

2018-01-17

Question-Answer

Syria: Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC)

Question:

Vilken information finns det eller går det att finna om Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) i Syrien? Vad finns det för information om anställda? Vad produceras på detta center? Vad är centrets huvudsakliga syfte? Finns det något annat syfte än det "officiella"?

Answer:

The Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in Jamraya area, northwest of Damascus had been subject to several raids by Israeli air force. See below a UN statement calling to reduce tension among the parties after an attack.

UN News Service (2013):

The Syrian army has reportedly said that Israeli fighter jets carried out a direct strike yesterday on a scientific research centre in Jamraya, north-west of Damascus, killing two people and wounding five.

The SSRC had been subject to US sanctions and accused of being responsible for producing prohibited weapons:

United States Congressional Research Service (2017):

Sanctions on the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center²¹

On April 24, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated 271 employees of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) as Specially Designated Nationals (SDNs) in response to the April 4 attack on Khan Sheikhoun.²² The SSRC is responsible for developing and producing Syria's nonconventional weapons and the means to deliver them. It is not known what, if any, direct role the newly designated individuals may have played in the April 4 attack. The designation states that "these 271 SSRC employees have expertise in chemistry and related disciplines and/or have worked in support of SSRC's chemical weapons program since at least 2012."

The SSRC, as an entity, is already heavily restricted. In early 2005, the Department of Commerce placed the SSRC on the Syria Entity List, meaning that the export of any controlled goods or services (including munitions, dual-use goods and services, high-end computers and other technology that could have a military application) requires a license, and there is a presumption of denial that Commerce would issue such licenses. In late 2006, the Department of State identified the SSRC as subject to economic sanctions under what was then the Iran and Syria Nonproliferation Act (now the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act, or INKSNA).

Sanctions include a prohibition on procurement contracts with the U.S. government, no foreign aid, no sales or licenses for U.S. Munitions List goods and services (correlating with Commerce's earlier ruling). State has reiterated this ruling a number of times, and has designated subsidiaries of the SSRC for similar restrictions.

In July 2016, the Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Center (FinCEN) designated FBME Bank Ltd. as a financial institution of primary money laundering concern, largely because of its clients serving as front organizations for the SSRC. Also in July 2016, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated one individual and a number of subsidiaries of the SSRC for sanctions that block transactions and freeze U.S.-based assets. On January 12, 2017, Treasury designated an additional seven individuals associated with the SSRC to prohibit transactions and block assets. And in late February 2017, Treasury added an additional entity associated with SSRC to the sanctions list.

It is not known through open sources whether the additional 271 individual designees associated with the SSRC have assets in the United States or transactions with U.S. persons (activities that are the targets of the new sanctions). It is also unclear whether these individuals were previously subject to SSRC sanctions because of their association with the organization—making this new designation largely redundant. This determination would likely depend on the individuals' financial relationship with the SSRC and on whether OFAC would recognize the individuals as financial beneficiaries or owners of the SSRC.

BBC (2017):

A document says chemical and biological munitions are produced at three main sites near Damascus and Hama... The intelligence document obtained by the BBC says Syria's chemical weapons are manufactured at three sites - Masyaf, in Hama province, and at Dummar and Barzeh, both just outside Damascus. All three are branches of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC), a government agency, it adds. Despite monitoring of the sites by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the document alleges that manufacturing and maintenance continues in closed sections.

It says the Masyaf and Barzeh facilities both specialise in installing chemical weapons on long-range missiles and artillery.

The OPCW mentioned Barzeh and Dummar - also known as Jamraya - in its latest official progress update on its work to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme. The watchdog says inspectors visited them between 26 February and 5 March and that it is still awaiting laboratory analysis of the samples that were taken.

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (2017):

In accordance with paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the first inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre took place from 26 February to 5 March 2017. Samples were taken by the inspection team and were sent to OPCW designated laboratories for analysis. The Secretariat is awaiting the analysis results before completing the final inspection report.

