

Chemical and Biological News

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

April Nerve Gas Attack in Syria Appears to Be One in a Series

By Anne Barnard, May 1, 2017

Beirut, Lebanon — Last month's chemical weapons attack on a rebel-held Syrian town may have caught the world's — and President Trump's — attention, but it was not the only recent suspected use of a nerve agent by Syrian government forces.

On three other occasions in the months leading up to the attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun, witnesses, doctors and human rights investigators say, government attacks left scores of people sickened with similar symptoms, like foaming at the mouth, shaking and paralysis — including two attacks in December, little noticed at the time, that killed at least 64 people.

New information about the additional attacks appears in a Human Rights Watch report released Monday, bolstering New York Times reporting on those episodes and placing Khan Sheikhoun in the context of wider evidence that the Syrian government continues to use chemical weapons despite its 2013 agreement to give them up.

Despite the missile strike Mr. Trump ordered on the Syrian military airfield he said was the source of the Khan Sheikhoun attack, Syrian forces are doubling down on tactics that constitute war crimes, including bombing hospitals and rescue and medical workers and using chemical weapons, according to the report and other witness accounts.

The Syrian government and its main ally, Russia, deny that it uses such tactics.

At a news conference held at United Nations headquarters in New York to release the report's findings, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth, ridiculed what he described as "preposterous" assertions by the Syrian and Russian governments denying responsibility.

Mr. Roth said it was time for them "to stop these transparently false diversionary claims and come clean."

He also said the pattern of attacks as described in the Human Rights Watch report amounted to "a level of culpability and horror that cries out for prosecution."

So far, Russia has used its Security Council veto to block investigations of war crimes in Syria in the International Criminal Court. But even without a Security Council referral to the court, an accountability mechanism created last year by the General Assembly can be used to look into the allegations. United Nations officials told reporters on Monday in New York and Geneva that the work could begin soon, and that member states have raised half of the required \$13 million initial budget.

Mr. Roth expressed impatience for the secretary general, António Guterres, to appoint a prosecutor, but Mr. Guterres's spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said the process was underway, adding, "I don't think the secretary general is dragging his feet."

On Saturday, an attack on a headquarters of the White Helmets civil defense rescue group in the town of Kafr Zita killed eight of its members, the group and other witnesses

say. And medical organizations working in Syria have tallied 10 government attacks in April alone on hospitals and clinics in rebel-held areas, part of a pattern of hundreds of attacks on medical workers and facilities that United Nations investigators have described as war crimes.

Human Rights Watch corroborated claims of two suspected nerve gas attacks on Dec. 12 that initially went relatively unnoticed. This was in part because they took place when the world's attention was focused on the battle over Aleppo, and in part because of the difficulty of verifying information in the Islamic State-held areas where they occurred.

Medical organizations and social media accounts that day shared images of dead children bearing no visible wounds, as if sleeping, like those killed by a nerve agent in Khan Sheikhoun and in 2013 attacks near Damascus. But because people can be killed for sharing information online from Islamic State-controlled areas, it was difficult to verify them at the time.

Human Rights Watch said its investigators interviewed four residents by telephone and two medics through intermediaries. It said they gave consistent accounts of chemical weapons attacks in two villages in eastern Hama Province, amid clashes between government and Islamic State forces, that killed residents sheltering in caves and in their homes.

The report also provides new details about the Khan Sheikhoun attack, as well as about an intensifying series of recent government bombings and shelling illegally using chlorine gas, with barrels dropped from helicopters and, in a new method, with improvised ground-to-ground missiles.

In those cases, too, the findings coincide with accounts residents and witnesses gave to

The Times and with a Times analysis of public information online.

Human Rights Watch corroborated eight chlorine attacks this year, out of a larger number reported by residents. Possession of chlorine, unlike sarin, is not illegal under international law, but its use as a weapon is. The attacks took place in areas where government forces were clashing with rebel forces, near the cities of Damascus and Hama.

The intense battles around Hama led to three attacks, two believed to be with chlorine and one believed to be with a nerve agent, in the two weeks before the Khan Sheikhoun attack. All of them were in al-Lataminah, a town in Hama Province between Khan Sheikhoun and the front line.

On March 25, ordnance crashed through the roof of a clinic that, because of previous attacks, had been reinforced with a metal roof covered with earth. Yellowish gas smelling of bleach filled the facility, killing a doctor, Ali Darwish, as he performed surgery, as well as his patient and another person, according to the Human Rights Watch report and other witnesses. On April 3, munitions with a similar smell again hit the village, injuring at least a dozen.

On March 30, a bomb fell without the usual intense explosion — chemical weapons typically contain a smaller explosive charge, to disperse but not destroy the agent — injuring 169 people, many but not all of them believed to be combatants. They reported symptoms similar to those from a nerve agent, including pupils constricted to pinpoints.

In the Dec. 12 attacks, two villages, Jrouh and al-Salaliyah, were hit, Human Rights Watch said. It quoted a Jrouh resident who said he found his wife, three children, brother, brother's wife and brother's three

children dead in his basement. He said his neighbors, his uncle and the families of his uncle's two sons also died.

"Everyone within 100 meters died," he told the rights group. "There was no one left." He buried his family and fled, and was interviewed by Human Rights Watch after finding refuge outside Islamic State territory.

Human Rights Watch interviewed 32 residents of Khan Sheikhoun and reviewed available evidence, corroborating previous accounts that one bomb containing a chemical agent fell after a warplane passed over before 7 a.m. on April 4, followed by three or four explosive bombs dropped in a second bombing run.

It found that bomb fragments from the scene of the suspected chemical bomb matched those of a Soviet-made munition that delivers sarin, the KhAB-250.

