syria.[1] The agreement is circulated in the form of a letter rather than a formal decision of the Council or as a statement by the President of the Council. However, the letter is unpublished at this time. *[\*Expand\*]*

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Security Council approves joint OPCW-UN mission to oversee destruction of Syria's chemical weapons', press release, 11 October 2013.

20131014

**14 October 2013** The Chemical Weapons Convention [see 29 April 1997] formally enters into force for Syria [see 14 September].

2013101

**14 October 2013** In the UK House of Commons, a junior Foreign Office minister is asked whether the Government has 'independently evaluated' reports that opposition groups in Syria had used chemical weapons. The minister responds: 'We have seen no credible evidence to suggest that the Syrian opposition was behind the 19 March attack. Russia and Syria continue to claim that the opposition were also responsible for the 21 August Ghouta atrocities'. He adds: 'The Joint Intelligence Committee assessment [see 29 August] confirmed that it was not possible for the opposition to have carried out an attack on the scale of 21 August and this has been backed up by the UN inspectors' report which leaves no doubt that the Syrian regime is the only party that could have been responsible'.[1]

In answer to a further question, the minister responds: 'We have seen no credible evidence to suggest that chemical weapons imported by the Gaddafi regime are now in the possession of the Syrian opposition forces'.[2]

[1] Hugh Robertson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Written Answer, 14 October 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 568, c540, in response to Paul Flynn MP.

[2] Hugh Robertson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Written Answer, 14 October 2013, *Hansard* (Commons), vol 568, c547-48, in response to Paul Flynn MP.

20131016

**Q 16 October 2013** The Syrian National Coalition states 'there are no chemical weapons sites in the areas under Free Syrian Army control'.[1] The Coalition further states: 'There are regime-controlled chemical weapons sites that are in areas besieged by the FSA, however there are no chemical weapons sites that are controlled by rebel brigades'.

The statement also includes: 'The Syrian Coalition, and the General Staff of the Free Syrian Army, reiterate their commitment to fully cooperate with members of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as they carry out their duties in dismantling and destroying the Assad regime's chemical weapons'. However, referring the recent comments about whether sites to be inspected by the OPCW are under opposition control *[\*clarify\*]* he is quoted as saying: 'The Syrian Coalition wishes that the Director-General of OPCW, Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, will, in the future, choose his remarks with more precision'.

*[\*Add about humanitarian corridors??\*]*

[1] Syrian National Coalition Of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 'Syrian Coalition: No Chemical Weapons in Areas Under Free Syrian Army Control', press release, 16 October 2013.

20131016

**Q 16 October 2013** The 'OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria' is formally established following the outline elaborated by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Director-General [see 3 October], suggestions by the United Nations Secretary-General [see 7 October] and the agreement within the UN Security Council [see 11 October]. Sigrid Kaag is appointed as the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission.[1] The mission is known by the abbreviation JMIS, as in OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria.[2] *[\*Expand\*]*

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Ban appoints Sigrid Kaag to head up joint OPCW-UN mission in Syria', press release, 16 October 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-34/DG.1, 25 October 2013.

20131016

**H 16 October 2013** [OPCW TS call for voluntary contributions for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, S/1132/2013, 16 October 2013.]

20131017

**H 17 October 2013** [Published today — Frederik Pleitgen and Nick Thompson, 'Syria's chemical weapons inspectors prepare for unprecedented mission', CNN, 17 October 2013.]

20131017

**17 October 2013** In the UK House of Lords, further details are given regarding the licences granted for export of sodium fluoride and potassium fluoride to Syria [see 1 September and 10 October]. A junior minister states: 'A minimum of 4050kg and a maximum of 4150kg of sodium fluoride was exported under licence between 2004 and 2012. It is not possible to give precise figures because HMRC [Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs] is only required to keep export records for a maximum of 3 calendar years from the year in which the export was submitted to them and some exports were made before this period. No potassium fluoride was shipped because the licence concerned was revoked and no shipments had been made'.

A further piece of new information provided in this answer is that other than the already disclosed six licences granted for export of sodium fluoride and one for potassium fluoride: 'No other licences have been granted for export to Syria of chemicals capable of use in the manufacture of chemical weapons'.[1]

[1] Viscount Younger of Leckie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Written Answer, 17 October 2013, *Hansard* (Lords), vol 748, c96, in response to Lord Roberts of Llandudno.

20131018

**18 October 2013** The number of sites inspected by the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations has now risen to 14, according to information released by the OPCW. The OPCW is not providing an exact number of sites that are subject to inspection, saying that this is 'more than 20 sites'.[1]

[1] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, 18 October 2013, as in: 'Chemical watchdog says 14 sites inspected in Syrian', *Dawn* (Bangladesh), 19 October 2013.

20131018

**H 18 October 2013** [Saudi Arabia announces it is declining its seat on the Security Council, citing what it describes as failures within the Council in dealing with Syria.]

20131019

**19 October 2013** Sigrid Kaag, the Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, visits The Hague to meet with the OPCW Director-General and other Secretariat officials.[1]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-34/DG.1, 25 October 2013.

