

Obama moves to escalate Syrian slaughter

Bill Van Auken
15 June 2013

The announcement that the US is moving to directly arm the Islamist militias and other armed gangs laying waste to Syria represents a further descent into crisis and outright criminality by the Obama administration.

US and other Western officials report that the Pentagon has also provided the administration with plans to impose a no-fly zone to carve out a swathe of Syrian territory at least 25 miles deep along the Jordanian border for the purpose of massing, training and arming proxy forces to invade Syria.

These measures, which will be taken in alliance with Britain and France, the two former colonial overlords of Syria and the surrounding region, are part of a war of aggression aimed at subjugating an oppressed, former colonial country to the strategic and profit interests of Washington and its closest NATO allies.

The White House claim that this military escalation is a US response to the regime of Bashar al-Assad crossing Obama's "red line" and violating "international norms" by using chemical weapons against the so-called "rebels" is an insult to the intelligence of the people of the United States and the world.

The drive toward direct intervention has nothing to do with any desire to protect human life in Syria. The provision of new and more powerful weaponry will result only in a proliferation of sectarian massacres by Sunni Islamist "rebels" like the one that claimed the lives of at least 60 people, most of them women and children, in the eastern Syrian village of Hatlah earlier this week. As for a no-fly zone, its preparation would entail massive bombings of Syrian air defenses in densely populated areas, threatening thousands of additional deaths.

No evidence whatsoever has been made public substantiating charges that the Assad regime used sarin gas "on a small scale," a highly improbable action which would make absolutely no military, much less

political, sense. The statement issued by Obama's deputy national security adviser Thursday even acknowledged that the alleged evidence of the use of sarin gas "does not tell us how or where the individuals were exposed or who was responsible for the dissemination."

Last month, Carla Del Ponte, lead investigator for the UN's international commission of inquiry on Syria, told the media that evidence indicated chemical weapons had been "used on the part of the opposition, the rebels, not by the government authorities."

The White House reported that it had shared its "evidence" with the Russian government. Yury Ushakov, foreign policy adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, said of the US briefing, "I will say frankly that what was presented to us by the Americans does not look convincing. It would be hard even to call them facts."

Like the allegations of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq more than a decade ago, the chemical weapons charge against Syria is a bald-faced lie. The Obama administration, following in the footsteps of the Bush White House, is trying to drag the American people into a predatory war based on phony pretexts and fabricated intelligence.

The immediate impetus for the turn by the Obama administration to more direct intervention is the growing recognition that following the fall of the "rebel" held town of Qusair to Syrian troops backed by Lebanese Hezbollah militiamen, the melange of Al Qaeda and other militia forces that Washington has used as its proxy troops in the war for regime-change is facing defeat.

In the aftermath of the 2011 US-NATO war against Libya, Washington believed it could easily pursue a similar strategy of hijacking popular protests and fomenting a sectarian civil war to topple Assad and impose a US puppet government. What it thought two

years ago would be a cakewalk, however, has gone to hell.

The fundamental reason for this debacle is not a lack of weapons—which Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey have poured into the country under the CIA’s supervision—or the brutality of the Assad regime, but the fact that the majority of the population, however much they might dislike Assad, hate the Islamist “rebels” even more.

There is a palpable element of desperation in the latest turn by the Obama administration, which the White House left to a junior aide to announce. It is responding not only to the failure of its previous policy, but also to enormous pressure from within the ruling political establishment for war.

This found sharp expression in the remarks Tuesday by former Democratic President Bill Clinton, who warned that Obama would look like a “wuss” and “total fool” if he stopped short of “dropping a few bombs.” Clinton solidarized himself with Republican Senator John McCain, whose own reckless militarism makes him a candidate for either a war crimes tribunal or a mental facility.

This was the culmination of a steadily escalating campaign by politicians of both parties, the media, the Washington think tanks and sections of the military and intelligence apparatus for a more direct military intervention.

Serving as adjuncts in this campaign are pseudo-left groups such as the International Socialist Organization in the US, the New Anti-capitalist Party in France and the Left Party in Germany, which promote the Islamist militias and mercenaries in Syria as “revolutionaries” and fashion twisted political alibis for imperialist intervention. All of them have blood on their hands.

Nonetheless, there are evidently deep divisions within the state over a war that poses the threat of drawing the entire region as well as powers with interests in Syria, particularly Iran and Russia, into the maelstrom.

After the bitter experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq, there is virtually no support among the American people for US intervention in Syria. US imperialism’s pretense to be championing democracy in Syria is further shattered by the revelations of its police state spying operations against the people of the United States and the world, and the vicious witch-hunt it has launched against Edward Snowden, the former National

Security Agency contractor who has exposed these crimes.

Despite two years of media propaganda vilifying the Assad regime and casting the Al Qaeda-linked militias as crusaders for democracy, an NBC- *Wall Street Journal* poll released this week showed that barely 11 percent of the US public supports even arming the “rebels.”

The entire political setup in the US proceeds with indifference to these popular sentiments. The hackneyed statements of the Democratic and Republican politicians have nothing to do with convincing anyone to support the war, while the corporate media churns out “news” that resembles Orwellian propaganda.

It will be the working class, both in the US and internationally, that pays the price for intervention in Syria. Under conditions where it is universally proclaimed that there is no money for jobs or vital social programs, not a word is raised about what the military options being considered by Obama will cost. More fundamentally, there is an inexorable logic to a US escalation in Syria, which points toward military confrontation with Iran and potentially Russia, threatening the lives of millions.

The struggle against war, opposed by the pseudo-left groups that once led the official “anti-war” movement and now back Obama and imperialism, can be prosecuted only on the basis of the independent political mobilization of the working class against the Obama administration and the capitalist system that is the source of militarism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact