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Israeli Bombers over Syria: Al Qaeda's Air Force

By Prof. James Petras

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Introduction

Israel has committed repeated acts of war against countries that opposed its Zionist policies of colonization and annexation of Palestinian territory in East Jerusalem and the West Bank . Israeli leaders have secured arms and diplomatic support for their attacks through their Zionist proxies in the United States Congress and the Executive Branch.

The current series of Israeli bombing raids and missile strikes against Syria are designed to strengthen the armed Syrian opposition and Islamist mercenaries seeking to destroy the government in Damascus. Israel intends to sabotage the upcoming round of peace negotiations. The Zionist state does not want a peaceful resolution to the current regional conflict. Its foreign policy depends on perpetual regional wars and political instability. Toward this end, Tel Aviv has the unconditional support of the 52 Presidents of the Major American Jewish Organization and all other Zionist organizations in the US .

Armed Conflict and Intervention in Syria

For almost three years, Syria has increasingly transformed into a battleground and humanitarian disaster. At first, there were domestic Syrian political and social organizations staging protests against the Baathist government. The early protestors included secular liberals, Muslims,

democrats and socialists. They had engaged in mostly peaceful protest against the authoritarian, but multi-cultural, secular regime of Bashar Assad. The government clamped down heavily and arrested many protestors.

This heavy-handed response help to split the Syrian opposition: Peaceful, civil-society protestors remained in the country, although diminished in numbers, while many others went underground or fled to bordering countries and formed the early core of the armed opposition. They received military and financial support from NATO countries and Turkey , as well as from the corrupt Gulf Monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia . A cross-border war was launched in which US and European special military forces played a leading role in organizing, training and directing a makeshift collection of armed Syrian groups. Turkey provided arms, training camps and logistical support. The funding came from the rich kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Monarchies, which have spent hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Saudis recruited radical Islamist and Al Qaeda mercenaries and Wahhabi terrorists to fight the Damascus regime – targeting secular Syrians, Shiites, Alawites, Syrian Christians and Kurds. In just a few years, the conflict underwent a radical change in character and in intensity from internal broad-based civil strife to an armed foreign-backed invasion with vicious sectarian overtones. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians fled from their home when thousands of mostly foreign, Islamist fighters attacked and occupied their cities, towns and villages – conducting campaigns of ethnic cleansing against non-Sunni and non-Arab Syrians.

The government in Damascus responded by mobilizing ground troops and its air force to recover its vital highways and cities and drive out this increasingly foreign occupation. This became especially critical toward the end of 2012, when Al Qaeda-linked extremists, funded by the Saudi and Gulf monarchies, gained ascendancy at a number of key fronts. These violent extremists overran and displaced the Western-backed ‘internal’ armed opposition who made up the so-called ‘moderates’. The Saudi proxies attacked Kurdish militia in the semi-autonomous Syrian northeast in order to secure cross border supply routes to Iraq thus regionalizing the war. This heralded the tremendous increase in terrorism and bombing against the Shiite government in Baghdad and majority Shia population.

As the Western-backed opposition retreated, the mercenaries, linked to Al Qaeda, fully expected their sponsors among the despotic Saudi oil billionaires to call on NATO and the US to launch missile strikes against the Syrian government. Without US and NATO air support, the jihadis would never take Damascus .

Meanwhile, the Islamist Turkish government had been playing a duplicitous role by allowing its border area to be used for terrorist camps, supply routes and a launch site for cross-border attacks against its neighbor. This has been very unpopular with the Turkish public. When it became evident that the Saudi-backed Al Qaeda terrorists were gaining the upper hand over Ankara ’s more ‘moderate’ Islamist Syrian clients, the Turks may have developed concerns that their border would become a regional center for Al Qaeda with thousands of well-armed, battle-tested Islamist mercenaries. This may explain Ankara ’s recent approach to Teheran hoping to undercut the jihadi clients of the Gulf Monarchies.

With the Syrian opposition badly split and the US domestic opposition to a new war increasing, the US-NATO regimes withdrew their commitment to the Saudis to act as ‘Al Qaeda’s Air Force’. In this context, US President Obama eagerly accepted the Russian President Putin’s offer to jointly oversee the dismantlement of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpile and to set up a peace conference between Syrian opposition factions, not-linked to Al Qaeda, and the Syrian government.

Chemical Weapons, Disarmament and Peace: Who’s in and Who’s Out?

