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Syrian Rebels Near Chemical Weapons Cache

By Jason Ditz

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Syrian rebel fighters seized the town of al-Safira overnight, a relatively anonymous suburb of Aleppo like many others that are constantly changing hands back and forth as the rebels and government fight over Aleppo, once Syria's financial and industrial capital.



The loss of Safira is drawing attention however because of its location near a large number of government weapons-making factories, and, according to intelligence sources, what is believed to be the single largest cache of chemical weapons in the nation.

This could be a game-changer in a number of ways, not the least of which is that Syrian rebel factions have shown a willingness to use their own crude chemical weapons in the civil war and might well do a lot more damage with real, modern chemical arms.

The bigger question is whether this will precipitate a US military intervention against the rebels, who they have been openly backing for quite some time. In February it was reported that the US was “poised” to carry out attacks in the Aleppo Governate to keep the cache from falling into rebel hands, fearing the weapons would not only be used internally by the rebels, but could be turned on Israel and other neighboring countries as well, destabilizing the whole region.