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Operation Tomahawk The Caliph

By Pepe Escobar

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The Tomahawks are finally flying again - propelled by newspeak. 42 Tomahawks fired from a Sixth Fleet destroyer parked in Mare Nostrum, plus F-22s raising hell and Hellfires spouted by drones, that's a neat mini-Shock and Awe to honor Caliph Ibrahim, aka Abu Bakr al -Baghdadi, self-declared leader of Islamic State.

It's all so surgical. All targets - from "suspected" weapons depots to the mayor's mansion in Raqqa (the HQ of The Caliph's goons) and assorted checkpoints - were duly obliterated, along with "dozens of", perhaps 120, jihadis.

And praise those "over 40" (Samantha Power) or "over 50" (John Kerry) international allies in the coalition of the unwilling; America is never alone, although in this case mightily escorted, *de facto*, only by the usual Gulf petrodollar dictatorships and the realm of King Playstation, Jordan, all none too keen to engage in "kinetic activities".

Aseptic newspeak aside, no one has seen or heard a mighty Gulf Cooperation Council air force deployed to bomb Syria. After all the vassals are scared as hell to tell their own populations they are - once again - bombing a fellow Arab nation. As for Damascus, it meekly said it was "notified" by the Pentagon its own territory would be bombed. Nobody really knows what the Pentagon is exactly telling Damascus.

The Pentagon calls it just the beginning of a "sustained campaign" - code for Long War, which is one of the original denominations of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) anyway. And yes, for all practical purposes this is a coalition of one. Let's call it Operation Tomahawk The Caliph.

I am Khorasan

Hold your F-22s. Not really. The tomahawking had barely begun when an Israeli, made in USA Patriot missile shot a Syrian Su-24 which had allegedly "violated" Israeli air space over the Golan Heights. How about that in terms of sending a graphic message in close coordination with the Pentagon?

So this is not only about bombing The Caliph. It is a back-door preamble to bombing Bashar al-Assad and his forces. And also about bombing - with eight strikes west of Aleppo - a ghost; an al-Qaeda cell of the mysterious Khorasan group.

No wonder global fans of the Marvel Comics school of geopolitics are puzzled. Two simultaneous villains? Yep. And the other bad guy is even more evil than The Caliph.

Astonishing mediocrity Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, has defined Khorasan as "a group of extremists that is comprised of a number of individuals who we've been tracking for a long time."

The Obama administration's unison newspeak is that Khorasan includes former al-Qaeda assets not only from across the Middle East - including al-Qaeda in Iraq and Jabhat al-Nusra - but also Pakistan, as in an ultra-hardcore extension of the Pakistani Taliban.

What a mess. Al-Qaeda in Iraq is the embryo of ISIS, which turned into IS. Jabhat al-Nusra is the al-Qaeda franchise in Syria, approved by CEO Ayman al-Zawahiri. Both despise each other, and yet Khorasan holds the merit of bundling Caliph's goons and al-Qaeda goons together. Additionally, for Washington Jabhat al-Nusra tend to qualify as "moderate" jihadis - almost like "our bastards". Too messy? No problem; when in doubt, bomb everybody.

The Caliph, then, is old news. Those ghostly Khorasan goons are the real deal - so evil that the Pentagon is convinced their "plotting was imminent" leading to a new 9/11.

The ghost in the GWOT machine

Khorasan is the perfect ghost in the GWOT machine; the target of a war within a war. Because Obama in fact launched two wars - as he sent two different notifications to Congress under the War Powers Resolution to cover both The Caliph and Khorasan.

And what's in a name? Well, a thinly disguised extra demonization of Iran, why not - as historic Khorasan, the previous Parthia, stretched from mainly Iran towards Afghanistan.

Khorasan is theoretically led by The Joker, sorry, al-Qaeda honcho Muhsin al-Fadhli, born in

Kuwait in 1981, a "senior facilitator and financier" to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq, in the priceless assessment of the State Department. Although Ayman al-Zawahiri, ever PR-conscious, has not claimed the credit, the Pentagon is convinced he sent al-Fadhli to the Syrian part of the Caliphate to attract Western jihadis with EU passports capable of evading airport security and plant bombs on commercial jets.

The Treasury Department is convinced al-Fadhli even led an al-Qaeda cell in Iran - demonization habits die hard -, "facilitating" jihadi travel to Afghanistan or Iraq.

And what a neat contrast to the Society of the Spectacle-addicted Caliph. Khorasan is pure darkness. Nobody knows how many; how long they've existed; what do they really want.

By contrast, there are about 190,000 live human beings left in bombed out Raqqa. Nobody is talking about collateral damage - although the body count is already on, and The Caliph's slick PR operation will be certainly advertising them on YouTube. As for The Caliph's goons, they will predictably use Mao tactics and dissolve like fish in the sea. The Pentagon will soon be bombing vast tracts of desert for nothing - if that's not the case already.

There is no "Free Syrian Army" - that Qatari myth - anymore. There are no "moderate" jihadis left in Syria. They are all fighting for The Caliph or for al-Zawahiri. And still the Obama administration extracted a Congressional OK to train and weaponize "moderate rebels".

US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power - Undisputed Queen of Batshit Crazy - at least got one thing right. Their "training" will "service these troops in the same struggle that they've been in since the beginning of this conflict against the Assad regime." So yes - this "sustained campaign" is the back door to "Assad must go" remixed.

People who are really capable of defeating The Caliph's goons don't tomahawk. They are the Syrian Arab Army (roughly 35,000 dead so far killed in action against ISIS/ISIL/IS and/or al-Qaeda); Hezbollah; Iranian Revolutionary Guards advisers/operatives; and Kurdish militias. It won't happen. This season's blockbuster is the Empire of Chaos bombing The Caliph and the ghost in the GWOT machine. Two tickets for the price of one. Because we protect you even from "unknown unknown" evil.