20131022

**22 October 2013** The Syrian Government has been fully cooperating with the destruction of its chemical weapons programme, so says Sigrid Kaag, the Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, speaking in Damascus. She is quoted as saying: 'To date, the Government of Syria has fully cooperated in supporting the work of the advance team and the OPCW-UN Joint Mission'. The tally of sites at which inspections have been conducted at is now stated to have reached 17, at 14 of which the inspectors carried out what is described as 'activities related to the destruction of critical equipment'.[1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria has "fully cooperated"' with OPCW-UN efforts to destroy chemical arsenal, team head says', press release, 22 October 2013.

20131023

**Q23 October 2013** For the first time, an official source publicly states that the number of sites disclosed by Syria in relation to its chemical weapons programme is 23. The information comes from a press conference in The Hague hosted by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

OPCW spokesman Michael Luhan tells the press conference that inspectors had now been to 18 of the 23 sites and that the team is proceeding with 'functional destruction' to ensure the sites are inoperable. He is quoted as saying the inspector teams are concentrating on destroying 'what we call the critical equipment that is at the heart of the production facility, or that runs the mixing and filling units. That critical equipment will be destroyed, rendering the production facilities and equipment inoperable, unusable'. Describing the 'low tech, quick and cheap' methods used to render equipment unusable, such as filling with concrete or crushing he is quoted as saying: 'It means that [Syria] will no longer have the capability to produce any more chemical weapons, and it will no longer have any working equipment to mix and to fill chemical weapons agent into munitions'.[1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria: joint OPCW-UN chemical weapons team reports visits to nearly all declared sites', press release, 23 October 2013. [\*OPCW source??\*]

20131023

**23 October 2013** Following suggestions that Norway could be used as a location for destruction of Syrian chemical weapons materials [see 10 October], Norwegian Foreign Minister Boerge Brende is quoted as saying Oslo will respond 'as soon as possible', adding that Norway does not have the equipment needed for the destruction process.[1]

[1] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Sweden to assist in Syrian arsenal destruction', Global Post, 24 October 2013

20131024

**24 October 2013** Sweden announces provision of assistance to the OPCW-UN mission to oversee destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. The assistance takes the form of a C-130 Hercules and its associated support unit. Defence Minister Karin Engström is quoted as saying 'The Swedish military aviation unit will be stationed in Cyprus in order to support the [OPCW] in personnel and equipment transport'.[1]

[1] [No author listed], Agence France Presse, as in: 'Sweden to assist in Syrian arsenal destruction', Global Post, 24 October 2013

20131024

**24 October 2013** Syria delivers to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons its first formal declaration and its general plan for destruction of chemical weapons as required under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention [see 29 April 1997], taking into account the modified timelines in the decision adopted by the OPCW Executive Council on 27 September. The receipt of this declaration is not made public for a few days[1] and no specific details of its contents are revealed at this stage.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'Syria Submits its Initial Declaration and a General Plan of Destruction of its Chemical Weapons Programme', press release, 27 October 2013.

20131024

**24 October 2013** In the UK, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable, 'has been accused of hampering a parliamentary investigation into the sale of potential nerve gas ingredients to Syria by refusing to disclose the names of British companies granted export licences for the chemicals', so writes the *Independent* newspaper [see 17 October]. The paper says that Sir John Stanley, chairman of the House of Commons Committee on Arms Export Controls, is calling for this refusal to be reconsidered and quotes him as warning it is a 'serious matter'.[1]

[1] Cahal Milmo, 'Vince Cable refuses to name firms that tried to export chemicals to Syria', *Independent* (London), 24 October 2013.

20131025

**Q25 October 2013** In The Hague, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons provides a report on *Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme* to States Parties via the Executive Council which is meeting today [see separate entry this date]. It is described as the 'first monthly report' to satisfy the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-31/DEC.1 [see 27 September] and UN Security Council resolution 2118 [see 27 September]. This report covers the period from 27 September to 22 October 2013.[1]

The report makes public more details on the disclosure by Syria on its chemical weapons-related stocks and on its facilities than had been previously provided in official sources.

The report states that Syria submitted information on its chemical weapons-related stocks indicating it held 'approximately 1,000 metric tonnes (MTs) of Category 1 chemical weapons (largely binary chemical weapon precursors), approximately 290 MTs of Category 2 chemical weapons, and approximately 1,230 unfilled chemical munitions'.

On facilities, the report states that Syria submitted information on 41 facilities at 23 sites, comprising 18 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs), including filling facilities, 12 chemical weapons storage facilities (CWSFs), 8 mobile filling units, and 3 other chemical weapons-related facilities. A footnote clarifies some details: 'Following the receipt on 23 October 2013 of the initial declaration required by Article III, the number of declared facilities has been amended to a total of 41. One of the disclosed CWPFs was unintentionally counted twice in the disclosure made on 19 September, while one of the disclosed CWSFs was found to be completely empty and thus not declarable as a CWSF'. [Note: the reference to Article III is to that article in the Chemical Weapons Convention.] 'In addition, the Syrian authorities have reported finding two cylinders not belonging to them, which are believed to contain

chemical weapons', although no further details, such as location of these cylinders, is provided.

