



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General
28 April 2020
English
Original: Russian

General Assembly
Seventy-fourth session
Agenda item 98 (m)

Security Council
Seventy-fifth year

**General and complete disarmament: implementation of the
Convention on the Prohibition of the Development,
Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and
on Their Destruction**

Letter dated 15 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith an aide-memoire from the Russian Federation concerning the report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on incidents involving the use of chemical weapons in Lataminah, Syrian Arab Republic (see annex).*

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 98 (m), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) V. Nebenzia

* The annexes are being circulated in English and Russian only.



Annex to the letter dated 15 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Aide-memoire concerning the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on chemical incidents in Lataminah, Syrian Arab Republic

On 8 April 2020, the leadership of the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) distributed the first report of the so-called Investigation and Identification Team on the chemical incidents in Lataminah, Syria, on 24, 25 and 30 March 2017.

We wish to reiterate that the decisions to establish the Investigation and Identification Team within OPCW and to fund it from the Organisation's regular budget were illegitimate. Those decisions were adopted in violation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. The work of this quasi-prosecutorial body, whose staff are predominantly from Western countries, is encroaching on the exclusive powers of the Security Council and is aimed at accomplishing the abhorrent political task of discrediting the lawfully elected authorities of Syria. Russia does not intend to cooperate with the Team or to finance its work.

A clear indication of the biased nature of the Team's report was the fact that, 24 hours before its official publication, an article appeared in the British newspaper *The Guardian* stating that, in the OPCW document, the Government of Syria was identified as the perpetrator of the chemical attacks. A legitimate question arises: how and on what basis were the Western media given access to this confidential information before it became available to the OPCW member States? We would appreciate an explanation in this regard from the leadership of the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The Team's report will be studied thoroughly in Russia at the expert level. This will take time. However, it can already be stated that the Team operates according to the same flawed principles as the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and the former OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism:

- Material and evidence are gathered remotely, mainly from opposition groups.
- Reports from the Damascus authorities of chemical weapons offences committed by terrorists are ignored.
- The investigations are conducted with gross violations of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and without observing the key principle of preserving the chain of custody of material evidence, which, inter alia, requires such evidence to be gathered directly on site, by OPCW experts exclusively.
- No proper criteria are applied for selecting witnesses or assessing the admissibility of their testimony.

The flimsy reports of the OPCW fact-finding mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism on the chemical incidents in Lataminah, as well as in Khan Shaykhun, Saraqib and other populated areas in neighbouring districts, provide incontrovertible proof of all these violations.

For clarity, we suggest consulting the related material prepared by experts from the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (which is available on the website of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations at: www.russiaun.ru/ru/news/opcw_report) (see addendum).

With regard to the investigations conducted by the OPCW fact-finding mission in Lataminah, we also wish to draw attention to the following.

It is openly stated in the report of the fact-finding mission concerning the incident on 30 March 2017 that “the majority of sources consisted of news media, blogs, and the websites of various non-governmental organisations (NGOs)”. There are fundamental inconsistencies in the results of the analysis of environmental samples and biomedical specimens. Traces of sarin are present everywhere (“soil collected under metal piece”, “large metal piece”, other “metal pieces”), but there is no evidence of its presence in the biomedical specimens.

In the report on the 25 March 2017 incident, it is stated, with respect to the possible use of chlorine, that the designated laboratories detected an assortment of chloro-organic compounds in the samples taken at the hospital premises. However, the majority of those compounds were antiseptics and related chemicals, such that their presence in the samples can be entirely explained by the disinfection measures regularly carried out at such medical establishments.

Regarding the incidents on 24 and 30 March 2017, in which the OPCW fact-finding mission considers that sarin was used, the crater formed by the explosion does not correspond in form to the crater that would be caused by the explosion of an aerial chemical munition and is suspiciously reminiscent of the crater specially prepared in advance by the White Helmets to simulate the explosion of what was alleged to be an “aerial chemical bomb” in Khan Shaykhun 10 days later.

It is noteworthy that the results of the analysis of the samples taken at Lataminah and Khan Shaykhun are virtually identical, notwithstanding the different meteorological, geographical, ballistic and other conditions.

It is quite obvious that the work of the Investigation and Identification Team, like that of the OPCW fact-finding mission, is aimed at meeting the political demands of a narrow group of States. This is clearly demonstrated by the falsified report on the chemical provocation carried out by the White Helmets in Duma on 7 April 2018, which served as the pretext for the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France to launch a missile strike on the territory of a sovereign State in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of international law.

The Investigation and Identification Team does not even hide the task it has been set: this body is intended to assist not only the OPCW governing bodies, but also courts and tribunals, whether at the national, regional or international level, including the notorious so-called International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to investigate crimes in Syria. This is yet another gross violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and, in essence, is leading to the repurposing of OPCW as a tool for the United States and its allies to exert political pressure on Governments to which they object.

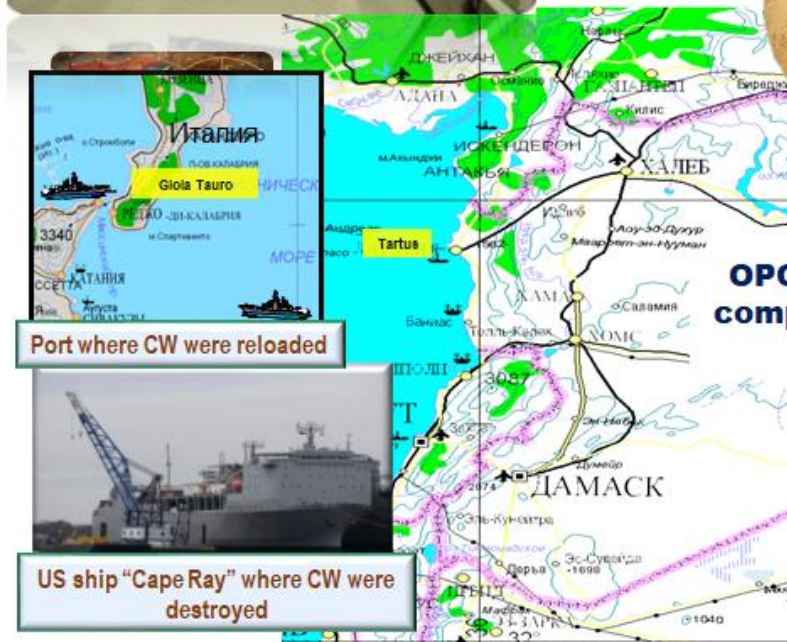
In sum, we note with regret that the reputation of OPCW as an authoritative expert body in the field of chemical weapons has effectively been sacrificed to the geopolitical ambitions of this group of countries in the Middle East.