Human Rights Watch said it found no evidence for the version of events provided by Russia: that government warplanes bombed a warehouse holding chemical agents stored by rebel groups. Corroborating reporting by The Times and The Guardian, it found that the only buildings near the small crater left by the suspected chemical bomb were abandoned, sustained no new damage, and were open to the air and could not have concealed a chemical weapons store.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/01/world/middleeast/april-nerve-gas-attack-syria.html?rref=collection%2Ftime%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare&_r=0

Assad kills at least 85 with chemical weapons

A dictator defies the world, Apr 8th 2017| BEIRUT

ON APRIL 4th a chemical attack struck the town of Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib, a province in northern Syria controlled by an alliance of rebel groups, including a powerful faction linked to al-Qaeda. At least 85 people, including 20 children, died, according to doctors and a Syrian monitoring group. The World Health Organisation said victims appeared to display symptoms that tally with the use of a deadly nerve agent such as sarin (as opposed to, say, a less powerful one such as chlorine).

One boy was filmed suffocating on the ground, his chest heaving and his mouth opening and closing like a fish out of water. Photographs show dead children lined up in rows on the floor or piled in heaps in the back of a vehicle, their clothes ripped from them by rescuers who used hoses to try to wash the chemicals from their bodies. Other images show victims foaming from their mouths or writhing on the ground as they struggle for air. Hours after the attack began, witnesses say, regime warplanes circled back over the area and dropped bombs on a clinic treating survivors.

After six years of war, international reaction to the attack followed a predictable pattern. The Syrian government swiftly denied dropping chemical weapons. Russia, its ally, said a Syrian air strike had hit a rebel-held weapons stockpile, releasing deadly chemicals into the air. Leaders in the West condemned the regime, but little more. Donald Trump declared that his view of Syria and its dictator had changed, but declined to say what he would do about it.

If the West ends up doing little, it ought not to come as a surprise. When the Syrian government gassed to death more than 1,400 people on the outskirts of Damascus in August 2013 it seemed inevitable that America would respond by launching air strikes against the regime. One week after the attack—the deadliest use of chemical weapons since Saddam Hussein gassed Iraqi Kurds in 1988—John Kerry delivered one of his most bellicose speeches as secretary of state, arguing the case for American military action in Syria. “It matters if the world speaks out...and then nothing happens,” Mr Kerry said.

Yet nothing, at least militarily, is just what happened. Instead, working with the Americans, the Russians brokered a deal that saw the Syrian regime supposedly dismantle its chemical-weapons programme. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) destroyed about 1,200 tonnes of Syria’s chemical stockpile. Barack Obama hailed the deal as a triumph for diplomacy over force.

Yet chemical attacks by regime forces continued, experts believe. Last year American and European officials began to voice growing fears that Damascus might have held onto nerve agents and other lethal toxins, in defiance of the deal cooked up by Mr Obama and Mr Putin. “Syria has engaged in a calculated campaign of intransigence and obfuscation, of deception, and of defiance,” Kenneth Ward, America’s representative to the OPCW, said in July. “We...remain very concerned that [chemical warfare agents]...have been illicitly retained by Syria.”

All these fears seem to have been borne out. As part of the deal in 2013 to end Syria’s chemical-weapons programme, both America and Russia promised to punish the Syrian regime should it use chemical

weapons again. Despite evidence of the regime’s repeated use of chlorine gas since then, neither side has honoured this promise, at least until now. In February Russia once again blocked efforts at the UN Security Council to sanction military and intelligence chiefs connected to the country’s chemical-weapons programme. A similar fate doubtless awaits the latest attempt by Britain, France and America at the Security Council. Hours after the attack, the three countries demanded a resolution ordering the Syrian government to hand over all flight logs, flight plans and the names of air-force commanders to international inspectors. Russia, however, called the resolution “unacceptable”.

Barring a significant shift in American policy towards military action, the latest use of chemical weapons is unlikely to alter the war’s trajectory much. The rebels are weakening. They lost their enclave in the city of Aleppo, the opposition’s last big urban stronghold, in December. Pockets of resistance remain around Damascus, north of Homs city, and along the southern border with Jordan; but these areas grow ever more isolated. In Idlib an alliance led by a group linked to al-Qaeda has gained strength, allowing America to argue that there are few appropriate rebel partners left to work with on the ground.

Indeed, now that Donald Trump is in charge, removing Mr Assad from power is no longer a stated aim of American policy in Syria. In recent weeks senior American officials said for the first time in public that they could live with Mr Assad as they concentrate on defeating Islamic State. Ironically, this approach would in fact be more likely to fuel further extremism in Syria, as other jihadist groups sought to take advantage of the vacuum that America’s political disengagement presented them with. It would also mean that, with Mr Assad at the

helm, the Syrian regime continued to drop gas on its own people. There would be nothing to stop it.

This article appeared in the Middle East and Africa section of the print edition under the headline "Assad unleashes horror again"

<http://www.economist.com/news/21720252-dictator-defies-world-bashar-al-assad-kills-least-72-chemical>

In Kim Jong-nam's Death, North Korea Lets Loose a Weapon of Mass Destruction

By Richard C. Paddock, Choe Sang-hun and Nicholas Wade, February 24, 2017

The Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia on Friday. The terminal where Kim Jong-nam was assassinated with VX nerve agent on Feb. 13 will be decontaminated despite the passage of time, the police said. CreditAssociated Press

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia — For years, North Korea has rattled the world with its nuclear tests and its threats to visit a nuclear holocaust upon the United States. Now, the finding by the Malaysian police that Kim Jong-nam was assassinated with VX nerve agent is a stark reminder of the North's lesser-known weapons of mass destruction: a stockpile of chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Kim, the estranged elder brother of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, was killed on Feb. 13 when two women rubbed his face with the nerve agent at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the police said on Friday.

If North Korean citizens were behind the killing, as Malaysian officials suggest, the use of VX raises several questions: Was the North Korean government using the attack

to signal to the world its fearsome arsenal of such dangerous weapons? Or was the toxin simply an attempt to avoid detection in carrying out a brazen killing at one of the world's busiest airports?

