The Latest On the Suspected Chemical Attack in Syria (all times local):

April 7, 2017

Fox News

http://www.fox34.com/story/35083200/the-latest-russia-says-canceled-un-vote-allows-a-compromise

5:50 a.m.

Israel's prime minister has welcomed the U.S. attack on a Syrian air base saying he "fully supports" President Trump's decision.

Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday in a statement that "In both word and action" Trump "sent a strong and clear message" that "the use and spread of chemical weapons will not be tolerated."

Israel's Channel 2 TV said Israel along with other allies was notified about the U.S. strike.

The attacks in neighboring Syria have worried Israel, which has warned against "game-changing" weapons reaching Hezbollah in Lebanon from the country, which supports the militant group. Last month Israel shot down an anti-aircraft missile fired at its planes as they struck a suspected Hezbollah weapons convoy.

Israel also has treated several thousand Syrians wounded in fighting and provided humanitarian aid to some Syrian communities near the Israeli frontier in the Golan Heights.

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6:30 a.m.

A Syrian opposition rebel commander whose district in the country's center was among those hit by chemical weapons says he hopes the U.S. attack on a government air base would be a "turning point" in the six-year war.

Major Jamil al-Saleh, who heads a U.S-backed rebel group in central Hama, says Friday the U.S. attack targeted the air base from where this week's gruesome chemical weapons attack against civilians was launched. The United States blasted a Syrian air base in central Homs province with a barrage of cruise missiles Thursday night in fiery retaliation.

Al-Saleh, who leads the Alezzah Army that operates in Hama province, says the continuation of U.S. strikes against government military facilities would protect the Syrian people.

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5:45 a.m.

Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador says the U.S. decision to cancel a vote on a U.N. resolution that would condemn the reported chemical weapons attack on a Syrian town "opens a window of opportunity" to find a compromise.

Vladimir Safronkov told reporters after closed Security Council consultations that a resolution "should not, cannot and will not pre-judge the outcome from (an) investigation."

Russia strongly objected to provisions in the original draft circulated by Britain, France and the United States which it said blamed President Bashar Assad's forces for the attack before an investigation.

Safronkov said he can't understand why the council rejected Russia's proposal for sending a team to conduct an "impartial, objective, honest investigation."

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5:50 a.m.

A Syrian opposition group has welcomed the U.S. attack on a Syrian air base, saying it should be just the beginning.

The Turkey-based Syrian Coalition says in a statement Friday that Trump has "closed the page on impunity" which his predecessor encouraged.

The statement released by Ahmad Ramadan, a senior official within the group, urged Trump to "hit the snake's head" and anyone who ordered and implemented the chemical weapons attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun, in rebel-held northern Syria.

The United States blasted a Syrian air base with a barrage of cruise missiles Thursday night in fiery retaliation for this week's gruesome chemical weapons attack against civilians.

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5:10 a.m.

Syrian state TV says a U.S. missile attack hit a number of military targets inside the country, calling the attack an "aggression."

A military official speaking on Syrian TV says an air base in central Syria was hit early Friday, causing material damage. The unnamed official did not elaborate.

Talal Barazi, the governor of Homs province, where the targeted air base is located, said most of the strikes appeared to target the province in central Syria. He also said the strikes are meant to "support the terrorists on the ground."

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4:30 a.m.

The United States has attacked a Syrian air base with roughly 60 cruise missiles in response to a chemical weapons attack it blames on President Bashar Assad.

U.S. officials say the Tomahawk missiles were fired from two warships in the Mediterranean Sea, targeting a government-controlled air base in Syria.

U.S. officials say Syrian government aircraft killed dozens of civilians by using chlorine mixed with a nerve agent, possibly sarin, earlier this week.

The bombing represents President Donald Trump's most dramatic military order since taking office. The Obama administration threatened attacking Assad's forces for previous chemical weapons attacks, but never followed through.

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3:20 a.m.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull says the chemical attack in Syria is a "war crime of the worst sort" that "cries out for a strong response."

Turnbull told Radio 3AW on Friday there does not appear to be any doubt that Syrian government forces were behind the attack.

He said: "This is a war crime of the worst sort, it is inhuman and it has been universally condemned."