Addendum**Informational material on chemical provocation in the Syrian Arab Republic****PRESENTATION OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Destruction of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic



**The Nobel Peace Prize 2013
was awarded to the OPCW for
“its extensive efforts to eliminate
chemical weapons”**

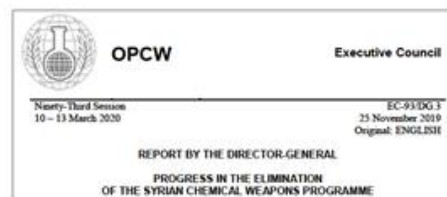


**OPCW officially confirmed
complete CW destruction in
Syria**



**Destruction of declared Syrian chemical
weapons completed**

4 January 2014



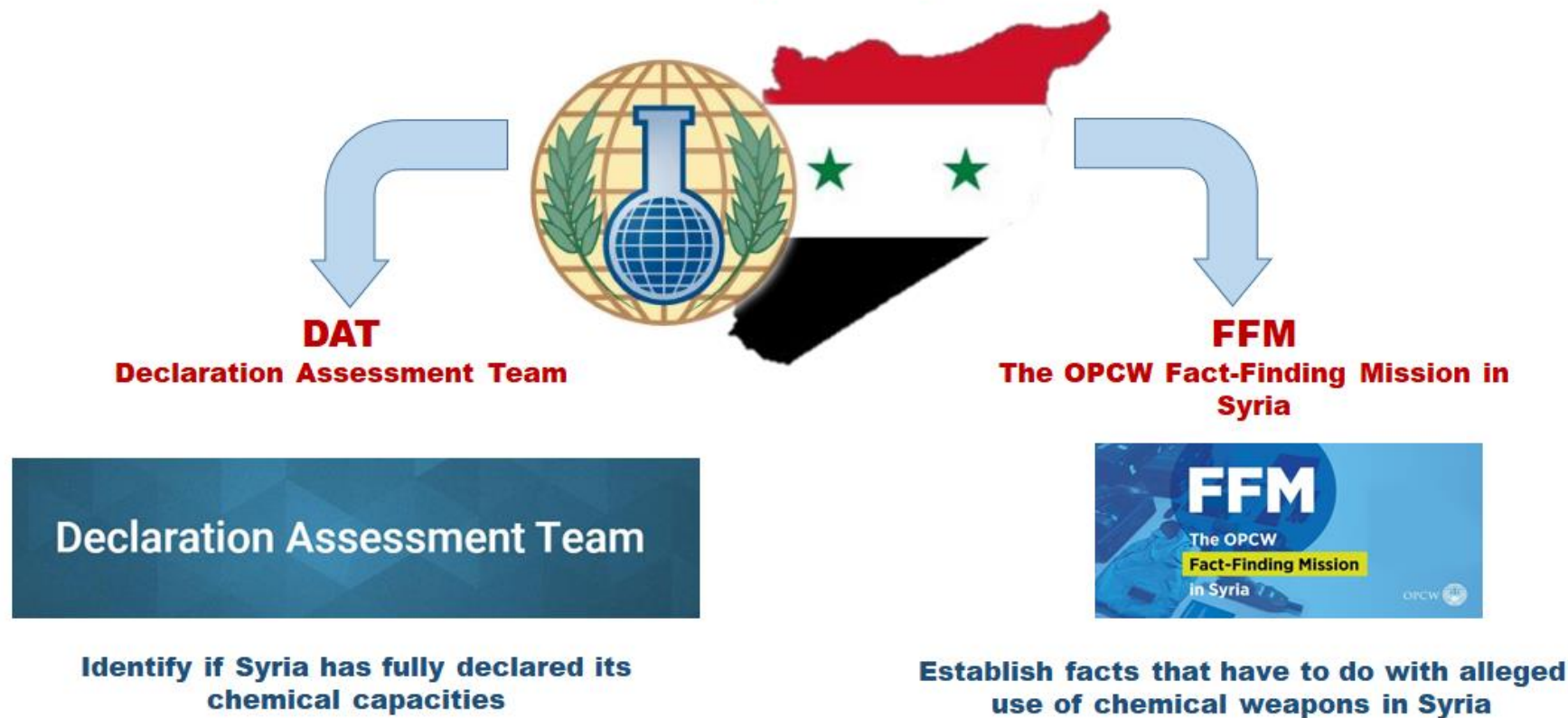
Finally, the 95-ton container by the OPCW to dispose of part of the Syrian chemical weapons shipment, has completed disposal of 15 tonnes of hydrogen fluoride at its facility in Texas.

This completes destruction of all chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The next to be done is a technical analysis for treating a number of cylinders in a determined and hazardous conditions that demand the utmost process.

Commenting on this development, the Director General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmed El-Sayid, said: "This process closes an important chapter in the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme as we continue efforts to clarify Syria's declaration and address ongoing use of toxic chemicals as weapons in that country".

All chemical weapons stockpiles and facilities connected with the former chemical weapons programme in Syria have been destroyed. This has been officially confirmed by the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

OPCW Missions to Check Syria's Compliance with the CWC



In spite of this, the Western countries have not ceased exerting political pressure on the Syrian Arab Republic, periodically accusing it of various violations of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, including the concealment of part of its chemical weapons capabilities. In addition, OPCW is supporting the stance of the United States of America and its allies regarding Syria.

To clarify the situation with regard to the Syrian chemical dossier, OPCW put a number of claims to Syria. To address those claims, in April 2014, under pressure from the Western States, two missions were set up under the Organisation's auspices: the Declaration Assessment Team, to verify the declaration made by Syria concerning its chemical weapons programme, and the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, to establish the facts surrounding the use of chemical weapons.

Regrettably, the work of those missions was organized in a manner that was biased and lacking in transparency, often under the direction of countries opposed to preserving peace in Syria.

For example, with regard to the Declaration Assessment Team, the following points must be noted.

The OPCW Executive Council in its most recent report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme (EC-93/DG.12), which is based on material provided by the Declaration Assessment Team, underscores that Damascus is actively cooperating with the Team, submitting monthly reports on the fulfilment of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Nevertheless, for reasons that are not clear, over the past four years the number of claims made against Damascus has increased from 4 to 23. For the current purposes, all the claims made by the Declaration Assessment Team can be consolidated into three groups. The first set of claims concerns the role of the Scientific Studies and Research Center at Barzah and Jamraya in the Syrian chemical weapons programme; the second, the results of the analysis of samples taken at a range of locations in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic; and the third, the efforts to clarify certain declarations made by Syria.

Science and Research Facilities at Barzah and Jamrayah

October 2016

The Barzah and Jamrayah Science and Research Facilities were declared under the CWC

November 2017, February 2018

Data about activities of the Research Facilities was submitted upon the OPCW request

2017, 2018

OPCW inspections certified the absence of undeclared activities in the Research Facilities

14 April 2018

Missile strikes were carried out against the Research Facilities

July 2019

OPCW inspection certified the absence of undeclared activities in the Research Facilities



Most of the issues that the Declaration Assessment Team deems problematic relate to the first group of claims, concerning the activities of the Scientific Studies and Research Center.