The report describes the establishment of an 'Operational Planning Group' which 'consists of OPCW and United Nations personnel and national experts provided by States Parties in a position to do so'. The OPG 'will provide advice on operational and logistical aspects relating to the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons. The OPG will provide advice with regard to the identification of requirements for possible in-kind contributions from States Parties'.

Support from States Parties has been provided. The trust fund [see 16 October] has received EUR 4 million as at the cut-off date of this report, with contributions from Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the USA. A four further States Parties are said to have made pledges to contribute an additional amount of EUR 2.7 million. Appreciation is expressed for other provisions of support: 'Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands for air transportation for the deployed teams; the European External Action Service, some European Union Member States, and the United States of America for providing armoured vehicles; and Canada for providing air transportation for the vehicles supplied by the United States of America'.

The report is also circulated as a UN Security Council document with an additional foreword by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.[2] *[\*ADD DETAILS\*]*

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-34/DG.1, 25 October 2013.

[2] UN Secretary-General, 'Letter dated 28 October 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2013/629, 28 October 2013.

20131025

**H 25 October 2013** [In The Hague, the Executive Council [see 8 October] of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons convenes for its thirty-fourth meeting [see 3 October]. The meeting receives the latest monthly progress report [see separate entry this date]. *[\*ADD DETAILS\*]*

20131025

**25 October 2013** The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues a statement on the discussions regarding suggestions that the country should host destruction of chemical weapons transported from Syria [see 10 and 23 October]. The opening summary paragraph of the statement reads: 'Norway and the United States of America have over the course of the last few weeks held extensive discussions and exchanged relevant information on issues related to the possible destruction of Syrian chemical warfare agents in Norway. The considerations have taken place in a constructive and positive atmosphere. The two countries have come to the joint understanding that Norway is not the most suitable location for this destruction.' The statement also includes: 'After a comprehensive assessment, the two countries have come to the joint understanding that due to time constraints and external factors, such as capacities, regulatory requirements, Norway is not the most suitable location for the destruction of Syrian chemical warfare agents.' [1]

[1] Norway, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Syrian Chemical Warfare Agents', 25 October 2013.

20131027

**27 October 2013** Today is 30 days since the adoption of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 [see 27 September] and thus the deadline for submission of the information specified in paragraph 1(a) of that decision. This information is provided by Syria a few days ahead of this deadline [see 24 October].

20131029

**29 October 2013** An artillery shell containing chemical weapons is alleged to be used in the north-east of Syria. An Iranian news agency describes the alleged use in the following terms: 'The toxic shell exploded near a Kurdish defense forces' checkpoint close to the border with Turkey in the city of Ras al-Ayn in the Northern province of al-Hasakah', citing Al-Alam as the source of its information. The news agency says that Lebanese TV channel Al-Mayadeen quotes Kurdish defense forces indicating they saw toxic yellow smoke that followed the shell explosion, while some of them had symptoms of severe chemical intoxication.[1]

The following day, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs states: 'Moscow is deeply embarrassed by another message about the use of chemical weapons in the territory of Syria by extremists. This information certainly requires thorough verification and investigation. At the same time, we reiterate yet again that the unanimously adopted UNSC resolution 2118 [see 27 September] imposes special responsibility on Syria's neighbours requiring them to prevent chemical weapons getting into hands of non-governmental subjects'. [2]

[1] [No author listed], 'Report: Terrorists in Syria Use Chemical Weapons near Turkish Border', Fars, 30 October 2013.

[2] Russia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Comment by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the development of the situation in the north-east of Syria, 30 October 2013. See also: [No author listed], 'Russia alarmed by fresh reports Syrian militants using chemical weapons – FM', Voice of Russia, 30 October 2013.

20131031

**31 October 2013** The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons announces that the 'functional destruction' of the first set of defined items in Syria under OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 [see 27 September] has been completed. The announcement states that the Joint OPCW-UN Mission has inspected 39 of the 41 declared facilities located at 21 of the 23 declared sites. The OPCW explains: 'The two remaining sites were not visited due to safety and security concerns. But Syria declared those sites as abandoned and that the chemical weapons programme items they contained were moved to other declared sites, which were inspected'. The OPCW concludes: 'The Joint Mission is now satisfied that it has verified — and seen destroyed — all of Syria's declared critical production and mixing/filling equipment. Given the progress made in the Joint OPCW-UN Mission in meeting the requirements of the first phase of activities, no further inspection activities are currently planned'. [1]

There is no official statement on the locations of the uninspected sites, although there are indications provided in news reporting. One of these sites is said to be at Safira, a town south east of Aleppo which has been the location of considerable fighting between government and opposition forces. [2] The second site is said to be near Damascus. [3]

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office is quoted as saying in response to the OPCW announcement: 'While the challenging work of the OPCW has reached an important first milestone, it brings no relief to the Syrian people. The Assad regime continues to use artillery, air power and siege tactics against civilians, with thousands killed every month. As winter approaches, the humanitarian situation grows more acute with millions left vulnerable'. [4]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Technical Secretariat, 'Syria Completes Destruction Activities to Render Inoperable Chemical Weapons Production Facilities and Mixing/Filling Plants', press release, 31 October 2013. See also, United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria meets deadline, renders chemical weapons facilities "inoperable" – OPCW-UN mission', press release, 31 October 2013.