He said Russia, as Syria's principal backer, has a responsibility to act and had yet to act appropriately.

Turnbull would not say whether the United States had asked Australia to join a coalition to act on Syria or whether Australia would be willing to increase its military contribution. Australia already flies air strikes in Syria.

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3:15 a.m.

The United Kingdom says there will be no vote on a U.N. Security Council resolution Thursday night to condemn the reported use of chemical weapons in a northern Syria town that killed more than 80 people.

The British Mission's political coordinator Stephen Hickey tweeted that the vote wouldn't take place because council members are still negotiating the text.

Russia strongly objected to provisions in the original draft circulated by Britain, France and the United States which it said blamed President Bashar Assad's forces for the attack before an investigation. It presented a short rival draft.

The 10 elected members of the Security Council presented what they hoped would be a compromise text on Thursday that addressed a key Russian objection - spelling out Syrian government obligations to investigators.

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2:35 a.m.

China's U.N. Ambassador Liu Jieyi says he hopes the U.N. Security Council can reach consensus on a resolution condemning this week's reported use of chemical weapons in northern Syria.

He spoke before heading into closed council consultations Thursday evening. The U.S. Mission said it was hoping for a vote late Thursday.

The latest text being discussed expresses "horror" at Tuesday's attack in Khan Sheikhoun that caused "large-scale loss of life." It demands that all parties provide "delay-free" and safe access to all sites that investigators from the international chemical weapons watchdog and the U.N. want to visit.

A compromise text put forward by the 10 elected members of the council would drop five specific requirements for the Syrian government to provide investigators, including flight plans and logs for April 4th when Khan Sheikhoun was attacked, names of commanders of helicopter squadrons, and access to air bases where investigators believe attacks involving chemical weapons may have been launched.

Instead, that text would be replaced with exact language from the September 2013 resolution that condemned a Syrian chemical weapons attack the previous month in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta that killed hundreds of civilians.

The proposed new language would order the Syrian government to cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the U.N. and provide their investigators "immediate and unfettered access" and "the right to inspect ... any and all sites." It would also orders all parties in Syria to "cooperate fully."

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9:45 p.m.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel says the chemical attack in Syria was "barbaric" and a war crime.

Merkel said Thursday that everything must be done to urgently investigate the attack and Germany would be a part of that.

She added that there were indications President Bashar Assad's government was behind the attack and the subsequent bombing of a hospital.

Merkel also criticized the failure of the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution condemning the attack.

She said those who refused to back the resolution "should think about what responsibility they are shouldering."

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8:50 p.m.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he hopes U.S. President Donald Trump will take military action in Syria after this week's chemical attack.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency quoted Erdogan as reacting to news reports Thursday that Trump was mulling military action after the assault in the northern Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun, which killed more than 80 people.

It quoted Erdogan as saying Turkey would be prepared to do "whatever falls on us" to support possible military action. Turkey is a leading supporter of the rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Earlier, Turkish officials said that autopsies of the victims from the assault, which happened 60 miles (95 kilometers) from the Turkish border, show they were subjected to chemical weapons.

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8:45 p.m.

The global chemical weapons watchdog says it has "initiated contact" with Syrian authorities as it investigates the suspected chemical attack earlier this week that killed more than 80 people.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons says in a statement it also has asked all members of the Chemical Weapons Convention to share "any information they may have regarding the allegations of chemical weapons use in the Khan Sheikhun area of Idlib province" in Syria.

The OPCW said Thursday that its Technical Secretariat has been "collecting and analyzing information" about the April 4 attack as part of its ongoing fact-finding mission which investigates allegations of the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria's civil war.

The secretive organization has not said if it has staff or investigators on the ground in Syria.

The fact-finding mission gathers information from witnesses and analyzes samples gathered from the sites of alleged attacks and from victims. In the past it has concluded that chlorine and sulfur mustard almost certainly have been used as weapons.

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8:15 p.m.

The United States says it hopes for a vote late Thursday on a resolution that would condemn the chemical attack in northern Syria that killed dozens of people.

The U.S. currently holds the presidency of the U.N. Security Council and drafted a resolution along with Britain and France that condemns the use of chemical weapons, particularly in Tuesday's attack on Khan Sheikhoun, "in the strongest terms."

