
RUSSIA CLAIMS IT HAS ALREADY ELIMINATED ITS CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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Russia has claimed that the country finished eliminating its chemical arsenal last year, in response to a new U.S. demand that Moscow allow chemical weapons inspectors into the country after the poisoning of a Russian ex-spy.

Russia eliminated its chemical arsenal "under strict international control in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on August 13.

The ministry claimed in its statement that the United States, not Russia, is now the "only participant in the Chemical Weapons Convention that has significant reserves of military-grade toxic substances."

For that reason, it said the U.S. insistence on Russia allowing inspections "appears especially hypocritical."

The United States last week said it would expand sanctions against Russia if it does not allow inspectors from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to confirm that it no longer has chemical weapons within 90 days of an August 22 deadline.

The U.S. demand was triggered under a 1991 U.S. law governing incidents involving the use of chemical and biological weapons. The law was applied against North Korea in March, for example, after leader Kim Jong Un's brother was killed with the chemical agent VX in Malaysia last year.

Russia: U.S. 'Undermines' Inspectors' Authority

The United States, Britain, and other Western allies have accused the Russian government of being responsible for the near-fatal poisoning in March of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia with a military-grade nerve agent, Novichok, in the English city of Salisbury.

Months after the Skripal incident, another English couple fell ill from exposure to Novichok contained in a perfume bottle they found discarded near Salisbury, in an incident British police believe is connected to the Skripal poisonings.

While both Skripals were released after a slow and painful recovery in a Salisbury hospital, the second woman who was exposed to the Novichok died shortly afterwards. Her partner, who found the perfume bottle and unknowingly gave it to her, is recovering.

Russia has repeatedly denied that it was involved in either of the nerve-agent incidents in England. Western nations say that Novichok was originally developed in the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In an announcement last September, months before the Skripal incident, Russia said that it had finished eliminating its chemical arsenal more than two years ahead of schedule.

The Russian ministry said on August 13 that the U.S. demand for new inspections "undermines the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, with which Russia in the closest possible way collaborated in fulfilling its national program for the elimination of chemical weapons."

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-claims-already-eliminated-chemical-weapons-skripal-case-new-opcw-inspections-us-demand-sanctions/29431586.html>

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