

War Avoidance Faction Pushes Back Against Obama Madness

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Aug. 18—On his way out of town on yet another ill-timed vacation, President Barack Obama staged a childish tirade against his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Not only did Obama cancel a long-scheduled bilateral summit in Moscow with Putin next month, he publicly insulted Putin describing him as having “that kind of slouch, looking like the bored kid in the back of the classroom.” Such language was both false and insulting, as well as unbecoming of a head of state, particularly in talking about another head of state of a great power.

Obama’s temper tantrum came in response primarily to the fact that Russia had granted temporary asylum to National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden. The fact that the Russian action was in keeping with international law, didn’t prevent Obama from becoming furious, as the NSA scandal spread, grabbing daily headlines as new revelations come out showing a deeper and more long-running illegal spy program against all Americans. Obama’s approval ratings have plummeted to the lowest in history of any second-term President.

According to Glenn Greenwald of the *Guardian*, one of the recipients of the Snowden treasure trove of documents, there are 15,000 more pages of material being reviewed. This week, the *Washington Post* published some additional Snowden material showing that the Inspector General of the NSA found thousands of instances in 2011 alone, in which NSA analysts violated the law by scooping up telephone and e-mail contents from American citizens, in violation of their First and Fourth Amendment rights.

Some Senate and House Democrats, led by Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), have taken up the new revelations and promise Congressional action after Sept. 9, when the House and Senate return to Washington from the August recess.

The issue of possible impeachment of President Obama is back on the table again. Obama is facing both the NSA spy scandal, and Congressional probes into the Internal Revenue Service targeting of political groups opposing Obama from both the right and the left. And Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) is pressing for the creation of a House Select Committee to investigate the Benghazi attacks of Sept. 11, 2012, which anniversary comes soon after Congress reconvenes.

Obama’s blow-up against President Putin has been countered by top Administration “realists,” including Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry. Hagel and Kerry met their Russian counterparts on Aug. 9—the same day that Obama was throwing his infantile fit against Putin. The four Cabinet members—Kerry, Hagel, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu—met in Washington as part of the regular 2+2 consultations (see *EIR*, Aug 16). According to Washington and Moscow sources, those talks covered a wide range of topics, from the ongoing Syria crisis, to upcoming P5+1 talks with the new Iranian government, to American and NATO plans to withdraw forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, to missile defense. The talks were productive, despite continuing disagreements on several of those sensitive national security topics. In particular, the U.S. and Russia reiterated that, while they have differing views on the ongoing Syria crisis, they share the commitment to solve the situation through ceasefire and diplomacy rather than by military force.

The idea of a Geneva II conference among all relevant parties in the Syria conflict is still on the table, although the prospects of such a meeting in the near term are slight. At the close of the talks in Washington,

Lavrov told reporters at the Russian embassy that the “grown-ups” had met, and that the U.S.-Russian relationship was on solid grounds on many critical issues. While the U.S. press jumped on Obama’s cancellation of the summit with Putin, top Kremlin spokesmen made the obvious point: When top government ministers can sit down together for in-depth discussions on a wide range of controversial topics, relations have hardly collapsed.

Dempsey in Israel

Complementing the Hagel-Kerry efforts with their Russian counterparts to cool down the provocations and war dangers, Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, traveled to Israel and Jordan to meet with top military and government officials. The purpose of the Dempsey mission was spelled out by Israeli journalist Ben Caspit, writing in Al-Monitor (a new online news organization that is currently edited by a former aide to Chuck Hagel from the latter’s years in the U.S. Senate). Caspit wrote that the Dempsey trip was aimed at averting the possibility of an Israeli preemptive strike on Iranian targets. In the new Israeli war cabinet, there is a near deadlock over the question of giving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authority to order such strikes, on the basis of a so-called Israeli “red line.”

According to Caspit and U.S. intelligence sources, the swing vote in the security cabinet is Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon. Dempsey spent a great deal of time meeting with Ya’alon during his two days in Israel, and the general’s message was clear on both the Iranian and Syrian issues: Israel must not take any unilateral action. Dempsey is aware that any Israeli action against Syria or Iran would be viewed internationally as a U.S.-sanctioned move, and it could trigger a much wider war, drawing in both the United States and Russia—and possibly China as well.

As Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly warned, such a broader conflict could very easily turn into a thermo-nuclear war. Dempsey shares that concern, and was very clear with Israeli officials that their ongoing bombing campaign against select targets in Syria was another big concern for Washington. Since the beginning of the year, Israel has conducted four bombing attacks on arms depots inside Syria, ostensibly to prevent those advanced weapons from getting in the hands of Hezbollah. Israel has maintained a policy of

silence on those bombing attacks, but Washington knows that the Russians and Syrians are well aware of the Israeli Air Force responsibility for the bombings.

To send a clear signal that the U.S. is not in favor of those attacks, Pentagon officials leaked details of the July 5 Israeli bombing of a Russian arms depot near Latakia, Syria, to the *New York Times*. The purpose of the leak was to deliver a clear message to both Moscow and Tel Aviv that the U.S. is emphatically *not* behind the Israeli actions and wants them to be halted. In Israel, Dempsey made clear to the IDF and Defense Ministry officials with whom he met that Washington is not happy that Russia is continuing to provide advanced arms to the Syrian government, but that Israeli reckless action could lead to an out-of-control conflict that must be avoided.

There is no guarantee that Dempsey’s mission succeeded, but it is indicative that senior Pentagon, State Department, and CIA officials are wary of any escalation of conflict in the region. Furthermore, there is a degree of optimism that the new Iranian government under President Hassan Rouhani may be ready to negotiate a deal to end the stalemate over Iran’s nuclear program. To the extent that Obama is now obsessed with his legacy—with his Presidency already near lame-duck status—a successful completion of the P5+1 negotiations with Iran over the coming months could be a feather in his cap. So the prospect of White House sabotage of a deal might be reduced, despite the presence of Dr. Susan Rice at the National Security Council and her fellow radical humanitarian interventionist Samantha Power at the United Nations. With Kerry, Hagel, and Dempsey pushing back against the war danger, Obama and Rice have recently jumped in bed with Republican Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham, in pushing a hard line on Syria, Egypt, and Iran.

Above all else, the Wall Street and London fears of growing support for Glass-Steagall, and the looming threat of an end-of-the-fiscal-year financial collapse are driving an increasingly desperate financial oligarchy to contemplate war. That wildcard factor cannot be ignored. With London maintaining a strong hold over Jabotinskyite fanatic Netanyahu, the danger of an Israeli breakaway ally provocation remains a great danger, a danger that LaRouche has repeatedly highlighted in his weekly webcasts and writings.