Russia objected to key provisions in the resolution and negotiations have been underway to try to bridge the differences.

A spokesman for the U.S. mission to the United Nations said "we're hoping to get a vote done later today."

France's U.N. Ambassador Francois Delattre told reporters Thursday that "we need a robust text," adding that "there are fundamentals we cannot compromise with when it's about the barbaric murder of civilians, among them many children, with chemical weapons."

Delattre told The Associated Press he thought there was "still a chance" for an agreement with Russia.

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7:40 p.m.

France is sending half a ton of medicine and equipment to Syria after a suspected chemical attack earlier this week killed more than 80 people.

The French Foreign Ministry said Thursday that it is sending medicine to treat the victims and equipment to protect first responders in future attacks via Turkey to be distributed by the aid group UOSSM.

France condemned Tuesday's attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun, which it blamed on President Bashar Assad's government. The Trump administration and other Western officials have also blamed government forces, allegations denied by Damascus.

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7:15 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman tells The Associated Press that Russia's support for Syrian President Bashar Assad is not unconditional.

Dmitry Peskov spoke two days after a suspected chemical weapons attack on a rebel-held province. Moscow, Assad's key backer, has been supporting the Syrian government militarily since 2015.

Turkey said Thursday that autopsies of Syrian victims from this week's assault in Idlib province, which happened 60 miles from the Turkish border, show they were subjected to chemical weapons.

The Syrian government maintains it didn't use chemical weapons, instead blaming the rebels for stockpiling the deadly chemicals. Russia's Defense Ministry says the toxic agents were released when a Syrian airstrike hit a rebel chemical weapons arsenal and munitions factory on the town's eastern outskirts.

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6:45 p.m.

Israel's former chief rabbi has compared the atrocities in neighboring Syria to the killing of Jews in World War II.

The comments by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, who survived the Holocaust as a child, adds one of the country's leading voices to a growing chorus of condemnations of the violence in Syria. This week, dozens of civilians were killed in a chemical attack in northern Syria.

Memories of the Holocaust are still fresh in Israel, and Israelis tend to refrain from comparing other conflicts to the Nazi genocide.

But in a radio interview Thursday, Lau broke that taboo and said Syrians are experiencing their own Holocaust.

"It did not start today. It has been six years since a Holocaust landed on them," he said.

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6:30 p.m.

The U.N. children's agency says at least 27 children were among the more than 80 people killed in the suspected chemical attack in northern Syria.

UNICEF says another 546 people, including many children, were wounded in Tuesday's attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun, and that casualty figures are expected to rise.

UNICEF Regional Director Geert Cappelaere said Thursday that "the killing of children in Syria cannot be allowed to continue," and called on all parties to the conflict to "immediately put an end to this horror."

The U.N. aid agency said it is supporting three mobile clinics and four hospitals in northern Syria.

The Trump administration and other Western officials have blamed the chemical attack on Syrian government forces, allegations denied by Damascus.

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5:20 p.m.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is warning against apportioning blame for a chemical weapons attack in Syria until an investigation has been carried out.

In a phone call with Israel's prime minister on Thursday, Putin "underlined that it's unacceptable to make unfounded accusations against anyone until a thorough and unbiased international investigation," according to the Kremlin.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, had earlier warned the West against rushing to blame Syrian President Bashar Assad for the attack on Khan Sheikhoun. He said the West lacks objective evidence against Assad, adding that materials presented by local activists can't serve as a proof.

Russia has said the toxic gas was released when Syrian airstrikes hit a rebel arsenal containing chemical weapons. U.S. and other Western officials have blamed the attack on Syrian government forces.

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5 p.m.

Turkey says initial tests of samples from victims of a suspected chemical attack in northern Syria indicate they were exposed to sarin gas, a highly toxic nerve agent.

The Turkish Health Ministry said Thursday that "according to the results of the first analysis, there were findings suggesting that the patients were exposed to chemical substance (Sarin)," without elaborating.

The attack on Tuesday killed more than 80 people and sickened dozens more, many of whom are being treated across the border in Turkey.

The Trump administration and others have said the attack on the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun was carried out by government forces, allegations denied by Damascus.