[2] Erika Solomon (from Beirut), 'Syrian army captures strategic town at approaches to Aleppo', Reuters, 1 November 2013.

[3] [No author listed], 'Syria Destroys Chemical Equipment Despite Security Issues', *Global Security Newswire*, 31 October 2013, citing: Anne Barnard, 'Syria Destroys Chemical Sites, Inspectors Say', *New York Times*, 31 October 2013. However, the version of this *New York Times* article available on the web on 2 November does not mention this detail.

[4] Ian Black and James Meikle, 'Syria meets chemical weapons deadline amid fears of polio outbreak', *Guardian* (London), 31 October 2013.

20131031

**H 31 October 2013** [Lebanon rejects any possibility of using its territory for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons — [No author listed], 'Berri rejects dumping Syrian chemical arms in Lebanon', *Daily Star* (Lebanon), 1 November 2013.]

20131031

**31 October 2013** In the US Congress, hearings are held regarding the situation in Syria. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Thomas Countryman. Committee Chairman Robert Menendez highlights that US sources originally suggested that there were 45 sites associated with the Syrian chemical weapons programme [see 14 September] while the Syrian declaration refers to 41 facilities at 23 sites. Countryman is quoted as saying: 'It's not just a semantics issue, whether we are talking about sites and facilities, whether we are double-counting. It is a serious question that needs to be addressed', adding: 'We do have the tools ... to resolve any discrepancies between what we believe and what the Syrians have declared'.[1]

Elsewhere, US sources raise doubts about whether the information provided by the Syrian authorities on chemical weapons activities is likely to be comprehensive. One unnamed official is quoted as saying: 'There's a real concern that the Syrians might be trying to preserve some of their chemical weapons capabilities'.[2] The official is said to have declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the situation.

US Secretary of State John Kerry announces that, to date, 'the United States has provided approximately \$6 million in financial and in-kind assistance to support the efforts of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission'.[3]

[1] [No author listed], 'Fidelity of Syrian Chemical Disclosure Questioned', *Global Security Newswire*, 1 November 2013

[2] Laura Smith-Spark, 'Syria has met first chemical weapons destruction deadline, OPCW says', CNN, 31 October 2013.

[3] John Kerry, US Secretary of State, 'Progress Eliminating Syria's Chemical Weapons Program', press statement, United States Department of State, 31 October 2013

20131101

**1 November 2013** Sigrid Kaag, the Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, travels to Moscow to meet with Russian officials on the progress of Syria's chemical weapons destruction.[1]

After the meeting, Russian first deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov is quoted as saying 'There are many arguments in favo[u]r of taking the vast majority of the poisonous substances outside of the country's borders'.[2]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'As part of peace efforts, UN-Arab League envoy meets Syrian President in Damascus', press release, 30 October 2013.

[2] [No author listed], 'Syrian Chemical Arsenal Likely to Be Taken Abroad for Disposal', *RIA Novosti*, 1 November 2013. See also: Steve Gutterman, 'Russia says better to remove most chemical weapons from Syria', Reuters, 1 November 2013.

20131105

**5 November 2013** In New York, the UN Security Council is briefed on activities undertaken by the OPCW-UN Joint Mission. Speaking to the press after the Council meeting,

Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission, is quoted as saying: 'We had a very good discussion with Council members; questions were raised concerning staff safety and security and the possible anticipated role of the Joint Mission, obviously continued verification monitoring but also possibly support for implementation of the final phases of the overall plan'. Asked about funding, she is reported to say that the UN voluntary fund set up to support the Joint Mission had received some \$2 million, while the OPCW mechanism had roughly \$10 million, which would carry the Joint Mission through the end of the year.[1]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria: top envoys brief on latest UN efforts to tackle worsening Syria crisis', press release, 5 November 2013.

20131106-09

**6–9 November 2013** At the headquarters of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague, the 'Operational Planning Group' convenes with a delegation from the Syrian Arab Republic in attendance. The OPG 'consists of OPCW and United Nations personnel and national experts provided by States Parties in a position to do so' [see 25 October] and numbers 30 experts from various backgrounds. The OPG develops what is described as 'an outline' of an 'Outline Plan for the Removal of Chemical Weapons in Syria for Destruction Outside its Territory'. This Outline Plan was circulated to OPCW member states annexed to document EC-M-34/DG.15, dated 14 November 2013, but which had not been made public as of 3 December.

The second monthly report of the OPCW describes the work of the group at this meeting in the following terms: 'The OPG presented a scenario for the rapid, sequenced packaging and transport of chemical agents from the Syrian Arab Republic for destruction. The OPG concluded that conditions of safety and security will be absolute prerequisites for the success of such a plan and that due regard must be paid to the protection of people and the environment at every stage of the process of transportation and destruction. Furthermore, the OPG recommended that international norms and standards applicable to the transportation of hazardous material will have to be fully upheld'.[1]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-35/DG.1, 25 November 2013.

