

FROM THE VINEYARD

Obama Follows Cameron, Inciting More Illegal Wars

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Aug. 18—President Barack Obama returned briefly to Washington today from his two-week vacation on Martha's Vineyard to confer with Administration officials on two of the myriad crises he faces: the ongoing protests in Ferguson, Mo., and the dire situation in Iraq.

There are no indications that the President plans to remedy the fact that he is in violation of the War Powers Act and Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, giving Congress exclusive authority to declare war, by requesting authorization for his actions.

Obama has persistently lied to Congress and to the American people about the scope of U.S. military operations in Iraq, and has, in effect, launched a third Iraq war.

Obama's actions are in tandem with British Prime Minister David Cameron, who has escalated British military operations against the Islamic State (IS/ISIS). Cameron published an op-ed in the Aug. 17 *Sunday Telegraph* announcing an expansion of British military operations against IS, which he accurately labeled "warped and barbaric," and which is moving rapidly to consolidate a "terrorist state" in Iraq and Syria. Ever the hypocrite, Cameron, who speaks for the British/U.S. imperial forces that *created* IS in the first place, wrote that IS must be defeated now, "Because if we do not act to stem the onslaught of this exceptionally dangerous terrorist movement, it will only grow stronger until it can target us on the streets of Britain. We already know that it has the murderous intent" (see following article).

More honestly, and ominously, Cameron echoed

Tony Blair's perspective of a "long war"—in effect, a permanent war with no peace strategy in sight. President Obama's numerous statements have echoed that perspective.

Mission Creep, No Exit Strategy

Obama has ordered an increase in the bombing, now identifying the Mosul Dam as a priority target for recapture from IS. In the past week, under Obama's expanded bombing orders, the number of U.S. bombings has doubled since the start of the bombing campaign on Aug. 8. In an interview with the *New York Times* a day before the bombings began, Obama had lied that the United States would not become the air force for the Kurdish Peshmerga or the Iraqi Army. Yet, that is precisely what has happened in the intervening ten days.

At the very first White House briefing on the U.S. intervention, senior Administration officials stated that the American mission would include protection of Iraq's "vital infrastructure."

In a presentation at the annual Aspen Security Forum in July, Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had identified IS as a strategic threat. However, he cautioned that the nations of the region on the front lines of the battle had to take the lead and work together to defeat the jihadist threat over a prolonged period of time. He emphasized that there had to be cooperation with Iran in the effort, and that the United States could not take the lead.

According to Washington sources, Dempsey warned President Obama that IS was on the verge of overrunning the Kurdish region and capturing its capital city, Erbil. He warned that if IS did succeed in taking the Iraqi Kurdish region, its next likely target would be the Kurdish region of Iran. Given the support that has flowed to IS from the Sunni Gulf states, Dempsey told the President that Iran was a far more likely target of IS than Saudi Arabia. If IS did launch operations against Iran, this would lead to a regional war and possibly worse.

According to the sources, Dempsey also demanded that the Obama Administration develop a clear plan of action, and an exit strategy, before any further action. The sources indicated that one reason that Obama was adamant about *not* going to Congress is that the Administration in fact has no strategy for dealing with the Iraq-Syria crisis, IS, or any other element of a genuine regional security plan. Obama and his inner circle are clearly committed to expanding the President's unitary executive powers, and this is another reason why the Administration has no plans to seek Congressional authorization for the creeping "long war" that the U.S. is entering in Iraq.

New Questions

The first Obama justification for military engagement in Iraq, the so-called "humanitarian" mission to rescue 40,000 Yazidis, a religious minority, trapped on Mount Sinjar, is now being called into question. Last week, when the Iraq mission reached Day 60, triggering the War Powers Resolution, President Obama abruptly announced that the rescue mission had been completed, and nearly all the Yazidis had escaped from the mountain. *New York Times* reporter Allissa Rubin, who was on the scene, wrote that "the Yazidis feel so betrayed by the Arab neighbors they had lived among for so many years; they all turned on the Yazidis when ISIS came. Many of the atrocities were carried out not by the militants but by their own neighbors."

Writing in antiwar.com, Jason Ditz was even more explicit: "So to sum up, President Obama started a war to save 40,000 trapped Yazidis from ISIS, and there weren't 40,000 of them, and they weren't trapped, and now it turns out ISIS also wasn't nearly so involved as previously indicated. America was lied into the first Iraq War in 2003 on some mighty flimsy pretexts but it seems the administration didn't learn any of the lessons, even bad lessons like keeping your lies less trans-

parent, and the whole pretext collapsed in just over a week. The war, however, will go on much, much longer."

The idea that U.S. and British military action in Iraq—action by the very players who created the current crisis with their two previous wars—could solve any problems in the region, of course strains credulity. In the context of the current warlike stance of the same nations against Russia, such action is doubly dangerous.

Backing Nazis in Ukraine

Again following Cameron's lead, Obama continues to support the Ukraine regime in its brutal campaign of murder against its own citizens of the eastern and southern parts of the country, in clear violation of the April 17, 2014 Geneva accord that was signed by Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and their Ukrainian, French, and German counterparts.

Despite verification by the International Committee of the Red Cross that the Russian truck convoy carrying humanitarian aid to the besieged cities of eastern Ukraine is only carrying food, blankets, and other vital humanitarian survival material, the Ukraine government continues to stall on providing the agreed-upon security assurances to allow the caravan to cross the border into Ukraine.

On Aug. 18, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier hosted another round of negotiations in Berlin among Russia, Ukraine, France, and Germany to reach an agreement on a ceasefire, the humanitarian aid deliveries, secured borders, and the long-promised political reforms. As the diplomacy has sputtered along, Ukrainian forces have continued the brutal bombing and artillery shelling of cities in the east, sending a flood of refugees across the Russian border. Every time that the so-called Ukraine National Guard, comprised almost exclusively of Right Sector self-professed neo-Nazis, commits an atrocity against civilians fleeing the bombings, the Kiev government blames either Russia or the Russian-speaking minorities in eastern Ukraine who are seeking autonomy. And Washington obligingly joins in the propaganda fest in a daily ritual of demonizing Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The outcome, unless the Ukraine crisis can be de-escalated, is that NATO and Russia are headed for a direct confrontation, a confrontation that no one is likely to survive.