"By using VX in an international airport in the heart of Asia, North Korea has sent a very clear message to the world that it will strike its enemies anywhere in the world," said Rohan Gunaratna, an expert on terrorism at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "It also demonstrates the North Korean response in the event of an attack against North Korea."

North Korea's nuclear program has long been the most urgent concern of the United States and its allies, and the now-dormant six-party talks to curb the program did not address chemical and biological weapons.

"The reported use of VX reminds us that not only is the North's nuclear-missile threat serious but so are its asymmetric threats, including biochemical weapons and cyber that are all part of the regime's W.M.D. tool kit," said Duyeon Kim, a Seoul-based nonresident fellow at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Friday expressing "shock" at the use of a chemical weapon and vowed to work with the international society to deal "strongly" with the violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The deadly use of a chemical weapon banned by international conventions in such a public manner could strengthen calls for the United States to put North Korea back on a list of terrorism-sponsoring countries, analysts said.

The North was first put on the terrorist list after its bombing of a South Korean airliner

near Myanmar in 1987, killing all 115 people onboard. But the United States delisted the country in 2008 as part of an agreement aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear programs — a deal that has since disintegrated with the North's subsequent missile and nuclear weapons tests.

After his announcement that Mr. Kim had been killed by VX nerve agent, Khalid Abu Bakar, the inspector general of the Malaysian police, said on Friday that small amounts of the poison could have been brought into the country without being discovered.

"If the amount of the chemical brought in was small, it would be difficult for us to detect," Mr. Khalid told reporters.

The airport terminal, which handles more than two million passengers a month, will be decontaminated despite the passage of time since the killing, he said.

Two women have been arrested in the killing, one from Indonesia and the other from Vietnam. Their defenders say they were duped into carrying out the attack and thought it was a prank, but Mr. Khalid said they had trained for it and practiced at two major shopping malls. The women used their bare hands to apply the poison on Mr. Kim's face and washed them immediately afterward, he said.

One drop of VX, or about 10 milligrams, can be fatal. But the attackers could have used a safety-enhancing battlefield form of the agent. Known as VX2, it is divided into two compounds that are harmless individually but become lethal when mixed together.

Each component also could have been made in slow-release form, as is done with many drugs.

If Mr. Kim's two assassins had each applied one component of VX, this would explain why

two people were needed, how they survived the attack, and perhaps why it took 15 minutes or more for Mr. Kim to die.

"Use of a binary nerve agent lends itself to this method and allows for a potentially highly targeted hit," said Vipin Narang, an associate professor of political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who has two degrees in chemical engineering.

The woman who applied the second compound would have risked exposing herself to the first component, which could explain why, as Mr. Khalid said on Friday, one of the women became ill and began vomiting after the attack.

This scenario raises the possibility that Mr. Kim could have saved his own life by immediately washing his face rather than going to airport staff members, as he did, to report the attack.

Professor Narang said it was clear that North Korea wanted the West to know what it is capable of — but without causing mass casualties.

"They wanted everyone, especially the U.S., to know it was VX and that they can make it or have it," he said. "Doing it publicly but not killing anyone else is a pretty good way to reveal that capability and deterrent."

In 2014, the South Korean Defense Ministry said the North had stockpiled 2,500 to 5,000 tons of chemical weapons and had a capacity to produce a variety of biological weapons.

Kim Jong-un has a history of resorting to extreme measures against his enemies.

Since taking power after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il, in 2011, he has executed at least 140 senior officials, sometimes killing them with anti-aircraft machine guns and even incinerating some of their bodies with

flamethrowers, according to the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank affiliated with South Korea's National Intelligence Service. Such measures were designed as a warning to others, South Korean officials said.

Lee Byong-chul, a nonproliferation expert at the Institute for Peace and Cooperation in Seoul, said the use of VX nerve agent highlights the proliferation threat posed by North Korea, noting that it has been accused of providing chemical weapons technology to Syria since the 1990s.

Shipments of gas masks, gas detectors and other protective gear bound for Syria from North Korea were intercepted in 2009 and 2013.

If confirmed, Mr. Lee said, the use of VX nerve agent by North Korea will very likely weaken the Trump administration's appetite for reopening nuclear disarmament talks, especially after its recent test of what it called a new type of intermediate-range ballistic missile.

China has been the most vocal proponent of new negotiations, but its relations with North Korea have deteriorated sharply. Pyongyang criticized Beijing this week as "dancing to the tune of the U.S."

Steve Vickers, a security consultant based in Hong Kong, said that Mr. Kim's assassination would be seen as a further insult to China, which had protected him for years by allowing him to live in the Chinese territory of Macau.

"This is clearly an embarrassment for the Chinese state security and to a lesser extent to the Malaysian government," Mr. Vickers said.

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/world/asia/north-korea-kim-jong-nam-](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/world/asia/north-korea-kim-jong-nam-vx-nerve-agent.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare)

[vx-nerve-agent.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/world/asia/north-korea-kim-jong-nam-vx-nerve-agent.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare)

Jumping to conclusions; something is not adding up in Idlib chemical weapons attack

By Paul Antonopoulos

Beirut, Lebanon – At least 58 people were killed in a horrific gas attack in the Idlib Governorate this morning. However, even before investigations could be conducted and for evidence to emerge, Federica Mogherini, the Italian politician High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, condemned the Syrian government stating that the "Assad regime bears responsibility for 'awful' Syria 'chemical' attack."

The immediate accusation from a high ranking EU official serves a dangerous precedent where public outcry can be made even before the truth surrounding the tragedy can emerge

Israeli President, Benjamin Netanyahu, joined in on the condemnation, as did Amnesty International.

