

British Out To Detonate Middle East Explosion

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Nov. 12—Within hours of the announcement that President Barack Obama had won a second term on Nov. 12, British Prime Minister David Cameron moved to pull the Middle East trigger on a global war. While touring the region, from Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait and Jordan, the British leader announced plans to escalate the military campaign to overthrow the Bashar Assad government in Syria, by boosting arms shipments, including heavy weaponry, to the Syrian rebels.

Associated Press reported on Nov. 7, that the British and French had been anxiously awaiting the outcome of the U.S. Presidential contest before moving to deeper NATO engagement to oust Assad. With Obama's re-election, AP reported, the path was cleared for much more direct military engagement by the West to carry out regime-change in Syria. Among the measures being planned, in addition to the escalation of weapons flows, was the creation of a "liberated zone" inside Syrian territory, along the border with Turkey, and the deployment of U.S. advanced anti-aircraft and missile-defense systems to southern Turkey.

To present a credible face on the Anglo-French and American drive to remove Assad by force, a collection of Syrian rebel leaders was brought to Doha, Qatar for a week-long meeting, ostensibly aimed at forging a credible, representative, and unified opposition. For months, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and others had made the case that the nominal Syrian opposition leadership, the Syrian National Council, was not

credible or representative of the myriad of Syrian groupings all seeking regime-change.

In reality, following the assault on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya on Sept. 11, 2012 by al-Qaeda-linked Libyan neo-Salafists, resulting in the murders of U.S. Amb. Chris Smith and three American intelligence officials, the deep penetration of the Syrian opposition by the same Jihadist networks became such a point of embarrassment, that something had to be done to shake up the Syrian opposition.

According to one eyewitness source, the gathering in Doha was a joke. American officials from the State Department and elsewhere attended every meeting, making it impossible for the Syrians themselves to resolve anything. Amb. Robert Ford, the top U.S. diplomat to Syria, was ever-present.

On Nov. 12, a "new" Syrian opposition leadership was announced, headed by Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib, a Sunni cleric who once led the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Until his departure from Syria in July of this year, Khatib was known to be close to the Assad government, as well as to the banned Muslim Brotherhood.

The day that the Khatib anointing was announced, Philip Hammond, the British Secretary of State for Defence and Chief of Staff, announced that the U.K. was prepared to launch direct military action against Syria, perhaps before the end of the year.

In itself, the British announcement was a joke. Following years of severe austerity, the British armed



UN/Marco Castro

U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron (shown here addressing the UN in September), on a visit to the Mideast, announced plans to escalate regime-change operations in Syria by increasing arms shipments to the rebels.

forces have been reduced to near impotence—with the exception of a primarily submarine-based nuclear-weapons capability that has been largely integrated into the U.S. Apache class fleet of submarines armed with SLBMs (submarine-launched ballistic missiles) with thermonuclear warheads.

What is significant about the British announcement is the clear signal of intent to go for a direct military confrontation between Western powers and the Assad government.

At a press conference on Capitol Hill in September, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson (USA-ret.), former chief of staff to Gen. Colin Powell (USA-ret.) at the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department, warned that any U.S. attempt to create a no-fly zone over Syrian territory could trigger a general war. Russia, he warned, would provide ally Syria with advanced air defense systems, creating the possibility of direct clashes between the two military giants.

Netanyahu Following the British Script

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, taking a cue from Cameron, added to the war drive by carrying out attacks on Syrian military positions on the Golan

Heights, and launching new bombing and missile attacks on the Gaza Strip. While Netanyahu may have momentarily bowed to pressure from the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and his own top military and intelligence advisors, and postponed direct military action against Iran, Israel is fully prepared to launch a new devastating attack on Lebanon and/or Gaza. A source close to the Israeli military command confirmed that there are plans for massive retaliation against any provocation—real or manipulated—from Hezbollah in Lebanon. “This time, we will bomb all of Lebanon back to the 12th Century,” the source warned. Similar plans for a rerun of Operation Cast Lead, the 2008-09 genocidal assault on the Gaza Strip, have also been put in place, Israeli sources confirm.

