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Putin warns West against unilateral action on Syria

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned the West not to take one-sided action against Syria, amid the increasing likelihood of foreign military intervention in the Middle Eastern country.

Putin gave the warning in an interview with state-run Channel One television on Wednesday, saying, “Only the UN Security Council can give approval for the use of force against another state.”

He further noted that without the backing of the UN Security Council, the move would be considered as “aggression.”

“Any other ways to justify the use of force against another sovereign and independent state are unacceptable and cannot be qualified as anything other than aggression,” Putin said.

Putin said that the proof for the accusation that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons should be convincing.

“If there is evidence that chemical weapons were used by the regular army... then this evidence must be presented to the UN Security Council. And it must be convincing,” Putin stated.

Referring to Russia’s S-300 air defense missile deal with Syria, the Russian president said that Moscow is committed to its military contracts with the Syrian government.

“We have delivered separate components [of the S-300 systems] but the whole delivery has not been completed and for the moment we have suspended it,” Putin said.

Putin’s remarks come amid the rising possibility of foreign military action against Syria.

The rhetoric of war against the Middle Eastern country first gained momentum on August 21, when the militants operating inside Syria and the foreign-backed Syrian opposition claimed that hundreds of people had been killed in a government chemical attack on militant strongholds in the Damascus suburbs of Ain Tarma, Zamalka and Jobar.

Damascus categorically rejected having had any role in the chemical attack.

Nevertheless, a number of Western countries, including the US, France, and the UK, quickly started campaigning for war.

On Tuesday, August 27, speculations became stronger about the possibility of a military attack on Syria. Media outlets reported US plans for likely surgical attacks, which would be in the form of “cruise-missile strikes,” and “could rely on ... US destroyers in the Mediterranean [Sea].” The plan was said to be awaiting US President Barack Obama’s go-ahead.

Later, however, domestic and international calls against a potential war forced some of the warmongering countries to temporarily tone down their stances.

On August 29, the British parliament voted against participation by Britain, the United States’ closest ally, in any potential military intervention in Syria under the current circumstances.

On Friday, August 30, NATO also distanced itself from participating in any military intervention in Syria, with the chief of the Western military coalition, Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, saying he did not “foresee any NATO role” in a war on Syria.

However, Washington remained defiant, saying that it is willing to go ahead with its plans for a strike on Syria without the approval of the United Nations or even the support of its allies. Under mounting pressure though, US President Barack Obama said on Saturday, August 31 that his administration will first seek authorization from the Congress.

Although the American legislators were highly skeptical of any US war on Syria at first, criticizing a draft resolution sent to them by the Obama administration, they seem to have given in to the White House campaign to promote war.

The US lawmakers have now drafted a bipartisan measure, to be voted on later, imposing a 90-day deadline for US military intervention and banning the “deployment of any US troops on the ground” in Syria.

The rollercoaster trend of war talk so far comes while the team of UN inspectors, who recently visited Syria to probe the sites of chemical attacks, has yet to release the findings of its inspection.

The UN, Iran, Russia, and China have warned against war.

Syria has been gripped by deadly unrest since 2011.