Syria Chemical Chronology

This annotated chronology is based on the data sources that follow each entry. Public sources often provide conflicting information on classified military programs. In some cases we are unable to resolve these discrepancies, in others we have deliberately refrained from doing so to highlight the potential influence of false or misleading information as it appeared over time. In many cases, we are unable to independently verify claims. Hence in reviewing this chronology, readers should take into account the credibility of the sources employed here.

Inclusion in this chronology does not necessarily indicate that a particular development is of direct or indirect proliferation significance. Some entries provide international or domestic context for technological development and national policymaking. Moreover, some entries may refer to developments with positive consequences for nonproliferation.

2008-2000

3 March 2008
The US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) releases its Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions for the period 1 January to 31 December 2006. The section of the report addressing the Syrian chemical program states: "Syria continued to seek dual—use technology from foreign sources during the reporting period. Syria has had a chemical weapons program for many years and already has a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin, which can be delivered by aircraft or ballistic missile. In addition, Syria is developing the more toxic and persistent nerve agent VX. We assess that Syria remains dependent on foreign sources for key elements of its CW program, including precursor chemicals."

3 March 2008
The US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) releases its Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions for the period 1 January to 31 December 2005. In the section addressing Syrian chemical weapons activities the report states: "Syria continued to seek dual—use technology from foreign sources during the reporting period. Damascus already held a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin, but apparently has tried to develop a more toxic and persistent nerve agent. We assess that Syria remains dependent on foreign sources for key elements of its CW program, including precursor chemicals."
—Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and

Related content is available on the website for the Nuclear Threat Initiative, www.nti.org.
27 February 2008
Testifying before the US Senate Select Committee on Armed Services, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Michael Maples, states that: "Syria's chemical warfare program is well established with a stockpile of nerve agent, which it can deliver by aircraft or ballistic missiles. During the past several years, Damascus has continued to seek chemical warfare—related precursors and expertise from foreign sources. Syria has the facilities and the expertise to domestically produce, store and deliver chemical warfare. Syria will continue to improve its chemical warfare for the foreseeable future to counter regional adversaries."

11 February 2008
In an article discussing the 6 September 2007 attack on a Syrian facility by Israeli aircraft a Syrian official is quoted as saying "Syrian had concluded ... that chemical warfare had little deterrent value against Israel, given its nuclear capability."

26 July 2007
An attempt "to weaponise a 500 km [range] 'Scud C' with a mustard gas warhead" is reportedly undertaken at a Syrian military facility in the vicinity of Aleppo. An accident during the test results in a series of explosions that kill as many as 15 Syrian military personnel and an unspecified number of Iranian missile weaponization engineers who were also present. The accident allegedly results in the dispersion of quantities of mustard, sarin and VX nerve agents all of which were apparently stored in close proximity to the site of the initial accident. The Syrian government which immediately announces the explosion, claims that it is triggered by a sudden rise in ambient air temperature which causes a chemical reaction in sensitive and highly reactive substances. Although this explanation did not entail any acknowledgement of the presence of chemical weapons it could be a description of the explosion of fuel for Syria's Scud missiles.

11 January 2007
Testifying before the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Michael Maples, states that "Syria has pursued development of a strategic deterrent principally based on ballistic missile, chemical, and, to a limited extent, biological warfare programs, as a means of countering Israel's conventional force superiority." Mr. Maples went on to note that "Syria has had a chemical weapons program for many years and already has a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin, which can be delivered by aircraft or ballistic missiles."

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5 January 2007
The U.S. Department of the Treasury announces that it has designated three Syrian entities, the Higher Institute of Applied Science and Technology (HIAST), the Electronics Institute, and the National Standards and Calibration Laboratory (NSCL) pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 13382. This EO gives the Department of the Treasury the authority to freeze the assets of proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their supporters. The effect of the designation is to prohibit all transactions between the designees and any U.S. person and freeze any assets of the designees that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons. This move builds upon an earlier designation by the U.S. Department of Commerce in March 2005.

25—27 October 2006
A Syrian government representative attends the Third OPCW Workshop to Promote the Universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention among States in the Mediterranean Basin, the Middle East, and neighboring regions held in Rome, Italy.

15 June 2006
Iran and Syria sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that calls for accelerating the implementation of existing defense cooperation agreements. The MoU also calls for the "elimination of all weapons of mass destruction" which is usually represents a demand for Israeli nuclear disarmament. [see also 14 November 2005]

May 2006
The US Central Intelligence Agency releases its Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions for the period 1 January to 31 December 2004. In the section dealing with Syria the report states: "Syria continued to seek dual—use technology from foreign sources during the reporting period. Damascus already held a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin, but apparently has tried to develop a more toxic and persistent nerve agent. We assess that Syria remains dependent on foreign sources for key elements of its CW program, including precursor chemicals."

28 February 2006
Testifying before the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Michael Maples, states that "We believe Syria already has a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin and apparently has
tried to develop a more toxic and persistent nerve agent."

26 January 2006
Georges Sada, formerly second in command of the Iraqi Air Force, claims that in June 2002 Iraq transported WMD to Syria aboard several refitted commercial jets, under the pretense of conducting a humanitarian mission for flood victims. He says that two commercial jets were converted to cargo jets, in order to carry raw materials and equipment related to WMD projects. The passenger seats, galleys, toilets and storage compartments were removed and new flooring was installed. Hundreds of tons of chemicals were reportedly included in the cargo shipments. Sada says he obtained the information from two Iraq Airways captains who were reportedly flying the sorties. The allegations are included in Sada's newly published book, "Saddam's Secrets" which he is promoting in the United States.

10 November 2005
In its Amended national report submitted to the U.N. 1540 Committee Syria includes the following amended statement: "The Syrian Arab Republic is a State that neither possesses nor intends to acquire weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, or related materials, as Syria has made clear in a number of general statements presented to the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and the First Committee of the General Assembly in New York, which deals with disarmament issues." On page 7 of the document Syria states: The Syrian Arab Republic does not possess any biological weapons, their means of delivery, or any related materials.

5 May 2005
U.S. President George W. Bush renews sanctions he imposed on Syria one year ago.

4 May 2005
Hearings on the controversial nomination of U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton to the position of U.S. ambassador to the UN continue. The chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee declines to endorse a request from Democrat committee members asking that the U.S. State Department turn over documents related to a long—running dispute between U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton and American intelligence agencies over assessments of Syria’s weapons programs. The purpose of the request was to obtain evidence supporting claims that Mr. Bolton is prone to the manipulation and exaggeration of intelligence information.