The question of the Center's role in the chemical weapons programme in the Syrian Arab Republic was raised following the Team's first visit in May 2014, as analysis of the samples taken at the facility showed the presence of toxic chemical precursors.

It must be noted that, according to the Chemical Weapons Convention, work in laboratories with various toxic chemicals (traces of which were detected at the Scientific Studies and Research Center) for research, medical or pharmaceutical purposes is permitted and such facilities are not subject to any obligation relating to declaration.

After extensive discussion of this issue, in October 2016 the Syrian Arab Republic submitted additional material on the work conducted at some of the Center's sites. Subsequently, in November 2017 and February 2018, at the request of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, the Syrian Arab Republic provided further documents detailing research and development in relation to chemical weapons that had been carried out at the Center in the periods 1995–1999 and 2006–2010, and offered the necessary clarifications in response to questions that arose.

Despite the fact that inspections conducted previously by the Team, in 2017 and 2018, had shown that there were no traces of undeclared activities, in 2018 the international coalition launched a missile strike on those sites on the pretext that they were linked to chemical weapons attacks in Syria.




















The inspection conducted by the Team in October 2019 again confirmed that no activities prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention had been carried out at the Center.

During a visit to Hafir 1 in April 2019, the Team discovered 40 undestroyed empty chlorine and ammonium cylinders on both sides of a small road behind the facility's tunnels. Representatives of the Syrian National Authority who accompanied the Team during the visit explained that the cylinders had already been declared to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in 2013 and examined by OPCW inspectors, and had remained in the same location since then. Nevertheless, the OPCW Technical Secretariat still considers the issue to be "outstanding", despite repeated promises to Damascus to deal with the matter, and the Team has plenty such "outstanding" issues in respect of the Syrian Arab Republic.

It must be recognized that, given the protracted armed conflict, which has lasted for eight years, Damascus is simply not in a position to respond to some of the issues because it lacks the additional documentation requested by the Team. For example, in the case involving the conversion of 2000 special aerial bombs, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted all available and extant documents, but the OPCW Technical Secretariat considered that to be insufficient.

In our view, there is a need to be realistic: the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Syria must carry out a final review of the outstanding claims in respect of the initial declaration. We believe that most of them could be closed.

FFM Activities to Investigate Alleged Chemical Incidents

Date	Place	Source of Information	FFM on-site visit	Sampling (evidence gathering)	«Chain of custody»	Interview by FFM of witnesses on site of incident	Date of issue of the report
04.04.2017	Khan Shaykhun	   	✗		✗	✗	29.06.2017 (3 months)
04.02.2018	Saraqib	   	✗		✗	✗	15.05.2018 (3,5 months)
24, 25, 30.03.2017	Al Lata-minah	   	✗		✗	✗	13.06.2018 (17 months)
04.04.2018	Douma	   	+	+	+	+	01.03.2019 (11 months)



- Syrian Civil Defence (SCD), White Helmets



- Chemical Violations Documentation Centre Syria (CVDCS)



- Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)



- Syrian Institute for Justice (SIJ)



- The activity took place



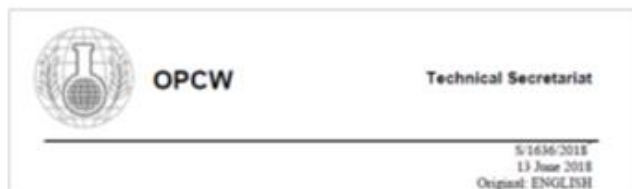
- The activity didn't take place

With regard to the OPCW fact-finding mission, Russia has made repeated statements pointing out specific shortcomings in the investigations conducted into the alleged chemical incidents in Lataminah (on 24, 25 and 30 March 2017), Khan Shaykhun (on 4 April 2017), Saraqib (on 4 February 2018) and Duma (on 7 April 2018).

At issue are the most serious flaws in the work of the fact-finding mission: a lack of balance in the mission's geographical composition; selectivity in the use of witness testimony, including an unjustifiable propensity towards obtaining information from opposition sources and bodies exposed for their falsification of data and close ties to foreign secret services (the White Helmets, for example, are officially funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department of the United States); and a reluctance to carry out operational measures at the sites of the alleged chemical incidents on the pretext that there are security threats, although appropriate guarantees have been provided repeatedly by the Government of Syria and, what is more, most of the Syrian Arab Republic is now under the control of government troops.

It must be pointed out that, in accordance with the diplomatic notes exchanged between OPCW and Damascus, the decisions of the OPCW Executive Council of 4 February and 23 November 2015, and paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution [2209 \(2015\)](#), the task of the OPCW fact-finding mission is “to study all available information relating to allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria”. Meanwhile, the mission itself has asserted that its task consists solely in establishing whether or not chemical weapons were used, without making a general analysis of all available information relating to an incident and often without visiting the sites concerned.

Investigation of Alleged Incidents in Ltamenah (Al Lataminah)



NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

REPORT OF THE OPCW FACT-FINDING MISSION IN SYRIA REGARDING ALLEGED INCIDENTS IN LTAMENAH, THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC 24 AND 25 MARCH 2017

- 1.1 This report covers the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in relation to two allegations in the area of Ltamenah, Hama Governorate on 24 and 25 March, respectively.
 - 1.2 After the FFM became aware of allegations of use of a toxic chemical as a weapon in Ltamenah, in the Hama Governorate, the team assessed the credibility of the allegations based on information collected from open sources and information received from several non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
 - 1.3 During the FFM deployment to gather facts related to the use of chemicals as a weapon in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017, the team also received samples and conducted interviews related to the incident on 25 March 2017 and during these interviews, encountered allegations of use of a toxic chemical as a weapon in another part of Ltamenah on 24 March 2017.
 - 1.4 For both incidents (24 and 25 March), the FFM interviewed a variety of witnesses including health workers, witnesses, first responders, and casualties. The team received environmental samples collected from the sites of the incidents.
 - 1.5 The conclusions for both allegations were derived from the analysis of interviews, supporting material submitted during the interview process, analysis of environmental samples, and subsequent cross-reference and corroboration of the evidence.
- 24 March 2017**
- 1.6 Whilst the collection of facts relating to the 25 and 30 March (S/1548/2017, dated 2 November 2017) incidents was ongoing, the team also identified witnesses in relation to the alleged incident on 24 March 2017, in Ltamenah. The interview process for the 24 March 2017 incident started at the end of July 2017.

* Released in English for technical reasons.

