

Obama, Cameron hold Syria war summit in Washington

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US President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron met yesterday in Washington to step up their campaign for war in Syria and discuss interventions elsewhere in the Middle East.

They pledged to increase the flow of weapons to Islamist militias fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, while promoting plans for talks on Syria with Russia, until now Assad's main international backer, to be held in Geneva.

At a press conference after their meeting, Obama announced, "Together, we're going to continue our efforts to increase pressure on the Assad regime, to provide humanitarian aid to the long-suffering Syrian people, to strengthen the moderate opposition, and to prepare for a democratic Syria without Bashar Assad."

Washington and London are promoting their bloody proxy war in Syria with lies. Far from providing "humanitarian aid" and backing a "moderate" opposition, they are arming far-right Islamist militias with the help of Middle Eastern allies like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, whose efforts are overseen by the CIA. Proposals aired in recent weeks include imposing a so-called "no-fly zone" to destroy Syria's air force and air defenses, and using US forces in neighboring Jordan to directly invade Syria.

Cameron's pledges of tens of millions of pounds to the Syrian "rebels" made the military character of this aid clear. He said, "Britain is pushing for more flexibility in the EU arms embargo, and we will double non-lethal support to the Syrian opposition in the coming years. Armored vehicles, body armor, and power generators are about to be shipped."

The meeting between Obama and Cameron comes amid a flurry of international negotiations to prepare a possible US-led war against Syria. On Thursday, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan will meet with Obama in the White House, with Syria at the top of their agenda. Erdogan has repeatedly pressed for war with Syria based

on groundless claims that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is due to arrive in Moscow today for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Syria. Unnamed senior Israeli officials told the press that Netanyahu intends to ask Russia to block the shipment to Syria of a sophisticated S-300 air defense system. Such a system would reportedly have enabled Syria to shoot down the unprovoked air strikes Israel launched on the Syrian capital, Damascus, one week ago.

The diplomatic offensive that Washington is orchestrating against Syria is a nakedly imperialist operation. It aims to isolate Syria, eliminate its ability to defend itself against US attack, and impose a neo-colonial regime—by negotiation if possible, otherwise by force—that would consist of Washington's right-wing Islamist proxies and turncoat elements of the Assad regime.

As Washington and its allies prepare for war, they continue to hope that at the Geneva talks the Russian regime might agree to a pseudo-legal ouster of Assad under threat of further US-led attacks on Syria.

Obama proposed to bring together "representatives of the regime and the opposition in Geneva in the coming weeks, to agree on a transitional body which would allow a transfer of power from Assad to this governing body. Meanwhile, we'll continue to work to establish the facts around the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and those facts will help guide our next steps."

The acknowledgment that Washington still needs to "establish the facts" about chemical weapons is a tacit admission that previous US claims—that Assad had used poison gas, thus crossing a "red line" and justifying a US attack—were based on fabrications.

Asked whether Russia would agree to cut off its support to Assad, Cameron praised discussions he held with Putin on Syria in the Russian town of Sochi on Friday. He said,

“We are all leading together this major diplomatic effort to bring the parties to the table to achieve a transition at the top of Syria, so that we can make the change that country needs.”

In ruthlessly pursuing its agenda of regime-change, in alliance with European imperialism and Sunni sectarian fighters in Syria tied to Al Qaeda, the Obama administration has set into motion forces that threaten the region and the entire world with war and catastrophe.

Speaking of his plan for talks with Moscow, Obama hinted as much, saying: “I’m not promising that it’s going to be successful. Frankly, sometimes once the Furies have been unleashed in a situation like we’re seeing in Syria, it’s very hard to put things back together. And there are going to be enormous challenges in getting a credible process going even if Russia is involved.”

There is considerable anxiety in ruling circles over the consequences of escalation in Syria. In an editorial yesterday titled “Staying out of Syria is the bolder call for Obama,” *Financial Times* columnist Gideon Rachman wrote: “If we supply weapons to the rebels, how do we know that it will not simply lead to more bloodshed... In more recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US and its allies vastly overestimated their knowledge of the societies in which they were intervening.”

Appearing Sunday on the interview program “Face the Nation,” Robert Gates, former secretary of defense under both George W. Bush and Obama, said US military action in Syria would be “a mistake.” Saying he thought the US intervention in Libya was also a “mistake,” he added, “I think that caution, particularly in terms of arming these groups and in terms of US military involvement, is in order.”

Obama and Cameron also reportedly discussed troop deployments in the continuing NATO occupation of Afghanistan, as well as plans for talks with Iran over its alleged nuclear program.

This highlights the fact that the war in Syria is part of a broader imperialist agenda for the Middle East. This agenda includes depriving oil-rich Iran of its remaining Arab ally, Syria, as a preparation for a possible war with Iran; forcibly marginalizing Russia’s influence; and, more generally, imposing the strategic hegemony of Washington and its allies in the Middle East.

The Obama-Cameron war summit underscored the fact that pseudo-left organizations such as the International Socialist Organization that support the Syrian war are pro-imperialist state organizations. (See, “The International Socialist Organization and the imperialist onslaught

against Syria”)

Any new Syrian regime that might emerge from the Geneva talks would be—like the regime run by competing militias that emerged from the US-NATO 2011 war in Libya—a right-wing US puppet government, based on Sunni sectarian forces seeking to impose restrictive Islamist laws and lacking any substantial popular support.

The US proxy forces that have taken power in Libya have rapidly made themselves deeply unpopular. They have allowed the major international banks to keep billions in Libyan oil money that was frozen when the war broke out, while presiding over an escalation of violence inside Libya between rival Islamist militias.

When a car bomb outside a hospital in Benghazi killed at least three people and wounded 17 yesterday, protests erupted against local Islamist militias, demanding that they be expelled from the city. One witness told Reuters, “This is the flesh of our sons, this is what the militias have given us.”

In a recent article titled “Under the black flag of Al Qaeda, the Syrian city ruled by gangs of extremists,” the *Daily Telegraph* described life in Raqqa, a city in northern Syria currently held by the Al Qaeda-linked Al Nusra Front. The town’s Christian churches are closed, Islamic courts arrest women who do not wear headscarves, and Al Nusra has seized many bakeries and work places. Hundreds of townspeople have joined protests against Al Nusra’s rule.

Washington and its allies are pushing for war and regime-change in Syria despite deep popular opposition to such a war in the working class at home. Some 62 percent of Americans, and even higher percentages of Turks and Lebanese, oppose further escalation of the war in Syria.



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