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Kremlin Labels Reports on Syrian Gas Attack 'Hatchet Job'

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The Kremlin has denounced claims that toxic gas had been used in the Syrian region close to a downed Russian helicopter, calling the reports a “hatchet job,” the RIA Novosti news agency reported Tuesday.

The Reuters news agency reported on Tuesday that containers of toxic gas had been dropped on a Syria town close to the crash site of the Mi-8 military helicopter.

The Syria Civil Defence, a group which describes itself as a local volunteer organization, claimed that the gas had affected 33 people in the town of Saraqib, in the rebel-held Syrian province of Idlib. The group released an unverified video online which allegedly shows people struggling to breath after the toxic attack, Reuters reported.

The group was unable to determine the type of the gas, its spokesman said.

A Russian Mi-8 helicopter was
shot down over rebel territory near Saraqib on Monday, killing all five people on board.
The helicopter was attacked while it was returning to a Russian air base after what the Kremlin claims was a humanitarian mission.

No group has claimed responsibility for downing Mi-8 so far.

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