CS-2018-1112(2) disclosed 13/06/2018



NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

REPORT OF THE OPCW FACT-FINDING MISSION IN SYRIA REGARDING AN ALLEGED INCIDENT IN LTAMENAH, THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, 30 MARCH 2017

- 1.1 The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) was alerted to allegations on 30 March 2017, of a chemical as a weapon in Ltamenah, Hama Governorate, whilst analysing information in relation to an earlier allegation in a different area of the same town. Whilst the use in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017 became the main priority, additional information became available with regard to gathering facts in relation to potential use in Ltamenah.
- 1.2 As it was unable to visit the location of the alleged incident shortly after the incident, the FFM interviewed a variety of witnesses, including casualties and treating medical staff, and received environmental samples, including munition parts, in a neighbouring country.
- 1.3 The conclusions were derived from the analysis of interviews, supporting material submitted during the interview process, analysis of environmental samples, and subsequent cross-reference and corroboration of the evidence.
- 1.4 Given limitations in some of the evidence, the FFM has not been able to determine with absolute certainty the use of a chemical weapon. Nevertheless, sufficient facts were collected to allow the FFM to determine:
 - (a) the presence of sarin on samples which came from the alleged site of the incident;
 - (b) that casualties from that site and time period displayed symptoms and received treatment consistent with exposure to sarin; and
 - (c) that munition parts from the alleged site of the incident were consistent with application in a chemical weapon.
- 1.5 Therefore, the FFM is able to conclude that sarin was more than likely used as a chemical weapon on 30 March 2017 in the south of Ltamenah.

CS-2017-0883(2) disclosed 03/11/2017

Moreover, the OPCW fact-finding mission investigated all three incidents in Lataminah remotely, citing security-related constraints, which is a clear breach of the rules and procedures for the investigation of cases of chemical weapons use laid down in the relevant United Nations documents and the Chemical Weapons Convention (Guidelines and procedures for the timely and efficient investigation of reports of the possible use of chemical and bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons (A/44/561, annex I, sect. II, of 4 October 1989), and part XI of the verification annex to the Chemical Weapons Convention, entitled “Investigation in cases of alleged use of chemical weapons”) and a gross violation of the basic principle of safeguarding the chain of custody. Material evidence was gathered and transmitted to the mission’s experts by representatives of the White Helmets, an organization that has been exposed more than once

for staging video footage of the use of chemical weapons. There are facts confirming the link between this pseudo-humanitarian organization and the terrorist group Jabhat Al-Nusra (the majority of the staged videos were shot in territory controlled by this terrorist group).

The material evidence used by the mission cannot therefore be described as factual.

The mission prepared two reports on the outcome of the investigations into the incidents at Lataminah.

In the report of 13 June 2018 (S/1636/2018), two incidents are examined, one involving the use of sarin on 24 March 2017 and the other the use of chlorine on 25 March 2017. The report of 2 November 2017 (S/1548/2017) addresses the incident on 30 March 2017 involving the use of sarin.

The reports state that samples were transmitted to the mission by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and it is claimed that these samples were taken at the sites of the alleged incidents.

In all cases, the samples were sent to the OPCW laboratory and then, after they had been split, to two designated laboratories for further analysis. The results of the analysis are considered below.

The mission's experts concluded that sarin was *very likely* used as a chemical weapon in the south of Lataminah on 24 and 30 March 2017, and chlorine on 25 March 2017.

The quality of the investigation and the probative value of the results of the analysis are demonstrated by the fact that the mission's experts do not state categorically that chemical weapons were used but employ the words "likely" and "very likely".

FFM Investigation of Incidents in Ltamenah (Al Lataminah) (24, 30 March 2017)



Types of shell craters



Fragments are from high-explosive bomb. They show traces of severe metal corrosion. According to the photo, the corrosion is aged at least five years.

Regarding the incidents on 24 and 30 March 2017, in which, according to the OPCW fact-finding mission, sarin was used, the crater formed by the explosion does not correspond to the crater that would be caused by the explosion of an aerial chemical munition and looks suspiciously like the so-called aerial chemical bomb crater that the White Helmets simulated in Khan Shaykhun 10 days later.

The mission's finding that the munition was a chemical munition filled with sarin is not supported by the evidence. Analysis of the photographs of the aerial bomb fragments shows that they depict severely corroded pieces of a conventional high-explosive bomb, not an aerial chemical bomb. It is clear that these pieces have been lying in the open for at least five years.

It is noteworthy that the results of the analysis of the samples taken at Lataminah and later at Khan Shaykhun are virtually identical, notwithstanding the different meteorological, geographical, ballistic and other conditions.

Results of Chemical Analysis of Biological Samples Taken by FFM during Investigation of the Incident in Al Lataminah on 30 March 2017

No	Blood	Hair
1	Biomarkers of sarin and other organophosphorous agents were not detected	Biomarkers of sarin and other organophosphorous agents were not detected
2	Biomarkers of sarin and other organophosphorous agents were not detected	Biomarkers of sarin and other organophosphorous agents were not detected

Biomedical samples were taken from two persons presented by "White Helmets"

5.37 No biomarkers relating to exposure to an organophosphorus based nerve agent were detected in blood (plasma) specimens. Similarly, no biomarkers relating to exposure to an organophosphorus-based nerve agent were detected in hair specimens.

It is stated, in the mission's reports, that four biomedical specimens were collected, in the presence of members of the mission, from two individuals presented by the White Helmets as victims of the incident. Analysis of the specimens by the two OPCW-designated laboratories showed no biomarkers of sarin. Flying in the face of the obvious, this fact is being interpreted as supporting the claim of sarin use, although the mission has no evidence of human exposure.

Results of Chemical Analysis of Samples Taken during the Investigation of the Incident with Alleged Use of Chlorine in Al Lataminah on 25 March 2017

No	Description	Laboratory 2 Results	Laboratory 3 Results	No	Description	Laboratory 2 Results	Laboratory 3 Results
1	Metal fragment	Not detected	Trinitrotoluene	13	Blanket in the hospital	Trichloroacetic acid Pentachlorophenol 2,4,6-trichlorophenol 2,3,4,6-tetrachlorophenol	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
2	Soil from the hospital	Trichloroacetic acid	Not detected	14	Scissors	2,4,6-trichlorophenol	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
3	Soil	Trichloroacetic acid	Trinitrotoluene	15	Surgical instrument	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
4	Soil	Trichloroacetic acid Trinitrotoluene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	16	Clothes from the hospital	2,2,2-trichloroethanol	Not detected
5	Cylinder 1 wipe-sample	Trichloroacetic acid	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	17	Hospital door	Chloroiodomethane Chlorine isocyanatebenzene Dichloroacetic acid	Bornyl chloride
6	Cylinder 2 wipe-sample	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	18	50 m from the hole	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Methyl-9,10-stearic acid	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate
8	Soil under cylinder 1	Trichloroacetic acid 2,2,2-trichloroethanol Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Tri(2-chloroethyl)phosphate	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	19	Concrete 50 m from the hospital	Trichloroacetic acid Diisopropyl methylphosphonate 1,3,5-trinitrobenzene Trinitrotoluene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene
9	Slurry from cylinder 2	Trichloroacetic acid Pentachlorophenol 2,3,4,6-tetrachlorophenol	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene	20	Soil	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
10 - 11	Doctor clothes	1,4-dichlorobenzene Triethanolamine	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	21	Soil	Trichloroethanol Trinitrotoluene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
12	Clothes of persons affected	1,4-dichlorobenzene 2-chlorophenol, 2,5-dichlorophenol, 2,4,6-trichlorophenol, benzochloride	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	22 23	Clothes of persons affected	Triethanolamine	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
				24 25	Rescuers clothes	2,4,6-trichlorophenol, benzochloride, Methyl-phosphonic acid	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate

