

= Destruction of Syria 's chemical weapons =

The destruction of Syria 's chemical weapons began with several international agreements that were arrived at with Syria , with an initial destruction deadline of 30 June 2014 . United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 imposed on Syria responsibilities and a timeline for the destruction of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities . The Security Council resolution incorporated and bound Syria to an implementation plan enacted in an Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council Decision . On 23 June 2014 , the last declared chemical weapons were shipped out of Syria for destruction . The destruction of the most dangerous chemical weapons began at sea aboard the Maritime Administration Ready Reserve Force vessel CAPE RAY crewed with U.S. civilian merchant mariners . It took 42 days aboard ship to destroy 600 metric tons of chemical agents that would have been used to make deadly Sarin and Mustard Gas .

The chemical weapons agreements arose at a time when the U.S. and France headed a coalition of countries on the verge of carrying out air strikes on Syria in response to the 21 August 2013 Ghouta chemical @-@ weapon attacks . The impetus toward peaceful destruction of the chemical weapons began on 9 September 2013 , when U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry ? asked by a reporter if there was anything Assad could do avert attack ? replied , " Sure , he could turn over every single bit of his chemical weapons " in the next week . " But he isn ? t about to do it , and it can ? t be done " . But the suggestion received a positive response from Russia and Syria , and U.S. ? Russian negotiations led to the 14 September 2013 " Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons , " which called for the elimination of Syria 's chemical weapon stockpiles by mid @-@ 2014 . Following the agreement , Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and agreed to apply that convention provisionally until its entry into force on 14 October 2013 . On 21 September , Syria ostensibly provided a list of its chemical weapons to the OPCW , before the deadline set by the framework .

On 27 September , the Executive Council of the OPCW adopted a decision , " Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons , " a detailed implementation plan based on the U.S. / Russian agreement . Later on 27 September , the UN Security Council unanimously passed United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 , incorporating the OPCW plan and making it binding on Syria . A joint OPCW @-@ UN mission will supervise the destruction or removal of Syria 's chemical arms , while its Director @-@ General is charged with notifying the Executive Council regarding any delay in implementation . The Executive Council would decide whether the non @-@ compliance should be reported to the Security Council , which is responsible for making certain Syria fulfills its commitments under Resolution 2118 .

OPCW began preliminary inspections of Syria 's chemical weapons arsenal on 1 October 2013 , and actual destruction began on 6 October . Under OPCW supervision Syrian military personnel began " destroying munitions such as missile warheads and aerial bombs and disabling mobile and static mixing and filling units . " The destruction of Syria 's declared chemical weapons production , mixing , and filling equipment was successfully completed by 31 October deadline . The destruction of the chemical weapons fell well behind schedule . The entire chemical weapons stockpile had been scheduled to be completely removed from the country by 6 February 2014 . Only on 23 June 2014 , had Syria finished shipping the remaining declared chemicals . On 18 August 2014 , all of the most toxic chemicals had been destroyed offshore . Western officials such as British Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant have expressed concerns about the completeness of Syria 's disclosures , and believe the OPCW mission should remain in place following the removal of chemical weapons until verification tasks can be completed .

Chlorine , a common industrial chemical , is outside the scope of the disarmament agreement ; however , its use as a poison gas would violate the Chemical Weapons Convention , which Syria joined in 2013 . Various parties , including Western governments , have accused Assad of conducting illegal chlorine attacks in 2014 and 2015 . A late disclosure in 2014 regarding Syria 's ricin program raised doubts about completeness of the government 's declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile , and in early May 2015 , OPCW announced that inspectors had found traces of

sarin and VX nerve agent at a military research site in Syria that had not been declared previously by the Assad regime .

= = Background = =

Syria has been in a state of civil war since 2011 .

More than 300 people died and thousands were injured in the 21 August 2013 Ghouta attacks , in which rockets containing the chemical agent sarin struck several opposition @-@ controlled or disputed areas of the Ghouta suburbs of Damascus . The United States and other Western countries blamed the Syrian government for the attacks , while Syria blamed civil war opposition forces . In response to Ghouta , a coalition of countries led by the United States and France , which support the rebels , threatened air strikes on Syria . Russia , a key ally of Syria , along with China had earlier blocked efforts by the United States , France , and the UK to secure United Nations Security Council approval for military intervention .

