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Regime Change in Ankara? More Likely Than You Think

By Mike Whitney
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On Friday, the United States rejected a draft resolution by Russia that was intended to prevent a Turkish invasion of Syria. Moscow had called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to address its growing concern that Turkey is planning to send thousands of ground troops and armored vehicles it has massed on its southern border, into Syria to protect Turkish-backed militants and to block the Kurdish militia, the YPG, from establishing a contiguous state in northern Syria. Moscow's one-page resolution was a thoroughly-straightforward document aimed at preventing a massive escalation in a conflict that has already claimed the lives of 250, 000 and left the country in ruins.

According to Russia's deputy U.N. envoy, Vladimir Safronkov, "The main elements of this Russian draft resolution are to demand that all parties refrain from interfering in the internal

affairs of Syria, that they fully respect Syria's sovereignty and independence, stop incursions, and abandon plans for ground operations.”

The resolution also expressed Moscow's “grave alarm at the reports of military buildup and preparatory activities aimed at launching foreign ground intervention into the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.”

There was nothing controversial about the resolution, no tricks and no hidden meaning. The delegates were simply asked to support Syrian sovereignty and oppose armed aggression. These are the very principles upon which the United Nations was founded. The US and its allies rejected these principles because they failed to jibe with Washington's geopolitical ambitions in Syria.

Quashing the resolution confirms in the clearest terms that Washington doesn't want peace in Syria. Also, it suggests that the Obama administration thinks that Turkish ground troops could play an important role in shaping the outcome of a conflict that the US is still determined to win. Keep in mind, if the resolution had passed, the threat of a Turkish invasion would have vanished immediately.

Why?

Because the Turkish “military has publicly stated that it is not willing to send troops across the border without U.N. Security Council approval.” (Washington Post)

Many people in the west are under the illusion that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has dictatorial powers and can simply order his troops into battle whenever he chooses. But that is not the case. While Erdogan has removed many of his rivals within the military, the top brass still maintains a certain autonomy from the civilian leadership. Turkish generals want assurances that they will not be prosecuted for war crimes in the future. The best way to do that is to make sure that any invasion has the blessing of either the US, NATO or the UN.

The Obama administration understands this dynamic, which is why they quashed the resolution. Obama wanted to leave the door open so Turkish troops could eventually engage the Russian-led coalition in Washington's ongoing proxy war. This leads me to believe that the Washington's primary objective in Syria is no longer the removal of Syrian President Bashar al Assad but the bogging down of Russia in a never-ending conflict.

Just hours after the US defeated Moscow's draft resolution at the UN, closed-door talks were convened in Geneva where high-level U.S. and Russian military officials met to discuss the prospects for ceasefire.

The cease-fire, which is typically referred to as a “cessation of hostilities”, is aimed at temporarily stopping the fighting so the battered jihadists and US-backed rebels can regroup and rejoin the war at some later date. Both Moscow and Washington want to deliver humanitarian aid to war-torn cities across Syria, and to move towards a “political transition” although both sides

are deeply divided over Assad's role in any future government. According to the *Washington Post*:

“One of the many problems to be overcome is a differing definition of what constitutes a terrorist group. In addition to the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, Russia and Syria have labeled the entire opposition as terrorists.

Jabhat al-Nusra, whose forces are intermingled with moderate rebel groups in the northwest near the Turkish border, is particularly problematic. Russia was said to have rejected a U.S. proposal to leave Jabhat al-Nusra off-limits to bombing as part of a cease-fire, at least temporarily, until the groups can be sorted out.” (“U.S., Russia hold Syria cease-fire talks as deadline passes without action“, *Washington Post*)

Repeat: “Russia was said to have rejected a U.S. proposal to leave Jabhat al-Nusra (al Qaida) off-limits to bombing as part of a cease-fire, at least temporarily, until the groups can be sorted out.” In other words, the Obama administration wanted to protect an affiliate of the group that killed 3,000 Americans in the terror attacks on 9-11 and that is responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent Syrian civilians whose only fault was that they happen to occupy country that these Wahhabi mercenaries wanted to transform into an Islamic Caliphate. Naturally, Moscow refused to go along with this charade.

Even so, Secretary of State John F. Kerry announced on Sunday that he and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, “had reached a ‘provisional agreement in principle’ for a temporary truce in the Syrian civil war and that it could start within days” although no one really knows how the “cease-fire would be enforced and how breaches would be resolved.”

Consider how hypocritical it is for Obama to reject Russia's draft resolution at the UN and, just hours later, try to put Al Qaida under the protective umbrella of a US-Russia brokered ceasefire. What does that say about America's so called “war on terror”?