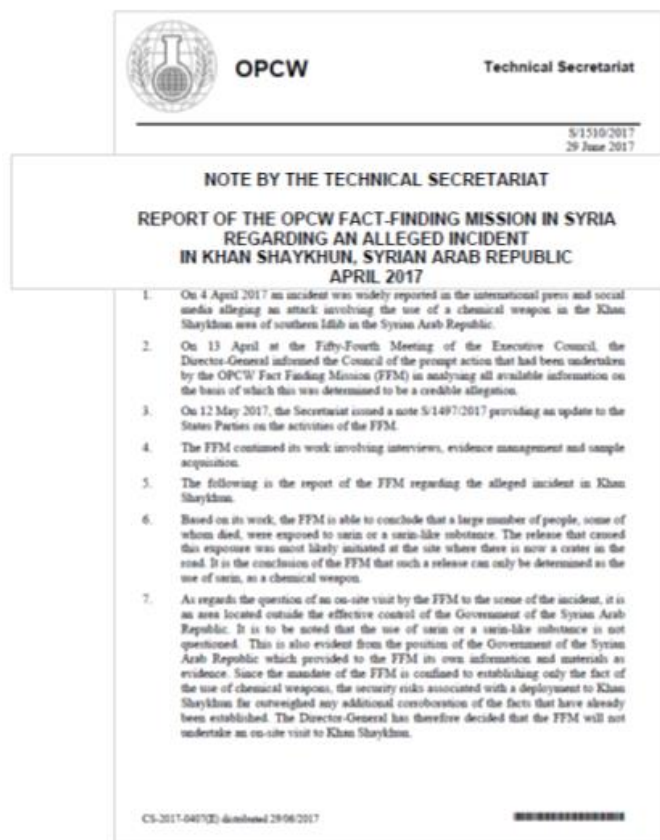
Most chlorine compounds (e.g. trichlorophenol) belong to antiseptics and related products and are inherent in hospital premises.

Organophosphorous compounds are not connected with sarin use.

In the report concerning the 25 March 2017 incident, it is explained that chlorine is believed to have been used because the designated laboratories detected an assortment of chloro-organic compounds in the samples taken at the hospital premises. In fact, the majority of those compounds (trichlorophenol, for example) were antiseptics and related chemicals, such that their presence in the samples is entirely explicable.

In addition to the chloro-organic compounds, a number of the samples were found to contain di-isopropyl methylphosphonate, a by-product of sarin production. The authors of the report do not attribute the presence of that chemical to the use of sarin, but rather to the fact that it was in this hospital that victims of the 24 March 2017 incident were decontaminated with water. In this case, the following question arises: where are the sarin and the by-products of sarin production that should have been found in the samples related to that incident? No answer or explanation is provided in the report.

FFM Investigation of the Incident in Khan Shaykhun (4 April 2017)



The staged nature of the 4 April 2017 chemical incident in Khan Shaykhun has been raised repeatedly in OPCW in statements by representatives of the Russian Federation. Our country has called for a thorough investigation into this case of chemical weapons use.

However, the United States, without waiting for the start of the investigation, still less a decision by the Security Council, launched a missile strike on the Sha'irat airbase, in flagrant violation of the norms of international law. Afterwards, the OPCW fact-finding mission initiated a remote investigation, that is without visiting the site of the alleged chemical incident, and, three months later, submitted a predictable report based on testimony from individuals presented by NGOs.

The official outcome of the mission's investigation is set out in the final report (S/1510/2017), issued on 29 June 2017. In the report, it is stated that, in Khan Shaykhun, "a large number of people, some of whom died, were exposed to sarin. The release that caused exposure was likely to have been

initiated in the crater in the road, located close to the silos in the northern part of the town. The team concluded that, based on such a release, the only determination that could be made was that sarin had been used as a weapon” (report, paras. 1.7 and 6.25).

The bases for such a finding were the results of sample analyses and interviews with witnesses and individuals who had been presented by NGOs as victims of the incident. The witness interviews and the receipt of the samples, the provenance of which is unknown, took place in the territory of a neighbouring State (report, paras. 3.13 and 3.15). The samples were collected and submitted to the mission by NGOs, meaning that they cannot be said to be trustworthy.

Notwithstanding the provisions of document [A/44/561](#), annex I, section II, of 4 October 1989, and part XI of the verification annex to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the mission acknowledges in paragraph 3.43 of its report that it was not able to:

- “Visit the hospitals and clinics where the casualties were initially treated” (i.e. the mission’s experts did not interact directly with those affected)
- “Gain direct access to records, including patient registers, medical files, treatment records, ... laboratory reports, from those previous treatment facilities” (i.e. the mission does not have any documentary proof of the number of victims or a clinical picture of their exposure)
- “Conduct on-site collection of testimonies and clinical examination” (i.e. the mission has no evidence directly obtained by the mission itself at the site of the alleged incident)

The conclusions contained in the report are based on the results of clinical examination of individuals presented by NGOs as victims and found in hospitals located in the territory of a neighbouring State party to the Convention (report, paras. 3.20 and 3.44). However, there is no evidence that those individuals were exposed at the site of the incident.

Environmental samples were not collected by experts from the mission or in their presence (report, para. 3.46), which points to a violation of the basic OPCW principle of safeguarding the chain of custody.

FFM Investigation of the Incident in Khan Shaykhun (4 April 2017)



Crater configuration is not typical of explosion of aerial chemical munition



No personal protective clothing during sampling from the crater



No personal protective clothing while assisting the affected persons



Pupil dilatation with persons affected by the incident

The mission posits that an aerial munition was used in the incident. However, it cannot be concluded from a review of the material presented in the mission's report that there was any aircraft within 5 kilometres of Khan Shaykhun at the time of the "chemical attack". At no point does the report mention the discovery of a bomb stabilizing fin that would clearly prove the crater was the result of an aerial bomb. It is common knowledge, however, that the stabilizing fin can always be found at or near the impact location, even following the detonation of a high-explosive or powerful fragmentation aerial bomb, a fact that the mission's experts overlooked.

