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UNSC fails to adopt resolutions on chemical weapons use in Syria

UNITED NATIONS, APRIL 11 /--/ The UN Security Council has failed to adopt two competing resolutions that would have established a mechanism to investigate use of chemical weapons in Syria as well as another concerning a fact-finding mission in the war-torn country.

The Security Council, voting yesterday on the three separate draft resolutions, failed to rally the votes needed to launch an independent mechanism of investigation into the incident, as delegates voiced frustration over the continued paralysis and the expanding rifts between nations. The first draft considered yesterday penned by the United States, which would have established a new investigative mechanism for one year, as well as identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, was rejected owing to a negative vote from Russia. The draft received 12 votes in favour, two against (Bolivia and Russia) and one abstention (China).

US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley said after the vote that month after month, the Assad regime, with full support of Russia and Iran, has strung along this Council.

She said her delegation had conducted transparent negotiations when drafting the resolution and had gone the extra mile in incorporating the views of the Russian Federation. "And when the people of Douma, along with the rest of the international community, looked to this Council to act, one country stood in the way. History will record that, on this day, Russia chose protecting a monster over the lives of the Syrian people," she said.

Russia's UN envoy Vassily Nebenzia, speaking following his veto, said the United States was attempting to mislead the international community.

He said the draft would have been an attempt to recreate the Joint Investigative Mechanism whose mandate had not been renewed in late 2017 which had become a puppet of anti-Damascus forces and shamed itself by rendering a guilty verdict against a sovereign State with no evidence. He added that the new mechanism, as proposed by the United States, would carry out an investigation with no regard to the standards set out in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and of Their Destruction, known as the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Yesterday's meeting marked the 12th time Russia has used its veto to block Council action on Syria. The meeting came days after reports of a chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburb of Douma.

Similarly, a competing draft penned by Russia which would have established the mechanism for one year as well but would have given the Security Council the responsibility to assign accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, was also not adopted.

By the terms of that text, the Council would have established a United Nations independent mechanism of investigation, also for an initial period of one year, and urged it to fully ensure a truly impartial, independent, professional and credible way to conduct its investigation. It would have further directed the mechanism to make full use

of all credible, verified and corroborated evidence collected by the OPCW fact-finding mission, while also directing it to collect and examine additional information and sources not obtained or prepared by the mission, including all information provided by the Government of Syria and others on the activities of non-State actors.

Six Council members - Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan and Russia - voted in favour of the draft while seven abstained (France, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States) and two abstentions (Cote d'Ivoire and Kuwait). The Council rejected a third text also proposed by Russia which concerned the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM).

The draft received five votes in favour (Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Russia), four against (France, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States), and six abstentions (Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, and Sweden). Syria's UN envoy Bashar Ja'afari, speaking at the close of the meeting, emphasized that his Government had officially invited the OPCW to send its fact-finding mission to investigate. He said Syria would fully cooperate and provide access to a liberated Douma.

Criticising the positions of the US, UK and France, he said that some permanent Council members were attempting to cover up domestic crises and conflicts among their political elites. After seven years of bloody terrorist war in Syria, the choice was clear, he said adding that the Council should stand up to lies, conscious that international public opinion would be judging its ability to safeguard the world. Ahead of the Security Council meetings, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had repeated his call on 15-member body to find unity on the issue of use of chemical weapons in Syria and ensure accountability.

The norms against chemical weapons must be upheld, I appeal to the Council to fulfil its responsibility and find unity on this issue, he said. I also encourage the Council to redouble its efforts to agree on a dedicated mechanism for accountability," he said. (PTI)

Police: Indonesia bootleg alcohol deaths exceed 100

JAKARTA, APRIL 11 /--/ Deaths from drinking toxic bootleg alcohol in Indonesia have exceeded 100 this month, police said today as they vowed a "scorched earth" crackdown on the makers and distributors of black-market liquor. Deputy National Police Chief Muhammad Syafruddin said deaths this month have been concentrated in populous West Java and Jakarta, the capital, but there were also cases in South Kalimantan and other regions that bring fatalities to more than 100.

Indonesian TV has broadcast images of distraught relatives in several cities and lines of gunneys bearing dead bodies in hospital hallways as the death toll relentlessly climbed since last week. There were 31 deaths in Jakarta and satellite cities at the beginning of the month followed by a dramatic surge in hospitalizations and deaths in West Java. "This is a crazy phenomenon," Syafruddin said. "If we let it continue, it will harm the nation," he said. "I have ordered all the police chiefs in Indonesia to make these cases stop, zero victims, meaning to reveal the roots ranging from the producers, distributors, sellers to those who have the idea of mixing alcohol with fatal chemicals," Syafruddin told reporters. Police displayed huge quantities of suspect confiscated alcohol at their news conference, some of it in the small clear plastic bags that it's sold in as well as professionally labeled bottles purporting to be whiskey or wine. Syafruddin said production of illegal alcohol must be eradicated completely with a scorched earth campaign and called for the cooperation of Cabinet and government agencies. It's unclear how effective the crackdown will be. Curbs on sales of legal alcohol in Muslim-majority Indonesia, including a ban on sales from tens of thousands of convenience stores, have created a significant black market for bootleg liquor among the country's poor. (Agencies)

