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British parliament votes against military action in Syria

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USPA News - British lawmakers on Thursday rejected a proposal that would have paved the way for military action in Syria, marking a stunning defeat for Prime Minister David Cameron whose government had been expected to join the U.S. in possible airstrikes against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The government's nonbinding motion was defeated by 285 to 272, a majority of just 13 votes.

The military action would have been in response to the alleged use of chemical weapons near the Syrian capital of Damascus last week, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people in an attack the U.S. and other countries have blamed on Assad. Cameron, speaking in the House of Commons after Thursday's vote, assured lawmakers that the United Kingdom will not take part in any military action against Syria unless another vote takes place. "I can give that assurance," he said, responding to a question from Opposition leader Ed Miliband. "I strongly believe in the need for a tough response to the use of chemical weapons, but I also believe in respecting the will of this House of Commons," the prime minister told lawmakers. "It is very clear tonight that, while the House has not passed a motion, the British Parliament, reflecting the views of the British people, does not want to see British military action. I get that, and the Government will act accordingly." Earlier on Thursday, the British government published a summary of its legal advice on a possible military strike on Syria. It said such military action would be considered to be a "humanitarian intervention," of which the aim would be to relieve humanitarian suffering by deterring or disrupting the further use of chemical weapons. "If action in the [UN] Security Council is blocked, the UK would still be permitted under international law to take exceptional measures in order to alleviate the scale of the overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe in Syria by deterring and disrupting the further use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime," the government's document said.

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