

US conspires with Turkey over militarized buffer zone following Syrian ceasefire

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Washington has made clear that the ceasefire implemented Thursday is only a staging post in its plan for regime-change in Syria.

Using the G-8 foreign ministers summit as its platform, the Obama administration demanded that the government of Bashar al-Assad comply with all United Nations proposals to end conflict with western-backed insurgents. On the very first day of the ceasefire, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton insisted that Assad was not complying with other parts of the six-point plan drawn up by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. “The Annan plan is not a menu of options, it is a set of obligations,” she declared.

The first official step to be taken is the installation of UN monitors on the ground within a matter of days, who will focus their attention on any alleged breaches of the ceasefire by the government while giving the opposition a free pass. “The burden of fully and visibly meeting all of these obligations continues to rest with the regime,” Clinton said.

But she added bluntly that the US wants regime-change and nothing less will do. “We remain firmly resolved that the regime’s war against its own people must end for good and political transition must begin,” she said. “Assad will have to go.”

Her sentiments were echoed by France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy and UK Prime Minister David Cameron, who said that Syria needed a “transition at the top” to avoid civil war. British Foreign Secretary William Hague had threatened Wednesday that “if a ceasefire is not upheld over the coming days... we will want to return to the Security Council in a new attempt to obtain a resolution on Syria, we will intensify our support for the opposition.”

The White House had earlier told the press that President Barack Obama had spoken with German

Chancellor Angela Merkel and agreed on the need for “more resolute” action by the UN Security Council given that Merkel “shared the concern that the Assad government was not complying with the terms of the agreement negotiated by Kofi Annan and continued to engage in unacceptable brutality against its own people.”

In reality, the Western powers are funding and directing the insurgency through the mechanism of the Syrian National Council and the work on the ground of their regional proxies, most notably Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Key to creating the basis for a military intervention against Assad is providing a regional imprimatur—a false flag that means the US and NATO can work behind the scenes. The Arab League, Ankara and the Gulf states are the instruments through which this is to be done. Turkey is host to the SNC leadership made up of ex-regime elements, Islamists and CIA assets, and its military wing, the Free Syrian Army. Many of the attacks on Syrian security personnel and other targets have been directly staged from there. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are funneling in funds, weapons and fighters to the SNC.

Attention is now concentrated on setting up a buffer zone on the Turkish border. This will provide a bridgehead and base of operations for the SNC and various covert operatives. More importantly, its “protection” will be used to legitimize a wider military deployment and aerial attacks, as was carried out recently in Libya.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was called upon to brief the G-8 on Turkey via video. It is unclear whether or not he will have broached the issue of a buffer zone. But he did not need to. The Turkish

media is awash with reports that the government is in the process of finalizing plans to seize Syrian territory by force and create a buffer zone. *Zaman* reported Monday that Turkey was considering whether to invoke a 1998 agreement with Syria that would sanction an armed intervention. The accord included Syria's pledge not to undermine Turkey's security.

Clinton had spoken earlier by phone about a buffer zone with Davutoglu. A State Department official said, "Turkey always said there were two triggers for them on further involvement. One was an overwhelming number of refugees—and they have told us the number is continuing to spike—and second is if the conflict bleeds across the border. Whether what happens in recent days constitutes this, we don't know yet."

In a statement also issued Monday, following a small exchange of gunfire on the Turkish border, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said, "Syrian citizens who took refuge in our country from the brutality of the current regime in Syria are under Turkey's full protection. We will certainly take necessary measures if such incidents reoccur."

The Turkish government said on Tuesday that it expects the UN Security Council to adopt a decision that would include taking the necessary measures to protect the Syrian people, because Assad has failed to live up to his commitments. However, the UN route towards military action is problematic given the opposition of Russia and China. Clinton met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Thursday, but there has so far been no sign of Moscow agreeing to UN-sponsored action despite supporting Annan's plan. It still insists publicly that the onus is on the opposition to halt violence.

More significantly, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave an interview with the daily *Hurriyet* in which he made an explicit call for NATO backing of any Turkish action against Syria. "Against the violation of borders, a country has rights that belong to norms of the international law," he said. "Moreover, on the basis of article 5 of the Atlantic Pact, NATO has the responsibility to protect Turkish borders."

Making clear that the US is the major force being appealed to, he added, "Up until now, this norm has been requested only once: it was requested by the United States after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 against the World Trade Center, in New York,

and against the Pentagon near Washington."

The invoking of 9/11 by Turkey must be taken as a stark warning by the Syrian people and workers throughout the world, given that it provided the pretext for devastating wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Saudi Defense Minister Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz also held talks on Syria at the Pentagon on Wednesday. He met with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and General James Mattis, who as head of US Central Command oversees troops in the Middle East, according to the Saudi Embassy. He then held talks with Obama in the Oval Office, after which a White House spokesman said that the two "discussed a range of bilateral and regional issues."

Erdogan is to hold talks with King Abdullah in Riyadh today, with *Hurriyet* reporting that Erdogan will tell Abdullah that Arab countries must take the lead in coordinated international measures against the Syrian government.

US action against Syria is bound up with its ongoing efforts to establish unchallenged global hegemony. Alongside Syria, the G-8 meeting also discussed Iran—the indirect target of the campaign to depose Assad and install a Sunni regime beholden to Washington and allied with Turkey and the Gulf States—and North Korea, whose planned ballistic missile test was described by Clinton as part of "a cycle of provocation."



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