Merely hours after the alleged chemical weapons attack in Khan Sheikhun, supposedly by the Syrian government, holes are beginning to emerge from opposition sources, discrediting the Al-Qaeda affiliated White Helmets claims.

For one, seen in the above picture, the White Helmets are handling the corpses of people without sufficient safety gear, most particularly with the masks mostly used, as well as no gloves. Although this may seem insignificant, understanding the nature of sarin gas that the opposition claim was used, only opens questions.

Within seconds of exposure to sarin, the affects of the gas begins to target the muscle and nervous system. There is an almost immediate release of the bowels and the bladder, and vomiting is induced. When sarin is used in a concentrated area, it has the likelihood of killing thousands of people. Yet, such a dangerous gas, and the White Helmets are treating bodies with little concern to their exposed skin. This has to raise questions.

It also raises the question why a “doctor” in a hospital full of victims of sarin gas has the time to tweet and make video calls. This will probably be dismissed and forgotten however.

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/jumping-conclusions-something-not-adding-idlib-chemical-weapons-attack/>

OPCW Executive Council Meets to Address Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic

April 13, 2017

The Hague, Netherlands — 13 April 2017 — On 4 April, reports emerged of the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Khan Sheikhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Today, the Chairperson of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council, Ambassador Odette Melono of Cameroon in consultation with the Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, convened a meeting of the Council to discuss these allegations.

The Director-General shared with the Executive Council the immediate steps taken by Technical Secretariat experts to analyse the available information and their preliminary assessment that this was a credible allegation. He also shared that the

OPCW Fact-Finding Mission has focused its work to investigate the incident in Khan Sheikhun and that it has collected samples, which have been sent to OPCW Designated Laboratories for analysis. OPCW experts are currently analysing all information gathered from various sources. The Director-General reiterated his call for States Parties that are in a position to do so to share with the Secretariat any relevant information without delay and allow the FFM to complete its work within the next two to three weeks.

In closing, the Director-General expressed, “Our experts are fully aware of the significance of the task they are expected to fulfil and I am confident that they will do it in a professional and impartial manner using all available technical means”.

The Executive Council has suspended the meeting and decided to reconvene next week to continue discussions on the alleged incident.

<https://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-executive-council-meets-to-address-alleged-use-of-chemical-weapons-in-the-syrian-arab-republic/>

OPCW Director-General Shares Incontrovertible Laboratory Results Concluding Exposure to Sarin

April 19, 2017

The Hague, Netherlands — 19 April 2017 — The Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reconvened today to further address the allegation of chemical weapons use in the Khan Sheikhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic. OPCW's Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü updated Council members on recent developments regarding the OPCW Technical Secretariat's activities.

Ambassador Üzümcü underscored that the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues its work using procedures and methodologies consistent with its mission and reaffirmed that the FFM has been endorsed by the relevant decisions of the Executive Council and applicable resolutions of the UN Security Council. He reiterated his full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of colleagues comprising the Fact-Finding Mission teams.

The bio-medical samples collected from three victims during their autopsy were analysed at two OPCW designated laboratories. The results of the analysis indicate that the victims were exposed to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance. Bio-medical samples from seven individuals undergoing treatment at hospitals were also analysed in two other OPCW designated laboratories. Similarly, the results of these analyses indicate exposure to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance.

Director-General Üzümcü stated clearly: "The results of these analyses from four OPCW designated laboratories indicate exposure to Sarin or a Sarin-like substance. While further details of the laboratory analyses will follow, the analytical results already obtained are incontrovertible."

In the meantime, the Fact-Finding Mission is continuing with interviews, evidence management and sample acquisition. The Director-General reported that an FFM team is ready to deploy to Khan Sheikhun should the security situation permit. He reminded the Executive Council of the 27 May 2014 attack on an FFM team and the action the Council subsequently took in emphasising the importance of safety and security of OPCW experts deployed to Syria.

The FFM is still anticipated to complete a first report of its findings to be submitted to States Parties of the Chemical Weapons

Convention within two weeks and the Director-General will make the report available to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Ambassador Üzümcü repeated his request for the continued support of all States Parties, including through the provision of relevant information, to ensure that the Technical Secretariat is able to pursue its work, and to allow it to fulfil the OPCW mission within a reasonable time frame.

The Executive Council decided to reconvene tomorrow, 20 April, to vote on a draft decision under discussion.

Background

The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission initiated its work on 5 April 2017 after the Technical Secretariat's preliminary assessment that the 4 April incident was a credible allegation. The FFM is led by, and predominately comprised of, experienced and impartial inspectors with support from experts from various units across the Technical Secretariat.

OPCW Designated Laboratories

The OPCW has been organising and conducting Official Proficiency Tests since 1996. Under the provisions of the CWC, the purpose of these tests is to certify laboratories for the analysis of authentic samples. As a result of efforts by the OPCW and States Parties spanning many years, it became possible to build-up an open-ended network of OPCW Designated Laboratories.

OPCW Designated Laboratories are a lynchpin of the Organisation's verification regime and its capacity to investigate possible violations of the Convention. They must be able to perform off-site analysis of chemical samples collected by OPCW inspectors from chemical production facilities, storage depots

and other installations, or from the site of an alleged use of chemical weapons, and provide forensic proof if a violation of the Convention has occurred. These laboratories offer the necessary assurance to our States Parties that chemical analyses needed to make determinations or to clarify issues occurring during OPCW inspections are carried out competently and with unambiguous results.

The Proficiency Tests are conducted on a twice-yearly basis and are open to all interested laboratories from OPCW Member States. Applicants need to achieve high scores on three consecutive tests to be awarded the status of Designated Laboratory. There are currently 18 OPCW Designated Laboratories in Europe, Asia and the United States of America.

