

First Load of Chemical Weapons Removed From Syria

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The first consignment of chemical weapons has left the Syrian port of Latakia on a Danish cargo vessel.

"The removal of the first consignment of priority chemicals from the Syrian Arab Republic took place today," the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, or OPCW, said in a statement on its website Tuesday.

Removal of the most dangerous chemicals is part of a UN-backed deal proposed by Russia following a sarin gas attack in war-torn Syria in August.

"The chemicals were transported from two sites and loaded onto a Danish vessel which left the port of Latakia," the OPCW statement said.

The vessel has been accompanied by naval escorts provided by Denmark and Norway, as well

as Syria, Reuters reported.

The removal had been scheduled to take place by Dec. 31, but it was delayed due to Syria's ongoing civil war, technical issues and poor weather conditions. Under the deal, Syria's chemical arsenal is to be eliminated by the middle of 2014.

In a further development on the Syria crisis, Russia and the U.S. have agreed to keep up diplomatic efforts to bring the conflict to an end.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will meet on Jan. 13 in Paris to discuss Iran's possible role in the upcoming Syrian peace talk, an unidentified Russian diplomat said Tuesday.

UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said earlier that Lavrov and Kerry will hopefully reach an agreement on Iran's possible participation in a so-called Geneva 2 peace conference in Montreux, Switzerland, on Jan. 22.

US officials said this week that Iran could be able to play a helpful role in the peace talks from the sidelines.

No official invitation has been sent to Tehran yet.

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