

Russia Is Source of Syrian Chemical Weapons, U.S. Defense Secretary Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said that Russia was a supplier of chemical weapons to Syria and the armed forces commanded by President Bashar Assad.

"There's no secret that the Assad regime has had chemical weapons, significant stockpiles of chemical weapons," Hagel said Wednesday in testimony to the foreign affairs committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Pressed by a representative to name specific countries, Hagel said "The Russians supply them, others are supplying them with those chemical weapons, they make some themselves."

He did not provide further details.

Hagel was speaking alongside U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, on the second day of formal hearings in Congress

on whether to authorize President Barack Obama to take military action against Syria in response to the apparent use of chemical weapons in the conflict there.

The United States has said an attack on Aug. 21 with chemical weapons was perpetrated by Syrian government forces loyal to Assad.

The Syrian regime has denied the allegations, and Russia has said it is not convinced by U.S. arguments to support its assertion.

But a Russian military expert dismissed Hagel's allegations about Russia.

"The Pentagon chief's statement is a blatant lie like the notorious test tube with anthrax from the arsenal of Saddam Hussein that then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell was shaking in the Security Council," said Igor Korotchenko, a member of the public council under the Russian Defense Ministry and the chief editor of the National Defense magazine.

Korotchenko was apparently referring to an incident in 2003 when Powell demonstrated a model test tube of anthrax to show the supposed power of the Iraqi regime's biological weapons. However, a U.S.-led survey was unable to locate WMD stockpiles in Iraq.

"The United States has powerful and effective special services, and Hagel could have turned to them to obtain comprehensive information that the Russian Federation has never supplied weapons of mass destruction to anyone, even its closest allies," Korotchenko said.

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