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APOME workshop:
Conceptualizing Regional Limitations, Reductions, and Disarmament
Valletta, Malta, 31 January–2 February 2014

Dismantling Syria’s CW Capacity
Implications for Regional Weapons Reduction and Disarmament in the Middle East
CW attacks

- CW allegations mounting during 1st half of 2013
  - 21 March: UNSG accepts Assad’s request for an investigation of alleged use
  - August: UN team (OPCW + WHO) finally arrives in Damascus after much haggling
  - Team uses OPCW operational procedures for CW investigation and OPCW-certified reference laboratories

- CW attacks against Ghouta (Damascus), 21 August 2013
  - Change mandate UN investigative team
  - Preliminary report, 16 September (Ghouta only)
  - Final report, 12 December (also includes originally mandated investigations of allegations and some post-Ghouta allegations)

- Outcomes:
  - Reports do not apportion blame
  - Ghouta: strong suggestion responsibility Syrian government
  - Earlier attacks: confirmation of sarin use in some of them; other evidence very limited
  - Still some open questions
A sad continuation ...

- With the exception of the Indochina wars, all cases of chemical warfare after World War II have taken place in the Middle East.

- However, no instance involved the Arab – Israeli fault line:
  - In wars between Arab societies
  - In Arab countries targeting their own citizens
  - In wars targeting fellow Muslim societies
Geneva Framework Agreement

• Threats of UK, French & US airstrikes against Syria following Ghouta

• Russian proposal for Syrian CW disarmament
  • Probably orchestration with USA to wipe out Obama’s red line of August 2012
  • Syria to become party to CWC → International responsibility for the process

• Ambitious destruction timeframe
Hybrid disarmament framework

- Coercive disarmament
  - International community, led by Russia & USA, demands Syria’s CW disarmament
  - Threat of force
    - Originally imminent
    - Now in background
  - Tight final CW destruction deadline of mid-2014
  - UNSC Resolution 2118 (27-09-2013), §21: Chapter VII measures in case of non-compliance

- CWC/UN framework: cooperative disarmament
  - Demand from Russia; US initially favoured bi- or plurilateral action relying on national resources
  - OPCW Executive Council decision of 27 September (subsequently endorsed by UNSC Resolution 2118):
    - Verification of destruction and determination of intermediate deadlines according to CWC principles
    - International community assumed responsibility for implementing the US-Russian Framework Agreement
    - Centrality of OPCW in technical matters; UN takes lead in areas such as security & safety, diplomacy, logistics, communications, etc.
  - OPCW-UN Joint Mission set up on 16 October
  - CWC has its own compliance monitoring and enforcement toolbox
Syria's declaration - 1

- CWC required 'Initial declaration' submitted on 23 October
  - Reportedly 714 pages

- Data supplied to OPCW:
  - Inventories of CW storage facilities, that included munitions, chemical agents and precursors
  - Information regarding components of binary weapons
  - Site diagrams for CW storage facilities, including buildings and their condition
  - Site diagrams and process flow diagrams for certain CW production facilities
  - Information on the nature of activities conducted and status of CW production facilities, buildings and equipment, including fixed and mobile mixing and filling facilities
  - Information about the nature of activities at research and development facilities
  - Information about the test and evaluation site

- Full declaration obligations to be submitted later
  - Must include description of all CW activities and organisation since 1 January 1946
  - Must identify who assisted Syria with setting up, supplying and running CW programmes
Syria's declaration - 2

- **Infrastructure**
  - 18 CW Production Facilities (including fixed filling facilities)
  - 12 CW Storage Facilities
  - 8 mobile filling units
  - 3 CW-related facilities (probably the test and evaluation site and laboratories)

- **1,230 unfilled chemical munitions**

- **Chemicals (1,335 metric tonnes)**
  - Agent and precursors: 1,045 MT
  - Raw materials: 290 MT
Syria's chemical warfare agents

- **Sarin precursors**
  - DF (methylphosphonyl difluoride)
  - Isopropanol (isopropyl alcohol)

- **V-agent precursors**
  - Sodium-o-ethyl methyl phosphonothionate
    *(OPCW code: A)*
  - N (2-chloroethyl)-N-ethyl propan 2 amine (solution 23-64%)
    *(OPCW code: B)*
  - N (2-chloroethyl)-N-isopropyl propan 2 amine (solution 23-64%)
    *(OPCW code: BB)*
  - N (2-chloroethyl)-N-isopropyl propan 2 amine (salt)
    *(OPCW code: BB salt)*
  - $A + B \rightarrow VX$
  - $A + BB \rightarrow VM$

