

US, Britain and France prepare onslaught against Syria

Statement of the World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board
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On Wednesday, President Donald Trump threatened a major new escalation of the seven-year-old US war for regime change in Syria, declaring in a tweet, “Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and ‘smart!’”

Trump’s threat expresses the criminality of the US-led campaign against Syria. The president of the United States is about to launch an unprovoked war of aggression. The US and European governments lie without restraint to justify their predatory war aims and the most incredible statements go unchallenged by the press.

The claims by the United States that its planned attack on Syria is a response to a chemical weapons attack by the Assad regime on April 7 are without any independent substantiation. The only people claiming to have witnessed the attack are US-backed proxy forces in Syria.

The United States’ humanitarian pretenses do not stand up to any serious scrutiny. The massacres of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza by the Israeli army have been supported by the United States and virtually ignored in the Western media. Saudi Arabia, the United States’ key Arab ally in the Middle East, is carrying out a genocidal war in Yemen. The rampage of the United States through the Middle East has destroyed entire societies.

Aside from the absence of evidence, no credible explanation has been given as to why the Assad regime would carry out a chemical weapons attack just as it was on the verge of driving out the Al Qaeda-linked insurgents funded by the US and its allies.

But there are plenty of reasons why the United States would instruct its proxies to either stage or fabricate such an incident. Just two days before the alleged attack in Douma, a *New York Times* editorial complained that Trump was “letting Russia take the lead in Syria” and allowing Iran to gain a “foothold” in the country. The *Times* asked, “How does that serve American interests?”

Just one hour after Trump’s Wednesday morning Twitter outburst, he admitted in a subsequent tweet that the

campaign against Russia is being driven by political forces in Washington. “Much of the bad blood with Russia is caused by the Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation, headed up by the all Democrat loyalists, or people that worked for Obama,” Trump wrote.

Behind the increasingly bitter sectarian warfare gripping Washington lie substantial divisions over foreign policy, centered on the conflict in Syria, which have been simmering for years.

In 2013, the United States was on the brink of a full-scale military assault to carry out regime change against Syrian President Assad, seeking to follow up on the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. But amid overwhelming popular opposition, President Obama was ultimately forced to pull back after the failure of a vote in the UK parliament to authorize British participation in the onslaught. Instead of a direct attack on Syria, the US agreed to a deal brokered by Russia to destroy Syria’s chemical weapons stocks.

In a lecture given in September 2013, in the immediate aftermath of the agreement, *World Socialist Web Site* Editorial Board Chairman David North warned:

But the postponement of war does not lessen the likelihood, indeed, the inevitability, of the outbreak of a major war. As the bellicose statements emanating from Washington make clear, the “military option” remains on the table. Nor is Syria the only target for military attack. US operations against Syria would set the stage for a clash with Iran. And, still further, the logic of US imperialism’s drive for global dominance leads to a confrontation with Russia and China.

This warning has been vindicated. The leaders of American imperialism have never forgotten what they saw as a colossal embarrassment and setback for US imperialism in failing to enforce Obama’s “red line.”

Now, as the US-backed Islamist proxies in Syria face defeat at the hands of the Syrian government, Iran, and Russia, the American intelligence agencies have manufactured a series of pretexts to justify their longstanding war plans.

The accusations that the Syrian government used chemical weapons on April 7 followed by only a few days the collapse of claims by the British government that Russia carried out a chemical weapons attack on British soil. The supposed victims of a nerve gas ten times more powerful than Sarin have not only recovered, but are being blocked by British authorities from making public statements. The incidents in Salisbury and Douma, as with the entire anti-Russia campaign, are part of a carefully orchestrated propaganda offensive aimed at legitimizing a military attack on Syria and escalation against Russia.

Fifteen years ago, France opposed the American intervention in Iraq, leading to the denunciation of “Old Europe” by the Bush administration and calls to change the name of French fries to “Freedom fries.” Since that time, France has completely reversed its position, anxious to reestablish itself as a colonial power by participating in the carve-up of the Middle East. Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian is now declaring that France is ready to “do its duty.”

No less significant than the geopolitical motivations for the war are pressing domestic considerations. All of the major imperialist powers preparing for war are riven by deep internal crises and a growing movement of the working class.

French President Macron has signaled his support for the US war drive as his government is embroiled in a head-on confrontation with transportation workers over his hated neoliberal policies. Germany’s right-wing grand coalition government, cobbled together after months of back-room deals, enjoys minuscule public support.

The British state, thrown into crisis by the Brexit-mandated withdrawal from the European Union, is led by a prime minister who is held in universal contempt, with no authority or legitimacy. Theresa May is so afraid of public opposition to British involvement in Syria and a repeat of Prime Minister David Cameron’s debacle in 2013 that she has announced plans to proceed with an attack without a vote in Parliament.

And the United States is embroiled in the greatest political crisis since Watergate and the forced resignation of Nixon, exacerbated by a growing strike wave of teachers and mounting opposition throughout the working class.

The rush by NATO to embrace a conflict with Russia leaves the distinct impression that the US and the European powers would welcome a de facto state of war, which they could use as a pretext to intensify their drive to censor the

Internet and outlaw domestic political opposition. The NATO powers are in the grip of a war fever as reckless as it is criminal. As their internal crises intensify, their military provocations become all the more naked.

The Putin government, for its part, is caught between elements within the military pushing for Russia to confront the US and powerful oligarchs who, battered by economic sanctions, are desperately seeking an accommodation with the United States. Iran likewise is under pressure from US economic measures that have led to a 35 percent drop in the value of the rial.

While Alexander Zasytkin, the Russian ambassador to Lebanon, said Wednesday, “If there is a strike by the Americans, then...the missiles will be downed and even the sources from which the missiles were fired,” President Vladimir Putin has sought to play down tensions, declaring he hoped “common sense” will prevail.

The Russian government is now facing the consequences of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, whose ultimate logic is the reduction of the country to the status of a semi-colony. Both Moscow and Tehran confront the fact that no concessions they make will satisfy the United States, which is seeking nothing less than their total subjugation. Neither the Russian nor Iranian bourgeoisie can resist the forces of world imperialism.

The escalation of the Syrian crisis demonstrates that the imperialist powers are driving toward a new world war. Whatever the outcome of the latest crisis, the onslaught against Syria is only a precursor to war against Iran, Russia and, ultimately, China, threatening the annihilation of mankind in a nuclear conflagration.

The only way to avert this catastrophe is to link the emerging international movement of the working class with the struggle against imperialist war.



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