During the G20 summit on 6 September , Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama discussed the idea of putting Syria 's chemical weapons under international control . On 9 September 2013 , U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated in response to a question from a journalist that the air strikes could be averted if Syria turned over " every single bit " of its chemical weapons stockpiles within a week , but Syria " isn 't about to do it and it can 't be done . " State Department officials stressed that Kerry 's statement and its one @-@ week deadline were rhetorical in light of the unlikelihood of Syria turning over its chemical weapons . Hours after Kerry 's statement , Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov announced that Russia had suggested to Syria that it relinquish its chemical weapons , and Syrian foreign minister Walid al @-@ Moallem immediately welcomed the proposal .

= = Framework for elimination of Syrian chemical weapons = =

= = = Negotiations and agreement = = =

From 12 to 14 September , details of the Framework were negotiated at the InterContinental Hotel in Geneva , Switzerland . High @-@ level negotiations were held between Kerry and Lavrov , with large teams of experts simultaneously working on technical details . A key breakthrough was reported to occur when the U.S. and Russia agreed on their approximations of the Syrian chemical weapon stockpile (estimated at 1 @,@ 000 tons of sarin , mustard gas and VX nerve gas) . On 14 September the Framework was agreed and signed .

On the same day , after the signing , Syria announced that it was acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention (provisionally applying it directly , but formally taking effect 14 October) , and in doing so becoming a member of the OPCW . This committed Syria not to use chemical weapons , to destroy its chemical weapons within 10 years , and to convert or destroy all of its chemical weapons production facilities .

= = = Overview and enforcement = = =

In the Framework , Russia and the United States agreed to the following target dates :

Syria to provide a comprehensive listing of its weapons to the OPCW by 21 September 2013

Initial OPCW on @-@ site inspections of declared sites to be completed by November 2013

Equipment for producing , mixing , and filling chemical weapons to be destroyed by November 2013

All chemical weapons material and equipment to be eliminated in the first half of 2014

The Framework states that , in the event of noncompliance , the UN Security Council should impose measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter . The Framework does not state how Syria 's compliance would be measured , or what the penalties would be if it did not comply . Under the UN

Charter , Chapter VII measures range from " demonstrations " to sanctions or military action and could be vetoed by any of the five permanent members of the Security Council . Russia and China had previously vetoed three resolutions attempting to condemn or sanction Syria , and were considered likely to block any future Security Council sanctioned military action against Syria . The U.S. indicated it might resort to military action outside the UN if Syria failed to comply with the Security Council resolution requiring it to eliminate its chemical weapons .

Chlorine , a common industrial chemical which would later allegedly be used in poison @-@ gas attacks inside Syria in 2014 , is not on the list of prohibited chemicals covered by the disarmament agreement .

= = = Reactions to the Framework = = =

The " Framework for the Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons " was received positively by France , Germany , the UK , the European Union , China , and the Arab League . Israel expressed cautious optimism , but was skeptical that Syria would comply .

Ali Haidar , Syria 's Minister of National Reconciliation , praised the agreement as " a victory for Syria that was achieved thanks to our Russian friends . " He described the agreement as removing a pretext for a U.S. attack on the country . Iran also stated that the agreement had deprived the U.S. of a pretext for attacking Syria .

Leaders of the main rebel coalition , the Syrian National Coalition , were angered by the agreement . The U.S. , without consulting the coalition , had changed its mind about striking Syria . Rebels furthermore worried the agreement might be considered a de facto admission of the Bashar al @-@ Assad government 's legitimacy .

= = OPCW Executive Council decision = =

The Executive Council of the OPCW met on 27 September and adopted a decision , " Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons " , that is a detailed and accelerated plan for the elimination of Syria 's chemical weapons . The Executive Council also approved Syria 's provisional application of the Chemical Weapons Convention pending entry into force on 14 October . The plan adds detail to but does not vary from the basic deadlines in the U.S. ? Russian Framework . The OPCW stated that the Executive Council had agreed on " an accelerated programme for achieving the complete elimination of Syria 's chemical weapons by mid @-@ 2014 . The decision requires inspections in Syria to commence from 1 October 2013 . "

Inspectors were given unusually broad authority , because Syria was required under the plan to provide inspectors unobstructed access to any suspected chemical weapons site , even if the Syrian government had not identified the location in its list of chemical weapons sites , and without the special procedures normally required for " Challenge Inspections " under Article IX of the convention .

The decision also stipulates that if the OPCW Director @-@ General determined there had been a delay in implementation of the decision , the matter should be discussed within 24 hours , when it should be decided whether the matter should be submitted to the UN Security Council .

