Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK contributes to the destruction of Syria’s chemical stockpile

2013-12-20

The UK is today announcing additional support for the international mission to destroy Syria’s chemical stockpile.

An FCO spokesperson said:

The international mission to destroy Syria’s chemical weapons programme is essential to ensure that Assad can never again use these horrific weapons to murder his own people.

The UK along with the US, Russia, China, Italy, Denmark, Norway and Finland will be playing its part in this mission over the coming weeks and months. As part of our contribution, we have agreed to destroy 150 tonnes of two industrial-grade chemicals from the Syrian stockpile at a commercial facility.

The chemicals, known as ‘B precursors’, are used in the pharmaceutical industry and are handled similarly to many other chemicals that are routinely manufactured, transported and destroyed in the UK.

The chemicals only become highly toxic when mixed with an ‘A precursor’ to make a nerve agent. To eliminate this risk, the A and B precursors will be removed from Syria separately.

The chemicals will be shipped to a UK port with suitable off-loading equipment before being transferred to a commercial site to be destroyed by incineration. The chemicals will be subject to industry-standard security measures.

It is important to stress that these are chemicals, not chemical weapons. They do not contain explosives. The chemicals will be sealed in standard industrial containers to international standards and under the supervision of

OPCW

inspectors.

The spokesperson added:

The UK has also agreed to provide a Royal Navy Vessel to assist in the safety and security of Danish and Norwegian cargo ships in international waters when removing the entire chemical stockpile from Syria by sea.

The UK is also providing specialist equipment to the US to assist with the hydrolysis of the most sensitive chemicals before their final destruction. These ‘large access devices’ will be used to move the chemicals between their storage units and the hydrolysis equipment.

Further information

The UK is already providing £2m to the Organisation for the Prohibition for Chemical Weapons (

OPCW

) Syria Trust Fund to assist with destruction and verification activities.

The UK has also provided £400,000 worth of equipment to the UN-

OPCW

Joint Mission operational teams deployed in Damascus.

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