20131107

**7 November 2013** It is announced that one of the remaining declared chemical weapons related sites to be verified [see 31 October] has now been checked by remote means. A UN spokesperson is quoted as telling reporters: 'The additional site inspected is in the region of Aleppo and was one of the two sites that could not be visited earlier due to safety and security reasons'.[1]

A later report describes the verification activities in the following terms: 'Verification was conducted with the support of sealed GPS cameras used by Syrian personnel, in accordance with the guidance of the inspection team. The exact geographical location and the time the footage/images were captured were then fully authenticated. As stated in the initial declaration, the site was confirmed as long abandoned and the building showed extensive battle damage. Thus, the Secretariat has now verified 22 of the 23 sites declared by the Syrian Arab Republic'.[2]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Syria: joint OPCW-UN chemical weapons team verifies site in Aleppo', press release, 7 November 2013.

[2] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-35/DG.1, 25 November 2013.



**H 7 November 2013** [Launch of the joint mission website]

20131108

**8 November 2013** Denmark offers assistance to move Syrian chemical weapons and associated items through the provision of a naval vessel. It also offers to provide protection through an unspecified number of what are described as specially trained troops. It is expected that the ship would be needed until February while the troops may be needed for longer.[1] In later reporting, the troops are described as being 'a personal protection team for international inspectors'.[2] Defence Minister Nikolai Wammen is reported to have said that the United Nations had unofficially asked whether Denmark could contribute ships to transport the weapons from Syria.[3]

[1] [No author listed], 'Military to assist in chemical weapon mission in Syria', *Copenhagen Post*, 8 November 2013, citing reporting in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*.

[2] Charles Onians (from The Hague), Agence France Presse, as in: 'Chemical watchdog to seal Syria arsenal destruction plan', Google News, 15 November 2013.

[3] [No author listed] (from Copenhagen), Associated Press, as in: 'Danes could transport Syria's chemical weapons', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8 November 2013.

20131112

**12 November 2013** In Tirana, there are protests against the possibility that Albania might act as host country for activities to destroy chemical weapons removed from Syria.[1] Rumours about possible imports of chemical weapons for destruction had circulated just weeks after the incoming government of Prime Minister Edi Rama had banned waste imports into Albania in its first cabinet meeting.[2]

With internal tensions rising, and with an imminent decision due by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the plan for destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, Rama announces later in the week that it is 'impossible for Albania to take part in this operation'.[3] The rejection of the destruction plan is described in the press as 'an unprecedented break from its traditionally staunch allegiance to NATO ally Washington'.[4]

[1] Benet Koleka (from Tirana), 'Albanians angry with U.S. over Syrian chemical weapons', Reuters, 12 November 2013.

[2] Besar Likmeta (from Tirana), 'Albania's New Govt Bans Waste Imports', *Balkan Insight*, 17 September 2013.

[3] [No author listed] (from Tirana), Associated Press, as in: 'Albania rejects US request to host disposal of Syria's chemical weapons', *Guardian* (London), 15 November 2013.

[4] Anthony Deutsch (from The Hague) and Benet Koleka (from Tirana), 'Albanian "No" deals blow to Syria chemical weapons plan', Reuters, 15 November 2013.

20131115

**15 November 2013** In The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons meets on the scheduled date for a decision on intermediate deadlines for destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and related items in accordance with paragraph 1(c) of the OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 [see 27 September].[1]

The Council is briefed by the OPCW Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü and the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria (JMIS) Sigrid Kaag. The Director-General tells the Council that Syria has reported the destruction of 774 Category 3 weapons, of which 462 have already been verified and that this work will continue in the coming weeks and provides a briefing on the most recent work of the Operational Planning Group [see 6-9 November]. Expressing appreciation for voluntary contributions either provided or pledged to assist the operations in relation to Syria, he informs the Council that total contributions to the

trust fund as at 14 November 2013 were EUR 10.4 million with a number of further commitments made.[2]

Negotiations on the timelines focus on removal of relevant materials and technologies from Syria. Speculation is focused on the possibility that the intended location was to be Albania which announces this day it is not willing to host the destruction activities [see 12 November].[3] It is reported that Belgium and France have been considered as potential destruction locations.[4] The decision, as adopted, contains no reference to which location destruction activities would be carried out.

The adopted decision envisages removal from Syria of all declared chemical substances and precursors, except for isopropanol, no later than 5 February 2014 with the highest priority chemicals to be transported out of Syria by 31 December 2013. Declared chemical weapons production facilities are to be destroyed during the period starting from 15 December 2013 to 15 March 2014. Destruction of what are considered to be the highest priority chemicals, described as 'mustard agent and the key binary chemical weapon components' and given the names 'DF', 'A', 'B', 'BB' and 'BB salt', is to be completed by 31 March 2014 and for all other declared chemicals by 30 June 2014.[5] Although the five chemicals are not given a collective name, they are verbally described as the 'priority 1' chemicals — a term not previously known to be used within the OPCW. The other chemicals are given the shorthand 'priority 2'. [6]

The OPCW Director-General, 'in close consultation with States Parties offering to host a destruction facility or otherwise providing assistance with transport or destruction', is requested to present to the Executive Council no later than 17 December 'a plan for the destruction of chemical weapons outside the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic which includes provisions for ensuring clear responsibility at each stage for all chemicals and takes into account all relevant considerations, including [other timing requirements], requirements for safety and security, and overall costs'.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Technical Secretariat, 'OPCW Executive Council adopts plan for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme in the first half of 2014', press release, 15 November 2013.

