

2014 Annual Seminar of the
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Light at the end of the tunnel? The Syrian chemical weapon programme

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One year ago

- UNSG investigation confirmed large-scale Sarin use against civilian targets in Ghouta outside Damascus
- Western governments considered air strikes against selected Syrian government targets
- US and Russia agreed framework on the elimination of Syria's CW programme; Syria acceded to the CWC
- OPCW and UN Security Council took decisions on the elimination of the Syrian CW programme
- JMIS was established; CW disarmament of Syria began

Uncertainties from the beginning

- Would the Assad Regime cooperate fully?
- Would CW disarmament work under the conditions of civil war?
- Were the time frames for removal/destruction of the Syrian stockpile realistic?
- Was the process verifiable (safety, security, access)?
- Could political coherence and unity in the OPCW and the UNSC be sustained throughout the process?

JMIS (OPCW/UN) in Syria

- Established in October 2013, Sigrid Kraag Special Coordinator
- First inspection team dispatched 1 October 2013; completion of initial inspection campaign by 31 October 2013
- Functional destruction of CWPFs and mixing/filling equipment by 1 November 2013
- Removal of all high priority chemicals from Syria between January and 23 June 2014
- Destruction of all category 1 chemicals completed by 28 August 2014 (on US MV Cape Ray 19 August)
- End of JMIS mandate in September 2014
- Continued presence of OPCW inspectors in Syrian under the CWC

Partners in the process of eliminating Syria's CW stockpile

- 21 countries and the EU made financial contributions (Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom).
- 10 countries supported the process with measures in-kind (Belarus, China, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia), providing:
 - transportation containers, security, naval support, port facilities, destruction of category 1 chemicals on board the USMV Cape Ray and in the UK, and destruction of other declared chemicals and of the hydrolysates in several countries by commercial companies.

Some questions / issues

- Clarification of certain elements of the the Syrian declaration
- Was the declaration complete?
- Completion of the elimination of CWDFs (delays in decision making caused by integration of Syria's CWPFs with CWSFs)
- Use of chlorine - OPCW fact finding mission: “compelling information, systematic and repeated use, high degree of confidence”
- Confirmed uses of CW: attribution and consequences?
- CW uses by IS/ISIS (not independently verified but likely)
- Loss of Syria's strategic weapon vis-à-vis Israel - what next?