

Foreign Minister Steinmeier on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons

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05.09.2014 - Press release 

Foreign Minister Steinmeier issued the following statement today (5 September) on the arrival in Bremen of the American vessel Cape Ray, on which Syrian chemical weapons were destroyed:

In an unprecedented operation, the international community has neutralised the Syrian regime's chemical weapons within a period of one year. This success shows that courageous and resolute diplomacy can bring about tangible results and solutions.

Many countries and organisations played a part in this outstanding achievement, above all the United States, the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), but also Russia, China, the Nordic countries and others. Germany was also involved in the operation from the start, providing financial, logistical and technical expertise, as well as military support.

Background information:

The chemical warfare agents were neutralised in international waters in the eastern Mediterranean on board the American MV Cape Ray, using a special method (hydrolysis). As a result, the agents can no longer be used as weapons.

The military protection of the Cape Ray took the form of a multinational protective escort operation. Germany deployed a Bundeswehr frigate, thus providing the second-largest number of troops after the United States.

Some of the waste materials produced during the hydrolysis process, around 370 tonnes of hydrolysate, as well as the solid material left over from the hydrolysis, will be destroyed by the German government-owned company GEKA mbh in Munster, Lower Saxony.

GEKA is responsible for disposing of chemical warfare agents. This work will be done in an environmentally sustainable manner and will take around five months. Hydrolysate is similar to industrial chemical waste.

Germany is also supporting the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons in the following ways:

- Funding of five million euros to the OPCW for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons. At the German Government's initiative, the ~~EU (European Union)~~ also provided 12 million euros to the OPCW's Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons.
- Participation of German research institutes and laboratories in the testing of chemical weapon samples from Syria (see the Sellström report).
- Logistical support for OPCW inspectors (airlifts; security training at the Bundeswehr Training College in Hammelburg).
- Emergency medical assistance (medication for emergency treatment, medical equipment) to Syrian hospitals to treat patients suffering from the effects of nerve gas.

Overview "Newsroom"