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**U.S. Envoy Discusses Use of Chemical Weapons as Terrorist Tactic**  
Eric Javits says U.S. working with Iraq to join treaty banning weapons

The following op-ed by Eric Javits, the U.S. permanent representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, was originally published in the June 8 edition of *USINFO* and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

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**Deadly Chemical Weapons Still Used As Terrorist Tactic**

By Eric Javits

U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Chemical weapons are not a relic of history. The terrorist attacks in Iraq using chlorine gas to maim and kill innocent civilians in recent weeks are a painful reminder that this threat is still with us and is evolving to take new forms.

Despite the evolving threat, much has been accomplished in deterring the use of chemicals as weapons. The Iraqi people are currently trying before the Iraqi High Tribunal Ali Hussein al-Majid (Chemical Ali"), for the 1998 chemical weapons attacks on Kurdish cities that killed thousands. The Chemical Weapons Convention reinforces the norm of civilized behavior by permanently banning any use of a toxic chemical with the intent to harm or kill.

On April 29, the Convention marked its tenth anniversary in force as a successful effort to strengthen international security. The treaty's ban is now a legal norm agreed by 182 countries that comprise over 95% of the world's population. The Convention restricts the actions of states and individuals, and lessens the prospects of successful terrorist attacks using chemical weapons.

The Convention obliges possessor states to destroy their stockpiles in full, under international verification and within set timeframes, and to take measures to prevent any chemical weapons activities on their territory. Without it, large stockpiles would remain, providing easy access to would-be terrorists. There would be no restriction on nations developing and producing even more deadly poison gas weapons. The Convention has become a landmark disarmament and nonproliferation agreement, bringing together nations in a productive consensus unmatched in other international security organizations.

As the attacks in Iraq show, we must be unwavering in our efforts to do more. Toxic chemicals are widely produced and have many peaceful purposes, as is the case with the chlorine in Iraq. Chemical storage or production facilities in densely populated urban areas provide potential targets for copycat attacks that could cause widespread panic and produce mass casualties. The Convention's broad prohibitions on chemical weapons will not be effective in excluding the possibility of their use until every nation takes the necessary national measures to prevent the use of toxic chemicals as weapons by any nation, group or non-state actor. We are working with the Iraqi government to allow Iraq to accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

After over 1,000 inspections at chemical factories in dozens of countries, chemical industry associations resoundingly endorse the on-site verification of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The worldwide regime to ensure that toxic chemicals are only used for legitimate purposes is earning a well-deserved reputation in deterring the spread of deadly weapons and inculcating a new security consciousness in government and industry - all at a cost, per capita, of less than a postage stamp a year.

The richest and poorest countries are cooperating to establish a comprehensive network to rid the world of existing chemical weapons and to deter the use of toxic chemicals as weapons. The OPCW is a quietly successful model of how the world can come together to solve global problems. In its first decade, the Convention and the OPCW have taken concrete steps toward weaving a resilient safety net against the threat of chemical weapons, gained the support of 182 member states, and strengthened the moral norm that use of toxic chemicals as weapons is abhorrent. The Iraq attacks show that more must be done. The goal for the next decade must be universal adherence to the Convention, domestic implementation of its obligations, and compliance with all its provisions, reflecting a global recognition that the use of chemical weapons is an affront to all civilized norms and an unacceptable act whether committed by nations, groups or individuals.

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