

Statement from the Press Secretary on the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria

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The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-Finding Mission on Friday released a report concluding that sarin was used as a chemical weapon in al-Lataminah, Syria, on March 30, 2017. While these findings are unfortunately not surprising to the United States, they are disturbing nonetheless. Al-Lataminah is about 10 miles from Khan Shaykhun, where the Assad regime used sarin against its citizens just five days later, seemingly as part of a concerted campaign. These events show how critical it is that the U.N. Security Council renew the U.N.-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which has the responsibility of officially determining responsibility for such attacks, key to deterring them in the future. Those countries that do not support renewal or are attempting to water down the JIM's mandate – such as Russia – are protecting the Assad regime and the terrorists who continue to use chemical weapons. We urge Russia to change course before the JIM expires, and we believe all responsible nations must vote in favor of extending this critical body. This important decision should further the principles that led the international community to pursue the Chemical Weapons Convention and our collective goal to stop the use of chemical weapons, rather than further a political game. We owe the world – and the victims of these heinous attacks – better.