<https://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-director-general-shares-incontrovertible-laboratory-results-concluding-exposure-to-sarin/>

OPCW Press Release on Allegations of Chemical Weapons Use in Southern Idlib, Syria

April 04, 2017

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — 4 April 2017 — The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is seriously concerned about the alleged chemical weapons attack reported by the media this morning in the Khan Shaykhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW's Fact Finding Mission (FFM) is in the process of gathering and analysing information from all available sources. The FFM will report its findings to the OPCW's Executive Council and States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The OPCW strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

Background

The Chemical Weapons Convention comprehensively prohibits the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons. Any chemical used for warfare is considered a chemical weapon by the Convention.

In response to persistent allegations of chemical weapon attacks in Syria, the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) was set up in 2014 "to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic". The FFM is required to study available information relating to allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria, including information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and others.

Since May 2014, the OPCW has deployed the FFM in numerous occasions to the Syrian Arab Republic and outside of Syria and has kept States Parties informed of its work. The FFM interviews witnesses and obtains samples and physical evidence for analysis.

In 2015, the OPCW Executive Council and the UN Security Council endorsed the continual operation of the FFM.

The FFM's findings established the facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in Syria and confirmed that chemical weapons had been used. The FFM's findings were the basis for the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), an independent body established by the UN Security Council (Resolution 2235, 7 August 2015). The JIM's purpose is to identify the perpetrators of the chemical weapon attacks confirmed by the Fact Finding Mission.

As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW oversees

the global endeavour to permanently eliminate chemical weapons. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1997 – and with its 192 States Parties – it is the most successful disarmament treaty eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

To date, nearly 95 per cent of all chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been destroyed under OPCW verification. For its extensive efforts in eliminating chemical weapons, the OPCW received the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace.

<https://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-press-release-on-allegations-of-chemical-weapons-use-in-southern-idlib-syria/>

UPDATED Media Brief: Reported Use of Chemical Weapons, Southern Idlib, Syria, 4 April 2017

April 07, 2017

Understanding the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention

- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is a treaty-based international organisation that operates according to a strict confidentiality regime, which governs the operations of the Organisation, protects the integrity of its investigations, ensures the security of its technical experts, and determines what information can be made public.
- The OPCW is responsible for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which comprehensively prohibits the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons.

- The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the use of toxic chemicals to kill or harm, regardless of their source.

OPCW, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Syrian Arab Republic

- Syria became a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a Member State of the OPCW in October 2013. As a result of a joint OPCW-UN mission, in cooperation with the Syrian government, all of the chemical weapons declared by Syria were removed and destroyed outside of Syrian territory.
- Questions have been raised as to whether Syria's declaration about its chemical weapons programme to the OPCW was complete and correct. In 2014, the OPCW Director-General established a team of experts from the Technical Secretariat to engage the relevant Syrian authorities to resolve the identified gaps and inconsistencies in the Syrian declaration. The team of experts known as the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) undertook 18 visits to Syria, held several meetings with Syrian authorities, visited former chemical weapons sites, and took samples. The DAT has submitted several reports to States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In July 2016, the Director-General informed the Executive Council, through his report to the Council's 82nd session, that the Technical Secretariat was not able to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's declaration and therefore could not fully verify that Syria had submitted a declaration that could be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and

Executive Council decision ECM-33/DEC.5. The Director-General submitted his report after high-level consultations with the Syrian Arab Republic.

- Starting in 2013, the OPCW has adapted itself in unprecedented ways, such as the joint OPCW-UN Mission with the support of 30 nations to remove, transport and destroy Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile in the midst of an active conflict zone.
- In accordance with CWC and the relevant decisions of the OPCW Executive Council as well as UN Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013), the Syrian Arab Republic and all groups and parties in Syria are obliged not to develop, produce, retain or use chemical weapons or toxic chemicals as weapons.

OPCW Response to the 4 April 2017 Incident

- The OPCW is investigating the incident in southern Idlib under the on-going mandate of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), which is "to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic". The OPCW cannot and will not release information about an on-going investigation. This policy exists to preserve the integrity of the investigatory process and its results as well as to ensure the safety and security of OPCW experts and personnel involved. All parties are asked to respect the confidentiality parameters required for a rigorous and unimpeded investigation.
- The OPCW Technical Secretariat has initiated contact with the Syrian authorities. It has also requested that all

States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, in a position to do so, share any information they may have regarding the allegations of chemical weapons use in the Khan Sheikhun area of Idlib province in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- The findings of the FFM will be submitted in a report to the OPCW Executive Council and States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
- In response to persistent allegations of chemical weapon attacks in Syria, the FFM was set up in 2014 "to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic". The FFM is required to study available information relating to allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria, including information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and others. The FFM employs investigative methods to determine if chemical weapons have been used. It interviews witnesses and obtains environmental and biomedical samples and physical evidence for analysis.
- Since May 2014, the OPCW has deployed the FFM in numerous occasions to the Syrian Arab Republic and outside of Syria and has kept States Parties informed of its work.
- In 2015, the OPCW Executive Council and the UN Security Council endorsed the continual operation of the FFM.
- Since its establishment, the FFM has looked into several incidents of allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria. In this context, the FFM has confirmed with "high degree of confidence" that Chlorine and Mustard were used as weapons in its investigations into past allegations of

chemical weapons use. These reports were submitted to States Parties to the CWC and also transmitted to the UN Security Council.

The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism

- The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) was established by the UN Security Council (Resolution 2235, 7 August 2015) with the mandate to identify “to the greatest extent feasible” individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria, where the OPCW FFM determines or has determined that a specific incident involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons.
- The JIM, as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations Security Council, carries out its further investigations and makes its findings as an independent body. It presents its reports to the Security Council, and informs the OPCW.

<https://www.opcw.org/news/article/media-brief-reported-use-of-chemical-weapons-southern-idlib-syria-4-april-2017/>

DISARMAMENT

Weren't Syria's Chemical Weapons Destroyed? It's Complicated

By Scott Shane, April 7, 2017

Washington — When the Syrian government carried out a gruesome chemical attack on civilians this week, many people had a question: Didn't the Obama administration, working with Russia and international

experts, destroy Syria's chemical weapons stocks in 2014?

