

# The Syria Chemical Weapons Agreement. What it Means, Why it Came about

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Global Research, September 15, 2013  
[LiberationNews.org](#)

Theme: [United Nations](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

*On Sept. 13, an agreement was reached between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on a plan to dismantle Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons. The government of Syria expressed support for the agreement. The Syrian armed opposition bitterly denounced it.*

The plan, which will be introduced as a United Nations Security Council resolution, calls for the Syrian government to turn over a list of its chemical weapons and where they are stored within one week. UN weapons inspectors are to arrive in Syria by mid-November, and the weapons are supposed to be destroyed by the middle of 2014.

The agreement halted, at least temporarily, the threat of a U.S. military attack on Syria. That the Obama-Kerry administration agreed to the plan, when just two weeks ago they were dead set on striking Syria, was due to the wide and deep opposition they encountered both at home and around the world. Instead of gathering support for a new war in the Middle East as time passed, the administration became increasingly isolated.

When, on Sept. 9, the Russian government offered a plan for international control of Syria's chemical weapons as an alternative to a U.S. attack, President Obama quickly grabbed at the proposal.

While Obama and Kerry have continued to threaten military action if Syria does not abide by the agreement, the rapidity with which an agreement was reached reflected their strong desire to play down the issue that had become a public relations disaster for them.



The Syrian opposition's condemnation of the agreement included threats against the UN inspectors. The opposition had been openly and ardently hoping for U.S. military strikes on their own country.

Why? Despite the massive funding, arming, training and other support the various armed opposition forces have received from the U.S., Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other countries, they know that they cannot achieve victory on their own. They were counting on a massive military campaign by the U.S. that would could severely weaken the government forces, foment splits and defections, and facilitate "regime change."

The overthrow of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party government led by Bashar al-Assad remains the objective the U.S. which, in addition to arming and supplying the so-called "Free Syrian Army," is continuing harsh economic sanctions against the country.

For nearly seven decades, U.S. imperialist policies in the Middle East have been aimed at destroying independent governments and popular movements, which are viewed as obstacles to U.S. domination of the entire oil-rich and strategic region.

Syria has long been in the crosshairs. The first known coup plotted and carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency was in Syria in 1949.

Why does Syria have chemical weapons?

To its west, Syria borders the highly militarized state of Israel. Israel possesses not only chemical and biological weapons, but also hundreds of nuclear bombs. Israel and Syria have been in a state for war since the Zionist state was founded in 1948 at the expense of the Palestinian people, most of whom were driven out of their homeland. In 1967, Israel seized the agriculturally rich and strategically important Golan Heights from Syria, and illegally annexed the area in 1980.

Israel is the only state in the region that possesses nuclear weapons. In the 1973 war, when Israel suffered initial setbacks, its military loaded 13 nuclear bombs on missiles and prepared to fire them against Damascus, Cairo and other cities in Syria and Egypt. A massive emergency supply operation by the U.S. played a key role in turning the tide of battle and the missiles were not fired. (Reference: Palestine, Israel and the U.S. Empire, p. 90)

Syria does not have the wealth required to develop nuclear weapons with which to deter a nuclear attack by Israel. Instead, it developed chemical weapons which are commonly referred to in military circles as “poor man’s nukes.”

That the Syrian military has used such weapons internally in the current struggle has been strongly denied by the government.

The main threat to the world

Watching the corporate media—acting as a virtual fourth branch of government—in recent weeks could lead one to believe that Syria constitutes the main danger in the world today. Nothing could be further from the truth.

While President Obama demanded that Syria surrender its chemical weapons, he pointedly did not call for a regional ban on such weapons. Israel, a key military ally and extension of Pentagon power, possesses chemical and biological as well as nuclear weapons. While Israel signed the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty, it has never ratified it.

And though the U.S. signed and ratified the treaty, it has repeatedly put off the destruction of its chemical weapons, the deadline now having been put back to 2021.

Chemical weapons are terrible weapons. But so too, are cruise missiles, 500 pound bombs, and all the other weapons of modern mass warfare, which the U.S. possesses and has used in unparalleled quantities.

The U.S. is the only country to drop nuclear bombs on centers of human civilization and has never renounced the first-strike use of nuclear weapons against other countries.

The Pentagon has used vast quantities of cancer-causing depleted uranium munitions in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and other countries. The millions of gallons of dioxin-laced Agent Orange that it dropped on Vietnam continues to cause severe birth defects,

other health problems and massive ecological damage in that country. The U.S. military fired thousands of white phosphorus shells into the city of Fallujah Iraq in 2004. White phosphorus particles burn through flesh and into bone.

What has been most “exceptional” about the role of the U.S. in the world over the past seven decades has been its violence, intervening in at least 66 countries in that time, and leaving in its wake a trail of death and destruction. In the famous words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the U.S. continues to be “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.”

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