

Military Option on Syria Must Remain Open-NATO chief

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Soldiers operating under the Free Syrian Army walking along in Aleppo. **Molhem Barakat**

BRUSSELS — The option of carrying out a military strike or similar operation in Syria must be kept open as a way of dealing with the crisis, the secretary-general of the NATO military alliance said Thursday.

Anders Rasmussen welcomed a U.S.-Russian agreement on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons, but said it was essential for keeping momentum in the diplomatic and political process that the military option remained on the table.

"I think, irrespective of the outcome of the deliberations in the UN Security Council, the military option will still be on the table," Rasmussen said at an event organized by the Carnegie Europe think tank.

A draft UN Security Council resolution on Syria's chemical weapons under discussion in New

York leaves the door open to the use of force if Syria does not comply. Russia is expected to oppose this provision.

Rasmussen said he had no doubt that the Syrian government was behind an Aug. 21 sarin gas attack on a Damascus suburb that the U.S. said killed more than 1,400 people.

He dismissed an allegation made by the Syrian government and Moscow that the rebels were responsible.

"The missiles were launched from areas controlled by the government," he said.

"It doesn't make sense for the opposition to attack their own people with chemical weapons in areas they already control, and furthermore, we don't think the opposition has at its disposal [the] means to carry out a chemical weapons attack of that scope and scale."

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