In his State of the Union address that year, President Barack Obama declared, “American diplomacy, backed by the threat of force, is why Syria's chemical weapons are being eliminated.” Months later, in July, on NBC's “Meet the Press,” Secretary of State John Kerry essentially declared the mission accomplished: “We struck a deal where we got 100 percent of the chemical weapons out.”

But, as became obvious when a Syrian attack on Tuesday killed more than 80 people, the truth was more complicated. Here is a primer on the history of Syria's chemical stockpile, the effort to eliminate it and experts' views on the new attack.

When did Syrian forces first use chemical weapons, and how did the United States respond?

Scattered reports of chemical attacks have been made since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, but a large-scale attack in August 2013 — with United Nations inspectors already on the ground — got the world's attention. Mr. Obama said he intended to carry out a limited military strike to uphold the international ban on chemical weapons and deter further attacks. Then he decided to seek authorization from Congress first.

But congressional support for strikes was lukewarm. Russia, seeking to head off American military retaliation, proposed an international effort to document and destroy Syria's chemical stocks. Mr. Obama, facing possible defeat in Congress, accepted.

Who did the work to find and eliminate the chemical weapons?

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons sent a team to Syria. Established in 1997 and based in The Hague, the organization is charged with enforcing the Chemical Weapons Convention that bans such arms. As of last fall, it reported that 67,098 metric tons of chemical agents, or 90 percent of the world's declared stockpile of 72,304 metric tons, had been "verifiably destroyed."

How did the process work?

First, the Syrian government issued a declaration ostensibly listing its stock of chemical weapons, though some American officials and independent experts were skeptical about whether it was complete. Teams from the O.P.C.W. visited 21 weapon-making sites to confirm that Syria had dismantled or destroyed its equipment; two other sites were considered too dangerous to visit because of fighting, but inspectors believed that they, too, had been taken apart.

The weapons, and chemicals used to make them, were diluted to make the material less dangerous to transport and then loaded onto a Danish ship in the Syrian port of Latakia. That ship, under the protection of Russia and China, delivered the chemicals to an American Navy vessel, the Cape Ray, where the chemicals were neutralized. More shipments followed, and in January 2016, the O.P.C.W. announced that the last of the Syrian stocks had been destroyed.

So did that eliminate the threat?

Not entirely, though by all accounts, it removed lethal weapons that could have caused slaughter and suffering on a huge scale. Even as the O.P.C.W. completed its mission, new reports emerged of scattered

attacks in Syria using chlorine and other suspected chemicals.

Obama administration officials say that they always believed Mr. Assad might be withholding at least small chemical supplies, and that in public statements, Mr. Kerry and others tried to refer to the elimination of Syria's "declared" stocks, a nuance often lost in news reports. American officials repeatedly returned to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with intelligence reports on remaining chemical stocks, pressing for further action.

Despite the failure to completely eliminate Syria's chemical weapons, Obama administration officials and outside experts considered the program fundamentally a success. "We strongly believed it was better to get 1,300 tons of chemical weapons out of the hands of the Syrian regime, or let them fall into the hands of ISIL," Jonathan Finan, who was Mr. Kerry's chief of staff and is now a fellow at the Institute of Politics at Harvard, said, using another name for the Islamic State.

Where did the nerve agent used in the attack this week come from?

Two possibilities are receiving attention: that the agent, sarin, was in stocks Mr. Assad hid from inspectors, or that weapons specialists in the Syrian government manufactured a new supply. While it is not simple to make sarin, it is possible in a small lab that could be easily hidden in a basement, out of sight of inspectors and foreign spy satellites.

Why did the Syrian government decide to carry out this massacre?

One underlying factor in Syria's latest attack may have been perceived signals of apathy from Russia and the United States. Russia proposed and participated in the destruction

of weapons stocks, but since 2015, Russian officials, who have long supported Mr. Assad, have repeatedly denied or obfuscated evidence of new chemical attacks by the government.

And President Trump, who publicly opposed American military action after the 2013 attack, had strongly suggested that his main concern in Syria was defeating the Islamic State, not restraining the government.

Some 500,000 people have died in the Syrian civil war. Why do the hundreds killed by chemical weapons get so much attention?

Some peace activists have asked that very question, suggesting that the disproportionate news coverage is illogical. But Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, an advocacy group in Washington, said that since the horrors of World War I, an international consensus has put chemical weapons in a special category. "They're indiscriminate weapons, and they kill in a particularly horrific way," Mr. Kimball said. "They're taboo."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/07/world/middleeast/werent-syrias-chemical-weapons-destroyed-its-complicated.html?rref=collection%2Ftime%2Ftopic%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare>

Key Points on Sarin: The 'Most Volatile' of Nerve Agents

By Russell Goldman, April 6, 2017

The victims of a bombing in northern Syria this week were exposed to sarin, a banned but easily manufactured poison that has been widely used in chemical weapons, Turkish officials who conducted autopsies on the victims said on Thursday.

What is sarin?

Sarin is a nerve agent, one of a class of chemical weapons that affect the brain's ability to communicate with the body's organs through the nervous system. It is a colorless, tasteless, odorless liquid that was first synthesized in Germany in 1938 as a potential pesticide.

Sarin is considered "the most volatile of the nerve agents," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "This means it can easily and quickly evaporate from a liquid into a vapor and spread into the environment."

Sarin vapor does not last long, but it can be deadly if inhaled. Contact with sarin liquid on exposed surfaces, in food, or in water can also be fatal. Its effects may strike quickly or be delayed after exposure.

How does it work?

