Explanation of Vote by the U.S. Mission to the U.N. on a Russian Draft of U.N. Security Council Resolution to Extend the Mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism

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https://usun.state.gov/remarks/8114

Thank you, Mr. President.

There’s a few things that I think we need to realize here, and I think a lot of it has to be on the genuineness, whether it was used or not; on the actors, whether they were to be trusted or not; the process of how this all played out; and then where we go from there. So if you look at that, first of all, we all voted. We voted that we were going to follow the rule and we were going to take the Russian resolution first, and we were going to take the U.S. second. Bolivia completely disrespected this Council by turning around a playing a game and having the vote after. We’ll have the vote. We’ll have the same outcome. But for a member who always says they want to be transparent, there was nothing transparent about that. You really tried to pull one over on this entire Council and that’s on you to deal with.

The second thing is, the United States took this resolution very seriously. The Joint Investigative Mechanism is one that we strongly believed in. We engaged in good faith with Russia when we first came up with the JIM. We were all united and together when we enacted the JIM. The JIM was there for a reason. It was there because there continues to be chemical weapons usage in Syria and people continue to die from it. And because of that, we knew of the importance.

And I’m glad to hear that Russia said that the JIM is so important. But what’s fascinating is, they now suddenly have all these flaws with the JIM but they never had flaws when we found ISIS to be responsible. Flaws didn’t seem to happen then. It only happened when Syria was blamed. Now why is that? Was the process different? Did the experts not do it the same way? Did they treat ISIS differently than they treated Syria? Is that what we’re going to imply?

So where is our responsibility? That the JIM remain independent.

So now you look and there’s a new resolution. And, by the way, the United States worked with each and every one of you on this resolution – even Russia. We took into account – even though they didn’t want to engage with us – we took into account things that we knew we could bring in from their resolution. And we have the changes, and I showed Russia the changes. And Russia then said they had no intention of voting for it from the very beginning, that they were always going to veto it. Again, that was disingenuous, because they just should have told all of us that that was their intentions in the first place.

Now you go to the process: there’s another resolution put on the table. Suddenly, Russia puts out this resolution and China joins them in the resolution. They didn’t touch base with one single country on this Council. Neither of them had a consultation, neither of them wanted to discuss it. To them, it was all a game – that they would just counter it with something else, and they did. And all of us can still look at it, and I can tell you what we think: they want a JIM that doesn’t have independence, they want a JIM that doesn’t have reporting, they want a JIM that they can micromanage – or that any member can micromanage. That’s the JIM they want. That’s what they’re looking for.

And so today, I’ve heard so many of my friends on this Council talk about how this is all embarrassing. It’s embarrassing that the Council’s not united. It’s embarrassing that we’re allowing this to play out. No, what’s embarrassing is that we don’t have a JIM renewal. What’s embarrassing is everyone is worried about who they’re going to upset, and they’re not thinking about the people that were abused by chemical weapons.

I mean, to realize the importance of what this investigative mechanism would do, you have to also realize when a country is playing games with people’s lives. That’s exactly what is happening here, and it’s been happening for 10 times. We’ve watched it happen: 10 different vetoes. And I will tell you the only thing that today has proved is that Russia cannot be trusted in the political process in Syria. Russia will not be a good and trusted actor because they want control who’s at fault, they want to control what happens, they want to control that area. Because they want to work with Iran and Syria to make sure that they have that all under control.

If you’re okay with that, then you make the decision. The United States is not okay with that.

So what I will tell you is through this process we were very kind and tried to work with all of you – as we always do – because we think every member is important. And we may smile, and we may work with you, and we incorporate these changes, but the United States will not be disrespected. And to have us work for weeks on a resolution and then turn around and say “oh, can we come up with something else? Can we come up with something else?” I’ve got a resolution with every one of your changes on it. But we’re going to allow one member to basically give a pass to chemical weapons use in Syria.

I will tell you this, to my Russia friends: the next chemical weapons attack is on your hands. The next pictures I hold up will be because you let it happen. Because by not having the JIM, you are basically telling the entire world that chemical weapons are okay to use. That’s what we should be embarrassed about today.

Thank you, Mr. President.