

## **International and U.S. Officials Meet and Tour Anniston Chemical Storage and Disposal Areas**

*By Michael B. Abrams*

The Turkish ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, traveled to Anniston, Alabama, for a series of briefings and a tour of the Anniston Chemical Activity (ANCA) storage facilities and Anniston Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ANCDF). The 17 February 2010 visit was organized to help the ambassador prepare for his upcoming posting as the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on 25 July 2010. The current OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter (who will step down on 24 July 2010, following two 4-year terms as the Director-General) accompanied Üzümcü on the trip. The OPCW is charged with overseeing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (commonly known as the Chemical Weapons Convention)—an international treaty that bans the production, storage, and use of chemical warfare materiel.

Top American officials described U.S. storage and disposal mission objectives and accomplishments in a series of briefings. Briefings were led by personnel from the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency (CMA); U.S. Army Element, Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (who discussed disposal plans for chemical stockpiles in Colorado and Kentucky); and ANCA and ANCDF (who described Anniston storage and disposal missions, respectively).

U.S. disposal operations began in earnest on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean in June 1990. Since then, the stockpiles located there and at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, and

Newport, Indiana, have been destroyed. New disposal facilities are under construction at Blue Grass Army Depot, Kentucky, and Pueblo Chemical Depot, Colorado. And stockpiles in Alabama, Arkansas, Oregon, and Utah are currently undergoing reduction. At one time, 7 percent of the original U.S. stockpile was stored at Anniston Army Depot; that local stockpile has been reduced by more than 72 percent since disposal operations began there in August 2003.

One of the main priorities of the ANCA civilian executive assistant, Mr. Jesse E. Brown III, and the relatively small ANCA team is the safe storage of the remaining chemical munitions stockpile at Anniston. Mr. Brown informed the visitors that the ANCA stockpile is “properly stored and secured” and that there is “100 percent accountability,” as required by the Chemical Weapons Convention. He also indicated that the selection of Anniston as the host of the OPCW visit is a sign of the respect that the CMA, Army, and Department of Defense (DOD) have for the stockpile and demilitarization work being conducted there. He said, “I think the visitors observed that the [United States] is working diligently to destroy the stockpile here at Anniston and [were] assured by the DOD and Army representatives present that funding [is] not an issue with respect to completing the mission.”

The CMA director, Mr. Conrad F. Whyne, was one of the U.S. officials on hand to brief and escort the OPCW leadership. He indicated that his primary objective for the trip was to ensure that the incoming OPCW Director-General was fully aware of the U.S. successes, future challenges, and deep commitment

to doing everything possible to remain in compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Üzümcü's diplomatic career began in 1976. His biography indicates that he has vast experience in multilateral diplomacy; he is also widely considered to be an expert in political-military affairs and disarmament and proliferation issues.

With regard to the upcoming April 2012 extended international treaty deadline for the destruction of all chemical munitions and production facilities, Üzümcü said, "We are approaching the deadline. We are approaching this transitional phase. I have to work very closely with the state's parties and try to achieve consensus on all . . . issues." He went on to explain, "The [OPCW] works on the basis of the principle of consensus, which is good. Several other international organizations work on the security issues; I believe that [the OPCW] should work on this basis because it takes time to reach consensus. But once you reach such a decision, it becomes much easier to implement it. So I'll work very closely with these parties."

Üzümcü acknowledged the challenges associated with the international position. "Future [OPCW] tasks will focus more on nonproliferation activities, inspections of chemical industrial sites, and so on. Therefore, it's quite challenging," he said.

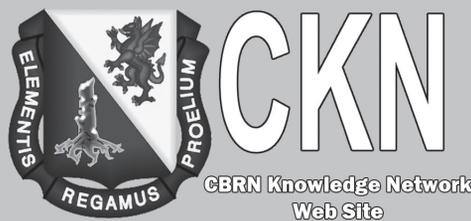
In looking back over his eight years as the OPCW Director-General, Pfrter said, "... hopefully, we have today an organization that is clearly seen as very efficient. I believe that was not decidedly the case when I arrived in 2002. So, I take

some pride in having worked well with all my colleagues in making of this . . . unique international organization which is seen by many as the way that it should be in the service of peace and security. I'm also happy to see that in the time I have been here, a significant number of countries have joined [the OPCW] so that today we can call it truly universal. We have made enormous progress in that, and that is crucial to the ultimate success of the treaty." And about the international treaty, Pfrter said "Progress has been made in the treaty. The treaty is a very complete instrument. It is about destroying chemical weapons. In fact, today we have reached the stage where the [United States] has destroyed over 70 percent and Russia 45 percent [to] 46 percent. These are major accomplishments, and we owe it to the countries and to the peoples in the world, how efficient they have been. Certainly that's behind the ultimate success story of this organization."

To learn more about U.S. chemical munitions storage and disposal programs, please visit the CMA Web site at <<http://www.cma.army.mil/>> and the U.S. Army Element, Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Web site at <<http://www.pmacwa.army.mil/>>. 

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