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27 April 2005

The U.S. State Department releases Country Reports on Terrorism 2004. Although the Syrian section of the report makes no reference to weapons of mass destruction or Syria's alleged chemical or biological weapons programs other sections of the report draw links between Syria, terrorism and WMD. Listing Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism the report goes on to say: "[m]ost worrisome is that these countries also have the capabilities to manufacture weapons of mass destruction and other destabilizing technologies that could fall into the hands of terrorists." At a press conference introducing the report U.S. State Department Counselor Philip Zelikow says: "Unfortunately, Cuba, North Korea, Syria, and in particular, Iran, continue to embrace terrorism as an instrument of national policy. Most worrisome is that these countries also have the capabilities to manufacture weapons of mass destruction and other destabilizing technologies that could fall into the hands of terrorists."


27 April 2005

The Iraq Survey Group (ISG) publicly releases the Addendums to the Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisors to the DCI on Iraq's WMD. On the question of purported transfers of Iraqi WMD to Syria the report says: "There was evidence of a discussion of possible WMD collaboration initiated by a Syrian security officer, and ISG received information about movement of material out of Iraq, including the possibility that WMD was involved. In the judgment of the working group, these reports were sufficiently credible to merit further investigation. ISG was unable to complete its investigation and it is unable to rule out the possibility that WMD was evacuated to Syria before the war. It should be noted that no information from debriefing of Iraqis in custody supports this possibility." The report concluded that "based on the evidence available at present, ISG judged that it was unlikely that an official transfer of WMD material from Iraq to Syria took place. However, ISG was unable to rule out unofficial movement of limited WMD—related materials."


26 April 2005

Unnamed U.S. intelligence officials are quoted as stating that Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton "had planned to say in a classified portion of his [July 2003 Congressional] testimony that Syria's development of chemical and biological weapons posed a threat to the stability in the Middle East." Intelligence officials say this prepared testimony "went well beyond what the United States had
previously said about Syria's weapons program."

1 April 2005
"Scientists from Surrey—based CABI Bioscience have been examining fungal—based insecticide to control Sunn Pest as part of an Integrated Pest Management project coordinated [sic] by ICARDA in Syria." CABI Bioscience is part of a global not for profit organization dedicated to improving human welfare. The ICARDA is the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas that works through a network of partnerships with national, regional and international institutions.
—"CABI Bioscience: Fungi to help fight key pest of Middle East cereals," M2, 1 April 2005.

8 March 2005
In Washington DC, Republican Representative Ileana Ros—Lehtinen and Democrat Eliot Engel announce that they are co—sponsoring a bill pressing for harsher sanctions on Syria and other countries that provide support to Damascus. The Lebanon and Syria Liberation Act, calls on President Bush "to push for tighter UN and other international sanctions against Syria. The bill would also withhold foreign aid to any country receiving U.S. assistance which could help Syria obtain nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, among other measures."

7 March 2005
Speaking in the United States, Hans Blix, former head of UNMOVIC says: "I don't believe that weapons from Iraq have been smuggled into Syria."

7 March 2005
The Center of Studies and Research at Naif Arab University for Security Sciences in Saudi Arabia holds a seminar on biological terrorism. Experts participating in the seminar are from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Comoros, Sudan, Syria, Palestine, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Egypt.

21 February 2005
Representatives from Syria, and other Middle Eastern and Western European nations, attend an international conference on bio—safety at the Al—Bustan Palace hotel in Oman, under the patronage of Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq al—Said, Oman's Minister of Heritage and Culture. The three—day event is organized by the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources. "The conferees ... discuss case studies assessing risks to bio—safety. The conference...also provide[s] the opportunity for participants to exchange information and experience on bio—safety."

16 February 2005
In testimony before the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence the Director of the Defense Intelligence

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Agency, Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, addresses the question of Syria's pursuit of WMD capabilities. He says: "Longstanding Syrian policies of supporting terrorism [and] relying on WMD for strategic deterrence...remain largely unchanged."

17 January 2005
Unnamed US congressional officials, speaking in anticipation of the final report of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), say that "they have not seen any information — never 'a piece,' said one" — indicating that WMD or significant amounts of components and equipment were transferred from Iraq to neighboring Syria, Jordan or elsewhere.

17 January 2005
U.S. Intelligence and congressional officials say they have not seen any evidence that WMD components or equipment were moved from Iraq to Syria, Jordan or elsewhere before or after the March 2003 U.S. invasion. In a separate statement Charles Duelfer, head of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) says: "What I can tell you is that I believe we know a lot of materials left Iraq and went to Syria. There was certainly a lot of traffic across the border points. But whether in fact in any of these trucks there was WMD—related materials, I cannot say."

14 January 2005
White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, rules out the possibility that Iraqi WMD may have been moved to Syria.

5 January 2005
Pakistani Federal Minister for Science and Technology Ch. Nouraiz Shakoor Khan and Syrian Deputy Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Mohamed Najib Abdul Wahid participate in the meeting of the Pak—Syria Joint Committee on Science and Technology. Topics to be discussed and potentially finalized in the Joint Committee meetings "include items in the fields of Agricultural Research, Biotechnology, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Water Resource Management in Arid Areas, Oceanographic Research standards, Accreditation, Precision Mechanics."

6—10 December 2004
A Syrian representative attends the Meeting of States Parties to the BWC in Geneva, Switzerland. The purpose of the meeting is to continue preparations for the Sixth BWC Review Conference which is to take place in 2006.

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23 November 2004
The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency submits its Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions 1 July Through 31 December 2003 in accordance with S.721 of the FY1997 Intelligence Authorization Act. In respect to Syria, the report states that until 31 December 2003, "Syria probably also continued to develop a BW capability." This statement, which repeats the statements issued on this matter by the CIA for a number of years now suggests an absence of new developments.

November 2004
The German Zollkriminalamt (Federal Customs Administration) releases a report entitled Exportkontrolle Informationen sensible Länder [Export Controls: Information about Countries of Concern]. The section addressing Syria says: "Syria is presumed to have initiated biological weapons research in the late 1980s under the auspices of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC, or CERS), Damascus. Syria is thought to have developed biological weapons agents such as botulinum toxin, algae toxins and Bacillus anthracis." [original text in German — translation by Harvard Sussex Program]

27 October 2004
US Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, John R. Bolton, delivers a speech at the Tokyo American Center following the conclusion of a Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) related naval exercise in the sea of Japan. Bolton thanks Japan for hosting Team Samurai and says: "While PSI is helping stem the spread of WMD, their delivery systems, and related materials, serious proliferation threats remain. These threats must be met head on by active, concerted efforts through PSI cooperation and other available means. North Korea, Iran, and Syria, among others, are clearly states of proliferation concern; we believe that PSI partners should be ready to scrutinize shipments going to or from such states or terrorist groups."