[2] Director-General, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 'Statement by the Director-General to the Executive Council at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting on 15 November 2013', EC-M-34/DG.16, 15 November 2013.

[3] Anthony Deutsch (from The Hague) and Benet Koleka (from Tirana), 'Albanian "No" deals blow to Syria chemical weapons plan', Reuters, 15 November 2013.

[4] [No author listed], 'Albania shuns Syria chemical weapons destruction', BBC News, 15 November 2013.

[5] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Executive Council, 'Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities', Decision, EC-M-34/DEC.1, 15 November 2013.

[6] The author was in attendance at the 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of States Parties in December 2013 and these were the terms in use at the time.

20131118

**18 November 2013** In Brussels, Belgian Defence Minister Pieter De Crem rules out Belgium as a location for destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and related materials.[1]

Also on this day in Brussels is a meeting of European Union foreign and defence ministers. Frans Timmermans, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, is quoted as saying: 'There is no [EU] member state that has come forward in saying "OK, give us the stuff"' and saying further: 'Instead of taking the chemical weapons out of Syria to the installations where they would be destroyed, one could perhaps take the installations to the chemical weapons instead'. [2]

The following day, France denies it has been approached for consideration as a location for destruction activities.[3]

[1] David Blair, and David Hopkins, 'Belgium becomes fourth country to refuse to destroy Syria's chemical arsenal', *Daily Telegraph* (London), 18 November 2013.

[2] [No author listed] (from Brussels), Associated Press, as in: 'No EU country comes forward as candidate to destroy Syria's chemical stockpiles', *Washington Post*, 18 November 2013.

[3] Charles Onians (from The Hague), Agence France Presse, as in: 'Syria chemical weapons could be destroyed at sea: watchdog', Yahoo News, 20 November 2013.

20131119

**19 November 2013** 'Unable to find a country willing to dispose of Syria's chemical weapons, the United States is considering plans to place the chemical components of the weapons on a barge where they would be dissolved or incinerated, according to senior American officials', so the *New York Times* writes today.[1]

The newspaper suggests that two options are under consideration. One options would involve using five incinerators operating at high temperatures on board a barge. The second would be centred on what the paper describes as 'a highly sophisticated mobile system' developed by the Department of Defense, known as the Field Deployable Hydrolysis System. The first of these options would be carried out by a commercial entity, the second would be carried out by government personnel.

The following day, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons confirms that the proposed options for destruction at sea are plausible. OPCW spokesman Christian Chartier is quoted as saying: 'It's still being looked at and is one of several solutions envisaged by member states and as long as a decision has not been taken, it remains a possibility'.[2]

Subsequent press comment includes occasional confusion between the concepts of destruction of chemical weapon materials within a facility installed on a ship which might operate at sea and the potential for dumping such materials at sea[3] — an activity specifically prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention [see 29 April 1997]. Paragraph 13 of Part IV(A) of the Verification Annex of the Convention reads:

Each State Party shall determine how it shall destroy chemical weapons, except that the following processes may not be used: dumping in any body of water, land burial or open-pit burning. It shall destroy chemical weapons only at specifically designated and appropriately designed and equipped facilities.

[1] Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt (from Washington), 'Options Narrowed, U.S. Is Said to Weigh Destroying Syrian Chemicals at Sea', *New York Times*, 19 November 2013.

[2] Charles Onians (from The Hague), Agence France Presse, as in: 'Syria chemical weapons could be destroyed at sea: watchdog', Yahoo News, 20 November 2013.

[3] See, for example: [No author listed], 'OPCW: Syria's Chemical Weapons Can Be Dumped at Sea', *Arutz Sheva*, 21 November 2013.

20131120

**Q 20 November 2013** The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons issues a request for expressions of interest from commercial entities involved in waste disposal to deal with some of the materials declared by the Syrian authorities and waste products resulting from the initial stages of destruction of the most toxic materials. The deadline for expressions of interest is given as 29 November.[1] [**\*Double check typesetting of chemical names\***]

The hazardous materials to be disposed of fall within four categories. The first category includes various organic chemicals for which companies should be able to receive them in February 2014 with operations completed by 30 June 2014. The chemicals are listed with their CAS registry numbers and approximate quantities in metric tons (mt):

- triethylamine 121-44-8 (30mt);
- trimethyl phosphite 121-45-9 (60mt);

- dimethyl phosphite 868-85-9 (5mt);
- monoisopropylamine 75-31-0 (40mt);
- di-isopropyl aminoethanol 69-80-0 (5mt);
- 2-chloroethanol 107-07-3 (5mt);
- butan-1-ol 71-36-3 (5mt);
- methanol 67-56-1 (3mt);
- propan-2-ol 67-63-0 (120mt);
- hexamine 100-97-0 (80mt);
- sodium-o-ethyl methyl phosphonothionate 22307-81-9 (130mt);
- n (2-chloroethyl)-n-isopropyl propan 2 amine (Salt) 96-79-7 (40mt);
- n (2-chloroethyl)-n-isopropyl propan 2 amine (solution 23-64%) 96-79-7 (90mt); and
- n (2-chloroethyl)-n-ethyl propan 2 amine (solution 23-64%) 13105-93-6 (25mt).

