

U.S. State Department Postpones Meeting With Russia on Syria

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 27, 2013



Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov wrote on his Twitter blog Tuesday that Moscow regrets the United State's decision to postpone the meeting.

The U.S. State Department has postponed the meeting between Russian and U.S. diplomats to discuss preparations for the Geneva peace conference on Syria that had been scheduled for Wednesday.

An unnamed U.S. official said the talks had been put off while the United States tries to find out whether an alleged chemical attack in a suburb of Damascus last Wednesday was ordered by President Bashar Assad's regime or by the rebels, The Associated Press reported Tuesday.

Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford had planned to discuss what to do next in Syria with their Russian colleagues in a meeting at The Hague.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov wrote on his Twitter blog Tuesday that Moscow regrets the United State's decision.

"Working out the parameters of a political settlement in Syria would be exceptionally useful right now, when military action looms over the country," Gatilov wrote.

A State Department spokesperson said that although talks had been postponed, the U.S. remains dedicated to organizing a conference with Russia and other countries.

The U.S. accused the Syrian authorities of using chemical weapons against rebels in a suburb of Damascus on Aug. 21. Rebels said that about 1,600 people died in the attack, while international organization Doctors Without Borders put the figure at 355.

Syrian authorities denied the accusations against them and in return accused the rebels of orchestrating the attack.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged restraint in reaction to the news from Syria and called for a thorough investigation of any reports concerning the possible use of chemical weapons.

A UN inspection team Monday visited the suburb where the attack supposedly took place, but came under fire from snipers.

Their report could set the course for further action in the war-torn country, where at least 100,000 human lives have been claimed during the three-year civil war.

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