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US Set to Launch 'Iraq, The Sequel', in Syria

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If you liked the run up to the US attack on Iraq, with the lurid fictional tales of mobile chemical weapons labs and Saddam's nukes, you will love "Iraq, The Sequel", currently unfolding in Syria. It is everything the interventionists have been hoping for: a heady brew of Kosovo, Iraq, and Libya all rolled into one. The possibility for an infinitely more toxic conflagration is exponentially higher, to boot, adding for the interventionists much excitement to the mix.

Here is the latest:

A fourth US warship capable of launching the type of cruise missiles that turned Libya to rubble and paved the way for al-Qaeda affiliates to take control of that country is now rushing to the waters off of Syria, ready to unleash destruction. Chuck Hagel, who some antiwar commentators foolishly believed would put an end to Washington's military adventurism, is feverishly preparing plans for President Obama to attack. The media worldwide, interventionist to the core, is pushing willing leaders in the US, France, and the UK to finally treat Syria to another devastating "liberation."

What has prompted this sudden dramatic move just over the past few days toward a Western invasion of Syria? A pretext. A claimed chemical attack near Damascus that has produced, according to an estimate from Médecins Sans Frontières, perhaps some 300 deaths. It is unclear whether a bona fide chemical attack has taken place, and it is even more unclear who might be responsible should the attack indeed be the work of some chemical agent. Yet all of a sudden

another Washington/Paris/London war is to be set in motion. How banal the triggers for war have become. Almost like a video game.

Somehow we are supposed to believe that within 72 hours after the arrival of a UN chemical weapons inspection team to assess -- with the Syrian government's cooperation -- the sites of previous claimed chemical weapons attacks, that same Syrian government would launch a chemical weapon attack on civilians just miles from where the UN inspectors are staying. The UN inspectors were there on invitation from the Syrian government and that same government would launch chemicals right into their neighborhood.

Unless Assad is indeed suicidally insane, which he has given no indication of being heretofore, it quite simply makes no sense. Why risk the overt wrath of the entire rest of the world -- alienating even your final allies in Iran and Russia -- for so measly a gain: killing 300 civilians in a war to the death against US/Saudi/Turk supported jihadists? There is no military justification and no justification at all short of the Assad clan being a Middle Eastern form of the Manson Family. Is that the argument?

As the always thoughtful Moon of Alabama blog points out, the hypocrisy of the West is stunning. Based exclusively on reporting by the Syrian opposition itself, some sort of substance has killed anywhere from 100-360 people outside Damascus, and the West is ready for war. Meanwhile, just over a week ago, the Egyptian military massacred more than a thousand unarmed Muslim Brotherhood protestors in Egypt and the West not only did not condemn the act but has endorsed further crackdowns against supporters of the duly elected government in Egypt -- in the name of democracy.

Thousands killed by the US allied Egyptian military is glossed over; dubious unconfirmed reports from highly biased sources, of a hundred or so killed in a war that has claimed by some estimates 100,000 lives, and the warships steam toward a date with destruction. Why are these 100 killed any different than those thousands of Syrians killed with CIA supplied weapons in case after documented case of Syrian insurgent atrocities? No answer.

Credible reports coming from the pro-government press in Syria that the rebels have time and time again -- including just yesterday -- used crude chemical agents in their fight to overthrow the government are routinely ignored by the same Western media that dutifully reports every utterance from the rebels' own mouthpiece, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

However, the claims that chemical agents were used has come under very skeptical scrutiny from those who understand such matters. Although the press with its signature lack of curiosity is reporting breathlessly on the preparations for war (it's good for ratings and for the profits of their military-industrial complex invested corporate owners), there are thankfully still some media outlets willing to consider those odd things called facts.

The Israeli Haaretz newspaper is one of those, and it reports (via Sic Semper Tyrannis blog) that those who know a bit about chemical warfare are unconvinced by Syrian insurgent reports of chemical weapons use.

Western experts on chemical warfare who have examined at least part of the footage are skeptical that weapons-grade chemical substances were used, although they all emphasize that serious conclusions cannot be reached without thorough on-site examination. Dan Kaszeta, a former officer of the U.S. Army's Chemical Corps and a leading private consultant, pointed out a number of details absent from the footage so far: "None of the people treating the casualties or photographing them are wearing any sort of chemical-warfare protective gear," he says, "and despite that, none of them seem to be harmed." This would seem to rule out most types of military-grade chemical weapons, including the vast majority of nerve gases, since these substances would not evaporate immediately, especially if they were used in sufficient quantities to kill hundreds of people, but rather leave a level of contamination on clothes and bodies which would harm anyone coming in unprotected contact with them in the hours after an attack. In addition, he says that "there are none of the other signs you would expect to see in the aftermath of a chemical attack, such as intermediate levels of casualties, severe visual problems, vomiting and loss of bowel control."

Steve Johnson, a leading researcher on the effects of hazardous material exposure at England's Cranfield University who has worked with Britain's Ministry of Defense on chemical warfare issues, agrees that "from the details we have seen so far, a large number of casualties over a wide area would mean quite a pervasive dispersal. With that level of chemical agent, you would expect to see a lot of contamination on the casualties coming in ,and it would affect those treating them who are not properly protected. We are not seeing that here." Additional questions also remain unanswered, especially regarding the timing of the attack, being that it occurred on the exact same day that a team of UN inspectors was in Damascus to investigate earlier claims of chemical weapons use. It is also unclear what tactical goal the Syrian army would have been trying to achieve, when over the last few weeks it has managed to push back the rebels who were encroaching on central areas of the capital. But if this was not a chemical weapons attack, what then caused the deaths of so many people without any external signs of trauma?

Tomahawk missiles may be flying by the time you read this article. But do not make the mistake of believing the lies being told to make the case for another war. This is another war based entirely on lies and the result will be the destruction of the people of Syria. Another war crime under cover of "humanitarian intervention."