19 October 2004
Syria and the European Union (EU) initial a 1,450 page association agreement. The agreement, which will enter into force after it is ratified by EU and Syrian political institutions, provides a framework for increased economic relations between the parties. It also includes sections addressing the expansion of social, cultural and political ties. The finalization of the agreement was delayed by disputes over the late inclusion of language on fighting terrorism and the non proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This language was added at the insistence of German and the UK [see 23 December 2003].

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8 October 2004
Charles Duelfer, head of the Iraq Survey Group is quoted responding to a question about the possibility that Iraqi WMD were transferred out of Iraq prior to March 2003. He says: "We cannot yet definitely say whether or not WMD materials were transferred out of Iraq before the war. Neither can we definitely answer some questions about possible retained stocks though, as I say, it is my judgment that retained stocks did not exist." [By excluding the possibility of retained stocks of WMD, or new production prior to March 2003 Duelfer also excludes the possibility that WMD were transferred to Syria or any other country.]

17 August 2004
The CIA is reported to have discovered that in the weeks before the war, Saddam Hussein replaced Iraqi border guards with trusted intelligence agents who supervised moving truckloads of contraband materials into Syria. Although officials caution that the new information is "not considered concrete evidence Saddam shipped chemical and biological agents to Syria before the U.S. invasion," there is a clear intention to raise the possibility that this transfer did occur.

15 July 2004
In Damascus, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Shara says that the EU has recognized it had made a "mistake" by insisting on the WMD clause in the EU Mediterranean joint political and economic pact. "I believe [the EU] have started to shift closer to our point of view, and I do not rule out that between now and September there may be a new thing regarding the Syrian European partnership, toward signing," says Shara. The next day, the Lebanese Daily Star quotes an unidentified Beirut—based European diplomat as saying that the EU has "somewhat diluted" the clause by "rephrasing" it, but that it was really the Syrians that "gave in", not the EU.
—The CBW Conventions Bulletin, No. 65 (September 2004), p. 49.

15 June 2004
The London Al—Sharq al—Aswat reports that yesterday's meeting of EU foreign ministers did not approve the contentious draft Association Agreement with Syria [see 8 April 2004] because of "the absence of any new element
that justifies returning to it or discussing it." The latest draft of the agreement, approved by all 25 EU member states, consists of a preamble and three clauses. It calls on Syria to implement the agreements on WMD it has signed and to sign the BWC and CWC. It also calls for setting up monitoring mechanisms and a commitment not to import, export or allow the transit of the components of such weapons. According to unidentified European diplomatic sources quoted by the newspaper, Syria had tried to intervene to achieve a more flexible paragraph but to no avail. The sources also state that Syria objects to the fact that the EU's Association Agreement with Israel does not include a similar paragraph and believes that the EU's stance is a result of US pressure.

— The CBW Conventions Bulletin, No. 65 (September 2004), p. 35.

7 June 2004
The government of the United Kingdom releases its annual report on the application of strategic export controls in 2003. The report notes the approval of exports of civil and military NBC protection equipment, including clothing and respirators, to Syria.


13 May 2004
Libya declares — in a statement read out by U.S. Under—Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton in Washington, DC — that it will "not deal in military goods or services with countries that it considers of serious weapons of mass destruction proliferation concern." Bolton says that Libya included North Korea, Syria and Iran as countries with which it had renounced all military trade. Subsequent to Bolton's comments, in a statement carried by the official Libyan news agency JANA, the Libyan Foreign Ministry says: "The Libyan statement was clear, it cited no country and was not aimed at Syria...Tripoli cannot say that Syria has WMD since it is a peaceful country whose land is occupied and is threatened by Israel."


11 May 2004
Using authority granted to him by the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, U.S. President George W. Bush imposes sanctions on Syria for its alleged pursuit of WMD and support of terrorist groups. The sanctions ban all U.S. exports to Syria except food and medicine; ban Syrian airlines from flying to or from the United States; restrict relations between U.S. banks and the Syrian national bank; and authorize the U.S. Treasury Department to freeze assets of Syrian nationals allegedly involved in terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, occupation of Lebanon, or terrorism in Iraq.


8 April 2004
Efforts to conclude a Free Trade Agreement between Syria and the European Union [see 9 December 2003] stall. Syrian officials publicly complain that the EU has added new clauses to the proposed agreement that require all parties to uphold bans on the possession or production of WMD including biological weapons. The Syrian officials complain that this clause is discriminatory as a similar agreement between the EU and Israel does not include any such clause. Syrian Minister of Expatriate Affairs, Mr. Buthaina Shabaan says: "[w]e feel the wording is a deliberate
attempt to raise impossible issues." He also rejects suggestions that Syria replicate Libya’s example and give up its chemical weapons. He points to Israel’s occupation of Syrian territory and possession of nuclear weapons.


25 March 2004
In Israel, the Sub—Committee for Intelligence and the Secret Services of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee publishes a report entitled "The Committee of Enquiry into the Intelligence System in Light of the War in Iraq." The report states that the possibility that Iraq’s alleged WMD stockpiles and their means of production "were moved to Syria on the eve of the war, still exists."


16 January 2004
US Secretary of State Colin Powell is interviewed on British television and makes a number of statements regarding US relations with Syria. Powell says: "We have not characterized Syria as one of the members of the axis of evil but we are concerned about some of Syria’s policies with respect to supporting terrorist activity, with respect of what they might be doing with weapons of mass destruction." Powell added that: "They [Syria] should follow the example of other nations in the region, especially Libya." [This statement is clearly part of a broader effort to apply pressure on Syria in the wake Libya's December 2003 repudiation of its weapons of mass destruction programs.]


9 January 2004
Responding to the claims of Syrian dissident Nijar Nijjof that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were smuggled into Syria in February and March 2003, US National security Advisor Condeleeza Rice says: "I don’t think we are at the point that we can make a judgment on this issue," Rice said. "There hasn’t been any hard evidence that such a thing happened. But obviously we’re going to follow up every lead, and it would be a serious problem if that did in fact happen." Rice added: "I can’t dismiss anything that we haven’t had an opportunity to fully assess."


9 January 2004
Exiled Syrian human rights campaigner Nijar Nijjof appears on Britain’s Channel Five News claiming that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were moved to Syria in the months prior to the US led invasion of March 2003. Nijjof claims that a senior Syrian military intelligence source has told him that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were smuggled into Syria in ambulances under the supervision of Brigadier Zoul—Himla Shalish, chief of the presidential guards. Nijjof asserted that the Iraqi chemical and biological weapons are now stored at three locations in central Syria, near the cities of Hama and Homs; a bunker controlled by the Syrian Department for Document Security (Bureau 489) built into a mountain near the town of Misyaf; a bunker 20 meters (66 feet) beneath a radar base in
the town of Chenchar; a "large factory workshop" making missiles and warheads in the village of Tal Snan.

