UN Council Weighs Compromise on Syria Nerve Gas Probe

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By AFP

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Seeking to avert a clash between Russia and the West, 10 Security Council countries on Thursday circulated a compromise resolution demanding a full investigation of the suspected chemical attack in Syria, diplomats said.

The new text — the third now before the council on investigating the apparent gas attack — was presented ahead of a closed-door meeting of the 15-member council on Syria at 6:30 pm (2230 GMT).

It remained unclear if Russia or the other four permanent council members would back the compromise presented as the United States was weighing military options in Syria.

Britain, France and the United States are pushing for a vote later Thursday on their draft text in response to the strike Tuesday on a rebel-held town in Idlib province that shocked the world.

At least 86 people — including 27 children — died in Khan Sheikhoun. Results from post-mortems performed on victims point to exposure to the deadly sarin nerve agent, according to Turkish health officials.

Britain, France and the United States are permanent council members along with Russia and China.

The 10 non-permanent members are Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine, Uruguay, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Italy, Kazakhstan and Sweden.

Their compromise text would drop demands that Syria hand over information on its military operations on the day of the strike, replacing them with language from a previous resolution urging cooperation on chemical weapons investigations, diplomats said.

“There are efforts to find a way forward that might be a compromise,” Swedish Ambassador Olof Skoog told reporters.

“We are going to try to make sure we have a good discussion before there are any votes.”

Russia has rejected the proposed Western-backed resolution as “categorically unacceptable” and put forward a rival draft that does not include specific demands that the Syrian government cooperate with an investigation.

The Russian text calls for an investigation but requests that the council approve the makeup of the team from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) dispatched to Idlib, according to the draft seen by AFP.