All nerve agents belong to a class of organic compounds that contain phosphorus, and work in essentially the same way, by inhibiting the action of a crucial enzyme in the body that allows muscles and organs to contract. Without the enzyme's action, the muscles and organs are constantly stimulated and stop working properly; asphyxiation soon follows.

How is it weaponized?

Sarin is dangerous to handle and has a short shelf life, so it is usually stored in the form of two separate precursor compounds that will produce sarin when mixed together.

On the battlefield, sarin and other nerve agents can be used against targets by spraying them as a liquid or an aerosol. Chemical bombs are designed to spray out the liquid on detonation. The Syrian

government is believed to have used such a bomb this week in Idlib Province.

The United Nations Chemical Convention, which bans the use of sarin in war, went into effect in 1997. The Syrian government agreed in 2013 to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile, including sarin.

How toxic is it?

According to the United States military, sarin is 81 times as toxic as cyanide and 543 times as toxic as chlorine, which has been used in Syria as a chemical weapon. Chlorine has legitimate commercial uses and is not banned.

What are the symptoms of exposure?

Symptoms of exposure may include the pupils of the eyes shrinking to pinpoints, rapid breathing, vomiting, convulsions, paralysis and respiratory failure. Swift medical attention can reverse the effects of low levels of exposure.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/world/middleeast/sarin-nerve-agent.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare>

Use of Nerve Agent in Kim Jong-nam Killing Is Condemned by Malaysia

By Richard C. Paddock And Choe Sang-hun, March 2, 2017

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia — The Malaysian Foreign Ministry said Friday that it was “greatly concerned” by the use of a banned chemical weapon in a public place to assassinate Kim Jong-nam, the half brother of North Korea’s leader, and has asked for international help in responding to the episode.

“The ministry strongly condemns the use of such a chemical weapon by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances,” the ministry said in a statement. “Its use at a public place could have endangered the general public.”

Malaysia has reported the use of the toxic chemical, VX nerve agent, to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which monitors chemical weapons banned under international conventions. The organization must now decide whether to bring the matter of the chemical’s illegal use before the United Nations Security Council.

Analysis of chemical residue on Mr. Kim found it to be VX nerve agent. South Korea has blamed the North for the killing. The Malaysian police have identified seven North Korean men who remain wanted for questioning in the case.

If there is compelling evidence that North Korea used the substance, the United States and its allies can push for a resolution against the North at the Security Council and for new sanctions. Washington can also place the North back on its terrorism-sponsor blacklist.

But North Korea has already been under heavy sanctions for decades, and analysts say that new steps against the North will have a largely symbolic effect of “naming and shaming.” Such a move could further dampen what is an already weak desire to start dialogue with the North to address its growing nuclear and missile threats, they said.

Malaysia reported the incident to the O.P.C.W. soon after the discovery that the poison was VX nerve agent, and since then the organization has been providing Malaysia

with assistance in its investigation of the killing.

Top of Form

"The ministry is in close contact with the O.P.C.W. regarding the recent incident and the latter has provided the Malaysian authority with some technical materials that have been requested to assist in its investigation," the ministry said.

Mr. Kim, the elder brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, was killed on Feb. 13 at Kuala Lumpur International Airport by two foreign women who smeared his face with poison, the police say. The two women, one from Indonesia and one from Vietnam, have been charged with murder.

North Korea, which has not been allowed to examine Mr. Kim's body, asserts that he died of heart failure. North Korean officials contend that it is absurd for Malaysia to say that VX nerve agent was used since it is so toxic that many others at the airport also would have died.

After Malaysia reported the use of the chemical, representatives of the O.P.C.W. came to Kuala Lumpur to provide assistance, one official said.

"The government of Malaysia will fully cooperate with the O.P.C.W. and other international organizations to bring the perpetrators to justice," the ministry said.

The Malaysian authorities on Friday released Ri Jong-chol, the only North Korean detained in the killing so far, and handed him over to immigration officials for deportation. The police also issued an arrest warrant for Kim Uk-il, 37, a North Korean who works for Air Koryo, the national airline. The authorities have said that they believed Mr. Kim was at the North Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur

along with another suspect, Hyon Kwang-song, an embassy employee.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/02/world/asia/kim-jong-nam-malaysia.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FBiological%20and%20Chemical%20Warfare>

Biological weapons of mass destruction with the ability to spread deadly diseases like Ebola and Zika 'could wipe out up to a fifth of the world's population'

- **Ex-Nato commander warned about threat of advanced biological technology**
- **James Stavridis said could lead to epidemic 'not dissimilar to Spanish influenza'**
- **He said prospect of terrorists using bio-weapons was 'most alarming'**

*By Emily Chan For Mailonline
December 26, 2016*

Biological weapons of mass destruction with the ability to spread deadly diseases like Ebola and Zika could wipe out up to a fifth of the world's population, it has been claimed.

Ex-Nato commander James Stavridis described the prospect of advanced biological technology being used by terrorists or 'rogue nations' as 'most alarming'.

He said that it could lead to an epidemic 'not dissimilar to the Spanish influenza' a century ago.

Writing in Foreign Policy, Stavridis said: 'In that plague, by some estimates, nearly 40 percent of the world's population was infected, with a 10 to 20 percent mortality rate.

‘Extrapolated to our current global population, that would equate to more than 400 million dead.’

He continued: ‘Most alarming would be that either rogue nations or violent transnational groups would gain access to these technologies and use them to create biological weapons of mass destruction.’

Last year, an EU report suggested that ISIS has recruited experts to wage war on the West using chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.

It warned: ‘At present, European citizens are not seriously contemplating the possibility that extremist groups might use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials during attacks in Europe.’

‘Under these circumstances, the impact of such an attack, should it occur, would be even more destabilising.’