6 January 2004
Responding to Syrian President Bashar Assad’s call for Israel to give up its undeclared arsenal of nuclear weapons [see 5 January 2004] a senior British government official says: "Israel is in a unique position as the only state whose very existence is threatened. There is no point is asking for a WMD—free Middle East while there are countries parading missiles with a sign up the side saying Death to Israel." An additional unnamed "senior Western diplomatic source said: "They [the Syrians] have to make a decision about whether [their] chemical weapons will make much of a difference against the Israelis, or whether they would not be in a better position by saying, 'we're giving it up and now we want a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.'"

5 January 2004
Syrian President Bashar Assad is reported to have said that Syria is entitled to defend itself by acquiring its own chemical and biological deterrent. His also says that any deal to destroy Syria’s chemical and biological capability would come about only if Israel agreed to abandon its nuclear arsenal.

24 December 2003
Following a summit meeting in the Egyptian town of Sharm El—Sheikh, the presidents of Egypt and Syria issue a joint statement that includes language on the issue of WMD. "The two presidents underlined their call to eliminate weapons of mass destruction from the region and to work jointly to achieve this goal within the framework of the United Nations and other international bodies. Events in the region have shown the importance of making the Middle East, Israel included, a region free from all WMD." The statement makes no mention of alleged WMD in either of the two countries and is generally perceived as directed at Israel.

24 December 2003
US Secretary of State Colin Powell is quoted as calling on Syria to emulate the example of Libya and repudiate its pursuit of WMD and support of terrorism. Powell adds that Syria needs "to get out of the hole that you have been in for all these years."

23 December 2003
The United Kingdom indicates that it is trying to secure the support of France and Germany in order to apply pressure to Syria on the issues of WMD, terrorism, and Iraq. One goal of the proposed pressure is to secure Syria’s accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is also revealed that Britain and Germany have warned the
European Commission, which recently completed technical discussions with Syria on a trade agreement, that they want to see stronger language in the proposed agreement on the topic of WMD.


22 December 2003
In the wake of Libya's repudiation of WMD, reports emerge that British Prime Minister Tony Blair has ordered British diplomats to negotiate with Syria and Iran on a handover of their alleged arsenals of chemical and biological weapons. A British diplomat is quoted as saying: "We are engaged in similar processes to those which got results in Libya. There is a lot going on behind the scenes and we are hopeful of progress."

-"Blair's bid to rid Iran and Syria of WMDs," The Daily Record (Scotland), 22 December 2003, p. 4, web.lemis—nexis.com.

19 December 2003
In a surprise development, Libya announces that it will join the Chemical Weapons Convention, destroy its existing stockpiles of chemical weapons, and end its pursuit of all WMD, and long—range missiles.


12 December 2003
US President George W. Bush signs the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act into law. He also issues a statement that his "approval of the act does not constitute my adoption of the various statements of policy in the act as US foreign policy."


9 December 2003
After five years of negotiations, Syrian and European negotiators reach an agreement in principle on an association accord. The chief EU negotiator, Mr. Christian Leffler notes: "Syria and the EU have reached an accord on all points, even the political ones." The next stage in the process is approval of the agreement by political authorities. A successful conclusion of the agreement is necessary for Syria's participation in efforts to create an EU—Mediterranean free trade area by 2010.


2 December 2003
Speaking at a conference organized by the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis and the Fletcher School's International Security Studies Program, US Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security John R. Bolton issues a warning to Syria and a number of other states. Mr Bolton says: "Rogue states such as Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya and Cuba, whose pursuit of weapons of mass destruction makes them hostile to US interests, will learn that their covert programs will not escape detection or consequences." He went on to warn: "[w]hile we will pursue diplomatic solutions whenever possible, the United States and its allies are also willing to deploy more robust techniques, such as the interdiction and seizure of illicit goods. If rogue states are not willing to follow the

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logic of nonproliferation norms, they must be prepared to face the logic of adverse consequences.


20 November 2003
The US House of Representatives votes 408 to 8 to accept the US Senate version of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.


13 November 2003
Syrian Information Minister Ahmad al—Hassan issues a statement in which he says: "Syria will not close the door on dialogue with the American administration, even if the hawks in that administration want to push for escalation in an unjustifiable way." This statement is the first direct response by a Syrian official to the US Senate's passage of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act.


12 November 2003
Responding to the US Senate's passage of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, Syria's Al—Baath newspaper observes, "those who want any useful dealings with Syria must understand that only dialogue can bear fruit."


11 November 2003
With an 89 to 4 vote, the US Senate passes the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. The bill was passed by the House of Representatives on 15 October 2003; the Senate version of the bill is slightly different. It includes a provision allowing the president to invoke a national security waiver asserting that it is in the US interest not to sanction Syria.


10 November 2003
The US Central Intelligence Agency submits its "Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions," for 1 January Through 30 June 2003 in accordance with S.721 of the FY1997 Intelligence Authorization Act. In respect to Syria, the report states that until June 2003, "Syria continued to seek CW—related expertise from foreign sources during the reporting period. Damascus already held a stockpile of the nerve agent sarin, but apparently tried to develop more toxic and persistent nerve agents. Syria remained dependent on foreign sources for key elements of its CW program, including precursor chemicals and key production equipment."

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30 October 2003
Mr. William J. Burns, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, provides written testimony to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in which he states: "Syria is fully committed to expanding and improving its chemical and biological weapons programs, which it believes serve as a deterrent to regional adversaries."
-Statement by Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs William J. Burns to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 30 October 2003, foreign.senate.gov.

30 October 2003
In testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Cofer Black, the State Department counter—terrorism coordinator, says: "[w]hile there is currently no information indicating that the Syrian government has transferred WMD to terrorist organizations or would permit such groups to acquire them, Syria's ties to numerous terrorist groups underlie the reasons for our continued attention."

28 October 2003
Speaking with reporters, General James R. Clapper Jr., head of the US National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA), suggests that evidence of Iraqi WMD programs was moved to Syria, and perhaps other countries, prior to the US invasion of March 2003. Describing his position as an educated hunch, Clapper notes that US intelligence tracked large numbers of Iraqi trucks moving into Syria in early 2003 and that these "may have been people leaving the scene, and unquestionably, I am sure, material."

