

West's Stance on Syrian Chemical Weapons: Prelude to Military Intervention?

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News Analysis: Talks of Syrian chemical weapons: prelude for intervention or further pressure on Damascus?

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DAMASCUS: The U.S. administration and its Western allies have renewed talks of Syria's alleged chemical arsenal over the past week, sending stern warnings to Damascus against using it.

Such moves have raised questions: is this added pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, or a prelude for a foreign intervention?

U.S. President Barack Obama and other U.S. officials have unleashed a barrage of warnings to the Assad administration citing Western media reports that "the Syrian regime has shown signs that it may be making chemical weapons material."

Obama said he wanted to be "absolutely clear" to Assad that "the world is watching" and the use of chemical weapons is "totally unacceptable" and "if you make mistake of using it - there will be consequences and you will be held accountable. "

The Syrian government then made several statements, saying even if it had chemical weapons, it wouldn't use them "against people."

"The real concern is that the U.S. may have other plans; to provide the terrorist groups with such weaponries.. .to justify any foreign intervention in Syria's internal affairs," Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad told local media on Thursday.

He stressed that any foreign military aggression on Syria will be costly and lead to catastrophic consequences in the region.

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However, Syrian analysts and experts argued that the United States and its Western allies' talk and warnings only aimed to apply more pressure on Damascus.

Sharif Shihadeh, a Syrian parliamentarian, told Xinhua that "stirring this file now doesn't exceed political pressure by the Western countries along with some regional ones in a bid to achieve political and strategic agendas."

He said Washington knows that Syria doesn't possess such weapons, adding that all "this wrangling is aimed at empowering the Western stance in the face of Russia that supports the Syrian government."

Meanwhile, Afif Delleh, a political expert, concurred with Shihadeh, saying the talk about chemical weapons is a "mere media magnification aimed to achieve political gains at the negotiation table."

Delleh, who runs a center for strategic studies in Syria, said that the Syrian administration "will not commit such a foolish act because using that kind of weapons would not resolve battles in the military sense, but have catastrophic results on civilians. "

He concluded that the Western countries will use all pressure cards to squeeze the Syrian administration.

Other observers believe that the United States wants to stir up the chemical weapons case because it acknowledges the presence of radical fighters of al-Qaida in Syria and that in the case of further deterioration in the country, those weapons might fall into the hands of those fighters which will cause great danger to Israel.

Meanwhile, NATO has approved Turkey's request to deploy Patriot missiles along the Turkish border with Syria to "protect Turkey from a possible attack from Syria."

In response, media reports revealed Wednesday Russia's intention to provide the Syrian administration with Iskander missiles in the face of the U.S. Patriots.

Recent developments highlighted the world powers' division on the Syrian issue. Observers here also said the end of the Syrian crisis depends largely on an understanding between the United States and Russia.

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