The Executive Council 's decision further calls , " on an urgent basis " , for funding by member states of the Syrian chemical weapons elimination process .

= = = Requirements for Syria = = =

Under the Decision , which was incorporated into Security Council Resolution 2118 , Syria is required to take the following actions :

submit to the Secretariat by 4 October further information (to that provided on 19 September 2013) on its chemical weapons , 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 , "

submit the declaration required by Article III of the Chemical Weapons Convention to the OPCW Secretariat no later than 27 October ,

complete elimination of all its chemical weapons material and equipment during the first half of 2014 , " subject to the detailed requirements , including intermediate destruction milestones , to be decided by the [Executive] Council not later than 15 November 2013 , "

complete destruction of its chemical weapons mixing / filling and production equipment by 1 November ,

cooperate fully with Decision implementation , to include providing OPCW personnel with " immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites in the Syrian Arab Republic , " and

designate one official as the OPCW Secretariat 's main point of contact , and provide that person with authority to ensure that the Decision is fully implemented .

= = Security Council Resolution 2118 = =

Negotiations over the Security Council resolution were initially contentious , as the U.S. , the UK , and France submitted a draft resolution that included automatic invocation of Chapter VII , sanctioning use of military force if Syria did not fulfill its commitments under the agreement . Russia and China were opposed to any resolution that authorized enforcement under Chapter VII without a second vote of the Security Council . After further negotiations , on 26 September the five permanent members of the UN Security Council reached agreement on an implementation and enforcement draft resolution . On the following day , just hours after the OPCW Executive Council approved a detailed implementation plan for the U.S. / Russian Framework , Security Council Resolution 2118 was unanimously passed , making the OPCW plan binding on the Syrians .

The resolution requires that Syria eliminate its chemical stockpile and allow complete access to UN and OPCW chemical weapons inspectors . If it does not comply with either demand , the Security Council would need to adopt a second resolution regarding imposition of military or other actions against Syria under the UN Charter 's Chapter VII . The vote on the resolution was delayed until 27 September because the OPCW needed to vote first on its detailed implementation plan . Syria vowed to abide by the resolution .

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov has stressed that the Western and Arab @-@ backed rebels in the Syrian civil war must also comply with the UN resolution , and must ensure that extremists do not acquire chemical weapons . " The responsibility is not only on the Syrian government , " he stated , " but also on the opposition and all the states in this sphere should of course not allow these weapons to fall into the hands of non @-@ state actors . "

= = Reactions to Security Council Resolution 2118 = = =

= = Implementation = =

= = Preparations and preliminary inspections = = =

On 21 September 2013 , Syria ostensibly met the Framework 's first deadline , for comprehensive chemical weapons disclosure . The OPCW stated it had received and was reviewing the " expected disclosure " concerning Syria 's chemical weapons stockpiles , 24 hours after stating it had received an " initial declaration " document from Syrian authorities . The OPCW stated that it would use on @-@ site inspections to verify the accuracy of the disclosure by Syria . It would also " assist in putting into place arrangements to keep the warfare materials and the relevant facilities secure until

their destruction . "

OPCW began preliminary inspections of Syria 's chemical weapons arsenal on 1 October 2013 , and actual destruction of Syrian equipment began on 6 October 2013 , with Syrian personnel under OPCW supervision applying angle grinders and cutting torches to " a wide range of items . " Specifically , under OPCW supervision Syrian military personnel had begun " destroying munitions such as missile warheads and aerial bombs and disabling mobile and static mixing and filling units . " The U.S. and Russia announced themselves " very pleased " with the rapid pace of Syria 's chemical arms disarmament . The Economist commented that the demanding timeline may mean the OPCW will deploy ad hoc destruction methods such as sledgehammers , tanks , or concrete fills .

On Monday , 7 October , UN Secretary @-@ General Ban Ki @-@ moon stated that the UN @-@ OPCW joint mission would eventually have about 100 personnel in Syria , with a support base in Cyprus . In a letter to the Security Council , Ban set out the mission 's three phases : establish an initial presence and verify Syria 's stockpiles declaration ; oversee chemical weapons destruction ; and verify destruction of all chemical arms related materials and programs . On 13 October Ban announced that veteran UN diplomat Sigrid Kaag would head the joint UN @-@ OPCW mission .