17 October 2003
The Organization of the Islamic Conference concludes its tenth summit in the city of Putrajaya, Malaysia by issuing a special declaration denouncing "the American Congress' Accountability Act to impose unilateral sanctions on Syria."

16 October 2003
Speaking in Putrajaya, Malaysia, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher describes impending US moves to apply sanctions on Syria as inadmissable and unjustifiable.
15 October 2003
The US House of Representatives passes the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. The vote is 398 to 4. The bill requires the president to enact at least two of a possible six economic sanctions against Syria if Damascus fails to end its alleged support for terrorism and its suspected efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction.

10 October 2003
US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton gives a speech in London in which he links Syria with the so-called Axis of Evil. In his speech, Bolton accuses Syria of sponsoring terrorism and pursuing WMD. Bolton also included Libya and Cuba in the Axis of Evil.

8 October 2003
White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan indicates that the Bush administration has ended its two-year long opposition to passage of the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. In the US Congress, the House International Relations Committee approves the bill 33 to 2, freeing it for a vote in the House of Representatives. The bill has 275 co-sponsors in the House.

6 October 2003
Israeli aircraft bomb and destroy a facility 14 miles from Damascus that is described as a training facility for Islamic Jihad terrorists. This is the first raid on Syria by Israeli forces since 1982.

3 October 2003
Responding to reporters' questions, the head of the US Iraq Survey Group (ISG), David Kay, says that the group has "multiple reports from Iraqis of substances being moved across borders." Kay further notes that there were movements of Iraqi military and scientific officials to Syria and Jordan before and immediately after the beginning of the war. Kay also says that the ISG does not know if any of these movements were directly related to Iraqi WMD programs.
-Justin Cole, "Kay says Iraqi WMD may have been moved abroad," Agence France Presse, 3 October 2003, web.lexis—nexis.com.

16 September 2003
US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton gives testimony before Congress in which he describes Syria’s arsenal of chemical weapons as the largest in the Arab world. Mr. Bolton
also indicates that the United States is continuing to investigate rumors that Iraq transferred its WMD to Syria prior to the US invasion in March 2003, which he describes as unconfirmed but a cause for concern.


**July 2003**

A senior Israeli defense source claims that "at least 100 Syrian long-range ballistic missiles, equipped with VX" are aimed at Israel.


**31 May 2003**

US President George Bush announces a new effort to combat weapons of mass destruction (WMD) called the Proliferation Security Initiative. The goal is to work with other concerned states to develop new means to disrupt the proliferation trade at sea, in the air, and on land. The initiative reflects the need for a more dynamic, proactive approach to the global proliferation problem. It envisions partnerships of states working in concert, employing their national capabilities to develop a broad range of legal, diplomatic, economic, military, and other tools to interdict threatening shipments of WMD and missile—related equipment and technologies.


**3 May 2003**

US Secretary of State Colin Powell visits Damascus to discuss US—Syria relations and US concerns regarding Syria's support of terrorism and pursuit of WMD. Speaking with reporters prior to his meeting with Syrian President Bashar Assad, Secretary Powell dismisses a Syrian proposal to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction labeling the proposal "political." He says; "It has always been a US goal that conditions should be created in this part of the world where no nation would have a need for weapons of mass destruction." "I am not supportive at the moment of a particular declaration that might be put forward for political purposes or to highlight the issue."


**28 April 2003**

Speaking at a press conference in the Hague, US Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control Stephen Rademaker says: "[t]he US strongly supports universality and we are concerned about states not party to the Convention (for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) like Syria, Libya and North Korea that have an active chemical weapons program." Asked about Syria, Mr. Rademaker says that he would "absolutely" support a mission by the OPCW's director to convince Damascus to join the Convention.


**17 April 2003**

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq al—Sharaa says that Syria will not allow inspections of its military arsenal and...
territory in order to refute US accusations of chemical weapons possession. The minister is speaking after a meeting in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. He further states that Syria "will only contribute, with its [Arab] brothers and the countries of the whole world, to transforming the middle east into a region devoid of all weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological or nuclear." This statement further underlines the Syrian position that all WMD issues in the region need to be addressed at the same time, including Israel's possession of WMD, rather than on a case by case basis.


16 April 2003
On behalf of the 22—state Arab League, Syria introduces a draft resolution in the UN Security Council calling for all states in the region to join all three anti—WMD treaties: the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).


15 April 2003
Speaking on French television, France's European Affairs Minister Noelle Lenoir says that France does not have any proof to support US accusations against Syria. The minister adds: "the world is dangerous enough, without our targeting one country or another on the question of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction." The statement is made in response to claims made by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that Syria has tested chemical weapons in the previous 15 months.

"France has no proof that Syria tested chemical weapons — Minister," *AFX European Focus*, 15 April 2003, web.lexis—nexis.com.

15 April 2003
Speaking in Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher responds to a reporter's question about proposed US sanctions on Syria related to that country's alleged pursuit of chemical weapons with the following statement: "Egypt rejects all threats against an Arab state." He also says: "we feel threats are not an appropriate way of dealing with a problem, if there really is one." Responding to speculation that the US might be considering military action against Syria now that it has concluded the initial conquest of Iraq, Maher says: "Arab countries and the international community are unanimous on [the need] to avoid what happened in Iraq being repeated once again."


14 April 2003
Speaking with reporters, Osama al—Baz, a close adviser of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, states that there is "a great difference between Syria and Iraq under Saddam Hussein." He adds that Egypt is sure that Syria does not have chemical weapons.


Related content is available on the website for the Nuclear Threat Initiative, www.nti.org.
13 April 2003
In a briefing to reporters at the White House US President George W. Bush says: "we believe there are chemical weapons in Syria." He also warns that "we expect cooperation" from Syria in respect to this and other issues such as Iraq.
"Bush says Syria has chemical weapons, country must cooperate over Iraq," AFX European Focus, 13 April 2003, web.lexis—nexis.com.

10 April 2003
The CIA releases its unclassified "Biannual Report on WMD Proliferation." It repeats previous assessments that Syria possesses a stockpile of weaponized sarin and is pursuing the development of other more lethal and persistent CW agents.

9 April 2003
US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton tells a press conference in Rome, "I think Syria is a good case where I hope that they will conclude that the chemical weapons program...that they have been pursuing are things that they should give up...It is a wonderful opportunity for Syria to forswear the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction..."

7 April 2003
It is revealed that the United Kingdom exported unspecified "toxic chemical precursors" to Syria in 2000 and 2001 that could be used for the manufacture of chemical weapons despite the existence of tight export controls on such materials.
"UK said to have sold chemical, night vision equipment to Syria," Jerusalem Post, 7 April 2003, p. 7.

