

German escort for destruction of Syrian chemical weapons

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02.04.2014 - Press release 

Speaking today (2 April) in Brussels, Federal Foreign Minister Steinmeier issued the following statement on the Cabinet decision to participate in protecting the US hydrolysis ship on which Syrian chemical weapons are to be destroyed:

Even though the world's eyes are currently focused on Ukraine, we cannot afford to disregard other conflicts.

The civil war in Syria continues unabated. However, we are making progress in shipping out chemical weapons from Syria. The sooner the chemical weapons are destroyed, the better, so that they no longer pose a danger to the people in Syria. It will be possible to start destroying the chemical weapons in the foreseeable future.

It is part of our international responsibility to assist in this task. We also want to be involved in protecting the chemical weapons destruction process on the high seas in the Mediterranean. I hope there will be widespread support for this in the German Bundestag.

Background information:

Today, subject to the approval of the German Bundestag, the Cabinet decided to provide a further substantial contribution to the process of destroying Syria's chemical weapons.

The Federal Government is prepared to participate in an international operation to provide military protection for the US ship Cape Ray, on which Syrian chemical weapons are to be neutralised in a process known as hydrolysis.

The Federal Government's decision envisages the deployment of a frigate and up to 300 German soldiers until the escort mission is completed, and until December 2014 at the latest.

The basis for the planned operation is a ~~UN (United Nations)~~ Security Council resolution which appeals to the ~~UN (United Nations)~~ member states to support the ~~UN (United Nations)~~ and OPCW-led mission to destroy Syria's chemical weapons.

Germany has to date supported the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with 5 million euros for the OPCW Special Trust Fund for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons, provided further training for OPCW inspectors and flown them to Syria for inspections.

In January 2014 the Federal Government agreed to destroy residuals generated by the destruction of chemical warfare agents, which are similar to industrial waste, in Germany in an orderly and environmentally friendly manner. The technological preparations for this are under way.

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