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Towards a Regional War and an Integrated Military Agenda: Washington Targets Syria and Iran

By Stephen Lendman
December 18, 2012

US policies threaten both nations. Doing so imperils the region and beyond.

On December 17, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) cited Syrian Vice President Farouk al-Sharaa saying continuing armed conflict favors neither side.

Opposition elements can't topple Assad without creating endless violence and chaos, he stressed.

He urged conflict resolution and national unity. "We are not protecting some particular person or regime. We are fighting for the very existence of Syria," he explained.

Elements committing crimes in Syria, and nations supporting them, lost all national, moral, and humane sense, he said. Government forces are duty-bound to restore and preserve public safety.

The longer conflict continues, the harder peaceful resolution becomes. He has no simple solutions to propose. Both sides must commit to find them.

Washington, key NATO partners, Israel, and regional allies maintain hidebound policies. They support continued conflict. They want Syria destroyed. They want Assad replaced by pro-Western extremists. Most Syrians deplore them.

He thanked Syria's real friends. He named Iran, Hezbollah's Hasan Nasrallah, Russia and China.

On December 17, Voice of Russia (VoR) discussed a December 17-18 Rome conference. More than 30 internal and external interests are involved.

Moscow hopes discussions may smooth the way for constructive conflict-ending dialogue. Hope springs eternal. Fulfillment remains distant.

The National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change (NCC) organized the conference. Its members favor peaceful conflict resolution. They reject continuing violence. They deplore outside elements pursuing violence and destruction.

Moscow Middle East expert Said Gafurov is cautiously optimistic. The conference may “contribute to resolving the Syrian gridlock,” he said.

It’s “an important step because it may help participants to sit down for parleys with the government.”

“It’s hard to say whether the conference will see any breakthroughs, but I don’t rule out that the gathering will at least pave the way for isolating irreconcilable militants.”

At the same time, FSA elements “want power, not democracy.” They’re “loath to consider the fact that at least 60 percent of the Syrian population supports” Assad.

After many months of conflict, the vast majority likely support him. He’s their last line of defense. Without him, they’re at the mercy of Washington-recruited Islamofascist killers.

They want their will forcibly imposed. They reject peace talks. They take orders from Washington. America’s in charge. US officials plot what type future they plan for Syrians.

Moscow-based Institute for Middle Eastern and Israeli Studies head Yevgeny Satanovsky added:

“Some opposition activists are really poised for talks free from foreign interference.”

“Most opposition figures, including those from the Free Syrian Army (FSA), are oriented towards outside forces and the fall of the Assad regime.”

“They call for the physical liquidation of President Assad and his family members, as well as representatives of religious and confessional minorities whom they describe as ‘heretics.’ “

Elements in Rome hope fruitful discussion will be prelude for a late December Cairo conference. Some see a chance to open dialogue between Assad and moderate opposition forces wanting peace.

On December 16, SANA quoted Nasrallah saying:

“Whoever thinks that the armed opposition in Syria is capable of resolving things militarily on the ground is mistaken.

Insurgents can’t emerge victorious, he added. Western nations lured Al Qaeda and other extremist fighters to Syria. They sent them on a fool’s errand.

“I warned Al-Qaida. The Americans and the European countries and Arab and Islamic countries have set a trap for you in Syria, and opened for you a battlefield so you come from across the world to be killed and to kill each other.”

Days earlier, Russia denied one of its senior diplomats said Assad is losing control of his country.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov was misquoted. Media scoundrels claimed Moscow believed he was doomed. His real assessment was:

“The fighting will become even more intense, and (Syria) will lose tens of thousands and, perhaps, hundreds of thousands of civilians.”

“If such a price for the removal of the president seems acceptable to you, what can we do? We, of course, consider it absolutely unacceptable.”

Russia’s Foreign Ministry said Bogdanov “has not made any statements or (given) special interviews recently.” His comments were made in a recent speech.

On December 17, senior Iranian lawmaker Gholam Ali Haddad Adel condemned Washington and Western allies. He denounced their double standard hypocrisy on Iran’s nuclear program.

“If you are concerned about (it), why do you support the Zionist regime which does not abide by UN resolutions,” he asked?

Tehran fully complies with NPT provisions, he stressed. Israel spurns them. No evidence whatever suggests an Iranian nuclear weapons program. High US, other Western, and Israeli officials know but won’t say.

Israel’s had a powerful arsenal for decades. It’s the region’s only nuclear power. It threatens to use them if endangered. It refuses inspections.