The second category includes various inorganic chemicals for which companies should be able to receive them in February 2014 with operations completed by 30 June 2014. The chemicals are listed as:

- hydrogen fluoride 7664-39-3 (60mt);
- phosphorus pentasulfide 1314-80-3 (10mt);
- phosphorus trichloride 7719-12-2 (30mt);
- phosphorus oxychloride 10025-87-3 (15mt); and
- hydrogen chloride 7647-01-0 (45mt).

The third category is effluent resulting from neutralisation operations that will need to be destroyed. Companies interested in conducting the disposal operations for these effluents should be able to receive the effluent in February 2014 and shall complete operations by 31 December 2014.

The fourth category for disposal is described as: 'packaging materials/empty containers/drums for the above-mentioned chemicals (around 4,000 containers, different capacities) as well as, amongst others, solid waste including personnel protective equipment, spill pillows, carbon filters, HEPA filters, rags and clean-up materials, and lab equipment'. No time limit is stipulated for this.

The EOI notes that the processes for treatment of these hazardous materials will have to be monitored by the OPCW. 'The receipt of subject chemicals and effluent to the facility and its consumption will be fully reported to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, and inspection teams of the OPCW will verify reported information on such receipt and consumption. In this regard, necessary verification measures meant to ensure the accountability of chemicals received and disposed of will have to be agreed. These may include but are not limited to: access of OPCW inspectors, subject to safety requirements, to agreed upon areas; the ability to confirm the receipt of chemicals and their destruction through physical access and/or by reviewing video recording; access to, as applicable, relevant operational records, process data, weighing data, and or video recordings of specific activities in relation to the disposal of the subject chemicals only'.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Technical Secretariat, 'Treatment and disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous organic and inorganic chemicals and related packaging materials/containers', Request for Expression of Interest (EOI), OPCW/CDB/EOI/01/2013, 20 November 2013.

20131121

**H 21 November 2013** [In The Hague, the Assembly of States Parties of International Criminal Court convenes for its 12<sup>th</sup> session.]

20131125

**Q 25 November 2013** In The Hague, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons provides the second monthly report [see 25 October] on *Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons*

*Programme* to States Parties via the Executive Council which is meeting today [see separate entry this date]. It covers the period from 23 October to 22 November 2013.[1]

Matters reported on include the meeting of the Operational Planning Group [see 6-9 November] and the verification of the penultimate unvisited site [see 7 November]. [*\*Add more\**]

As with the first report, this report is also circulated as a UN Security Council document with an additional foreword by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.[2] [*\*ADD DETAILS\**]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-35/DG.1, 25 November 2013.

[2] UN Secretary-General, 'Letter dated 27 December 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2013/700, 27 December 2013.

20131125

**H 25 November 2013** [In The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons convenes for its thirty-fifth meeting [see 25 October]. The meeting receives the latest monthly progress report [see separate entry this date].]

20131128

**28 November 2013** After some days of rumours circulating [see 19 November], it is confirmed that a plan is being prepared to enable destruction of declared Syrian chemical weapons and related materials on board a US Navy auxiliary vessel *MV Cape Ray*. [1] The option of a ship-board destruction operation has come to greater prominence following the difficulties of finding a land-based location to carry out such destruction activities.

The proposed plan would involve fitting a 'Field Deployable Hydrolysis System' on board the ship. The system is described as using 'a titanium reactor and heated water and other chemicals' to neutralize the chemicals from the Syrian programme. It is reported that the Defense Threat Reduction Agency developed the system but that it has never been used operationally.[2]

The proposed plan is outlined to the OPCW Executive Council the following day.

[1] Mark Urban, 'Syrian chemical weapons set to be destroyed at sea', BBC News, 28 November 2013.

[2] Lolita C Baldor and Pauline Jelinek, Associated Press, as in: 'AP sources: Plan calls for ship to destroy weapons', *Denver Post*, 28 November 2013.

20131129

**H 29 November 2013** [OPCW Executive Council meets, receives progress report from DG, including US announcement on offer of ship-based destruction option. The plan would be for the use of a hydrolysis method. OPCW announces that 35 companies have responded to the request for expressions of interest on disposal of hazardous materials [see 20 November].]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Technical Secretariat, 'United States offers to destroy Syria's Priority Chemicals', press release, 30 November 2013.

