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## Warning: Saudi mayhem ahead

By Pepe Escobar

2/21/2014

Move over, Peter O' Toole. It's Charles of Arabia time. Prince Charles switched to Lawrence mode when he went schmoozing and dancing in Riyadh this past Tuesday with the natives. And just like clockwork, the next day BAE Systems - Europe's number one weapons peddler - announced that the UK and the House of Saud had agreed on "new pricing" for an extremely juicy deal; 72 Eurofighter Typhoon jets.

The Eurofighter is a direct competitor of the spectacularly unsalable French Rafale and the very expensive American F-35s and F-16s. The Associated Press duly included in its dispatch - reproduced by virtually every newspaper around the world - the Washington-enforced meme "Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries are fortifying their military capabilities to counter a perceived threat from regional rivals, particularly Iran." As if Tehran was going to bomb the House of Saud tomorrow.

The Eurofighter, on the other hand, has already been employed against fellow Arabs - as in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's humanitarian bombing of Libya back to failed-state status. It's open to debate whether the House of Saud might be tempted to employ it against the enemy within: aspiring Saudi women drivers.

Brandishing the official excuse that near-nonagenarian King Abdullah was not able to receive him, Charles of Arabia declined to discuss with the House of Saud the absolutely appalling

women's rights, migrant workers' rights and for that matter the full human rights situation in the kingdom. Of course not; this is only brought up when demonizing Russia, China and/or Iran.

Moreover, Charles of Arabia could not possibly ruffle feathers as the French are also positioning themselves as contenders in the Snuggle-Up-with-a-Saudi industrial-military complex game show (worth more than US\$70 billion in these past few years). French President Francois Hollande - an abysmal nullity at home but a Great Liberator of Africa and Syria - visited Riyadh in December trying hard to steal significant market share from the Anglo-Americans. The problem is, no sentient being anywhere would even contemplate buying a Rafale.

### **Here's the dough, now gimme a bomb**

So the House of Saud is stockpiling weapons. Check. Saudi Arabia's Prince Bandar bin Sultan, aka Bandar Bush, remains on the loose, financing/weaponizing his growing army of mercenaries in the Levant. Check. And the House of Saud is up to something with its ally Pakistan. Check.

Just one day before Charles of Arabia hit Riyadh, Saudi Defense Minister - and, crucially, Crown Prince - Salam bin Abdul Aziz was in Islamabad. The heart of the matter was - what else - a "defense pact". [1]

Crucially, there's also a Pipelineistan reverberation. By mid-2013, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was all excited over the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline, which should theoretically go online in 2015. Now he's not so sure. One doesn't need to be the perspicacious Charles of Arabia to detect a Saudi hand on all this - actively spoiling the Iran-Pakistan energy partnership.

The House of Saud's Iranian paranoia has no equal in the whole solar system, and regime change in Syria is a key plank in the retribution scenario. No matter Washington's non-denial denials of the "we're not involved" kind, Bandar Bush's network will soon be supplying mercenary gangs in the Levant with anti-aircraft weaponry.

And guess who's following Charles of Arabia to Riyadh next month: none other than US President Barack Obama. As part of the House of Saud's multi-pronged attack, King Abdullah will practically supplicate from Obama (of Arabia?) a decisive push for regime change in Syria.

Meanwhile, the House of Saud is trying to amass as many Pakistani "advisers" as possible to train its paid goons in Syria. The official Pakistani non-denial denial is that they won't be sending their army to Syria. [2] But in a remix of Afghanistan during the 1980s jihad, a bunch of seasoned "advisers" will more than suffice.

Then there's the House of Saud nuclear play. Already in 2012, they were advertising the drive to build no fewer than 16 commercial nuclear reactors by 2030 - and on top of it a tech agreement with Beijing was signed.

The House of Saud spent a lot of dough in the Pakistani nuclear weapons program. It's not even a matter of "acquiring nuclear technology" against Iran; that would take too long. Depending on the result of the P5+1 talks with Iran along 2014, a hyper-paranoid House of Saud could simply

rain a mountain of hard cash on cash-strapped Islamabad and just buy one of its nukes.

After all, Riyadh just offered a cool \$3 billion to the Lebanese army so that it would buy French weapons - something that over-excited Frenchmen duly interpreted as a Saudi "tactical divorce" from the Barack Obama administration.

Every each way one looks at it, expect major House of Saud-provoked mayhem ahead. Even in Tehran, they are worried about Saudi sanity - as the office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei knows all there is to know about the cosmic paranoia, aging King Abdullah (89) riding into the sunset, the fierce succession war to follow, and, meanwhile, Bandar Bush's warmongering offensive.

Which brings us back to perspicacious Charles of Arabia. He could not have failed to notice there is a direct continuum from medieval Wahhabism and one Osama bin Laden. Until recently, every leadership of every hardcore Islamist gang on the planet shared three traits: they studied in Saudi Arabia; they were financed by Saudi sources (public or private); and they reached their "maturity" in Afghanistan. Now the jihadi landscape is more diversified. So it's up to Bandar Bush to regiment the new jihadi Google generation into "Islamic Fronts".

For the House of Saud, though, the agenda always remains the same: demonize Iran; be the dutiful errand boys of the hyperpower and lesser Western "powers"; and buy weapons in droves. No wonder Charles of Arabia happily danced to their tune; after all, these jolly old chaps are "our" gold-medal bastards.

*Notes:*

1. Pak-Saudi defence cooperation agreed, The News, February 17, 2014.
2. Pakistan Refuse Saudi Demand to Send Pakistan Army in Syria, Pakistan TV.