The Putin-Obama agreement was a significant advance for the US and Russia . President Obama did not have to face massive domestic and Congressional opposition to a new war with Syria and he was ‘credited’ with accepting a diplomatic solution. Russian President Vladimir Putin assumed the role of a world statesman in initiating the process, ensuring Syrian compliance and moving the parties toward a peace conference in Geneva to be held in late November. The European Union and the NATO powers were able to temporarily disentangle from their military commitments to the Syrian ‘rebels’ and their Saudi backers and express their own indignation over US cyber-spying of their citizens and leaders. Furthermore, this gave the Obama Administration the opportunity to open nuclear negotiations with Iran . Turkey , which had been flooded by desperate Syrian refugees, was facing rising nationalist pressures against its own military role in the Syrian ‘civil war’. The Russian initiative allowed the Turks to further explore re-opening relations with Syria’s ally, Iran .

This advance toward peace and disarmament weakened the military ambitions of the despotic Saudi regime and threatened the hegemonic position of the Israeli junta. The Saudi-Gulf States strategy had been to destroy the secular Syrian state via a mercenary Al Qaeda ground war supported by massive NATO-US air strikes against Damascus . The Saudis envisioned a replay of the Libyan invasion that saw the overthrow of the secular Gadhafi. A bloody jihadist victory in Damascus would strike a blow at Iran , the Saudi’s (and the Israeli’s) ultimate target.

The US-Russian rapprochement and Obama’s withdrawal of his threat to bomb Damascus had deprived the Saudi’s Al Qaeda mercenaries of their long-awaited Western missile support. Across the Atlantic , in a fit of pique and high-pitched hysteria at NATO’s refusal to serve as ‘Al Qaeda’s air force’ for their pet mercenaries, the Saudis refused to sit take their appointed seat ‘with the infidels’ on the UN Security Council!

However, Israel was quick to step in with its own bombs and missiles to bolster the Islamist terrorists in Syria !

Israel viewed itself as a casualty of the Obama-Putin agreement; it had been clamoring for more overt Western involvement in the war against Syria . Israel’s strategy was to encourage the armed conflict, decimate the Syrian government, society and economy, and create a new client configuration composed of ‘Egypt-Jordan-Syria’ under joint Saudi- Israeli- US auspices (and financing).

The Israelis had expected US President Obama to unleash a massive NATO air strike against Syrian military installations, arms depots and vital civilian infrastructure. This would tip the

military balance in favor of the armed Syrian opposition and foreign jihadist mercenaries and precipitate the collapse of Damascus . Indeed the entire US Jewish-Zionist power structure, including the pro-Israel media troika (the New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal), called for the US to bomb Syria despite the fact that the majority of America citizens were increasingly vocal in their opposition to US involvement!

When Obama finally took note of US public opinion and embraced Vladimir Putin's proposal for Syrian peace and the dismantling of its chemical weapons arsenal, the media troika and the ZPC unleashed hysterical attacks, accusing President Obama of vacillation (for disobeying Netanyahu?), sacrificing Syrian lives (what about the Syrian victims of Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights?) and of betraying the 'rebels' (also known as Al Qaeda terrorists).

Israel and Saudi Arabia make logical 'allies': Both are sworn enemies of secular Arab nationalism and anti-colonialism; both have sponsored overseas terrorist groups against their opponents; both seek to destroy Iran and both are completely dependent on Western arms relying on imperialist wars to achieve their own regional aims. At the moment their plans for 're-drawing the map' of the Middle East has met a speed-bump in the form of Obama's reluctance to launch US missiles and bombs against Damascus.

The Israeli Air Force at the Service of Al Qaeda

In recent years Israel has committed numerous acts of war throughout the Middle East, including crimes against humanity in Gaza , the West Bank and Lebanon . It is no surprise that Israel , a colonial state and would-be regional hegemon, would bomb Syrian military bases and weapon depots on six occasions this year, despite the fact that Damascus was struggling for its survival against thousands of Saudi-financed Al Qaeda-linked mercenaries.

Israel 's deliberate and unprovoked attacks against the beleaguered Syrian state are motivated by dangerous, sinister and cynical considerations on the part of Tel Aviv.

First, the Israel wants a strong Wahhabi-Al Qaeda presence in the region to counter the secular Baathists as well as their Shiite allies in Lebanon and Iran . Their attacks against the Syrian military show their desire for the terrorists to continue ravaging Syrian cities and towns. This is essentially a tactical alliance between extremist Zionist-Jews and Radical Sunni Muslims.

Second, Israel is calculating that its missile attacks against Syrian bases will provoke an armed response from Damascus which Tel Aviv could use as a pretext to declare war and unite the 'hawk and dove' Zionists in Israel, and especially in the US, and mobilize against another 'existential threat' to the 'Jewish State'. In other words, Israel intends to prod the US Congress and White House to launch an 'allied' bombing campaign against Damascus .

