

## UN Security Council reaches deal on Syria's chemical weapons

By: Brendan Bordelon – September 27, 2013

President Obama hedged his bets while praising a new U.N. Security Council resolution demanding the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons on Friday, calling it "a potentially huge victory for the international community."

The five permanent members of the Security Council struck a deal Thursday night on a resolution that sets the framework for an internationally-led disarmament effort, and threatens sanctions or military action if the Assad regime doesn't play ball.

"The Russians have agreed to support a strong, binding and enforceable resolution that unites the pressure and focus of the international community on the Syrian regime to ensure the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons," the Obama administration said in a statement.

"This is a breakthrough arrived at through hard-fought diplomacy," it continued. "Just two weeks ago, no one thought this was in the vicinity of possible."

But at the insistence of Russia and China, the resolution also requires another Security Council vote before any disciplinary action is taken against the Syrian government. In the event that Syria fails to comply, one or both nations would likely veto such efforts.

"It'd be very difficult to imagine either Moscow or Beijing going along with such a resolution," said Ted Carpenter, a foreign policy expert at the libertarian Cato Institute.

Carpenter told The Daily Caller News Foundation that while the Assad regime may conclude its chemical arsenal is "simply more bother than it's worth," past behavior by the Syrian government and its Russian ally makes him skeptical.

He expects "a lot of foot-dragging, a lot of delaying tactics, perhaps partial implementation with a lack of clarity of whether the implementation is complete or is ever going to be complete."

And even in the event of Syrian compliance, a lot can still go wrong. "Implementing a deal like this is difficult enough even in normal circumstances," he said. "Doing it in the midst of an ever-changing civil war is extremely challenging."

Carpenter claimed that the administration's concerns were always more political than practical. "I think this is a way out for the Obama administration to exit from a policy that was disastrous in terms of substance and disastrous in terms of domestic politics," he said.

But he was also cautiously optimistic about the agreement, calling it “the least bad measure available.”

“The most likely alternative would’ve been either a major diplomatic and political embarrassment for the Obama administration, with Congress refusing to authorize military force, or the president defying a congressional vote and going ahead, in which case we have a constitutional crisis here and a really bad and counterproductive policy in the Middle East,” he explained.

“I don’t know whether this will turn out to be a permanent fix,” he concluded, “but at least we have a reprieve from a course of action that would’ve been disastrous for the United States.”

The resolution puts the Organization for the Prohibition in Chemical Weapons in charge of the plan to dismantle Syria’s vast chemical stockpiles, instructing it to report any violations of the agreement to the Security Council.

A vote on the resolution by the full 15-member Council is expected sometime Friday.