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Russia Leads World in Chemical Weapons Reduction

By The Moscow Times

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Russia has disposed of over 90 percent of its chemical weapons stockpiles since starting the process in 1997, making it the world leader in chemical weapons reduction, Russia's senior chemical weapons control official told news agency Interfax on Monday.

"As of July 13, Russia has destroyed 35,972 of 39,967 tons of its existing stocks of chemical warfare agents," said Colonel General Valery Kapashin, the head of the government's Federal Agency for the Safe Storage and Destruction of Chemical Weapons, Interfax reported.

The destruction of Cold War chemical weapons stockpiles, mandated by the 1997 convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, has proven to be an intensive and arduous process. Both Russia and the U.S. were supposed to eliminate their entire chemical arsenals by 2012, but missed the deadline.

Russia is now inching toward completion of the project. Two of its seven chemical weapons storage facilities have been closed, and four more will be closed by the end of this year.

The final site will be closed sometime after 2015, Kapashin was quoted as saying.

The U.S. has destroyed nearly 90 percent of its 30,500 ton chemical arsenal, and is still planning how to best dispose of the remaining 2,700 tons, the U.S. government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in 2014.

According to a 2001 Arms Control Association report, 80 percent of the weapons stored at Russia's facilities were nerve agents such as the hyper-toxic sarin and VX nerve gasses — some of the most deadly chemical agents ever devised, capable of killing with just a few drops.

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