Intelligence services were also warned to screen returning Jihadi fighters for ‘specialist CBRN knowledge’.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4066952/Biological-weapons-mass-destruction-ability-spread-deadly-diseases-like-Ebola-Zika-wipe-fifth-world-s-population.html>

India must be prepared for biological warfare: Manohar Parrikar

BY PTI , March 02, 2017,

New Delhi: Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar today said India must be well-prepared to deal with chemical and biological warfare in the wake of changing threat perception and security concerns.

Referring to reports of use of chemical weapons in recent terror attacks in Afghanistan, he said India should have an effective system in place to prevent potential consequences against use of chemical or biological weapons.

“The reports which are coming from the southern and northern parts of Afghanistan... I have seen photographs of local population suffering from blisters. At this moment, I don’t have confirmation on this, but the photos were quite disturbing.

“We should be prepared for any kind of warfare,” he said during an event organised by the DRDO.

Echoing Parrikar’s concerns, Army Chief General Bipin Rawat said the Armed Forces must be prepared for all kinds of threat.

“Although chemical weapons have been banned by the United Nations, it could be used by an adversary,” he said.

Parrikar and Rawat were speaking at an event where the DRDO handed over Nuclear, Biological, Chemical(NBC) Reconnaissance Vehicle and NBC drugs to the Army.

There were reports which suggested use of chemical weapons in certain areas in Northern and Southern Afghanistan as people there had blisters and wounds.

More than a dozen people were killed in near-simultaneous attacks in Kabul yesterday. In the first attack, a suicide car bomber targeted a police station in western Kabul. The explosion was followed by a gun fight between the police and several attackers.

A bomber detonated explosives outside offices of the intelligence service in eastern Kabul in the second attack.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-must-be-prepared-for-biological-warfare-manohar-parrikar/printarticle/57435338.cms>

Safety Standards Improved in Latin American Research Labs

May 15, 2017

The Hague, the Netherlands — 15 May 2017 — laboratory personnel gained in-depth knowledge needed to nurture a culture of safety, security and responsibility in research and academia, during a course on chemical safety and security management in laboratories for member states in the Latin America and Caribbean region, held from 24 to 28 April in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The course was sponsored by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Industrial (INTI), and the Argentinian Government, and aimed at enhancing the capacity of laboratories in the region to promote a culture of safety and security.

Key aspects of the programme included theoretical lectures on various policy and practical aspects related to the Organisation and the management of lab infrastructures. Particular emphasis was placed upon waste management, personal protection measures, emergency management, toxicology and regulations, management of toxic chemicals, and the Global Harmonized System (GHS). The theoretical programme was followed by guided tours to various sectorial laboratories of (INTI) where participants observed safety measures in place and discussed them with the INTI staff involved.

The programme was conducted at INTI facilities, in Spanish, and was attended by 12 participants from El Salvador, Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, and Panama and 32 local participants. Each participant had a professional background in chemistry and is currently working on the application of occupational safety in public and private entities.

The course is one of many new international cooperation programmes the OPCW has tailored to scientists working in various fields of chemistry. It was well received by participants, organisers and local authorities.

Victor Yanssen from the Training Department of the Superintendence of Labor Risks of Argentina said the level of detail the course went into on a regional and international level, gave him new insights into how Argentina could strengthen its local safety and security frameworks. Marcos Salazar, Chemist, Professor at the University of Panama, and Member of the Laboratories of the Center for Research and Information on Medicines and Toxics said that the most useful elements of the programme for him were the technical explanations and demonstrations of how to implement and maintain optimum laboratory safety and security on a practical day-to-day level.

The closure of the course was followed by a solemn ceremony of the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the OPCW, attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina and other guests. The ceremony featured speeches from the Vice-Chancellor, H.E. Mr Pedro Villagra Delgado, and a representative of the OPCW, and featured OPCW's 20th anniversary video and a video message of progress from the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü.

Background

As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW oversees the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1997 – and with its 192 States Parties – it is the most successful disarmament treaty eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

To date, nearly 95 per cent of all chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been destroyed under OPCW verification. For its extensive efforts in eliminating chemical weapons, the OPCW received the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace.

<https://www.opcw.org/news/article/safety-standards-improved-in-latin-american-research-labs/>

Caribbean and Central American States Committed to Advancing Implementation of Chemical Weapons Convention

April 04, 2017

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — 7 April 2017 — A workshop run by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) provided tailored assistance to countries in the Caribbean and Central America that have yet to draft their national implementing legislation - in Bridgetown, Barbados from 21 to 24 March 2017.

The workshop gave legal drafters and national authority representatives for States Parties in the Caribbean and Central America the opportunity to create initial draft legislation under the guidance of OPCW's International Cooperation and Assistance Branch.

Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of the Environment and Drainage of Barbados, Mr Edison Alleyne, underscored in his opening remarks the importance of national implementation by States Parties in the region: "While we may not produce chemical weapons, many of our countries use or generate toxic chemicals through activities not prohibited under the Convention - which could be precursors for the manufacture of chemical weapons. We must remind our stakeholders of this, not to scare them, but to stress the importance of having a comprehensive chemical management process with a strong legal foundation."

To date, a number of States Parties in Latin America and the Caribbean have yet to adopt comprehensive implementing legislation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Out of the 33 States Parties in the area, only 15 have legislation covering all the elements required under the Convention, while nine States Parties have legislation covering only some of these elements. Nine others have yet to adopt any legislation.

The Workshop consisted of two days of presentations to familiarise participants with the CWC, and two days of drafting sessions to equip participants with technical skills to draft the legislation and pursue its adoption.

By the end of the four day session, each participant presented draft legislation that was fully in line with the provisions of the CWC, meets the requirements of their respective national legislative bodies, and could be submitted to their parliaments.

Into the future, the OPCW will continue to monitor the progress of adoption of draft legislation by States Parties.

The event brought together 30 participants from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and was hosted with EU funding.

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<https://www.opcw.org/news/article/caribbean-and-central-american-states-committed-to-advancing-implementation-of-chemical-weapons-convention/>