

Braying for war against Syria

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In preparation for a US war against Syria, Washington's political establishment and the corporate media are steadily escalating a campaign of lies and propaganda about the alleged use of chemical weapons.

The propaganda about Syrian chemical warfare is completely unsubstantiated and based on assertions that have about as much credibility as the propaganda used by the Nazi regime in Germany to portray its invasions of Poland and Czechoslovakia as acts of self-defense and humanitarianism.

Typical is an editorial in the *Financial Times*, the voice of the City of London's financial oligarchy. After first acknowledging that "there is no firm proof" that any chemical weapons have been employed by Syrian government forces, the editorial goes on to affirm that "if, as close observers of the Syrian conflict believe, the claims are true, then only concerted action now can hope to prevent atrocities in the future such as that of Halabja, where in 1988 the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq gassed to death 5,000 of its rebellious Kurdish citizens."

The conclusion is preposterous. Having admitted there is no proof that the Syrian military used even the small amount of Sarin gas that the Obama administration mentioned in a highly conditional claim last week, the newspaper asserts that "only concerted action", i.e., direct military intervention, can forestall genocidal atrocities.

Who are these "close observers"? The editorial doesn't say, but one can be certain they consist of the collection of oil interests, Syrian exile politicians and Western militarists that are demanding armed intervention on whatever pretext and as soon as possible. These elements and the pack of liars in the US and British media who echo them will say anything to further a stampede to war.

"Close observers" with any knowledge of the situation in Syria and a shred of honesty will

acknowledge that the allegations that the Syrian regime used small amounts of sarin gas to kill a few dozen people on the outskirts of Aleppo—where a number of the victims were Syrian army soldiers—make no sense whatsoever.

As experts on chemical warfare have pointed out, the only purpose of using such weapons is to inflict mass casualties. Given threats by the Obama administration and other Western powers to intervene in the event of a chemical attack, it would be both pointless and contrary to the Syrian regime's interests to employ such arms in the way that is being alleged.

On the other hand, the collection of Islamists and Al Qaeda-linked militants who are functioning as the West's proxy army in the war for regime-change have every interest in conducting such an attack and then blaming it on Damascus in order to provoke Western intervention. In point of fact, the so-called rebels have bragged about having obtained chemical weapons capabilities and being prepared to use them. Last December, they posted a video on YouTube showing their chemical stockpiles and the testing of poison gas on rabbits.

Underlying the attempt to fashion a pretext for intervention out of lies about chemical weapons is the frustration in Washington, London and other Western capitals over the failure of the so-called rebels to make any strategic advance in their sectarian-based civil war to bring down the Assad regime. In recent weeks, Syrian government forces have inflicted a series of reverses on the opposition forces.

Together with the drive for direct Western intervention has come an escalation of terrorist attacks, the hallmark of the Al Qaeda-connected elements that form the core of the US-backed "rebels." A car bomb was detonated in Damascus Monday in an attempt to kill Syria's prime minister, Wael al-Halqi. While he emerged unhurt, the blast claimed the lives of a number

of Syrian civilians, adding to the hundreds already killed in such attacks.

The *New York Times* on Saturday carried a front-page article finally acknowledging the ugly truth that it and the rest of the corporate media have attempted to hide in their coverage of Syria's civil war. "Nowhere in rebel-controlled Syria is there a secular fighting force to speak of," the newspaper reported. The article depicted the Al Nusra front, which is formally aligned with Al Qaeda, as exercising dominance and setting up Islamic courts in areas that have been seized from the government.

Even more ominously, it was reported Monday that anti-regime elements fired two surface-to-air missiles at a Russian passenger jet carrying 200 people, mostly tourists, from Egypt to Moscow.

The reversals for the so-called rebels are no doubt bound up with the revulsion for these elements felt by large sections of the Syrian population, which has been dragged against its will into a sectarian civil war. Many who oppose the Assad regime are even more hostile to elements like Al Nusra and the prospect of a Western military intervention in their country.

The cynicism of US politicians backing such an intervention is obscene. Out of one side of their mouths they demand that Washington arm the "rebels," i.e., a force dominated by Islamist militias, and call for military retaliation against the Assad regime for the nonexistent use of chemical weapons against them. Out of the other, they warn that Syria could, without an American invasion, become a "failed state" and leave Al Qaeda—the very force they want to arm—in control, with access to these same chemical weapons.

The incoherence of these mutually contradictory pretexts underscores the contempt of the ruling establishment for the American people and the fact that the drive to war against Syria has nothing to do with any of the professed concerns about the well-being of the Syrian people or the threat of terrorism.

One of the most vocal proponents of US intervention, Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican, nearly gave the game away in a Sunday television interview when he declared that if the US did not intervene militarily in Syria, "we're going to start a war with Iran because Iran's going to take our inaction in Syria as meaning we're not serious about their nuclear weapons program."

The reality is that the intervention in Syria is part of the preparation of a far more dangerous war against Iran. Underlying this war drive is the attempt by American capitalism to offset its deepening economic decline by using its residual military power to gain control of the vast energy resources of the Middle East and Central Asia.

The cutthroats braying for war against Syria out of supposed concern over the use of chemical weapons have already killed a million Iraqis and hundreds of thousands of Afghans to this end, and they are prepared to slaughter millions more people.



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