Within the Israeli national security establishment, there is a growing worry that Netanyahu, the heir of the Jabotinsky policy of permanent war/permanent revolution, will take berserker actions leading to World War III.

Last month, the Institute for National Security Studies, a prestigious Tel Aviv think tank, conducted war games, based on a scenario of an Israeli unilateral attack on Iran, immediately following the U.S. Presidential elections. While a majority of participants in the war game thought that cooler heads in Iran, Israel, and the United States would prevail, a strong minority of participants insisted that the Israeli preventive strike could escalate rapidly into World War III, drawing in Russia and the United States.

The publication of the results of that war game in the Israeli press coincided with another frontal assault against madman Netanyahu and his partner in the war drive, Minister of Defense Ehud Barak. Israel Channel 2 television aired a documentary on Nov. 5, detailing a 2010 confrontation between Netanyahu and his then-IDF chief of staff, Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, and then-Mossad chief Meir Dagan. The two senior military and intelligence advisors blocked Netanyahu from launching an attack on Iran by declaring that the Prime Minister had no authority to order an attack without the approval of the cabinet. According to the Channel 2 account, Netanyahu was forced to back down.

Ha'aretz military correspondent Yossi Melman added an additional dimension to the exposé. He wrote, days after the TV exposé, that Netanyahu never intended to order a preventive strike on Iran. His intention was to convince the Iranian leadership that an Israeli attack was imminent, and draw them into

preemptive strikes against targets in the region, including U.S. interests. According to Melman, Netanyahu's goal was, and remains, to force the United States and NATO to go to war against Iran, by luring Iran into throwing the first punch.

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff have repeatedly warned Netanyahu and other top Israeli leaders that if Israel launches a unilateral preventive attack on Iran, particularly while diplomatic talks between Iran and the P5+1 (UN Security Council Permanent Five + Germany) are still going on, the U.S. will make it clear that this was done without U.S. support, and that the U.S. will not get involved—so long as there are no attacks against direct American interests or treaty partners in the Gulf.

In short, Netanyahu is playing with fire, betting that he can induce Iran to start a war, forcing the U.S. into the fight—regardless of the fact that this could trigger a global conflagration.

Obama's Dilemma

Left to his own devices, President Obama would be fully on board with Cameron and Netanyahu, pushing the button on World War III. But the President faces powerful opposition from the JCS and sane elements in

the U.S. intelligence community who are profoundly aware of the danger of general war, even thermonuclear war.

In addition, senior U.S. intelligence sources also point out that Congress is not in a mood to allow another flagrant Presidential violation of the War Powers Resolution and the underlying Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, which gives the U.S. Congress the exclusive power to declare war. President Obama flaunted his refusal to go to Congress before the overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya.

Congressman Walter Jones (R-N.C.) has introduced House Concurrent Resolution 107, mandating impeachment against any President who violates Article 1, Section 8. The resolution has bipartisan support.

Furthermore, Russian President Vladimir Putin has undertaken a major overhaul of the Russian military command, replacing his Defense Minister and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces last week, and installing more professional and hardline allies in their places. According to one senior U.S. intelligence official, the moves by Putin are part of an ambitious plan to invest in a major research-and-development program in the military sector, including in the nuclear triad.

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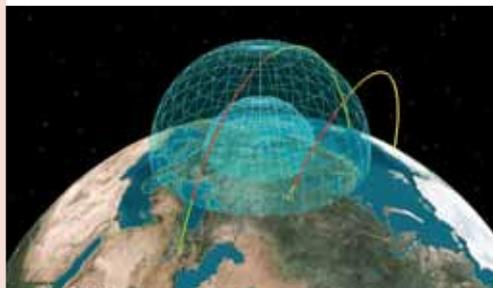
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