= = = Implementation challenges = = =

UN Secretary @-@ General Ban in early October publicly recognized many of the challenges of the weapons destruction effort , in particular the dangerous nature of chemical arms destruction during a civil war , especially in urban areas such as Damascus , Aleppo , and Homs . " Heavy artillery , air strikes , mortar barrages and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas are commonplace and battle lines shift quickly , " he wrote . Ban added that the most challenging phase of the destruction effort would begin in November , when OPCW and UN experts begin destroying Syria 's estimated 1 @,@ 000 tons of precursor chemicals and chemical weapons . In order to do so , they will need to cross battle lines between governments and rebel forces . The Syrian government and Western @-@ backed opposition forces have pledged cooperation with chemical disarmament , but Al Qaeda @-@ linked rebel groups , including Al Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria , have not .

OPCW director @-@ general Ahmet Uzumcu stated in early October that completing the destruction process by the mid @-@ 2014 deadline will depend on whether temporary cease @-@ fires can be arranged between opposition and government forces . A nine @-@ month ceasefire to allow the OPCW to carry out the entire chemical weapons destruction process was rejected by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) , according to a report in Asharq Al @-@ Awsat (a Saudi @-@ linked pan @-@ Arab newspaper) .

Also exceptionally challenging will be the movement and destruction of deadly agents such as sarin , VX nerve agents and mustard gas during the civil war . The chemical weapons convention disallows movement of such deadly agents outside the country holding them , but Security Council Resolution 2118 allows extraordinary measures to be taken in Syria . Some of the chemicals will need to be transported along the highway between Damascus and Homs , which is still contested as of December 2013 . Syria has requested the international community provide armored vehicles to assist in safe transport of the chemicals . In February 2014 , Syria stated that rebels had attempted to attack two convoys transporting chemical weapons .

OPCW director @-@ general Uzumcu called the overall timeline " doable , " though one of his field experts characterized it as " Herculean . " The Economist magazine commented in October 2013 that the timeline was " ambitious , to put it mildly , " but acknowledged it had been " worked out in consultation with American and Russians experts with full knowledge of the OPCW 's capabilities . " Li Hong , secretary @-@ general of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association , stated that both the turbulent civil war and the financial cost of chemical weapons disposal will be a heavy burden on the Syrian government , and called it " unrealistic " to expect Syrian chemical weapons to be fully eliminated by 2014 . Expert opinions were summarized in Foreign Policy magazine as follows : " Taking control of [Syria] ' s enormous stores of [chemical] munitions would be difficult to

do in the midst of a brutal civil war . Dozens of new facilities for destroying the weapons would have to be built from scratch or brought into the country from the U.S. , and completing the job would potentially take a decade or more . "

In October 2013 , Amy Smithson of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies stated that the government appears to be cooperating , but cautioned that the Syrian government has a " very sorry track record " on working with nuclear inspectors , and that it is easier to hide chemical weapons than a nuclear program . Chemical weapons expert Gwyn Winfield writes that Syria has an incentive to hold onto some of its chemical weapons , since its original incentive for developing a chemical weapons capability , as a deterrent against a suspected Israeli nuclear weapons arsenal , " isn 't going to go away . " In contrast , Ralf Trapp , a former OPCW official , has expressed optimism that satellite surveillance would deter cheating . Under the disarmament resolution , Syria is required to allow inspection of any site that raises suspicions .

A disagreement arose regarding the number of chemical weapons sites in contested areas of Syria , with the Syrian foreign minister stating that one @-@ third of sites are in such areas . FSA official Louay Miqdad stated in early October that there were no chemical weapons in areas occupied by opposition forces , " which is something that the Assad regime itself acknowledges , while these storehouses are also not located on the front , so why should we stop fighting ? " According to the OPCW chief , one abandoned site is in rebel @-@ held territory and routes to others lead through rebel @-@ held territory . Malik Ellahi of the OPCW states that few of the locations inspectors must visit will be difficult to access .

In April 2014 , disarmament experts such as Ralf Trapp characterized the pace of the operation as impressively quick . With 92 @. @ 5 % of the arsenal removed or destroyed , Trapp noted that many people hadn 't expected such speed to be achievable given the ongoing civil war .