5—6 April 2003
It is alleged that during the night of 5 to 6 April 2003, Saddam Hussein’s entire chemical weapons arsenal, which reportedly includes hundreds of artillery rockets for truck mounted Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), travels from Tikrit in Iraq to eastern Syria. Reportedly the weapons are subsequently stored near the town of Kamishli (Al—Qamishli), a town on the Syria — Turkey border.
[This report has been included for completeness but should be treated as of uncertain value pending more substantial confirmation.]

March 2003
Sources in Jerusalem claim that Britain has informed Israel that it has warned Syrian President Bashar al—Assad not to store Iraq’s WMD in his country or cause an escalation along the Lebanese border with Hizballah’s help. The warning was relayed to Bashar al—Assad by a special British emissary several days prior.

Related content is available on the website for the Nuclear Threat Initiative, www.nti.org.
"Israeli Political Sources: UK Warned Syria Not To Hide Iraqi WMD, Heat Up Border," GMP20030320000181

23 December 2002
During a television appearance, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon says: "[w]e believe that biological and chemical weapons that Saddam Hussein wanted hidden were transferred to Syria." The Prime Minister subsequently indicated that this information had not yet been confirmed. In Iraq UNMOVIC inspectors continue their efforts to verify Iraqi declarations on the status of its WMD programs.

June 2002
Syria is preparing to begin serial production of an extended range version of the Scud—C ballistic missile. The missile is believed to be fitted with a warhead specially designed to accommodate biological or chemical warfare agents that separates from the missile after engine cutoff.

6 May 2002
US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton delivers a speech in which he draws attention to Syria's possession of weapons of mass destruction and its ties to terrorist groups.

18 April 2002
In the US Senate, Senators Barbara Boxer (D—CA) and Rick Santorum (R—PA) introduce the Syria Accountability Act of 2002 (S 2215). The act states that "the government of Syria should halt the development and deployment of short— and medium—range ballistic missiles and cease the development and production of biological and chemical weapons." The act would make it US policy that "Syria's acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs threaten the security of the Middle East and the national interests of the United States." Sanctions are also provided for in the act.
-The CBW Conventions Bulletin, No. 56 (June 2002), p. 44.

9 March 2002
The Los Angeles Times prints extracts from the classified "Nuclear Posture Review," which was submitted to the Congress in January 2002. The review states that US nuclear weapons could be used in three types of situation: against targets able to withstand non—nuclear attack; in retaliation for attacks with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons; or "in the event of surprising military developments." The review also includes a list of seven countries against which US nuclear weapons could be used, including Syria.
December 2001
US officials state that if Syria has not "already weaponized a VX warhead, they are pretty close."

1 July 2001
Syria tests a Scud—B missile fitted with a simulated chemical warhead. The missile was fired from Haleb in northern Syria, traveling to a target area 300km away in southern Syria.

January 2001
US Defense Secretary William Cohen releases the third edition of "Proliferation: Threat and Response," which includes a section describing Syrian CW capabilities. Syria is said to have a stockpile of sarin and to be developing VX.

11 October 2000
Jane's Defense Weekly publishes an article on the topic of Syria's alleged chemical weapons programs that draws on Israeli and US sources. Unnamed US Department of Defense officials are quoted as saying: "if they [Syria] haven't already weaponized a VX warhead, they are pretty close." The article also repeats claims that Syria flight—tested a Scud—B missile fitted with a warhead designed to disperse VX nerve agent in early 1998. [This article is the latest in a series of reports quoting Israeli sources alleging that Syria has deployed or is about to deploy VX nerve agent on missiles aimed at Israel: see May 1995, May 1998].

20 October 2000
The Director—General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Jose Bustani, addresses the UN General Assembly and calls upon Middle East nations to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention. In response, the Syrian delegate draws attention to the threat posed to his nation by Israeli nuclear weapons.
-The CBW Conventions Bulletin, No. 50 (December 2000), pp. 43—44.

July 2000
The UK government publishes its third annual report on Strategic Export Controls, which reveals that export licenses for Australia Group chemicals were issued for destinations in Syria and at least 54 other countries.
**1999-1990**

**Late October 1999**
The Syrian Air Force conducts a chemical weapons test using an unidentified live agent dropped from a MiG—23 fighter—bomber.

**September 1999**
Israeli Intelligence Chief Amos Malka states that "[T]he Syrians are manufacturing and developing more ground-to-ground missiles, and I think we have to suppose that they also have chemical weapons."

**July 1998**
Israeli intelligence sources allege that Syria is about to locally produce quantities of VX agent. The item also alleges, though without providing details, that Syria has previously received VX from foreign sources.

**June 1998**
A senior Israeli military intelligence officer tells the Knesset Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security that Syria continues to manufacture Scud C missiles and will soon have the capability to make VX nerve agent.

**19 May 1998**
Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai briefs the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee that Syrian long-range, ground-to-ground missiles, including the Scud C, have been equipped with VX nerve agent, which Mordechai said changes the strategic balance between Israel and Syria.

**May 1998**
Israeli sources claim, apparently on the basis of satellite images, that Syria has carried out a live agent test of VX mounted on a Scud-C missile.

**May 1998**
Israeli military intelligence sources claim that Syria has moved two Scud-C units, believed to be equipped with chemical warheads, into the Damascus region. Reference is also made to Syria efforts to develop "novichok," which can supposedly be produced using unrestricted chemicals.

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April 1998
A description is provided of one of Syria's alleged CW production facilities near the city of Homs. It is co-located with a large petro-chemical facility.

September 1997
US Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) officials claim that Syria will begin producing chemical bomblets for Scud-C missiles at a new facility near Damascus within months. The facility is described by Israeli intelligence officials as co-located with the Centre D'Etudes et de Recherche Scientifique. The current Syrian arsenal is described as being composed of unitary chemical warheads. It is also claimed that Scud-B missiles have been fitted with VX warheads since 1979-1982. [Note: Passage is unclear and may simply refer to the missiles rather than the warheads.]

2 May 1997
President Assad states that if Israel will rid itself of nuclear weapons, Arab states will be ready to get rid of other weapons. This statement is widely regarded as an oblique confirmation of the possession of chemical weapons.

29 April 1997
The Chemical Weapons Convention enters into force. Syria remains outside the regime.

April 1997
Israeli officials claim that, with Russian assistance, Syria has begun to produce VX nerve agent and is in the initial stages of preparing missiles warheads to deliver the agent. Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai states that he has discussed this development with the US and UK governments. The Israeli claims are vigorously denied by Syrian sources, which respond that Israeli is attempting to distract attention from its hard-line on peace negotiations.

