

Statement by the President on the Completion by the M/V Cape Ray of the Destruction of Syria's Declared Chemical Weapons

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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Today we mark an important achievement in our ongoing effort to counter the spread of weapons of mass destruction by eliminating Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile. The most lethal declared chemical weapons possessed by the Syrian regime were destroyed by dedicated U.S. civilian and military professionals using a unique American capability aboard the M/V Cape Ray – and they did so aboard that U.S. vessel several weeks ahead of schedule. This is a major milestone in the international community's efforts under the leadership of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to rid the Syrian regime of its chemical weapons. It further advances our collective goal to ensure that the Asad regime cannot use its chemical arsenal against the Syrian people and sends a clear message that the use of these abhorrent weapons has consequences and will not be tolerated by the international community.

We are grateful to the United Nations-OPCW Joint Mission and the entire international coalition for their unprecedented achievements. In particular, we appreciate the dedication of Joint Mission Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag, OPCW Director General Uzumcu, and their teams for their vital work. We also thank our close allies and partners – Denmark, Norway, Italy, Finland, Germany, and the United Kingdom – for their key contributions to this mission, and we appreciate the assistance of Russia and China. Going forward, we will watch closely to see that Syria fulfills its commitment to destroy its remaining declared chemical weapons production facilities. In addition, serious questions remain with respect to the omissions and discrepancies in Syria's declaration to the OPCW and about continued allegations of use. These concerns must be addressed, and we will work closely with the OPCW and the international community to seek resolution of these open issues, even as we broadly press the Asad regime to end the horrific atrocities it continues to commit against its people.