The United Kingdom said Friday it would destroy on its soil 150 tons of two industrial-grade chemicals from Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile, making a contribution to the international effort to dismantle and eliminate the ability of Damascus to use chemical weapons to wage war.

A British foreign office spokesman said that the chemicals in question, which only become toxic when mixed with another set of chemicals that will not be involved in the operation, would be shipped to a port in the United Kingdom, transferred to a commercial site and destroyed by incineration.

“The international mission to destroy Syria’s chemical weapon program is essential to ensure that (Syrian President Bashar) Al-Assad can never again use these horrific weapons to murder his own people,” the foreign office spokesman said.

Hundreds died in a chemical weapons attack on Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, in August. Washington threatened to attack in retaliation but later went along with a Russian proposal to dismantle all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons program by mid-2014.

The foreign office said a British Royal Navy vessel would also be involved in the operation to remove the chemicals from Syria. The chemicals will be shipped from the Syrian port of Latakia aboard Danish and Norwegian cargo ships.
The British effort is only a portion of the international effort in which a joint mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations are supervising the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles, delivery systems and production facilities. The most sensitive chemicals are scheduled to be destroyed at sea aboard a U.S. Navy vessel in the Mediterranean.

The chemicals to be destroyed in the United Kingdom are known as “B precursors”, materials that are used in the pharmaceutical industry. The foreign office spokesman said that the chemicals only become toxic when they are mixed with an “A precursor” but those chemicals will be removed from Syria separately.

“It is important to stress that these are chemicals, not chemical weapons,” the spokesman said. “They do not contain explosives.”