


Weekly Address: Pursuing a Diplomatic Solution in Syria

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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President Obama follows up on his speech to the nation on Tuesday and describes the possibility for a diplomatic solution in Syria, partially because of the credible threat of U.S. military force.

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Remarks of President Barack Obama

Weekly Address

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This week, when I addressed the nation on Syria, I said that – in part because of the credible threat of U.S. military force – there is the possibility of a diplomatic solution. Russia has indicated a new willingness to join with the international community in pushing Syria to give up its chemical weapons, which the Assad regime used in an attack that killed more than 1,000 people on August 21. I also asked Congress to postpone a vote on the use of military force while we pursue this diplomatic path. And that’s what we’re doing.

At my direction, Secretary of State Kerry is in discussions with his Russian counterpart. But we’re making it clear that this can’t be a stalling tactic. Any agreement needs to verify that the Assad regime and Russia are keeping their commitments: that means working to turn Syria’s chemical weapons over to international control and ultimately destroying them. This would allow us to achieve our goal – deterring the Syrian regime from using chemical weapons, degrading their ability to use them, and making it clear to the world that we won’t tolerate their use.

We’ve seen indications of progress. As recently as a week ago, the Assad regime would not admit that it possessed chemical weapons. Today, it does. Syria has signaled a willingness to join with 189 other nations, representing 98 percent of humanity, in abiding by an international agreement that prohibits the use of chemical weapons. And Russia has staked its own credibility on supporting this outcome.

These are all positive developments. We'll keep working with the international community to see that Assad gives up his chemical weapons so that they can be destroyed. We will continue rallying support from allies around the world who agree on the need for action to deter the use of chemical weapons in Syria. And if current discussions produce a serious plan, I'm prepared to move forward with it.

But we are not just going to take Russia and Assad's word for it. We need to see concrete actions to demonstrate that Assad is serious about giving up his chemical weapons. And since this plan emerged only with a credible threat of U.S. military action, we will maintain our military posture in the region to keep the pressure on the Assad regime. And if diplomacy fails, the United States and the international community must remain prepared to act.

The use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world is an affront to human dignity and a threat to the security of people everywhere. As I have said for weeks, the international community must respond to this outrage. A dictator must not be allowed to gas children in their beds with impunity. And we cannot risk poison gas becoming the new weapon of choice for tyrants and terrorists the world over.

We have a duty to preserve a world free from the fear of chemical weapons for our children. But if there is any chance of achieving that goal without resorting to force, then I believe we have a responsibility to pursue that path. Thank you.

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