20/27

Technical analysis of the material contained in the report shows that the characteristics of the crater confirm that it was formed as a result of the detonation in the ground of a low-power explosive device and not a munition dropped from an aircraft. Even before the completion of the “investigation”, the crater was rapidly concreted over by persons unknown.

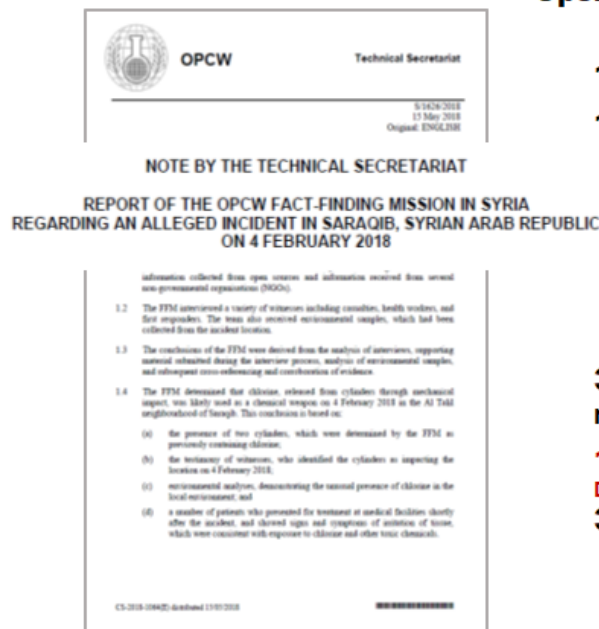
The mission received recordings made by NGOs at the site of the incident of alleged chemical weapons use. The video footage and images depicting people wearing surgical masks (without any means of respiratory protection (gas masks) or protective clothing), which were shot by members of NGOs during the first hours after the chemical incident at the site of the alleged incident, provoke particular puzzlement as to the feasibility of the scenes shown and raise doubt as to their veracity.

It is well known that, when a chemical munition containing sarin is actually used, it is not possible to work in a surgical mask, as doing so will result in immediate death.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis of the samples taken from the crater revealed a large quantity of sarin, which is not consistent with the video footage of samples being taken by people in surgical masks. This demonstrates that there was initially no sarin in the crater and that it was subsequently added to the samples that were transmitted to the mission by NGOs.

20-06147

Investigation of the Alleged Chemical Incident with Use of Chlorine in Saraqib on 4 February 2018



Open information sources used:

12 blogs

12 news media:

- USA – 4;
- Israel – 2;
- Turkey – 1;
- United Kingdom – 1;
- Canada – 1;
- Iraq – 1;
- China – 1;
- Syrian opposition – 1.

3 review and analytical resources

1 state entity (US State Department)

3 hosting services

- youtube;
- gettyimages;
- liveuamap.

Annex 2
OPEN SOURCES
Open source internet links related to the Al Ltamenah incident

- <https://www.bbc.com/middle-east-news/story/2018/02/18-02-04-syria-civilian-attack-activists-say-1.5788943?https://www.bbc.com/m/2018/02-04-syria-civilian-attack-activists-say-1.5788943?https://www.bbc.com/m/2018/02-04-syria-civilian-attack-activists-say-1.5788943?https://www.bbc.com/m/2018/02-04-syria-civilian-attack-activists-say-1.5788943>
- <https://twitter.com/SyriaCivDef/status/960261610454618113>
- <http://aa.com.tr/en/g/video-gallery/syria-regime-costumes-to-use-allegedly-chlorine-gas-in-idlib-0>
- http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05x40d4?ocid=socialflow_twitter
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42944033>
- <http://www.dailyjournal.net/2018/02/04/syria-gas-attack/>
- <http://www.metronews.ca/news/world/2018/02/04/syria-activists-say-civilians-hit-by-chlorine-gas-attack.html>
- <http://www.rudew.net/mobile/english/middleeast/syria/05022018>
- <http://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/2132271/syria-activists-government-said-kill-29-sold-wr>
- <http://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/05/middleeast/syria-chlorine-idlib-russia-intl/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/EidhEam1/posts/2024135344466691>
- https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1200664886703531&id=648124961957528
- <https://twitter.com/Conflicts/status/960272586348400641>
- <https://twitter.com/ElHotHogyan/status/960253962191556608>
- <https://twitter.com/DHEn/status/960276642160627714>
- <https://twitter.com/TakeGodia/status/960343029319196673>
- <https://twitter.com/Lekechuck/status/960358930828169221>
- <https://twitter.com/Lekechuck/status/960253700945186817>
- <https://twitter.com/MGhuab3/status/96034586215288832>
- https://twitter.com/Rabwa_Najati/status/960286667440615425

Annex 2 of the report regarding investigation of an incident in Saraqib on 4 February 2018

Concerning the Saraqib report, the OPCW fact-finding mission again followed the practice that had proved convenient for certain parties of undertaking a so-called remote investigation (without a site visit or the collection of samples by members of the mission themselves) and prepared a report in which it was concluded that “chlorine, released from cylinders through mechanical impact, was likely used as a chemical weapon” in a neighbourhood of Saraqib.

One of the means of data collection identified in the report is analysis of open sources. In particular, the report includes links from Internet blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and the newsfeeds of the BBC, CNN and *The Washington Times*, i.e. sources not directly verified by the mission. Furthermore, the annex containing these links has the heading “Open source internet links related to the Al Ltamenah incident” (not Saraqib), which attests to the fact that errors were made in the preparation of the document, following the pattern established in previous reports of the mission, notably the report on the March 2017 incident in Lataminah.

The approach taken by the mission can hardly be described as professional. The evidence gathered is extremely inconclusive. It is not affirmed in the mission's report that a chemical weapon was used; rather, words such as "possible" and "likely" are employed to assess the situation. This lexis is wholly inadmissible in a report that purports to be a final document and on the basis of which political decisions are being taken.

Discrepancies in Results of Chemical Analyses Made in 2 OPCW-Designated Laboratories during Investigation of the Incident in Saraqib on 4 February 2018

Nº	Description	Laboratory 2 Results	Laboratory 3 Results
1	Cylinder 1 wipe-sample	Tris(chloropropyl)phosphate	Isopropyl methylphosphonate
2	Cylinder 1 wipe-sample	Chloroacetic acid Dichloroacetic acid	
3	Soil near cylinder 1	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Dichloroacetic acid	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Methylphosphonic acid
4	Soil near cylinder 1	Chloroacetic acid Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Tetrachlorobenzene Bis-dichloropropyl ether	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Methylphosphonic acid
5	Soil near cylinder 1	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Chloromethylfenol Dichloromethoxybenzene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate
6	Soil near cylinder 1	Bis-dichloropropyl ether Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Methylphosphonic acid
7	Wipe-sample from cylinder 2	Diphosphoric acid Tris(chloropropyl)phosphate	Isopropyl methylphosphonate
8	Wipe-sample from cylinder 2	Dichloroacetic acid	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene

