**Ambassador Vitaly Churkin’s interview on PBS News Hour**

**September 9, 2013**

We respond to what Kerry said if chemical weapons could be put under international control and what Foreign Minister of Syria Mr.Muallem said in Moscow today and the news of Mr.Kerry’s statement after the talks. We were prompt to respond by our Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov who came up with this initiative that we’ll work with the Governement of Syria in order to achieve the international control and moreover to move towards the destruction of Syrian chemical stockpile and make Syria a party to the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons…

*Пропущено около минуты из-за зависания Интернета. Как только запись будет выложена – восполним.*

…one of long standing concerns of Israel for their security in case chemical weapons from Syria somehow spill over to the Israeli territory. I think it is a very important initiative which has been picked up by the Syrian Government. I mean our leverage on them sometimes does work, not always but sometimes it does work. This is one of those situations where we could work together with the US on this preparation of Geneva-2 conference which was initiated by Secretary Kerry and Minister Lavrov. So I think we need to have “yes” for an answer from the US. And there is a statement, as I mentioned, from the Secretary General Ban of the UN which goes in the same direction – it is a good opportunity to continue this triangle cooperation which we have in terms of Geneva 2

**Q**: What makes you think, Mr.Ambassador, that the Syrians are prepared to turn over control of the chemical weapons. In that interview with Charlie Rose President Assad didn’t even acknowledge they have chemical weapons – number 1, and number 2 – the reporting is they spent years amassing these weapons. What makes you think they will give up that control?

**V.I.Churkin**: They say they are accepting our initiative. I haven’t seen President Assad interview and I understand he is repeating a longstanding line of the Syrians who refuse to acknowledge their possession of chemical weapons. Mirror image in this respect is the attitude of Israelis to their nuclear stockpiles. So there is nothing surprising about his refusal to acknowledge that two days ago but now we have a new reality which may be there after the statements by State Secretary John Kerry and initiative of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

**Q**: Why should americans not see this, Mr.Ambassador, as simply as a stalling tactic? Why should the American Government see this as a serious move that could change the situation in a matter of days.

**V.I.Churkin**: Because it is a serious move. It is a response to what Secretary of State of the US said and of course it can be disregarded or somehow interpreted in a negative way. And the US can go ahead with the military strike which would eliminate the chance of political settlement, have the catastrophic consequences on Syria which would make this war an another war like Vietnam and Iraq used to be. All these conversations about 60 days campaign… You broke it, you got it. Now that Syria in such situations there is no way for the US to walk away from it especially in the situation if the US is pretty much isolated internationally.

**Q**: So you mean that the American strike could lead to indescribable consequences.

**V.I.Churkin**: Absolutely. In this situation one doesn’t have to be a military expert to recognize that you cannot calculate, this is not a computer game, you can not calculate everything in advance. What American official say they are going to cripple the possibility for the Assad to use his chemical stockpile. We are not quite clear what it means but it may well be that it would entail the Syrian government lose control of its chemical weapons increasing the chance for it in getting into the hands of extremists which are in all the places in Syria. To say nothing of the likely increase of fighting because the armed opposition including Al-Qaeda affiliated will take the opportunity of the American military strike to intensify their onslaught including their atrocities that they commit in front of the internet cameras for the past months and a couple of years.

**Q**: Secretary Kerry has said that any strike would be in his words “unbelievably small”.

**V.I.Churkin**: I don’t believe it’s possible. Besides, the fact of it would be a violation of international law. Because Syria has not undertaken an aggression against the US. There is no decision of the Security Council to use the military force. American officials recognize that they cannot be the world policeman, they also came to the realization that judge and jury. They’ve come to a conclusion. Large part of the world do not share their conclusion. My suspect is that we are not going be able to persuade American officials that their conclusions are wrong but anyway we would expect that … shed more light after we learn the results of the investigation carried out by the UN inspectors in Syria on reported use of chemical weapons in Ghuta but the current initiative of the Russian Federation would allow the US to avoid all the dramatic consequences which likely to be there, which are going to be there in Syria and would help the US avoid another nasty conflict in the Middle East for which the US would become responsible should there be a military strike by the US.

Thank you very much.