Iran’s UN ambassador, Mohammad Khazayee, earlier denounced Israel’s refusal to join NPT and allow IAEA inspections.

“Iran considers Israel as the prime suspect in the field of possessing nuclear weapons and not abiding by the NPT. The international community should exert pressure on the Zionist regime to join the NPT,” he added.

On December 17, Haaretz/Reuters headlined “Iran FM: Tehran, world powers must end impasse over nuclear program,” saying:

FM Ali Akbar Salehi said both sides “reached a conclusion that they must exit the current stalemate.” More talks are needed. Serious ones. He expects them. He’s not sure when.

Washington obstructed earlier P5+1 talks. Successful future ones depends on cutting that gordian knot. They also depend on recognizing Iran’s right to pursue nuclear power generation peacefully.

Its program replicates dozens of other countries. Iran alone is criticized. Doing so is red herring cover for regime change. Tehran wants its rights respected. It wants lawless sanctions ended.

Its sovereignty is inviolable. It won’t surrender to Washington, other Western nations and Israel.

Reports suggest possible new talks early next year. Unless conducted constructively, they’ll fail like earlier ones.

On December 15, Mossad-connected DEBKAfile (DF) claimed Washington and Tehran held “secret one-on-one” talks. They failed.

Resolution isn’t possible as long as America remains obstructionist. DF quoted senior Iranian negotiator Mostafa Dolatyar saying talks went nowhere.

Washington demands Iran relinquish its legitimate right to enrich uranium to 20%. He added that world powers “made certain connections with purely technical issues and something purely political.”

As long as this attitude holds, resolution isn’t possible.

DF said US/Iranian talks were held in Lausanne, Switzerland. They began on December 1. Dolatyar heads Iran’s Foreign Ministry Political and International Studies think tank.

He’s also a senior nuclear negotiator. His remarks carry weight. They’re authorized by the highest level’s of Iran’s government.

DF cited a December 5 Wall Street Journal article. It’s titled “From Bushehr to the Bomb.” It attracted little attention. It deserved none.

It said Washington began monitoring Bushehr more closely “after Iran had unexpectedly removed fuel rods containing between 22 and 220 pounds of weapons-grade plutonium.”

America earlier claimed Bushehr posed little proliferation risk.

At the same time, uranium isn’t the only bomb-making material. “Iran has long been at work on a plutonium-breeding heavy-water reactor in the city of Arak.”

Tehran says it’s for research. Bushehr spent fuel rods are supposed to be returned to Russia for storage. In October, they were removed. Iran says they were returned to the core reactor.

The Journal’s bottom line is that Iran produced enough plutonium for “24 Nagasaki-type bombs.” No evidence whatever suggests Iranian nuclear materials of any type are intended for bomb-making.

DF headlined the story. “Tehran can easily manufacture plutonium bombs without building a large” reactor like Arak. It cited baseless threats repeated many times before. They long ago wore thin.

DF, Netanyahu, other Israeli hardliners, and US ones never quit. Their claims lack credibility. No evidence supports them.

At the same time, nuclear expert Helen Caldicott calls all nuclear plants atom bomb factories. A 1,000-megawatt reactor produces 500 pounds of plutonium annually.

Ten pounds can produce a bomb able to destroy a large city. At least 53 countries operate nuclear reactors. Most do solely for power generation and other peaceful purposes.

Regional nations alone include Algeria, Egypt, Niger, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, UAE, and, of course, Israel and Iran.

Tehran alone is called threatening. Israel's menace is ignored. So are Iran's peaceful intentions. Having the ability to produce bomb-related material falls way short of proving intent. DF and the Journal left that unexplained.

A Final Comment

Over the weekend, reports said Pentagon authorities quietly recalled the USS Eisenhower battle group and USS Iwo Jima Amphibious ready group with 2,000 marines on board.

On December 19, they're expected home in Norfolk, VA. They've been stationed for weeks off Syria's coast. An unnamed flight deck problem was named. Repairs are needed.

One CVN (carrier/fixed wing-vice rotary wings/nuclear) remains in the Gulf.

The USS Nimitz was scheduled to replace the Eisenhower in January. It needs two month's work for flight deck resurfacing. The Roosevelt will be back in service soon. Several months are required to return three carrier groups to the Gulf.

Offensive Patriot missiles expected in place in January will replace sea power capability. Washington also has extensive air power nearby. So do Turkey and Israel. French and British warships have their own.

Pulling US naval power for now may delay US Syrian plans. It's hard knowing for sure. Continued conflict to oust Assad continues. Post-holiday season, what's next may be clearer.