

WORKING THREAD: UN CHEMICAL WEAPON REPORT ON SYRIA RELEASED

The UN has finally released its report (pdf) on the analysis of both human and environmental samples relating to the chemical weapon attack in the Ghouta area of Syria on August 21. The report finds unequivocal evidence of sarin in blood, urine and environmental samples.

A total of 36 primary victims and first responders who were exposed were interviewed. Sixteen of them were from Moadamiyah and twenty were from Zamalka. Seventy eight percent of them lost consciousness, 61% had difficulty breathing and 42% had blurred vision. Thirty four of the thirty six had blood samples taken (two refused) and 15 showing the most severe symptoms submitted urine samples. The materials were sent to two separate laboratories for analysis:

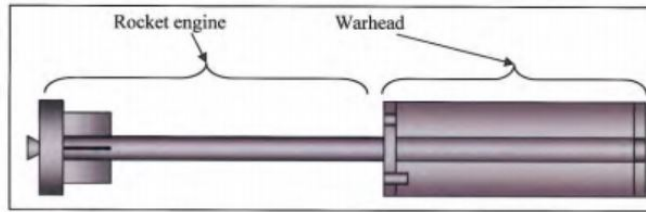
Table 2: Results of biomedical testing

	Laboratory 3				Laboratory 4			
	Plasma		Urine		Plasma		Urine	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Moadamiyah								
Positive	14	93%	N/A	N/A	15	100%	4	100%
Negative	1	7%	N/A	N/A	0	0%	0	0%
Total	15	100%			15	100%	4	100%
Zamalka								
Positive	15	79%	N/A	N/A	16	84%	10	91%
Negative	4	21%	N/A	N/A	3	16%	1	9%
Total	19	100%			19	100%	11	100%
Combined totals								
Positive	29	85%	N/A	N/A	31	91%	14	93%
Negative	5	15%	N/A	N/A	3	9%	1	7%
Total	34	100%			34	100%	15	100%

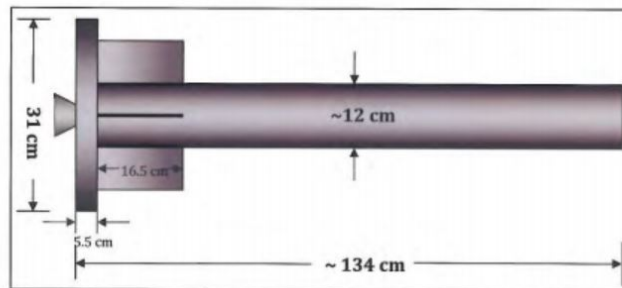
NA = not available

Rockets that could have delivered the chemical agent were found at some sites. At least one was capable of carrying up to 50 liters of liquid. Schematic of intact rocket:

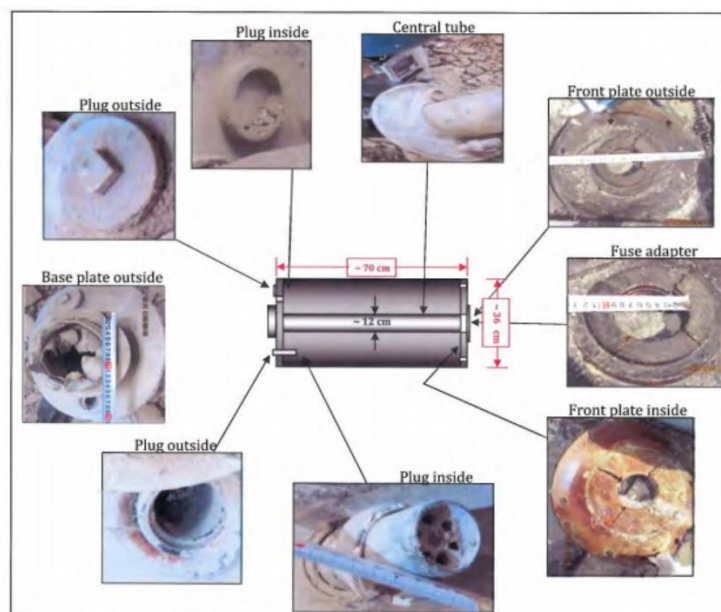
Below is a drawing of the found ordnance, the body has been divided into two parts.



The engine end was exposed at the impact site:



The warhead:



Liquid capacity of the warhead:
 The approx. capacity of liquid in the warhead is according to the measurements between 56 ± 6 liters. This calculation is exclusive to the thickness of the container walls and any other unknown components possibly contained in the warhead.

But of course, these inspections came on August 26 in Moadamiyah and August 28 and 29 in Zamalka, so 5 to 8 days passed between the attack and the analysis. The key point to keep in mind when considering the rocket evidence is this:

Limitations:

As with other sites, the locations have been well traveled by other individuals prior to the arrival of the Mission. Time spent on the sites was well used but limited. During the time spent at these locations, individuals arrived carrying other suspected munitions indicating that such potential evidence is being moved and possibly manipulated.

People had plenty of time to move things around before the UN inspectors came onto the site. The possibility that evidence has been manipulated cannot be ruled out.

My first impressions from the report are that it is without question that the people interviewed and who submitted samples were indeed exposed to sarin. How it was delivered is another question entirely. Rockets were found in the vicinity where people were exposed and environmental samples, including from the rockets themselves, showed evidence of sarin, but it is impossible to conclude the rockets definitely delivered the sarin. It is impossible to rule out sarin being put onto the rocket debris after impact.

I've only skimmed the report, please consider

this a working thread and share any findings in comments.