

Anglo-American 1957 Secret Plan to Assassinate the Syrian President. Déjà Vu?

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At a time when the British press was still “reporting the truth”, London’s Guardian (27 September 2003) published a detailed report of a 1957 Anglo-American assassination plot directed against the Syrian president, with a view to implementing “regime change”. The similarity to today’s war on Syria is striking.

What is revealing is that the political assassination of the Syrian president has been on the Anglo-American drawing board for over half a century.

The article, which reviews the text of the leaked ‘Secret Document’, confirms that British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and President Dwight D. Eisenhower had ordered the assassination of the Syrian Head of State.

“Macmillan backed Syria assassination plot

Documents show White House and No 10 conspired over oil-fuelled invasion plan”

To consult the complete article by Ben Fenton, The Guardian, 27 September 2003 [click here](#).

The stated objective of this Secret Plan, entrusted to Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) [today’s MI6] and the CIA, consisted in assassinating the Syrian president together with key political and military figures. “Mr Macmillan and President Eisenhower were left in no doubt about the need to assassinate the top men in Damascus.”

“In order to facilitate the action of liberative forces, reduce the capabilities of the Syrian regime to organise and direct its military actions, to hold losses and destruction to a minimum, and to bring about desired results in the shortest possible time, a special effort should be made to eliminate certain key individuals. Their removal should be accomplished early in the course of the uprising and intervention and in the light of circumstances existing at the time.” (The Guardian, 27 September 2003)

The stated pretext of the Macmillan-Eisenhower plan was that Syria was “spreading terrorism” and “preventing the West’s access to Middle East oil” *Déjà Vu*

The secret 1957 Plan called for the funding of a so-called “Free Syria Committee” equivalent to today’s Syrian National Council (SNC). It also involved “the arming of “political factions with paramilitary or other actionist capabilities” within Syria. Under the plan, the CIA together with Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) “would instigate internal uprisings”.

“Internal disturbances” in Syria would be triggered through covert operations. The “CIA is prepared, and SIS [MI6] will attempt, to mount minor sabotage and coup de main incidents [sic] within Syria, working through contacts with individuals.”

An all out invasion plan had also been envisaged.

What was lacking from the 1957 plan, formulated at the height of the Cold War, was the “humanitarian” R2P envelope.

Moreover, in contrast to today’s Free Syrian Army (FSA) (i.e the foot soldiers of the Western military alliance), the 1957 Anglo-American plan did not contemplate the recruitment of foreign mercenaries to wage their war:

[in 1957] Britain and America sought a secretive “regime change” in another Arab country they accused of spreading terror and threatening the west’s oil supplies, by planning the invasion of Syria and the assassination of leading figures.

Newly discovered documents show how in 1957 Harold Macmillan and President Dwight Eisenhower approved a CIA-MI6 plan to stage fake border incidents as an excuse for an invasion by Syria’s pro-western neighbours, and then to “eliminate” the most influential triumvirate in Damascus. (The Guardian, 27 September 2003)

...

The insidious plan was known to key political figures in the British government. It was made public 46 years later in 2003:

Although historians know that intelligence services had sought to topple the Syrian regime in the autumn of 1957, this is the first time any document has been found showing that the assassination of three leading figures was at the heart of the scheme. In the document drawn up by a top secret and high-level working group that met in Washington in September 1957, Mr Macmillan and President Eisenhower were left in no doubt about the need to assassinate the top men in Damascus.

Part of the “preferred plan” reads: “In order to facilitate the action of liberative forces, reduce the capabilities of the Syrian regime to organise and direct its military actions, to hold losses and destruction to a minimum, and to bring about desired results in the shortest possible time, a special effort should be made to eliminate certain key individuals. Their removal should be accomplished early in the course of the uprising and intervention and in the light of circumstances existing at the time.”

The document, approved by London and Washington, named three men: Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, head of Syrian military intelligence; Afif al-Bizri, chief of the Syrian general staff; and Khalid Bakdash, leader of the Syrian Communist party.

For a prime minister who had largely come to power on the back of Anthony Eden’s disastrous antics in Suez just a year before, Mr Macmillan was remarkably bellicose. He described it in his diary as “a most formidable report”. Secrecy was so great, Mr Macmillan ordered the plan withheld even

from British chiefs of staff, because of their tendency “to chatter”.

...

Driving the call for action was the CIA’s Middle East chief Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of former president Theodore Roosevelt. He identified Colonel Sarraj, General al-Bizri and Mr Bakdash as the real power behind a figurehead president. ...

The “preferred plan” adds: “Once a political decision is reached to proceed with internal disturbances in Syria, CIA is prepared, and SIS [MI6] will attempt, to mount minor sabotage and coup de main incidents within Syria, working through contacts with individuals.

“The two services should consult, as appropriate, to avoid any overlapping or interference with each other’s activities... Incidents should not be concentrated in Damascus; the operation should not be overdone; and to the extent possible care should be taken to avoid causing key leaders of the Syrian regime to take additional personal protection measures.”

The report said that once the necessary degree of fear had been created, frontier incidents and border clashes would be staged to provide a pretext for Iraqi and Jordanian military intervention. Syria had to be “made to appear as the sponsor of plots, sabotage and violence directed against neighbouring governments,” the report says. “CIA and SIS should use their capabilities in both the psychological and action fields to augment tension.” That meant operations in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, taking the form of “sabotage, national conspiracies and various strong-arm activities” to be blamed on Damascus.

The plan called for funding of a “Free Syria Committee”, and the arming of “political factions with paramilitary or other actionist capabilities” within Syria. The CIA and MI6 would instigate internal uprisings, for instance by the Druze in the south, help to free political prisoners held in the Mezze prison, and stir up the Muslim Brotherhood in Damascus.

The planners envisaged replacing the Ba’ath/Communist regime with one that was firmly anti-Soviet, but they conceded that this would not be popular and “would probably need to rely first upon repressive measures and arbitrary exercise of power”. (Ben Fenton, *The Guardian*, 27 September 2003, emphasis added)

In contrast to the 2011-2012 Plan, which is supported by the Arab League, with the participation of Saudi Arabia and Qatar in covert ops., the 1957 Eisenhower Macmillan Plan was not carried out due to lack of support by neighbouring Arab countries: “The plan was never used, chiefly because Syria’s Arab neighbours could not be persuaded to take action and an attack from Turkey alone was thought to be unacceptable. (Ben Fenton, *The Guardian*, 27 September 2003, emphasis added)

The ongoing US-NATO aggression directed against Syria has been planned for several years.

An invasion of Syria was contemplated in the immediate wake of the 2003 Iraq invasion by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

“Regime change” in Damascus was again put forth by the Bush administration in the immediate wake of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The

assassination was casually blamed, without evidence, on Damascus.

President George W. Bush “denounced Syria and its ally, Iran, as ‘outlaw regimes... Syria and Iran deserve no patience from the victims of terror,’” The British media confirmed in October 2005 that Washington was [“looking for a pro-western replacement for Mr Assad.”](#)

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