- **Mustard agent**
Elimination of warfare capacity

- Empty munitions destroyed

- Facilities and equipment rendered inoperable
  - Full destruction to be completed later

- At present, Syria can no longer
  - Produce precursor chemicals or warfare agents
  - Mix precursor chemicals
  - Deliver chemical munitions
Elimination of chemicals

- Syria must destroy
  - Isopropanol
  - Mustard agent remnants in original containers
- Operations on US vessel Cape Ray
  - Hydrolysis (Mustard agent)
  - Neutralisation (V-agent precursors)
- Effluents and raw materials to be commercially incinerated
**Principal deadlines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct 2013</td>
<td>Start verification activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Oct</td>
<td>Submission initial declarations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Nov</td>
<td>Completion destruction facilities &amp; equipment</td>
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<td>15 Nov</td>
<td>OPCW EC sets interim deadlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Dec</td>
<td>Removal of Priority 1 chemicals from Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Jan 2014</td>
<td>Final destruction munitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Feb</td>
<td>Removal of other declared chemicals from Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Mar</td>
<td>Destruction of isopropanol by Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Mar</td>
<td>Latest possible destruction of Priority 1 chemicals</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>Ultimate date destruction other declared chemicals</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Dec</td>
<td>Ultimate date elimination effluents</td>
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Local capacity building & outreach

• Syrian government
  • Building national institutions required by CWC
  • Building understanding of CWC processes
    o Assistance with declarations (e.g., what to declare and how)
    o Assistance with correctness of declarations
    o Assistance with internal organisation of capacities in order to be able to cooperate with OPCW and UN
  • Assistance with the transfer of chemicals (inc. container filling)

• Outreach to insurgents
  • Need to convince insurgents of value of CW disarmament in face of many more casualties from conventional weapons
    o Need for cease-fires to enable disarmament operations, inc. transport
    o Necessary to demonstrate value of negotiations for broader dialogues to end war

• Outreach to proxies
  • Pressure on Syrian government to maintain CW disarmament commitment (Russia, Iran, China ...)
  • Pressure on insurgents (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, ...)
  • What about so-called al-Qaeda elements?
Public outreach

- **Global public**
  - Information on the CWC and elimination & destruction processes
    - One major briefing of global environmental groups
  - Political support for proposed options (UNSC; OPCW decision-making organs)
  - Mobilising financial support for the operations
- **Mediterranean coastal states**
  - Urgent need for active engagement and debate with politicians, opinion shapers and local constituencies on the elimination process, as well as the safety and (environmental) security issues
- **States where effluents will be destroyed**
  - Urgent need for information briefings on transport, storage and final destruction processes for local communities
Lessons for ME disarmament

- **Focus on the task at hand (weapon elimination)**
  - Enables to take distance from personal animosities
  - All parties to discussions are equal
  - Tasks have finality
  - Advanced dialogue over military intervention
  - Enhanced status and role of international norms and organisations

- **Geneva Framework Agreement**
  - Established US – Russian working relationship
  - Brought Syria on board
  - Involvement of global multilateral organisations
  - Implementation required interaction with insurgent factions
    - By international community
    - By Syria
    - By other insurgent factions

- **Disarmament process gave impetus to**
  - Geneva II negotiations
  - Iran interim agreement on nuclear programme
  - Glion sessions for ME weapon-free zone
  - Change in Israel’s CW threat perceptions
Issues for consideration

• Missing deadlines
  • This is a compliance issue
  • World only sees black & white solutions and had difficulties in managing uncertainties
  • May have impact on Israeli perceptions of CWC if not resolved adequately
  • May break consensus between US and Russia
    ○ Other priorities regarding ME or other issues (e.g., Ukraine) might intercede
    ○ Respective domestic interests press for other options to deal with the war

• Egypt might be only regional state not party to CWC over next 12-18 months
  • Need to develop novel discourse for ME process
  • Decoupling CW – NW necessary, particularly if existing treaties are to form the basis for ME zone

• Importance for capacity-building and outreach
  • Many constituencies & stakeholder communities require appropriate information
  • Public must be bought into the process
Recalling where science, industry and military art converged

Challenging entrenched positions

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