

Kerry, Lavrov Ask For Unbiased Probe in Alleged Syrian Nerve Gas Attack

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Moscow and Washington are demanding an "unbiased" investigation into the alleged nerve gas attack near Damascus, the Russian Foreign Ministry said after the top Russian and U.S. diplomats discussed the issue in a phone conversation.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry expressed on Thursday "common interest in carrying out an unbiased investigation by UN experts who are currently in the country into the reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons near Damascus," the statement said.

The Syrian opposition has accused the government of killing scores of people in a massive nerve gas attack near Damascus on Wednesday, with death toll estimates varying from 100 to more than 1,000 people. The Syrian government promptly denied the reports as baseless.

Russia called on the Syrian government to cooperate with the UN team, Lavrov said shortly

after receiving the reports of the attack. "And it is up to the opposition to ensure the safe access of the mission to the scene of the alleged attack," the statement said.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has asked the Syrian government to allow a team of UN experts to investigate the latest claims that chemical weapons were used in Syria.

The UN team of chemical weapons investigators started working in Damascus on Monday. The team is expected to visit three sites where chemical weapons attacks allegedly occurred earlier. One site is the town of Khan al-Assal, in Syria's northern Aleppo province, where the Syrian government claimed rebels used chemical weapons in March.

The unrest in Syria began in March 2011 and later escalated into a civil war. More than 100,000 people have been killed in the conflict so far, according to the UN.

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