

# Syria: Evidence Shows Insurgents Responsible for Gas Attack

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)  
Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Media Disinformation](#)  
In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

On September 18, [Russia Today](#) (RT) headlined “Russia to provide UNSC with data for chem weapons’ use by Syrian rebels.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said:

“We have plenty of reports on chemical weapons use, which indicate that the opposition regularly resorts to provocations in order to trigger strikes and intervention against Syria.”

“There’s a lot of data. It’s widely available on the Internet. This data is presented in the report, which our experts put together in association with the use of chemical weapons in Aleppo in March this year.”

“Theres also plenty of data on the incidents that occurred in August in Ghouta, near Damascus.”

“All of this will be considered in the Security Council, together with a report, which was submitted by UN experts, confirming that chemical weapons were used.”

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov spent two days in Damascus. He met with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem and President Bashar al-Assad.

[Voice of Russia](#) headlined “Damascus provides Russia with new info on Syrian opposition’s use of chemical weapons – Ryabkov.”

Syria provided “very convincing” evidence, he said. It shows insurgents’ responsibility for Ghouta’s gas attack.

“There is some confusion in this regard,” said Ryabkov. “We received additional proof, which had been gathered and analyzed by the Syrian authorities.”

“They consider it to be evidence of chemical weapons use by the so-called Syrian opposition in eastern Ghouta on the 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th.”

“The material received, given to us in Arabic, will be translated into Russian. What kind of conclusions can Russia draw?”

“This will be studied in detail and without hurry. I assure that this could change the course of further talks.”

“As for possible conclusions that may be drawn by Russia from this new evidence.”

“It’s a case that requires further scrutiny. It will take some time and should be done without haste.”

“This evidence was previously given to (UN inspectors head) Mr. Selstrem, who was here in Syria and headed the group of experts.”

His report is “limited in terms of scope, preliminary and insufficient. It’s not “grounds for far-reaching conclusions.”

“We come across the situation often when materials prepared by UN experts and released by the UN secretariat are not grounds for sufficient, comprehensive and far-reaching summaries.”

Ryabkov added that Security Council resolution language should cover only Syria agreeing to eliminate its chemical weapons. Force threats won’t be permitted.

It should support an expected Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) decision backing the US/Russian deal, “and nothing more than that.”

Lavrov said he hasn’t seen evidence Syria supplied, “but I’m sure that the experts are going to work with it and, of course, we’ll provide it to the security council.”

According to Russia’s Presidential Administration Chief of Staff Sergei Ivanov, Moscow and the USSR never supplied chemical weapons to other countries.

“Nobody disputes the fact (it ever) shipped warheads armed with sarin to Syria or any other country.” Toxic agents used in Ghouta were likely “backyard produced.”

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel accused Russia of supplying Damascus with chemical weapons. He and other US officials lied.

On September 19, [Itar Tass](#) headlined “Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister meets Syrian opposition in Damascus.”

Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said Moscow “is ready to submit evidence of Syrian opposition using chemical weapons to the UN on Thursday.”

“We plan to do is as quickly as possible, tonight or tomorrow,” he said. “We expect all available information, not just one investigation into one incident, will be taken into consideration.”

Bogdanov met with Popular Front for Change and Liberation’s Qadri Jamil, as well as Syrian National Council officials.

He called it important to do so. Resolving Syria’s conflict requires their cooperation.

“We are ready to organize contacts not only with the opposition, but also between the opposition groups, maybe in Moscow,” Bogdanov added.

On September 19, [Russia Today](#) headlined” “Russia: UN inspectors ignored evidence on Syria,” saying:

Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told RT:

“The Syrian authorities have conducted their own sampling and investigation, analysis in terms of possible evidence of the rebels being responsible for the tragic episodes both on August 21, but beyond that also on August 22, 23 and 24.

“This is new material – new material for us. But this is not already completely new material for the UN.”

“This material was discreetly handed over to Ake Sellstrom, the head of the UN mission of experts here (in Syria) which came to investigate the Ghouta incidents.”

“Sellstrom was asked to look into it and eventually factor this new evidence into the final report. It never happened in fact.”

“This is one of the reasons why we criticize the speed with which the report was released and also an incomplete content of this report.”

