

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

September 13, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

As you conduct negotiations with the Russian Federation on disarming the Assad regime of its chemical weapons, I urge you to ensure Syria's biological weapons are included as an equal component of any plan. I remain highly skeptical of Russia's true intentions, but I believe omitting Assad's bioweapons from any agreement would represent a gaping hole in the plan and would not adequately protect U.S. national security interests.

Bioweapons also constitute weapons of mass destruction and, for decades, the government of Syria has pursued this capability to complement its massive chemical weapons arsenal. Last July, a Syrian government official directly acknowledged the existence of his country's bioweapons, simultaneously threatening to use them if Syria was "exposed to external aggression." In April of this year, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified before the Senate, providing the assessment of the U.S. intelligence community: "Based on the duration of Syria's longstanding biological warfare (BW) program, we judge that some elements of the program may have advanced beyond the research and development stage and may be capable of limited agent production." Director Clapper also assessed that Syria's delivery systems for chemical weapons "could be modified for biological agent delivery."

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, in a 2008 analysis, concluded that Syria's capabilities included "possible production capability for anthrax and botulism, and possibly other agents," and that the "design of biological bombs and missile warheads with the lethality of small nuclear weapons may now be within Syrian capabilities . . . ." One scientist who serves as a biodefense consultant to NATO, and who was quoted in a *Washington Post* article last week, believes that Syria's bioweapons program is "capable of serious harm" and "includes a full complement of lethal human and animal strains, from neurotoxin producers such as botulinum to the family of orthopox viruses such as camelpox and cowpox, both cousins to the microbe that causes smallpox."

Assad's bioweapons, either in his hands or the hands of terrorists, represent a direct security threat to the United States and our allies. In many ways, bioweapons can be easier to hide, transport, and employ than chemical weapons, potentially making them an even graver threat. If weaponized biological agents, their component materials, or even technical manuals were to fall into the hands of Hezbollah or another terrorist group, this would be a direct threat to the United States and our

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allies, particularly Israel. For example, one small vial of Anthrax employed effectively could inflict devastation on any American city.

It remains dubious that any agreement negotiated with Russia will serve America's national security interests. However, any credible agreement must force the surrender of both Assad's bioweapons and chemical weapons, and it must achieve their destruction in a way that is workable, effective, timely, and verifiable. I ask for your best efforts to ensure that these important criteria are satisfied.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Cornyn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

JOHN CORNYN  
United States Senator