Meanwhile in Turkey, Erdogan's threats to invade Syria have intensified following a car bombing in Ankara last week that killed 28 and wounded 61 others. The Turkish government blamed a young activist, Salih Neccar, who had links to the Turkish militia (YPG) in Syria of being the perpetrator. But less than 24 hours after the blast, the government's version of events began to fall apart. In a story that has been scarcely reported in the western media, the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) claimed full responsibility for the bombing according to a statement on its website. (The Freedom Hawks are linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party or PKK.) Then, on Monday, the Erdogan regime was slammed with more damning news: DNA samples demonstrated conclusively that Neccar was not perpetrator, but rather Abdulkaki Sömer, a member of the group that had claimed responsibility from the beginning. (TAK) As of this writing, the government still hasn't admitted that it lied to the public to build their case for war. Erdogan and his extremist colleagues continue to use thoroughly discredited information to threaten to invade Syria. As he said on Saturday at a UNESCO meeting in Gaziantep:

“Turkey has every right to conduct operations in Syria and the places where terror organizations are nested with regards to the struggle against the threats that Turkey faces...No one can restrict Turkey’s right to self-defense in the face of terror acts that have targeted Turkey.”

This explains why Turkey has been shelling Syrian territory for the last week. It also explains why Erdogan has given Sunni jihadists a free pass to traverse Turkey and reenter the war zone in areas that improve their chances of success against the Syrian Army. Check this out from the *New York Times*:

“Syrian rebels have brought at least 2,000 reinforcements through Turkey in the past week to bolster the fight against Kurdish-led militias north of Aleppo, rebel sources said on Thursday.

Turkish forces facilitated the transfer from one front to another over several nights, covertly escorting rebels as they exited Syria’s Idlib governorate, traveled four hours across Turkey, and re-entered Syria to support the embattled rebel stronghold of Azaz, the sources said.

“We have been allowed to move everything from light weapons to heavy equipment, mortars and missiles and our tanks,” Abu Issa, a commander in the Levant Front, the rebel group that runs the border crossing of Bab al-Salama, told Reuters, giving his alias and talking on condition of anonymity.” (“Syrian Rebels Say Reinforcements Get Free Passage via Turkey“, *New York Times*)

The Obama administration knows that Erdogan is fueling the conflict, but has chosen to look the other way. And while Obama has (weakly) admonished Turkey for shelling Syrian territory, he has, at the same time, acknowledged Turkey’s “right to defend itself”, which is an expression the US reserves for Israel when it conducting one of its murderous rampages in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Now, Obama has bestowed that same honor on Erdogan. This alone speaks volumes about the duplicity of Washington’s approach.

So what is Washington’s gameplan in Syria? Is the administration serious about defeating ISIS and ending the hostilities or does Obama have something else up his sleeve?

First of all, Washington is not the least bit concerned about ISIS. The group is merely a straw-man that allows the US to conduct military operations in a region that is vital to its national interests. If the ISIS boogiemer disappeared tomorrow, the White House would conjure up some other phantom—like the drug war or something equally ridiculous—so it could continue its depredations uninterrupted. What matters to Washington is breaking up the strong, secular Arab governments that pose a long-term threat to US-Israeli ambitions. That’s what really matters. The other obvious goal is to control critical resources and pipeline corridors to the EU and make sure those resources continue to be denominated in US dollars.

We continue to believe that the US-Kurdish (YPG) alliance does not really advance US strategic interests in Syria. The US is not interested in Kurdish statehood nor do they care if jihadist militias control the northern quadrant of Syria’s border-region. The real purpose of the US-YPG alliance is to enrage Turkey and provoke them into a cross-border conflict with the Russian-led coalition. If Turkey deploys ground troops to Syria, then Moscow could face the quagmire it has

tried so hard to avoid. Turkish forces would serve as a replacement army for the US-backed jihadists and other proxies that have prosecuted the war for the last five years but now appear to be in full retreat.

More importantly, a Turkish invasion would exacerbate divisions inside Turkey seriously eroding Erdogan's grip on power while creating vulnerabilities the US could exploit by working with its agents in the Turkish military and Intel agency (MIT). The ultimate objective would be to foment sufficient social unrest to incite a color-coded revolution that would dispose of the troublemaking Erdogan in a Washington-orchestrated coup, much like the one the CIA executed in Kiev.

It is not hard to imagine Obama secretly giving Erdogan the greenlight, and then pulling the rug out from under him as soon as his troops crossed over into Syria. A similar scam was carried out in 1990 when U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, gave Saddam Hussein the nod to invade Kuwait. The Iraqi Army had barely reached its destination before the US launched a massive military campaign (Operation Desert Storm) that forced Saddam to speedily withdraw along the infamous Highway of Death where upwards of 10,000 Iraqi regulars were annihilated like sitting ducks in a vicious and homicidal display of American firepower. That was the first phase of Washington's plan to overthrow Saddam and replace him with a compliant Arab stooge.

Is the same regime change trap now being set for Erdogan?