“We expect the UN Secretariat to both send Sellstrom and his people back to Syria to continue investigation of the three remaining incidents, and also to write a full and comprehensive report against the background of all information they have received.”

Ryabkov’s concerned about Syrian/Russian provided evidence being “nullified and disregarded.”

UN inspectors should follow the same procedure Russia did in analyzing a March Aleppo chemical attack. It showed insurgents responsible for chemical weapons use.

Ryabkov wants Sellstrom’s team to return to Syria. He wants their investigation continued. He wants a legitimate, unbiased report. The one submitted was, one-sided, fraudulent and worthless.

“We are concerned about (further) provocations, Ryabkov stressed. We have seen it before that the moment something better, positive is out there, is looming, you will always find (elements) who would try immediately to change these dynamics and establish a new reality, so to say, through a provocation.”

“And it’s just amazing how little of this understanding is among those who now advocate a very different course fighting the government with weapons in their hands.”

“It’s unforgivable. This is the real crime which they are committing against their own people and their country.”

On Tuesday, [Fox News](#) contributor/former congressman Dennis Kucinich and journalist Greg Palkot interviewed Assad in Damascus. He said in part:

“Last week we joined the international agreement of preventing chemical WMDs, and part of this agreement, the main part, is to not to manufacture these armaments, not to store, and not to use, and of course not to distribute, and part of it is to get rid of those materials, the chemical materials.”

“Of course, when we are part now of this agreement, we have to agree on that chapter (o)n

getting rid of all these armaments. I mean to destroy them.”

Ten years ago, he said, he proposed a WMD-free Middle East. Washington opposed it. Letting Israel maintain formidable nuclear, chemical and biological weapons reflects US policy.

Asked if joining the Chemical Weapons Convention is a stalling tactic, Assad responded:

“When you join the agreement, you have a mechanism, and you have to obey this mechanism, and according to the history of Syria, we never made an agreement with any party in this world and we didn’t fulfill what we have to do or our role in that agreement, never.”

“We didn’t say that we are joining partially that agreement or that organization. We joined fully. We sent the letter. We sent the document, and (we) are committed to the full requirements of this agreement.”

Asked if he can destroy CWs quickly, and if not, why, he responded:

“I think it’s a very complicated operation technically, and it needs a lot of money. Some estimated about a billion for the Syrian stockpile.”

“We’re not experts in that regard, but that’s the estimate that we’ve had recently.”

“So, you have to ask the experts what do they mean by ‘quickly’ because this has a certain schedule. It needs a year, maybe a little bit less or a little bit more. So, what do you mean by ‘quickly?’ ”

He’s willing to let America destroy his CWs if it’ll pay for it. A “specified” UN organization will handle the task.

Syria has no conditions, Assad said. “In the end, if they’re going to be destroyed, they could be destroyed anywhere.”

“As I said, (they’re) very detrimental to the environment, so whichever country is ready to take risk of these materials let them take it.”

Asked if destroying his CWs by mid-2014 is doable, he said:

“(W)e have to discuss these details with the organization first. This is first. Second, the time is not our problem.”

“It is the problem of the organization. How much time (they) need to implement this agreement.”

“The only thing we have to do is provide the information, and to make them accessible to our sites, which is not a problem. We can do it tomorrow. We don’t have any problem.”

“The problem is how fast they can be in getting rid of any chemical material, because this is a very complicated situation. It’s not about will. It’s about techniques. So, only experts can answer your question.”

Assad want evidence UN inspectors reported fully assessed. He wants further investigation.

He wants unbiased analysis. He wants conclusions based on it.

He questioned suspect videos. No one verified them. They're easy to fake.

Mother Agnes Mariam de La Croix's International Support Team for Mussalaha in Syria (ISTEAMS) reported fabricated ones. They're commonly used. They were used against Gaddafi in Libya. They'll be used again.

Assad stressed there's "a lot of forgery on the internet. Any rebel can make sarin. (It's called) kitchen gas. (W)e know that all those rebels are supported by governments, so any government (with) chemical material can hand it over to" insurgents.