Trump's homeland security adviser Bossert resigns on Bolton's request

WASHINGTON, APRIL 11 /--/ US President Donald Trump's homeland security adviser, Tom Bossert, has resigned at the request of new national security adviser John Bolton, an administration official said on Tuesday, marking the latest departure from the White House of a senior adviser. Bossert, who was a former deputy national security adviser to former President George W. Bush, had overseen the Trump administration's response to the Hurricane Maria disaster in Puerto Rico, as well as cyber security policy. An official said Bolton, who started his new role on Monday, urged Bossert's departure. "The president is grateful for Tom's commitment to the safety and security of our great

country," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement. "Tom led the White House's efforts to protect the homeland from terrorist threats, strengthen our cyber defences, and respond to an unprecedented series of natural disasters," she said. A source close to Bolton said other departures might be upcoming as the new national security adviser builds his own team in some sectors.

The potential purge raised concern from Democratic Senator Chris Coons, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who told CNN that Bolton "seems to be swiftly moving to eliminate or to move toward an early retirement several of the president's advisers."

Jamil Jaffer, a former chief counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and associate counsel to Bush, said it was a "huge mistake" to force Bossert out. "Tom is a very smart and highly skilled national security leader who has been a beacon of principle, capability and discipline in an otherwise chaotic White House," he said in a statement. "Letting Bossert go at a time of heightened threats and when there is significant churn on the overall national security team is yet another unforced error." Bossert joins a long list of senior officials who have resigned or been fired since Trump took office in January 2017, including previous national security advisers

Michael Flynn and H.R. McMaster, White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, communications directors Hope Hicks and Anthony Scaramucci, economic adviser Gary Cohn and chief strategist Steve Bannon. Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin have also left.

Bossert was socializing with U.S. intelligence officials and reporters at a conference on a coastal island off Georgia on Monday night, according to two people who were present. One of the two people said Bossert gave no indication he was leaving the administration but joked at one point that he was

unsure of his future "like everyone else who works for Trump." Bossert ran the administration's work on cyber security issues and was considered a key voice for responding more aggressively to destructive cyber attacks launched by adversaries, including Russia, Iran and North Korea. He helped guide the administration's decisions in recent months to blame and impose costs on each of those countries in an effort to create more forceful cyber deterrence strategy. Bossert was generally well respected by cyber security experts, who viewed him as a knowledgeable voice. Rob Joyce, the White House's cyber security czar, who reported to Bossert, is still working in the administration, a White House official said.

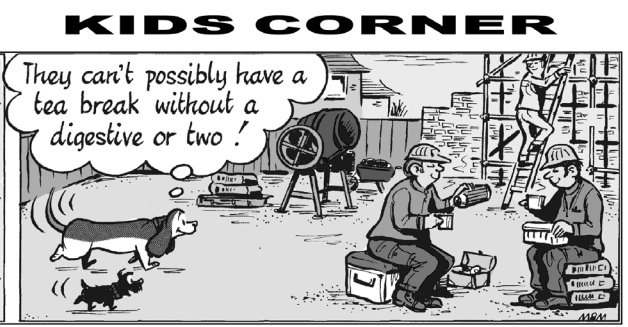
Russian whistleblower was 'fearful for his life': Lawyer

LONDON, APRIL 11 /--/ Russian whistleblower Alexander Perepilichny, who died while jogging near London aged 44 in 2012, was "fearful for his life," his lawyer at the time told a court today. The lawyer, Dmitry Lipkin, spoke via video-link from Moscow at the Old Bailey court in London where an inquest is examining whether Perepilichny died of natural causes or was poisoned. "We had information... that he did not come to Russia because he was fearful for his life," Lipkin told the court. "He was threatened. He left Russia but who he was threatened by, I don't know," he said.

Perepilichny, a wealthy businessman, had been helping investment firm Hermitage Capital Management investigate a money-laundering operation when he was found dead near his home in Weybridge, outside London. Two years after his death, his life insurance company ordered tests that detected a toxin from a Chinese plant called Gelsemium, which can trigger cardiac arrest in its stomach. The case has come under increased scrutiny following last month's nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in the English city of Salisbury. (AFP)

German billionaire missing in Alps since Saturday

BERLIN, APRIL 11 /--/ Authorities in Switzerland and Italy are searching for a German billionaire who has been missing in the Alps since the weekend. Karl-Erivan Haub, heir to the Tengelmann retail empire, failed to return from a ski excursion Saturday near Switzerland's famous Matterhorn peak on the border with Italy.



WordWheel
No. 259

S	I	N	?
U	?	?	A
O	?	?	M

Insert the missing letter to complete an eight-letter word reading clockwise or anticlockwise. Solution No. 258: OCTAGONS

5x5
Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

No. 159

B	L	A	R	E
L	I	N	E	
A	V	O	I	D
S	E	D	G	E
T	R	E	N	D

OUR SOLUTION TO PUZZLE 158 (Other combinations may be possible.)

Reference: C.O.D. 1995

S		L		T
A	R		S	E
P	O		E	E

WORD-BUILDER
159

L	K	N
A	E	

How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or ones beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.

TODAY'S GOALS:
Good - 5 Excellent - 7 Amazing - 10
SOLUTION 158: bel, below, blow, blow, bow, bowl, bowl, elbow, lob, lobe, low, low, owl, web, woe

Reference: C.O.D. 1995