

Watchdog Approves Syria Disarmament Plan

BY MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The world's chemical weapons watchdog approved an ambitious and risky accelerated plan to rid Syria of its chemical arsenal at a late night meeting Friday.

The decision by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) paved the way for the U.N. Security Council to adopt a resolution enshrining the plan, which will make it legally binding.

The resolution, already agreed on by the five veto-wielding members, was expected to pass easily late Friday at the United Nations, breaking a nearly three-year deadlock on the council, which had been deeply divided on Syria.

"The good news is there's a decision and we expect to have an advance team on the ground (in Syria) next week," OPCW spokesman Michael Luhan told reporters at the organization's Hague headquarters.

The risks inspectors will face were underscored when a car bomb exploded outside a mosque north of Damascus, killing at least 30 people, the latest victims of a civil war which has claimed more than 100,000 lives and driven another 7 million — around a third of the country's pre-war population — from their homes since March 2011.

Law experts, meanwhile, said discussions were under way to set up a war crimes tribunal for Syria to punish perpetrators from all sides of atrocities.

The agreement in The Hague allows the start of a mission to rid Syria's regime of its estimated 1,000-ton chemical arsenal by mid-2014, significantly accelerating a destruction timetable that often takes years to complete.

"This decision sends an unmistakable message that the international community is coming together to work for peace in Syria beginning with the elimination of chemical weapons in that country," OPCW Director-General Ahmet Uzumcu said in a statement.

The draft Security Council resolution agreed upon Thursday by Russia, China, the United States, France and Britain includes two legally binding demands — that Syria abandon its chemical stockpile and allow unfettered access to the chemical-weapons experts.

If Syria fails to comply, the draft says, the Security Council would need to adopt a second resolution to impose possible military and other actions on Damascus under Chapter 7 of the U.N. charter.

President Barack Obama called the Security Council deal "potentially a huge victory for the international community."

The agreement shaping



RAJA ABDULRAHIM/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT
Abu Ahmad Yassin, an electrician, heads the Islamic Administration for General Services, which restores water and electricity in opposition-held Aleppo, Syria.

up for approval Friday represents a breakthrough after 2 1/2 years of paralysis in the Security Council.

Diplomatic efforts to find some agreement on Syria gathered momentum in the aftermath of an Aug. 21 poison gas attack that killed hundreds of civilians in a Damascus suburb and Obama's subsequent threat to use military force.

The U.S. and Russia agree that Syria has roughly 1,000 metric tons of chemical weapons agents and precursors, including blister agents such as sulfur and mustard gas and nerve agents like sarin.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the U.N. on Friday that progress in Syrian chemical disarmament "should give an impe-

tus to" moves to establish a zone "free of weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery in the Middle East."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the U.N. General Assembly he hoped the Security Council resolution would be adopted "to support the OPCW in launching the verification and destruction of chemical weapons" in Syria. He said China was prepared to help fund the disarmament mission.

Meanwhile, a group of U.N. inspectors already in Syria investigating the alleged use of chemical weapons said Friday they are probing a total of seven suspected attacks, including in the Damascus suburb where hundreds were killed last month. That number

was raised from three sites previously.

Attacks with conventional and makeshift weapons continued unabated.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an activist group that monitors the civil war, said a car bomb struck as worshippers were leaving the al-Sahel mosque after Friday prayers in Rankous, 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of Damascus.

Residents quickly held funerals for some of the bombing victims in line with Islamic tradition of quickly burying the dead. At one funeral, several rockets fired by government troops fell nearby, wounding some of the mourners, activist Mohammed Saeed said.

Car bombs, shelling and airstrikes have become common in Syria's civil war, heavily damaging cities and Syria's social fabric as the conflict has taken on increasingly dark sectarian overtones that pit a primarily Sunni Muslim rebel movement against a regime dominated by Assad's Alawite sect.

The unrelenting violence led a group of international law experts to call for the creation of a war crimes court in Damascus to try top-ranking Syrian politicians, soldiers or rebels when the civil war ends.

Professor Michael Scharf of Case Western Reserve University told The Associated Press that draft statutes for

such a court have been quietly under development for nearly two years.

Scharf said the group is going public now to push the issue of accountability for war crimes in Syria in hopes that will deter combatants from committing further atrocities.

Syria is not a party to the International Criminal Court — the permanent war crimes tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands — so the ICC has no jurisdiction over crimes there unless the court is referred to it by the Security Council. Russia would almost certainly block such a move in the case of Syria, and diplomats said Moscow had blocked references to the ICC from the draft Security Council resolution.

The OPCW destruction plan calls on Syria to give inspectors unfettered access to any site suspected of chemical weapons involvement, even if Syria's government did not identify the location. That gives the inspectors unusually broad authority.

Once the plan is approved, it gives Damascus a week to provide detailed information on its arsenal, including the name and quantity of all chemicals in its stockpile; the type and quantity of munitions that can be used to fire chemical weapons; and the location of weapons, storage facilities and production facilities. All chemical weapons production and mixing equipment should be destroyed no later than Nov. 1.

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Empire Products, 1300 West 21st St.



Tuesday, Oct. 1: 9 a.m. - Noon
Vishay, 1505 E. Hwy 50



Tuesday, Oct. 1: 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Kolberg-Pioneer, 700 West 21st St.



Wednesday, Oct. 2: 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Bow Creek Metal, 3009 E. Hwy 50



Wednesday, Oct. 2: 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.
TruXedo, 2209 Kellen Gross Dr.



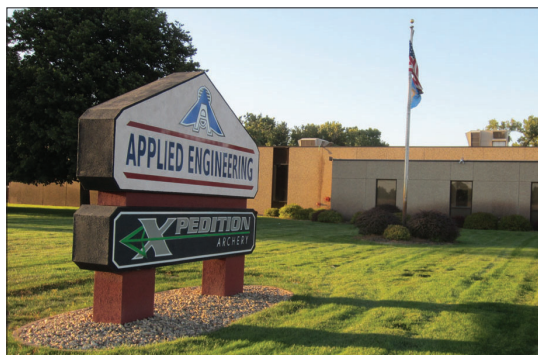
Thursday, Oct. 3: 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Baldwin Filters, 1901 Hastings Dr.



Thursday, Oct. 3: 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Manitou Americas, 900 Ferdig Ave.



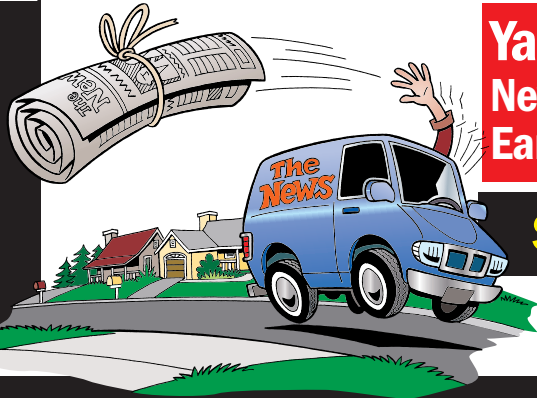
Friday, Oct. 4: 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Applied Engineering, 2008 E. Hwy 50



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Xpedition Archery, 2008 E. Hwy 50

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