

---

Syria denies & condemns use of chemical weapons – foreign minister

06/04/2017



Syria's foreign minister has dismissed allegations that the Syrian Army had deployed chemical weapons in the city of Idlib, saying the military will never use such weapons against its own people or even terrorists.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem denied claims that the military used chemical weapons in the western city of Idlib. Speaking at a news conference on Thursday, Muallem said an airstrike by Syrian military had targeted an arms depot where chemical weapons stockpiles were stored by Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) and Al-Nusra Front militants.

He said it's impossible that the army – which has been making significant gains in almost all theaters of the Syrian war – would use banned chemical weapons against its *“own people”* and even terrorists.

Read more [Chem attack blame game ‘failed’ at Syria conference in Brussels – Russian envoy](#)

Asked if Damascus would allow a fact-finding mission into the Idlib incident, Muallem said past experience of similar investigations was *“not encouraging.”* He also said that he could not predict *“the reality of US intentions”* in Syria.

Muallem added that such a mission must not be politicized and must start its operations *“from Damascus, not Turkey,”* apparently referring to the latest statements by Ankara condemning the

incident, as well as the fact that some victims were taken to Turkey for autopsy.

'Monstrous crime'

Meanwhile, Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for the Russian president, said the Kremlin believes the Syrian military will do its utmost to prevent chemical agents from falling into the hands of terrorists.

*"This was indeed a dangerous and monstrous crime, but in our opinion, it would be wrong to point fingers,"* Peskov told reporters on Thursday. The Kremlin spokesman said Moscow does not agree with assessments provided by certain Western countries.

*"Immediately after the tragedy no one had access to this area, so no one could have had verifiable data. Consequently, any information which the US side or our colleagues from other countries might have had access to, could not be based on objective facts,"* Peskov told reporters.

Though Peskov rejected *"hasty assessments"* of the alleged use of chemical weapons, he emphasized that there are always disagreements between Moscow and Washington, but mutual discords over the Idlib incident are unlikely to affect *"the spirit of our cooperation."*

[READ MORE: Rebels 'only people who benefited' from Idlib chemical weapons attack – analyst](#)

Earlier in the day, the Russian Foreign Ministry dismissed as *"unsubstantiated"* statements by US Vice-President Mike Pence that Moscow and Damascus had failed to fulfill their obligations under a landmark 2013 deal to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons arsenals.

*"I wouldn't use profane language, especially when it comes to the second-most powerful man in the US administration, but I do believe that this is ignorance rather than irresponsibility,"* Mikhail Ulyanov, head of the ministry's Arms Control Department, said.

*"The new administration has only recently begun reviewing its policy. Once that's done, American officials' statements, I hope, will become more accurate. There is no reason to say the US-Russia agreements [on eliminations Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles] did not work,"* Ulyanov stated.

---