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Syrian Air Force Behind Chemical Attacks

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Why in News

Recently, the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** has said that the Syrian air force carried out three chemical attacks on a village in **Syria's western Hama region** in 2017.

Key Points

- The **OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT)** was established by OPCW in 2018 to identify the perpetrators of illegal attacks.
It concluded that the Syrian air force helicopter dropped bombs containing **poisonous chlorine and sarin nerve gas**
- The Syrian government has denied using chemical weapons.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

- It is an international organization established by the **Chemical Weapons Convention, 1997 to implement and enforce the terms of the non-proliferation treaty**, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, or transfer of chemical weapons by signatory states.
- The OPCW is **authorized to perform inspections** to verify that signatory states are complying with the convention.
This includes a commitment to grant inspectors full access to chemical weapons sites.
- The OPCW also **performs testing of sites and victims of suspected chemical weapons attacks**.
- By the **2001 Relationship Agreement** between the OPCW and the United Nations, the OPCW reports on its inspections and other activities to the UN through the office of the Secretary General.
- The OPCW was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2013**. Its headquarters are located in **the Hague, Netherlands**.

Chlorine gas

Chlorine is a choking agent. Its greenish-yellow clouds of gas cause shortness of breath, wheezing, respiratory failure, irritation in the eyes, vomiting, and sometimes death.

Sarin gas

- Sarin is a chemical warfare agent classified as a **nerve agent**. They are similar to certain kinds of insecticides (insect killers) called organophosphates in terms of how they work and what kind of harmful effects they cause.
- It was **originally developed in 1938 in Germany** as a pesticide.
- Sarin is a clear, colorless, and tasteless liquid that has no odor in its pure form. However, sarin can evaporate into a vapor (gas) and spread into the environment. It is **also known as GB**.

Source: IE