

Russia Sends Armored Trucks to Assad to Transport Toxins

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia has sent 25 armored trucks and 50 other vehicles to Syria to help transport toxins that are to be destroyed under an international agreement to rid the nation of its chemical arsenal, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Monday.

In a report to President Vladimir Putin, Shoigu said Russian aircraft delivered 50 Kamaz trucks and 25 Ural armored trucks to the Syrian port city of Latakia from Dec. 18 to 20, along with other equipment, RIA Novosti reported.

Western powers have balked at Syria's request for military transport equipment to transport chemical weapons material to Latakia because of concerns it could be used to fight Assad's opponents in the conflict or kill civilians.

"The Defense Ministry has very swiftly implemented actions to deliver to Syria equipment and materiel to provide for the removal of Syrian chemical weapons and their destruction,"

Shoigu said.

Syria has agreed to abandon its chemical weapons under a deal proposed by Russia to avert potential U.S. military action after a deadly Aug. 21 sarin gas attack the U.S. blamed on President Bashar Assad's government.

Damascus agreed to transport the "most critical" chemicals, including about 20 tons of mustard nerve agent, out of the northern port of Latakia by Dec. 31 to be safely destroyed abroad away from the war zone.

Russia has been a major seller of conventional weapons to Syria and has given Assad crucial support during the conflict, blocking attempts to punish with sanctions and saying his exit must not be a precondition for a peace process.

Syrian government forces took control of a key highway connecting Damascus to the coast earlier this month, but the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has voiced concern the deadline could be missed.

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