

Obama Calls Russian Proposal for Syria 'Potentially Positive'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. President Barack Obama has said that a Russian initiative to put Syrian chemical arms under international supervision is potentially positive but cautioned that it could be an attempt to stall U.S. military action against Syria.

"This represents a potentially positive development," Obama said in an interview with NBC on Monday, adding that it should be taken "with a grain of salt initially."

Obama, who is seeking to persuade the U.S. lawmakers to endorse White House plans for a "limited" military strike on Syria, pledged to take the Russian proposal seriously and said he had asked U.S. State Secretary John Kerry to explore together with the Russian side the possibility of a deal with Bashar Assad's regime.

In another of six television interviews he gave on Monday, Obama told PBS that he welcomed any genuine effort to find a diplomatic solution for the Syrian crisis.

"If we can exhaust these diplomatic efforts and come up with a formula that gives the international community a verifiable, enforceable mechanism to deal with these chemical weapons in Syria, then I'm all for it," he said.

Obama warned, however, against attempts to derail the U.S. push to apply pressure on the Syrian regime, which has been accused of an alleged Aug. 21 chemical weapons attack on rebels that reportedly killed over 1,400 people.

"We don't want just a stalling or delaying tactic to put off the pressure [on Syria]," he said.

"We have to maintain this pressure, which is why I'll still be speaking to the nation tomorrow [on Tuesday] about why I think this is so important," he emphasized.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said Monday that a crucial vote on authorizing use of force in Syria would be delayed until Obama presents "his case to the Senate and the American people."

The U.S. Senate was earlier expected to vote on Syrian action on Wednesday.

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