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Assad: Syria to Give Up Control of Chemical Arms

By Jason Ditz

September 12, 2013

After facing down a rival French plan that included a UN authorization for military action against Syria, the tide seems to be turning decisively in favor of the Russian version, with Syrian President Bashar Assad and the Obama Administration both throwing support behind it. Hours later, Syria confirmed that it has now ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention obliging them to renounce use of the weapons and move toward their dismantlement.

Assad is said to have given an interview to Russian television announcing his intention to cede control of the arms to the international community. He will reportedly endorse the Russian plan, and say that it was Russia's efforts, not US threats, that led to his decision.

Other Syrian officials, notably Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem, have already backed the plan, but this is the first time Assad will have directly commented on the matter.

The US is also going into Geneva talks with Russia with a more positive attitude today, saying the Russian plan is "doable but difficult." While no one would dispute the idea that any chemical weapons disarmament is difficult (the United States has been trying to dispose of its own for almost 50 years now and still isn't done), the big do-ability question of Russia's plan had been whether the US would go along, since it is predicated on the US stopping their threats to attack Syria, at least for the time being.

At this point everybody on board with the deal, except of course the Syrian rebels, who don't do diplomacy. Gen. Idriss, the head of the US-backed Free Syrian Army, says any disarmament plan must be rejected in favor of a US attack on Syria.