22 November 1996
Syria's CW stockpile is described as comprising thousands of aerial bombs filled with chemical agents and between 100 and 200 chemical warheads for Scud-B and Scud-C surface-to-surface missiles.

September 1996
Western and Israeli Intelligence sources reveal that Syria has received at least two consignments of material for the manufacture of chemical weapons through the Greek Cypriot port of Limassol. The two consignments apparently originated in Russia and Cuba. However, it is believed that several Western European companies have

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also sent material to Syria via the same route.


6 June 1996
Responding to allegations that Syria is constructing a chemical weapons production facility, the Minister of Information, Dr. Muhammad Salman, neither confirms nor denies the report. He says, "Syria is entitled to possess any weapons it deems necessary to face up to its enemies."


June 1996
Syria is building a chemical weapons factory in Aleppo, according to the German weekly magazine Stern, which states that US intelligence officials have passed satellite imagery of the plant to their German counterparts, who are now investigating possible German industrial involvement in the Syrian project.


June 1996
In Germany, the managing director of Rose GmbH, Mr. Hans-Joachim Rose, is reported to be under investigation by German authorities for possible involvement in the Syrian chemical weapons program. Mr. Rose is already on trial for illegally exporting chemical equipment to Libya.


October 1995
In Russia, the former chairman of the Presidential Committee on CBW Convention Problems, Lt-Gen Anatoliy Kuntsevich, is under criminal investigation in connection with the export of CW-related chemicals to the Middle East. According to the FSS, General Kuntsevich had sold 815 kilograms to Syria in 1993; and the FSS had blocked a further 5-ton shipment in 1994. The chemical is later identified as methylphosphonyl dichloride, a nerve agent precursor.


September 1995
The Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies in Israel describes Syria's CW capabilities as follows: personal protective equipment and Soviet-type unit decontamination equipment; stockpiles of various CW agents including mustard gas and the nerve agents sarin and VX (the latter "unconfirmed"); chemically filled aerial bombs and chemical warheads for surface-to-surface missiles.


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May 1995
Dany Shoham, of the Begin-al-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, asserts that Syria produces hundreds of tons of chemical weapons a year, chiefly sarin and VX. These agents have been loaded into thousands of aircraft bombs that can be delivered by the Sukhoi-22, Sukhoi-24, and MiG-23 aircraft possessed by Syria. Syria also has, so the newspaper reporting continues, 100-200 CW warheads for its Scud-B missiles.

June 1994
In the US Congress, a study of potential military countermeasures against nuclear and CBW weapons proliferation is published by the Congressional Research Service. It includes Syria in a list of 12 states that probably possess chemical weapons.

April 1994
Concern is expressed that North Korea is assisting Syria in the development of chemical and biological weapons and warheads.

2 November 1993
In Germany, Federal Economics Ministry official Hans Dieter Hermann, addressing a meeting of experts in Frankfurt, states that there are chemical weapons programs in Syria and that it is urgently attempting to set up its own production plants.
—Deutsche Press Association from Frankfurt, 1642 hrs GMT 2 November 1993, as translated from the German in JPRS-TND-93-036, 17 November 1993, p. 44.

14 September 1993
In the US House of Representatives, Representative Tom Lantos, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights, releases a staff compilation of information on "400 companies from 40 countries that have supplied goods and production equipment with dual civilian and military applications" to Libya, Syria, Iran, and North Korea.

16 June 1993
US Defense Secretary Les Aspin, in a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, speaking of the growing challenge faced by Israel from ballistic missiles with nuclear or CBW warheads notes that Syria has

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chemical weapons and is seeking long-range missiles.

May 1993
Syria has reportedly received assistance from North Korea in the development of its chemical weapons capabilities beginning in the late 1980s.

April 1993
Syria is described as possessing the largest and most advanced chemical warfare program in the Arab world. Syria is reported to have begun to produce tube and rocket artillery rounds filled with mustard type blister agents. Syria is also reported to be seeking assistance from Chinese and Western companies in the development of more advanced chemical warheads.

January 1993
In Moscow, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service presents a report, "New Challenge after the 'Cold War': Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction." The 130-page report includes an account of WMD programs at various stages of development in 16 countries, including the Syrian CW program.

1993
A declassified Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report, Chemical Warfare Assessments Syria, claims Syria began developing chemical weapons in the 1970s. This is the only reference to Syria’s indigenous efforts beginning so early and is at odds with a 1990 DIA report, Offensive Chemical Warfare Programs in the Middle East which claimed indigenous production efforts only began in the 1980s.

December 1992
At the Paris Conference, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Ash-Shar declares that Syria will not sign the Chemical Weapons Convention "because it will not agree to be exposed to the non-conventional threat from Israel."

September 1992
Jane's Foreign Report describes Syria as possessing two underground chemical weapons production facilities, one near the village of Safiya (Al-Safira), and the other on the main road to Damascus south of Homs. The report alleges that these facilities were constructed with the aid of West German companies and operated with East
German technical assistance. They are supplied with precursors from India and have recently begun to produce VX nerve agent. Production had previously focused on mustard.

**September 1992**
According to unidentified Israeli sources quoted by the Paris newsletter Middle East Defense News, in May 1992, the Syrian CW stockpile was estimated at "several thousand aerial bombs, filled mostly with sarin," and 50 to 100 ballistic missile warheads. Syria is described as being capable of producing several hundred tons of CW agents per year. Three chemical weapon production sites are identified, one located just north of Damascus, and the second near the industrial city of Homs. The third, in Hama, is believed to be producing VX nerve agent in addition to sarin and tabun while Israeli intelligence is reported to be monitoring several additional "suspicious sites."

**September 1992**
Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur speaks during a radio interview of the threat posed by Syrian production of chemical weapons, stating that Israel will continue to take action to stop it. "There is no need to panic, but we—those in charge of the defense establishment—must certainly view this with utmost seriousness," he says.
—IDF Radio (Tel Aviv), 0600 hrs GMT 25 September 1992, as translated from the Hebrew in FBIS-NES-92-188, 28 September 1992, p. 27.

**July 1992**
At the prompting of the German foreign ministry, authorities in Cyprus stop a German freighter en route to Syria, ordering it to return its cargo to India. The cargo includes 25 containers of the nerve agent precursor trimethyl phosphite, for which the German shippers had not obtained an export license. This is the second half of a $200,000 order placed with an Indian company, United Phosphorus Limited. It is claimed that the chemical is intended for production of the pesticide DDVP.

**30 May 1992**
A 45-ton shipment of the nerve gas precursor trimethyl phosphite arrives from India at the premises of Damascus-based Setma Ltd. corporation.