Nº	Description	Laboratory 2 Results	Laboratory 3 Results
9	Soil from the place of falling of cylinder 2	Chloral hydrate 2,4-dichlorophenol Trichloroacetic acid Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene
10	Soil from the place of falling of cylinder 2	2,2,2-trichloroethanol Trichloroacetic acid Monochloroacetic acid 2,4-dinitrotoluene 4-amino-2,6-dinitrotoluene 2-amino-4,6-dinitrotoluene Trinitrotoluene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene
11	Soil from the place of falling of cylinder 2	Chloral hydrate Monochloroacetic acid Trichloroacetic acid Trinitrotoluene	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene
12	Piece	Monochloroacetic acid Trinitrotoluene	Isopropyl methylphosphonate Trinitrotoluene
13	Soil near cylinder 2	2,2,2-trichloroethanol Trinitrotoluene Diisopropyl methylphosphonate	Diisopropyl methylphosphonate Isopropyl methylphosphonate
14	Grass 10 m from cylinder 2	2,4,6-trichlorophenol Tetrachloroethan Dichloromethoxybenzene Dichloroacetic acid Trichloroacetic acid	Isopropyl methylphosphonate

Chlorine compounds were detected by Laboratory 2 in 14 samples, by Laboratory 3 - in no sample.

Nitrotoluenes were detected by Laboratory 2 in 5 samples, by Laboratory 3 – in 5 samples.

Organophosphorous compounds were detected by Laboratory 2 in 6 samples, by Laboratory 3 – in 13 samples.

The two OPCW-designated laboratories that analysed the samples received by the fact-finding mission from the White Helmets obtained contradictory results. If the samples are identical, how could this have happened? There is no reason to doubt the qualifications of the designated laboratories.

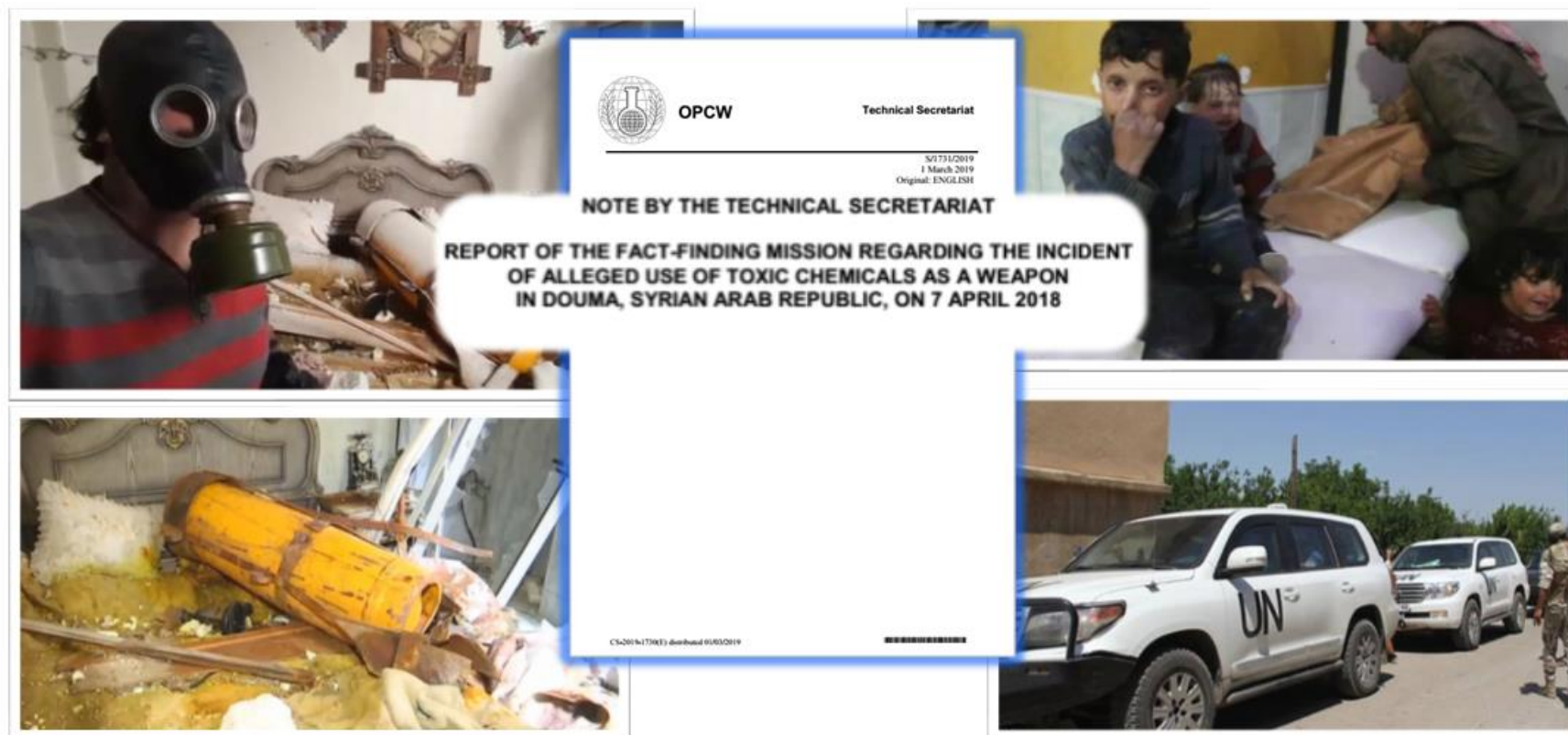
Chloro-organic compounds, detected in 14 samples by one laboratory, were found in no samples by the other laboratory. It is also noteworthy that there were traces of an explosive in a number of the samples, whereas, according to eyewitness accounts, the cylinders allegedly containing chlorine did not explode.

It should be noted that both laboratories identified chemicals listed in schedule 2 of the annex on chemicals to the Chemical Weapons Convention (di-isopropyl methylphosphonate, isopropyl methylphosphonate, methylphosphonic acid) that are not related to chlorine, but rather are markers of organophosphorous toxins. It can be assumed that the samples either were not taken from the site of the incident in Saraqib or were prepared artificially for transmission to the mission.

The mission does not take account of this fact, referring only to “the presence of chemicals that can neither be explained as occurring naturally in the environment nor as being related to chlorine” (in particular, schedule 2 toxic chemicals). In our view, the only explanation for the presence of these substances is that they were added to the samples by the White Helmets.

Let us consider the incident that occurred on 7 April 2018 in Duma.

FFM Report on the Incident with Alleged Use of a Toxic Agent in Douma, on 7 April 2018



One year after the events in Khan Shaykhun, on instructions from their Western patrons, on 7 April 2018 the White Helmets repeated the scenario they had perfected previously in Duma. However, the well-oiled mechanism whereby the Government of Syria was accused of using chemical weapons on its own people stuttered. The Syrian authorities immediately made a formal request to OPCW to send experts to the site of the alleged incident to establish all the circumstances. Thus, for the first time in the five years since the events in eastern Ghutah, the OPCW fact-finding mission's remote investigation procedure broke down. The mission was obliged to conduct its investigation directly at the site of the incident in strict compliance with OPCW standards.