20131202

**H 2 December 2013** [In The Hague, the Conference of States Parties of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons convenes for its eighteenth session. Numerous public statements make direct reference to events in Syria and subsequent activities to complete the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons capabilities. CSP was scheduled to run all week but concluded late on Thursday 5 December. Also on the Thursday were NGO plenary statements and a CWCC side event on destruction technologies that might be used for the Syria chemicals.]

20131204

**H 4 December 2013** [Sigrid Kaag briefing to UNSC]

[1] United Nations Department of Public Information, 'Preparations in "full swing" for removing Syria's chemical agents, says OPCW-UN mission chief', press release, 4 December 2013.

20131204

**H 4 December 2013** [NATO-Russia Council statement]

[1]

20131206

**6 December 2013** Syria submits to the OPCW what is described as the final version of its detailed plans for destruction in respect of chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs). The report is circulated within the Executive Council as document EC-M-36/P/NAT.1.[1] This report is not made public.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-37/DG.1, 23 December 2013.

20131209

**9 December 2013** The OPCW Director-General circulates a note on the detailed plans put forward by Syria for destruction in respect of chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) as circulated within the Executive Council as document EC-M-36/P/NAT.1 [see 6 December]. The note bears the reference EC-M-36/DG.2.[1] This note is not made public. [*Note: EC-M-36/DG.2/Add.1 is issued 16 December.*]

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Executive Council, 'Report of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-36/3, 8 January 2014.

20131210

**H 10 December 2013** [Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony in Oslo]

20131210

**H 10 December 2013** In New York, the UN Secretary-General writes to the President of the Security Council on issues relating to the Joint Mission in Syria.[1] His letter notes his earlier reporting [see 25 November] that Syria has begun phase III of the elimination of its chemical weapons programme, 'in the course of which all necessary transfers of chemicals weapons materials ... will be performed. These chemical weapons and materials will be removed and transported by sea out of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.' He goes on to write:

In order for the Joint Mission to perform its role in facilitating and coordinating international assistance and planning, I now intend, in close consultation with the Director General of OPCW, to solicit and coordinate appropriate support from Member States for the removal and maritime transport of those items, as well as the necessary transfers, and to assist them in those activities in furtherance of the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

I also intend to mobilize resources to assist Member States in managing the risks and potential liabilities associated with the removal, maritime transport and ultimate destruction of the aforementioned items in implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter urgently to the attention of the members of the Security Council, so that the Council is able to respond to the above points as early as possible.

The following day, the President of the Security Council writes back, stating that the letter 'has been brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council, who have taken note of your intentions and the information contained in your letter'. [2]

[1] UN Secretary-General, 'Letter dated 10 December 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2013/730, 11 December 2013.

[2] President of the Security Council, 'Letter dated 11 December 2013 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General', S/2013/731, 11 December 2013.

20131213

**H 13 December 2013** [In New York, formal publication of the Sellstrom report - S/2013/735-A/68/663.]

20131215

**H 15 December 2013** [Start date under OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1 [see 15 November] for destruction of declared chemical weapons facilities, to be completed by 15 March 2014.]

20131217

**H 17 December 2013** [Deadline under OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1 [see 15 November] for the OPCW Director-General, 'in close consultation with States Parties offering to host a destruction facility or otherwise providing assistance with transport or destruction', to present to the Executive Council 'a plan for the destruction of chemical weapons outside the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic which includes provisions for ensuring clear responsibility at each stage for all chemicals and takes into account all relevant considerations, including [other timing requirements], requirements for safety and security, and overall costs'.]

20131217

**Q 17 December 2013** In The Hague, the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons convenes for its thirty-sixth meeting [see 25 November].[1] The meeting adjourns at the end of the day and recvenes briefly on 8 January.

The meeting is held in private, but a number of national statements are made public.[2] *[\*ADD MORE\*]*

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Executive Council, 'Report of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-36/3, 8 January 2014.

[2] As of ..., statements from ... are posted on the OPCW website. *[\*INSERT\*]*

20131220

**20 December 2013** A Syrian report on progress relating to destruction in respect of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) is circulated within the OPCW Executive Council as document EC-M-37/P/NAT.1.[1] This report is not made public.

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Executive Council, 'Report of the Thirty-Seventh Meeting of the Executive Council', EC-M-37/2, 8 January 2014.

20131223

**Q 23 December 2013** In The Hague, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons provides the third monthly report on *Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme* to States Parties via the Executive Council [see 25 November]. It covers the period from 23 November to 22 December 2013.[1] *[\*ADD MORE\*]*

As with earlier reports, this report is also circulated as a UN Security Council document with an additional foreword by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.[2] *[\*ADD DETAILS\*]*

[1] Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Director-General, 'Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme', EC-M-37/DG.1, 23 December 2013.

[2] UN Secretary-General, 'Letter dated 23 May 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2013/774, 27 December 2013.

20131224

**H 24 December 2013** [Syria letter to UNSG/PSC alleging attacks on CW sites by 'armed terrorist groups' - S/2013/762.]

20131231

**31 December 2013** Today marks the deadline under OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1 [see 15 November] for removal from Syria of the 'mustard agent and

the key binary chemical weapon components' that are being described as 'priority 1' chemicals.