= = = Later activity = = =

In late October 2013 , the OPCW said it expected 1 November deadline for destruction of CW production , mixing and munition @-@ filling capability to be met . It was reported on 23 October that it had visited 18 of 23 declared sites . It was reported that " ' low tech , quick and cheap ' methods were being used , such as filling equipment with concrete , smashing it , sometimes using heavy vehicles . " The OPCW " said the Syrian government had provided complete co @-@ operation with the 27 weapons inspectors in the country . "

On 31 October , the OPCW announced that it had met the deadline for destroying all declared equipment and facilities related to chemical weapons production , having visited 21 out of 23 sites , and received assurances from the Syrian government that the other two sites had been abandoned and emptied of chemicals and equipment , with these dispersed to sites visited by the OPCW . The two sites were unreachable due to being in contested areas of the ongoing civil war . On 7 November , the OPCW said that one of the two unvisited sites had been officially verified as " dismantled and abandoned " , based in part on images that the Syrian government shot using a " tamperproof " GPS @-@ enabled camera provided by the OPCW . Later , in January 2014 , U.S. Ambassador Robert Mikulak worried that the October destruction was incomplete and " reversible " and claimed that it did not , in fact , meet requirements .

On 15 November , the OPCW approved a plan to transport Syria 's chemical weapons to a location outside its territory by 5 February 2014 , where the weapons would then be destroyed . Acceptance of shipments of the 1 @, @ 000 tons of chemical agents for destruction have been refused by most countries approached by the OPCW . As of November 2013 , Belgium and France were still considering whether to agree to such shipments .

The countries of Norway and Denmark agreed to transport the chemical weapons from Syria to Italy where they were to be handed over to a United States Navy ship for destruction in international waters . The Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen @-@ class frigate Helge Ingstad will take part in the operation , as will the Norwegian marine corps unit Kystjegerkommandoen . The Norwegian government hired in the Norwegian registered RoRo cargo ship MV Taiko for the mission . Denmark will participate with the Danish frigate HDMS Esbern Snare and the Danish government has hired in

the civilian cargo ship Ark Futura for the mission .

The United States will destroy the highest @-@ priority chemicals , which were scheduled for removal from Syria by 31 December , on board the MV Cape Ray in international waters of the Mediterranean , using an U.S. Army Field Deployable Hydrolysis System . The United Kingdom will give the United States specialist equipment and training to enable the highest @-@ priority chemicals to be processed more quickly . In addition around 150 tonnes of priority two chemicals , toxic material similar to industrial chemical agents , will be transported to the UK with the help of the British Royal Navy and destroyed there . The remaining stock of priority two chemicals not going to Britain will be destroyed by commercial companies .

The first shipment of components for chemical weapons were removed from Syria by a Norwegian / Danish flotilla on 7 January 2014 . The 31 December deadline for complete removal of priority chemicals had been missed ; on 7 January , the New York Times assessed the delay was due to the difficulty of overland transport of chemical weapons in the middle of a civil war . A second shipment was removed around 27 January ; that same day , the U.N. Secretary General , Ban Ki @-@ moon , expressed concern over the worsening delays and assessed that Syria already has the resources required to transport the weapons promptly despite the ongoing civil war .

On 2 July , the Danish ship Ark Futura arrived in the Italian port of Gioia Tauro , carrying the chemical weapons , which were then loaded onto the U.S. ship Cape Ray . The Cape Ray was equipped with two Field Deployable Hydrolysis Systems capable of neutralizing the poisonous substances and converting them into industrial waste . On 19 July 2014 , around 250 protesters gathered at the Souda base to protest the elimination of the chemical weapons in the nearby region of the Mediterranean Sea .

= = = = Delays = = = =

By 30 January 2014 , only about four percent of the priority chemicals had been removed . Syria continued to blame security issues ; U.S. officials disagreed and accused the government of deliberately causing or prolonging the delay . On 31 January , Russian diplomat Mikhail Ulyanov responded that " the Syrians are approaching the fulfilment of their obligations seriously and in good faith . " The U.S. blamed Syria 's Assad government for intentionally delaying efforts to remove chemical arms from the country for destruction , suggesting that the goal of liquidating the arsenal by midyear is in jeopardy . Stating that Assad is , in effect , slow @-@ walking the chemicals in order to obtain more security equipment , U.S. Ambassador Robert P. Mikulak said that " Syria has demanded armored jackets for shipping containers , electronic countermeasures , and detectors for improvised explosive devices . " He said the demands are " without merit " and " display a ' bargaining mentality ' rather than a security mentality . "

Around 21 February , Syria proposed a hundred @-@ day plan for removal of the chemicals . British official Philip Hall criticized the plan as " not adequate " . At the time , the US had stated destruction of the chemicals , once off @-@ site , would take 90 days ; given that timeframe , Syria 's proposed May removal deadline would not leave enough time for all munitions to be destroyed to meet the end @-@ of @-@ June deadline for complete destruction of Syria 's chemical weapons . Around 4 March , Syria agreed to a 60 @-@ day timetable for removal of the stockpile . By 4 March 2014 , almost a third of the stockpile had been removed or destroyed .