Responding to allegations of a ton of sarin used, as well as rockets and launchers Syria's army uses, he said:

"This realistically cannot be possible. You cannot use the Sarin beside your troops, this is first."

"Second, you don't use WMDs while you are advancing. You've not been defeated, and you're not retreating."

"The whole situation was in favour of the army. Third, we didn't use (CWs) when we had bigger problems last year."

"When they talk about any troops or any unit in the Syrian army that used this kind of weapon, this is false for one reason because chemical weapons can only be used by specialized units."

"It cannot be used by any other units like infantry or similar traditional units. So, all what you mentioned is not realistic and not true."

"Definitely, so far as government, we have evidence that the terrorist groups have used Sarin gas and those evidences have been handed over to the Russians."

"The Russian satellites, since the beginning of these allegations at the 21st of August, they said that they have information through their satellites that the rocket was launched from another area."

So, why ignore this point of view? So, the whole story doesn't even hold together. It's not realistic."

"In one word, we didn't use any chemical weapons in the Ghouta, because if you want to use it, you would harm your troops. You would have harmed tens of thousands of civilians living in Damascus."

Assad wants further investigations. He invited UN inspectors to come in March. He asked them to come back.

More work needs to be done. Other areas need examining. Washington pressured Sellstrom to report quickly. He didn't finish his mission. It's suspect. It's incomplete. It lacks credibility.

Full and accurate analysis shows insurgents alone used chemical weapons. They're responsible for multiple incidents. They attacked Ghouta with gas. Syrian forces had nothing

to do with it, Assad stressed.

Asked if he'd characterized ongoing conflict as civil war, he said:

"No. Civil war start(s) from within society. (Syria's conflict has) 80 or 83 nationalities coming to fight within your countries supported by foreign countries."

"What we have is not a civil war. What we have is a war, but it's a new kind of war."

"(N)o one has precise numbers. We know that we have tens of thousands of Jihadists" involved 80 to 90% of the rebels or terrorists on the ground are Al Qaeda and their offshoots."

"We have tens of thousands of Syrians that have died, mainly because of the terrorist attacks, assassinations, and suicide bombers, the majority."

"More than 15,000" soldiers were killed, he said. He has no insurgent casualty numbers. "(W)e cannot count them," he said.

"The majority of the innocent people have been killed by the terrorists, not by the government."

"No wise government in the world would kill its own people. How can you withstand if you kill your own people for two years and a half, while the West is against you, many of the regional countries are against you, and your people are against you while you kill them? Is it possible? Is it realistic?"

Attacks on villages, residential and suburban areas target terrorists. "(T)he army has to go there to get rid of" them, Assad stressed.

"The army should defend the civilians, not the opposite. You cannot leave the terrorists free, killing the people, assassinating the people, beheading the people and eating their hearts."

"When we go to defend them, you say you are killing your own people! You don't, but in every war, you have casualties."

"This is war. You don't have clean war. You don't have soft war, and you don't have good war."

Asked about diplomacy and confidence-building measures, he responded:

"Any diplomatic move without having stability and getting rid of the terrorists is going to be just an illusion."

"Any diplomatic move should start with stopping the flow of the terrorists, the logistical support of those terrorists, the armament support and the money support."

"Then, you have a full plan. The Syrians could sit on the table, discuss the future of Syria, the political system, the constitution and everything."

Negotiating with opposition elements "doesn't mean (doing it) with the terrorists." Syria is fully committed to peaceful conflict resolution, Assad stressed.

National reconciliation excludes amnesty for terrorists. They have blood on their hands.

At the same time, he said, “we invited every militant in Syria to give up armament, and offered amnesty to whoever laid down his armament and wants to go back to his normal life as a Syrian citizen. Of course we believe in that.”

Assad covered much more important ground. His interview was long and detailed. Everything he said deserves careful consideration.

He’s thoughtful, straightforward, and honest. He says what he means and means what he says. He deserves to be taken seriously.

He prioritizes peaceful conflict resolution. He wants Syrians alone able to choose who’ll lead them.

He wants foreign intervention stopped. He wants bloodshed ended. Syrians overwhelmingly support him. It’s for good reason.

He’s their last line of defense. Restoring peace depends on him. Don’t expect Fox News to explain.

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