The Turkish Health Ministry said the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons would also test the samples.

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3:20 p.m.

Germany has welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's strong condemnation of a chemical attack in Syria.

Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel says Trump's statement Wednesday criticizing Syrian President Bashar Assad's government is "positive."

He says European countries were worried about earlier U.S. comments suggesting that ensuring Assad leaves office was a lesser priority than fighting the Islamic State group.

Gabriel said Thursday those comments "irritated us in Europe at the time."

He says "apart from the war on terror, it's just as important to achieve a constitutional reform in Syria and free elections, and of course that can't mean Assad staying in power permanently."

Still, Gabriel warned against a military escalation and urged the U.S. to support U.N.-backed talks.

Germany has taken in 600,000 Syrian refugees in recent years.

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3 p.m.

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Tugrul Turkes says he is unconvinced by Russia's claim that Syrians killed in a northern town were the victims of toxic agents that were released by a Syrian airstrike hit a rebel chemical weapons arsenal.

Turkes spoke in an interview with Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency on Thursday. He described the Russian explanation as "unfulfilling."

Turkes says that "if the Syrian regime knew that there were chemical weapons in the warehouse, it should have also known that it should not have attacked it."

He added that there is "no excuse. To me, this is evidence that strengthens the fact that it was the work of the (Syrian) regime and that it was an attack against civilians."

Earlier, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem said in Damascus toxic agents were released after the Syrian army bombed a warehouse belonging to the al-Qaida's branch in Syria that contained chemical weapons

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2:30 p.m.

The top humanitarian aid official with the U.N.'s Syria office says he believes an awareness of the need to protect civilians is "sinking in" after a deadly chemical weapons attack this week in Syria's northern Idlib province.

Jan Egeland expressed hopes for a "watershed moment" with "all of these world leaders saying that say they have again woken up to the suffering of the civilians that we see every day."

Egeland spoke to reporters on Thursday after a meeting of the U.N.'s humanitarian "task force" for Syria.

He said the world body needs a "green light" to reach 1 million people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas of the war-torn country. He also called for 72-hour cease fires in the key zones of fighting so aid can get in, and protection for hospitals and evacuees who choose to leave violent areas voluntarily

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2:10 p.m.

The Kremlin says differences with Washington over the use of chemical weapons in Syria are unlikely to worsen U.S.-Russia relations.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned the West on Thursday against rushing to blame Syrian President Bashar Assad for the attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun in northern Syria.

He says the West lacks objective evidence against Assad, and materials presented by Syrian activist White Helmets first-responder team cannot serve as a proof.

Peskov says that Russia believes "that the use of chemical weapons is absolutely inadmissible." He added that the Syrian army must act to "prevent any chemical agents that can be used as weapons from falling into the terrorists' hands."

The Russian Defense Ministry has claimed that residents of Khan Sheikhoun have been exposed to chemicals contained in rebels' chemical arsenal struck in a Syrian air raid.

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1:45 p.m.

Syria's foreign minister says Damascus needs assurances that any fact- finding mission into Idlib's attack would be impartial and not politicized.

Walid Moallem says Syria's experience with past missions is "not encouraging."

He told a press conference in the Syrian capital on Thursday that any investigative mission would need to take off from Damascus and be far from the sphere of Turkish influence.

Moallem was asked if Syria would accept an international investigation. He said that "when we are sure we have convincing answers to these questions, we will give you an answer."

He also said that Syria provides the United Nations with intel about the transport of chemical weapons by "terrorists" between Iraq and Syria.

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1:35 p.m.

British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson says he cannot understand how anyone on the U.N. Security Council could fail to sign up to a resolution condemning the chemical weapons attack this week that killed dozens in northern Syria.

Johnson said on Thursday during a visit to Sarajevo that he "cannot understand how anybody on the U.N. Security Council could fail to sign up to a motion condemning the actions of the (Assad) regime that is almost certainly responsible for that crime."

Johnson described the attack that killed more than 80 people in Syria's Idlib province as "abominable and contemptible" and said "those who did it deserve international condemnation."

He says "work is now going on in New York on the exact language (of the resolution) and I think we should have no hesitation in forcing it to a vote."