Syria missed a 15 March deadline for destroying its 12 chemical weapons production facilities . Syria has proposed to instead render the facilities inoperable by sealing their entrances ; the U.S. and its allies oppose this proposal and insist on destruction .

By 21 March , Syria 's entire supply of mustard gas had been removed . On 27 April , Syria missed its revised 60 @-@ day deadline for complete removal of its full chemical weapons arsenal . As at 23 May , Syria had removed or destroyed 92 @. @ 5 % of its declared chemical stockpile .

On 23 June , the head of OPCW , Ahmet Üzümcü , announced in The Hague that the last of Syria 's declared chemical weapons had been shipped out of the country for destruction . The last 8 % of the chemical stockpile was loaded on to ships at Latakia . The most toxic chemicals , including sarin precursors and sulphur mustard , were destroyed by 18 August aboard the US naval vessel MV

Cape Ray . The remaining were destroyed in the US , Great Britain and Finland . On 4 January 2015 , the OPCW confirmed that the destruction was completed .

Despite American criticisms of the delays , the OPCW has described Syria 's cooperation as " satisfactory " .

= = Problems with cargo = =

In a news article published in Norway 's biggest newspaper Verdens Gang in December 2015 , it was revealed that the operation had been far more dramatic than what was expected and reported . There were rocket attacks against Latakia while " Taiko " was docked . There were explosions and strikes around the docks and there were incidents where possible suicide boats would come to close to the ships and had to be warned off . The commander of the Norwegian frigate commanded that the moorings on the freighter " Taiko " was rigged with explosives every time she went to land in Syria . The goal : To get from the country as soon as possible if anything happened . From the get go , the shipments of containers that was transported to the cargo ships was in bad shape and they leaked lethal material and gases . The containers were characterized by having been filled up hastily in a war zone before they were transported to the pier and handed on to the Norwegian forces . When almost half of the cargo gave signal of leakage of lethal material , an emergency meeting was held onboard Taiko with representatives from OPCW , UN , USA , Norway , Denmark , Syria and Finland . The Norwegian soldiers were ordered to deal with the situation . However no country would accept a docking of the ship with the material leaking on board , and Norwegian personnel and ships had to sail back to Syria and deal with and open the sealed containers and move the material to different containers .

= = Alleged violations = =

Chlorine , a common industrial chemical , was allegedly used in poison @-@ gas attacks by the Assad government in 2014 . Chlorine is not on the list of prohibited chemicals covered by the disarmament agreement ; however , its use as a weapon violates the Chemical Weapons Convention .

In July 2014 , Assad disclosed to the OPCW " a facility for the production of ricin " but stated that " the entire quantity of ricin produced was disposed of prior to the entry into force " of the Chemical Weapons Convention . The lateness of this disclosure raised doubts about the completeness of the government 's declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile . The Israeli intelligence community believes the Assad government retains several tons of chemical weapons .

= = Declared sites and chemical weapons = =

Syria declared 23 sites to OPCW , the location of which are not disclosed for confidentiality reasons . On these sites a combined 41 facilities were present containing " 1 @, @ 300 tons of chemical precursors and agents and 1 @, @ 230 unfilled munitions " .

According to U.S. chemical weapons nonproliferation expert Amy Smithson , declared sites are believed to include :

- four production facilities near Safira , Khan Abu Shamat , Homs , and Hama
- six storage facilities near Safira , Homs , Hama , Furqlus , Latakia , and Palmyra
- a research and development site in Damascus

In October 2013 , the OPCW directly inspected 21 of the 23 sites . The OPCW was able to indirectly confirm that the other two , unreachable , sites had been abandoned .

= = = Allegations of undisclosed sites = = =

The Economist reported in early October that Syria had disclosed 19 chemical weapons @-@ related sites , whilst unnamed Western intelligence sources believed 45 sites to exist in total . One

U.S. official said it was not clear if the discrepancy is " a deception " or merely a " difference of definition " regarding what constitutes a chemical weapons site . In Science Insider , experts stated that there was a possibility of incomplete record @-@ keeping , citing an incident in 2002 wherein Albania discovered , in a cluster of mountain bunkers , 16 tons of primitive , undocumented chemical weapon agents that Albania had forgotten about . Chemical weapons expert Winfield has commented that the success of the destruction plan depends on Syria revealing all of its chemical arms stockpile , much of which is moveable and may be spread across dozens of sites .