**April 1992**
A Syrian MiG-23 fighter-bomber makes the first test of dropping a VX bomb north of Damascus.

**22 January 1992**
Addressing a U.S. Senate committee, Director of Central Intelligence Robert Gates states that Syria "apparently is
seeking assistance from China and Western firms for an improved capability with chemical warheads."

15 January 1992
In the U.S. Senate, Director of Central Intelligence Robert Gates testifies on proliferation questions and mentions the existence of a chemical weapons program in Syria.

Early 1992
Syria allegedly test-fires chemical warheads.

December 1991
Israeli Chief of Staff Ehud Baraq tells an audience of leading Israeli industrialists in Tel Aviv that the chemical weapons capability of Syria is larger than that of Iraq.

October 1991
Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, speaking at a meeting in Beersheba, says that Syria possesses the world’s third-largest arsenal of chemical weapons.
—IDF Radio (Tel Aviv), 1500 hrs GMT 27 October 1991, as translated from the Hebrew in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts 30 October 1991 via FT Profile.

March 1991
Syria has recently started to produce VX nerve agent according to unidentified intelligence sources quoted in the Washington Times.

March 1991
Director of US Naval Intelligence Rear-Admiral Thomas Brooks names Syria as one of 14 states that probably possesses chemical weapons.
—Statement of Rear Admiral Thomas A Brooks, USN, Director of Naval Intelligence, before the Seapower, Strategic, and Critical Materials Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, on Intelligence Issues, 7 March 1991, pp. 56-59.

23 November 1990
President George Bush meets with Syrian President Hafez Assad in Geneva and claims that Syria has equipped its stockpile of SS-21 missiles with chemical warheads.
17 July 1990
Israeli Air Force commander Major-General Avihu Bin-Nun seeks to minimize the significance of the threat posed to Israel by Syrian chemical weapons. He notes that Syria did not use chemical weapons in 1973 even though its Army had been defeated and Israeli forces had advanced to within 41 kilometers of Damascus. This represents the first official open source support of claims that Syria possessed chemical weapons in 1973.

March 1990
Director of US Naval Intelligence Rear-Admiral Thomas Brooks names Syria as one of 12 third world states that has either achieved or is developing CW capabilities.

February 1990
Israeli reserve Brigadier-General Aharon Levran claims that Syria has now equipped several of its Scud missiles with chemical warheads.

16 January 1990
A US Congressional Research Service publication notes that prior to the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's announcement, the Army Intelligence Agency included Syria in the list of countries suspected of possessing chemical weapons or being in the process of acquiring them.

1990
A classified Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report claims Syria has two chemical munitions storage depots, at Khan Abu Shamat and Furqlus. It also claims that the Centre D'Etude et Recherche Scientifique, near Damascus, is Syria's primary chemical weapons research facility.

**22 February 1989**

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, the US Director of Naval Intelligence, Rear-Admiral Thomas Brooks, describes Syria as a country that has obtained or is developing CW capabilities.


**9 February 1989**

In testimony before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, CIA Director William Webster states, "Syria is stockpiling a variety of chemical warfare agents for various battlefield missions [and] producing and amassing a variety of munitions that can be used as delivery systems for chemical agents...Syria has nerve agents in some weapon systems."

—William Webster, Prepared Testimony, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, 9 February 1989, p. 5.

**1989**

China sells Syria over 11,000 MF-11 gas masks. The exact date of the sale or the delivery remains unspecified.


**December 1988**

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy publishes a report stating that Syria received a small number of chemical weapons from Egypt prior to the 1973 Middle East war.


**24 March 1988**

Colonel-General Vladmir K. Pikalov, chief of the Soviet Union's Chemical Troops, visits Syria and holds meetings with the defense minister, the commander in chief, and the deputy chief of staff of the Syrian armed forces. The purpose of the visit is reportedly to express the USSR's displeasure over the Syrian pursuit of chemical weapons in the wake of controversy generated by the Halabja incident in Iraq.


**4 August 1987**

The United States adds eight more chemicals to the list of precursors banned from export to Syria.


**2 December 1986**

Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin tells parliament, "we are aware that Syria is armed with chemical weapons—artillery shells, bombs, and ground-to-ground missile warheads...including nerve gas." He also states that Syria is engaged in the production of gas carrying bombs.


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7 August 1986
Syria is reported to be helping the Iranian CW program, which is described as much smaller than the Syrian program.

7 August 1986
In a speech before Israel's National Defense College, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres announces that Syria is spending large sums to acquire surface-to-surface missiles and to develop chemical warheads. This publicly reported statement represents a change in Israeli policy, which had previously censored all mention of Syrian chemical weapons capabilities.

5 June 1986
The United States bans the sale of eight chemical precursors to Syria.

Early 1986
Unidentified US officials describe Syria's chemical weapons capabilities as including domestically produced sarin.

1985
US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith indicates that Syria has a production capability for nerve agents.
—Tom Diaz, "Syria said to have offered chemical weapons to Iran," Washington Times, 9 December 1985, p. 4.

15 September 1983
A U.S. Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) asserts that Syria is "a major recipient of Soviet CW assistance, [and] probably has the most advanced chemical warfare capability in the Arab world, with the possible exception of Egypt. Both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union provided the chemical agents, delivery systems, and training that flowed to Syria. As long as this support is forthcoming, there is no need for Syria to develop an indigenous capability to produce CW agents or materiel, and none has been identified."

Note: This intelligence assessment is potentially at odds with later assessments that Syria obtained its initial CW capability through Egypt. Additionally it should be noted that there is no direct reference to the size of the Syrian CW arsenal although the clear implication is that it is not insignificant.

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1983
Syria receives a shipment of corrosion-resistant glass vessels and pipes and other lab equipment apparently destined for a Damascus Research facility. The materials, imported from Germany, have the potential to be used for the production of chemical weapons agents.

Late 1982
The Syrian leadership decides to build an indigenous chemical weapons capability.

June 1982
Syria suffers a major defeat by Israeli forces in Lebanon, including the destruction of air-force and air-defense network.

February 1982
There are unsubstantiated claims by Amnesty International that Syrian forces employ cyanide gas during the suppression of Moslem brotherhood in Hama.

1979-1982
It is claimed that Scud-B missiles have been fitted with VX warheads since 1979-1982.

October 1973
Syria suffers a major defeat by Israel in the Yom Kippur war. Some reports indicate that Israeli forces capture samples of Syrian chemical weapons.

Late 1972-Mid-1973
Egypt supplies Syria with weaponized CW in preparation for Yom Kippur War. The shipment is variously described as mustard and sarin or mustard only.

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17 December 1968
Syria accedes to the 1925 Geneva Protocol.