Russia argued at a U.N. Security Council meeting on Wednesday against holding Assad's government responsible, with Moscow insisting a Syrian air strike had hit a rebel ammunition store that held chemical weapons.

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1:25 p.m.

The Syrian foreign minister is categorically denying his government used chemical weapons in the attack this week in Idlib province or in any other attack.

Walid Moallem told reporters at a press conference in Damascus on Thursday that "the Syrian Arab Army has never used chemical weapons and will not use chemical weapons against Syrians and even against terrorists."

He says the Syrian army bombed a warehouse for al-Qaida's branch in Syria that contained chemical weapons, echoing the Russian defense ministry's claim.

He denounced the "chorus" of accusations against Syria, which he says was launched by countries known for their hostility.

Moallem also says Israel is the "main beneficiary" of these accusations.

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11:45 a.m.

France's foreign minister is urging for a resumption of Syria peace talks and wants President Bashar Assad's government prosecuted over its alleged use of chemical weapons.

Jean-Marc Ayrault told CNews television on Thursday that a new U.N. resolution and Syrian peace negotiations should be a top priority - not rushing into new military interventions.

Ayrault says that "France is still seeking to talk with its partners on the Security Council ... Russia in particular."

Russia argued at a U.N. Security Council meeting on Wednesday against holding Assad's government responsible for a chemical weapons attack this week that killed more than 80 people in Idlib province.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, warned that the Trump administration would take action if the Security Council did not.

Ayrault says "these crimes must not remain unpunished. ... One day, international justice will rule on Assad."

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11:40 a.m.

Turkish media are quoting Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag as saying that results from autopsies conducted on three Syrians brought to Turkey after this week's assault in Idlib province show they were subjected to a chemical weapons attack.

The private DHA news agency quotes Bozdag as saying on Thursday that "it was determined after the autopsy that a chemical weapon was used."

More than 80 people were killed in the suspected chemical attack on Tuesday in the northern Syrian town of Khan Sheikhoun. Turkish officials say that close to 60 victims of the attack were brought to Turkey for treatment and three of them died.

Turkish media have also reported that World Health Organization experts had taken part in the autopsies conducted in a hospital in the Turkish city of Adana late on Wednesday on Syrian victims.

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10:45 a.m.

The head of Israel's Holocaust memorial is urging world leaders to end to the atrocities in Syria following a chemical weapon attack that killed dozens of civilians this week.

Yad Vashem chairman Avner Shalev on Thursday said the international community must "end the human suffering and provide humanitarian aid to the victims."

He noted that after World War II world leaders enacted universal principles and instituted organizations aimed at preventing future crimes against humanity. He said those tools should be utilized now to stop atrocities in Syria.

About 6 million Jews were murdered in the systematic Nazi effort to kill all the Jews of Europe during WWII.

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10:30 a.m.

Israel's defense minister says he is "100 percent certain" that President Bashar Assad's forces carried out the chemical attacks in Syria this week that killed dozens of civilians.

Avigdor Lieberman told the Yediot Ahronot newspaper on Thursday the attacks were conducted under Assad's "direct and intentional order" and carried out with Syrian planes.

He gave no proof to support his position but his remarks mesh with earlier assessments from Israeli defense officials who said military intelligence believes Assad's forces were behind the assault that killed 86.

The attacks in neighboring Syria have worried Israel, which has warned against "game-changing" weapons reaching Hezbollah in Lebanon from Syria, which along with Iran supports the militant group.

Channel 2 TV reported Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security Cabinet will convene later in the day to discuss the latest developments in Syria and their ramifications for Israel.

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5:15 a.m.

The United Nations humanitarian chief says that 41 donors have pledged $6 billion to help people in need in 2017 amid the Syrian crisis.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien said what is now needed is to see the pledges turned into "cash for action" as soon as possible.

O'Brien welcomed the pledges, which came at a regional conference in Brussels in Wednesday.

He says that "the needs have never been greater and the requirements have never been higher for the Syria crisis."

He added that the conference was "a momentous opportunity for much of the world to come together to commit more support and solidarity for Syrians and those affected across the region."

Another $3.7 billion was pledged for 2018 and beyond.