Thirdly, Tel Aviv views its missile strikes and bombing raids against Syria as a 'dress rehearsal' for its planned attack on Iran . In the context of Iranian President Rouhani's recent peace overtures toward the US , bombing Syria and provoking Damascus would scuttle any peaceful accord between the Washington and Teheran. Israeli pilots are using Syria as a laboratory to test radar and communications, flight patterns, its bombing accuracy, interception technology and

assets to further their readiness for a pre-emptive attack on Iran . The purpose for attacking the Syrian government and destroying defensive weapons destined for its Lebanese Shiite ally, Hezbollah, is to destroy any Lebanese capacity to resist Israeli aggression in a regional conflagration.

However, Israel 's military-driven 'diplomacy' has failed. And yet the Jewish state cannot reverse its brutal, colonial policies in the West Bank, re-think its working alliance with Al Qaeda in the Levant or formulate a realistic political settlement with Syria and Iran . Instead, the characteristic failure and mediocrity of Israeli policymakers have condemned them to rely exclusively on their first, last and only resort – greater brutality and aggression.

Netanyahu showed his disappointment with Obama by announcing the construction of 1500 new 'Jews-only' apartments in Occupied Palestinian East Jerusalem . Meanwhile, the Israeli Foreign Office denounced the Obama Administration for having revealed that Israeli planes and missiles had struck the major Syrian port of Latakia – implying that Washington's revelation of Israel's attempted sabotage of the peace talks amounted to a 'betrayal' or 'crime' against the Jewish state!

The entire Zionist power configuration in Washington has lined up to support the Jewish state. When Israel commits an act of war against its neighbor, no matter how unjust and brutal the act, Zionists from the most religious to the most secular, the 'peaceniks' and neo-cons, all form a united chorus in praise of the righteous and moral 'Jewish Bombs' even as they fall on the besieged people of Syria today and Iran tomorrow. While the pro-Israel media troika in the US doesn't hesitate to denounce civilian suffering from Pentagon and CIA drones strikes in Pakistan, when Israeli missiles rain on Syria ... acts of pre-emptive war by the heirs of the Holocaust ... they are described as necessary for the defense of a peace-loving nation...because Bibi Netanyahu said so!!! That garrulous Harvard Law Professor will argue on the US television 'talk shows' that Israel had to pulverize the concrete bunkers of the Syrian military otherwise some anti-Semite might someday find some pebble to toss at some member of the moral Israeli 'peace force'. 'Existential threat' indeed!

Rank cant and mendacious special pleadings aside, the Saudis and their Israeli allies intend to finance, arm and serve as Al Qaeda's air force against the Assad regime in Syria . They mean to undermine any Syrian or Iranian peace process, that is, unless the US and Russia prevent them from provoking a major regional conflagration – threatening the welfare of hundreds of millions of people.

Conclusion

The Middle East has always been a mosaic of complex and changing alliances, marking shifts in the balance of imperial power. During the past decade, the US , Israel , Saudi Arabia and their satraps in Jordan , Egypt and Lebanon have ruled the roosts. Iraq , as an independent modern secular nation and multicultural society, was shattered and under the US military boot; the Taliban were in retreat ... Iran was isolated ... Syria was surrounded by invading foreign armed and trained terrorists and mercenaries.

Time passed and circumstances changed. The US was forced to retreat from the horrific sectarian conflict it created in Iraq , while Iran gained political influence and stature in the region. Turkey captured lucrative regional markets. In Afghanistan , the Taliban have recovered, advanced and are preparing to take power as soon as the US withdraws support from its lackey in Kabul . The White House temporarily lost a dictator in Egypt , only to gain a new dictatorial client, but the junta in Cairo faces an uncertain future with massive popular unrest. The King of Jordan may still be on the CIA/Mossad payroll but that country is a backward satrapy forced to rely on police state tactics.

The corrupt Gulf Monarchies repress their dissident majorities at home while using their countries' incredible oil wealth to subsidize jihadi terrorists abroad. Their legitimacy and support is fragile: Petro-billions, bombs and US military bases do not constitute a state!

Tactical relations are in flux. The Saudi monarch rejects the UN, repudiates the US for its rapprochement with Iran and embraces —its own hot air. Surely the Saudis understand that siding with Israel 's air force against an Arab nation is a dangerous and desperate ploy that could backfire.

The Syrian and Iranian governments will continue with their peace agendas, democratic openings and calls for social co-existence, such as Hezbollah has successfully secured in Lebanon . The Russians support their overtures. If they are successful, even the US and Europe would reap immense economic benefits from a demilitarized and sanctions-free Middle East and Persian Gulf . The world economy would see lower energy prices and greater security, while the flow of rentier capital to the speculators in the City of London and Wall Street flood would reverse and benefit their own countries. We stand at the crossroads between turning toward peace or reverting to regional war, crisis and chaos.