Congressional Research Service (2011):

Report on the unrest and US sanctions against the regime (timeline of events) (and archived versions of 2011) [ID 200871]

INKSNA includes Army Supply Bureau (2008), Syrian Navy (2009), Syrian Air Force (2009), and Ministry of Defense (2008). 23 On May 24, 2011, the State Department designated the Industrial Establishment of Defense and Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) under INKSNA. Specific Sanctions Against Syria Specific U.S. sanctions levied against Syria fall into three main categories: (1 ... and Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) under INKSNA. 54 See, State Department Press Releases And Documents “Near East: Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act: Imposed Sanctions,” July 20, 2010. Unrest in Syria and U.S. Sanctions Against the Asad Regime Congressional Research Service 24 Specific Sanctions ... Force (2009), and Ministry of Defense (2008). 14 On May 24, 2011, the State Department designated the Industrial Establishment of Defense and Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) under INKSNA. Specific Sanctions Against Syria Specific U.S. sanctions levied against Syria fall into three main categories: (1) sanctions resulting from the passage of the 2003 Syria Accountability.

Source in Arabic:

It is imperative to highlight the fact that this is an unofficial translation of the article. Moreover, the reliability of the source was not verified. However, due to scarcity of information related to SSRC the below article sheds a light on the composition of the institute and the personnel.

Enab Baladi (عناب بلدي), (Syrian Opposition Newspaper) (2017):

“Israel Air Force targeted yesterday 4th January the Scientific Research center in Jamraya (جمرايا) behind Qasioun mountain, northwest Damascus.

Location:

The Scientific Research Centre is located in the Northwest of Damascus behind Qasyoun mountain, and in its vicinity Republican Guards Battalion 105th is stationed. As well as, HQ of the 4th Division which is led by Maher Al Assad, brother of President Bashar Al Assad, in an area called Al Driej (الدريج)

Establishment:

Former President Hafez Al Assad established the Research Centre in 1971, with the help of the Soviet Union. Presumably to be Research Centre of Solar power and

recycling, however, according to a report by BBC, the Research Centre conducts Research to manufacture Chemical Weapons.

Personnel:

The Centre is considered to be one of the most secretive and staff are prohibited to declare their tasks, as well as communicating with foreign agencies, or foreigners, especially at times of war.

Omar Al Armanazi is the General Director, with Salam To'meh as vice president.

There are Syrian officers, researchers and scientists working in the Centre.

What are the Research Centres in Syria?

Jamraya Centre is one of the Scientific Research Centres that carries out studies and research to develop arms and store it. According to "Al'aan" website, a defected former staff stated that Research Centres are divided into branches which are directly connected to the Presidential Palace. It is as follows:

"Institute One Thousand" "المعهد ألف", is located in Damascus and responsible to produce and develop electronic and computer systems.

"Institute Two Thound" "المعهد ألفان", it is located in Damascus as well and responsible for issues related to mechanical development. Such as producing shells and missile engines, long and medium range.

Institute Three Thousand" "المعهد ثلاثة الاف", is located in Barza, east of Damascus and responsible for developing and manufacturing chemical and biological weapons.

"Branch 450", is responsible for stockpiling the weapons and directly answerable to the Presidential Palace.

"Institute Four Thousand" "المعهد أربعة الاف", is located in Sefera area in Aleppo and supervises aviation projects and primarily responsible for all missiles and shells projects, however the regime moved it to Misyaf area, in the suburbs of Hamah, after conflicts with the opposition."

Denna sammanställning av information/länkar är baserad på informationssökningar gjorda under en begränsad tid. Den är sammanställd utifrån noggrant utvalda och allmänt tillgängliga informationskällor. Alla använda källor refereras. All information som presenteras, med undantag av obestridda/uppenbara fakta, har dubbelkontrollerats om inget annat anges. Sammanställningen gör inte anspråk på att vara uttömmande och bör inte tillmätas exklusivt bevisvärde i samband med avgörandet av ett enskilt ärende. Informationen i sammanställningen återspeglar inte nödvändigtvis Migrationsverkets officiella ståndpunkt i en viss fråga och det finns ingen avsikt att genom sammanställningen göra politiska ställningstaganden. Refererade dokument bör läsas i sitt sammanhang.

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