The official outcome of the investigation was set out in the final report, issued on 1 March 2019. In the report, it is clearly stated that "the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place" in Duma. However, the material and findings contained in the report indicate that the means used (cylinders) were dropped from an aircraft. It should be noted that the final report contains no official confirmation, based on expert technical analyses, that cylinders were dropped from an aircraft, although such work was carried out by OPCW experts.

Technical Assessment of Two Cylinders Discovered at the Douma Incident

UNCLASSIFIED - OPCW Sensitive
Do not circulate

Final version
- for comments
(by hand to TM only)

Engineering Assessment of Two Cylinders Observed at the Douma Incident
- Executive Summary

DRAFT FOR INTERNAL REVIEW
Expanded Rev 1 - 27 February 2019

Introduction

1. This note relates to the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018 in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. As part of the fact-finding mission, information was gathered and assessed on two chlorine cylinders, observed at two separate locations in Douma. The FFM team visited both these locations:

- Location 2, where it observed the presence of an industrial gas cylinder on a top floor patio/terrace of an apartment block, next to a crater-like opening in the reinforced concrete roof leading to a room below.
- Location 4, where it observed the presence of a similar cylinder lying on a bed in a top floor room of an apartment, with a crater-like opening in the reinforced concrete roof above the room.

3. An engineering assessment has been conducted, using all available information, to evaluate the possible means by which these two cylinders arrived at their respective locations as observed. This report summarises the findings of the engineering sub-team.

Approach

4. The studies on the two cylinders were conducted using sources of information available to the FFM team, which included: open-source material (images and videos); observations and measurements taken by the FFM team at both locations; photographs taken by the FFM team at both locations; and engineering data from open-source information relating to the dimensions, design code, specifications, materials of construction and mechanical properties of the cylinders, sourced from the manufacturer's stamps and country of manufacture.

5. Samples were taken by the FFM team at both locations. Whilst the results of analysis are obviously relevant for the overall investigation of the alleged incident, they were not the central focus in the scope of this element of the fact-finding mission. It was necessary, however, to make some assumptions; for example, about the likely contents of the cylinders, in order to provide inputs for the engineering assessment. These were necessarily defined as scenarios to be used in the development of hypotheses, as described below.

Hypotheses


6. To derive the inputs for an engineering assessment, it was necessary to develop hypotheses for what was thought (i.e. alleged) to have occurred. This needed to be done in a way that did not pre-judge the situation or lead prematurely to a mistaken interpretation of the facts. The situation was also complicated by the many sources of information and opinion about what was alleged to have

UNCLASSIFIED - OPCW Sensitive
Do not circulate

Assessment

32. At this stage the FFM engineering sub-team cannot be certain that the cylinders at either location arrived there as a result of being dropped from an aircraft. The dimensions, characteristics and appearance of the cylinders and the surrounding scene of the incidents, were inconsistent with what would have been expected in the case of either cylinder having been delivered from an aircraft. In each case the alternative hypothesis produced the only plausible explanation for observations at the scene.

33. In summary, observations at the scene of the two locations, together with subsequent analysis, suggest that there is a higher probability that both cylinders were manually placed at those two locations rather than being delivered from aircraft.



Ian Henderson

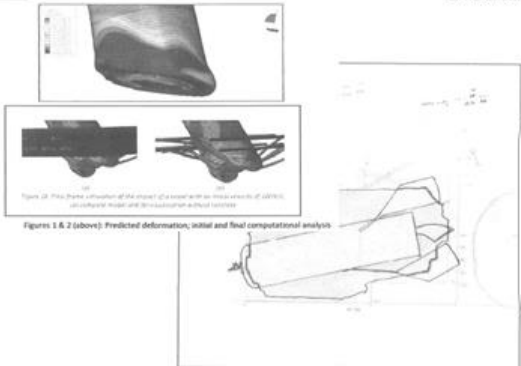


Figure 1 & 2 (above): Predicted deformation; initial and final computational analysis

Figure 9: Location 4 cylinder post-impact superimposed onto crater (baseline) configuration, for illustrative purposes. Sketch from a scaled drawing

Ian Henderson
former OPCW expert
Participated in the
investigation of
the Douma incident

<http://syriapropagandamedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Engineering-assessment-of-two-cylinders-observed-at-the-Douma-incident-27-February-2019-1.pdf>

Subsequently, it became known that the conclusions reached in the report of the OPCW fact-finding mission contradicted the views of the members responsible for the technical analyses. On 13 May 2019, an OPCW document entitled “Engineering Assessment of Two Cylinders Observed at the Douma Incident” and dated 27 February 2019 was published on the website of the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media. The author of the document was an OPCW expert named Ian Henderson, who had taken part in the investigation into the incident. The findings in this highly technical report fully corroborate the conclusions of the Russian experts, voiced repeatedly in forums such as OPCW and the Security Council, that the chemical incident at Duma was a hoax. However, the views of the OPCW expert were not taken into account, and he was subsequently accused of disclosing restricted information.

The conclusions drawn in the mission's report were also called into question by a number of prominent academics, public figures and experts. The first Director-General of OPCW, José Bustani, also criticized the mission's findings.

At present, reports are being prepared by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team, the establishment of which, in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, undermined the exclusive powers of the Security Council. Potential errors, in relation to either Khan Shaykhun and Duma or the other incidents investigated by OPCW, could have extraordinarily serious repercussions for stability and security around the world.

Suggestions of the Russian Federation to Elaborate FFM Terms of Reference

To visit the sites of CW alleged use

To observe “do it yourself” principle when sampling and collecting evidence

To observe strictly Chain of Custody procedures which is a basic rule

To assure geographical balance in the composition of the FFM by excluding the dominance of experts from Western countries and their allies



It is quite clear that the time has long been ripe for the format of the OPCW fact-finding mission's work to be brought into line with the relevant United Nations documents and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The mission must: visit the site of alleged cases of chemical weapons use; collect samples and other material evidence for itself; strictly observe the basic rules on preserving the chain of custody; and guarantee geographical balance among its members so as to prevent the mission from being dominated by experts from only certain countries.

The Russian Federation has repeatedly submitted for consideration by the Security Council a draft resolution on the creation of a new investigative body that would be legitimate and, even more importantly, totally impartial and highly professional. However, the Western members of the Security Council are vehemently opposed to the Russian initiative. In their counter-projects, our opponents take into consideration only a small proportion of our ideas, reducing the initiative essentially to re-creating the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism with all its shortcomings.

I. Kirillov

Head of the Radiation, Chemical and Biological Defence Troops
of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation