

High Level Opposition to Obama's Escalating Syria Conflict

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Global Research, June 19, 2013

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Dozens of responsible world leaders oppose Washington's war on Syria. They do so for good reason. They want peaceful conflict resolution. They're against greater escalation. Few say so publicly.

On May 15, the UN General Assembly adopted an anti-Assad resolution. It's non-binding. It was Arab League-led. Washington co-sponsored it. It followed four others since 2011.

It passed 107 - 12. Over 70 nations refused support. They endorse peace, not war. They oppose greater foreign intervention. Russia called the measure "counterproductive and irresponsible."

Assad expressed views many other leaders share. Few air them publicly. He warned about longterm regional destabilization, saying:

"If the unrest in Syria leads to the partitioning of the country, or if the terrorist forces take control, the situation will inevitably spill over into neighboring countries and create a domino effect throughout the Middle East and beyond."

Most Americans oppose greater intervention. [Most polls](#) consistently say so. [Pew Research](#) shows overwhelming Arab street unease. At issue is Syrian violence spreading cross-borders.

High-level Pentagon officials express concerns. Greater Syrian intervention's much more daunting than Libya. Last March, Joint Chiefs Chairman General Martin Dempsey said "We can do anything" if asked.

At the same time, he repeatedly opposed greater US involvement. He's against escalated conflict. Endgame consequences worry him most. Before acting, "we have to be prepared for what comes next," he warns.

Attacking Syria won't be easy, he added. Russian-supplied air defenses are formidable. They're located close to major population centers.

Syrian opposition is splintered. Many insurgents are known terrorists. Hezbollah supports Syria. So does Iran. Russia may intervene supportively.

“Whether the military effect would produce the kind of outcome I think that not only members of Congress but all of us would desire – which is an end to the violence, some kind of political reconciliation among the parties, and a stable Syria – that’s the reason I’ve been cautious about the application of the military instrument of power.... It’s not clear to me that it would produce that outcome,” he said.

On June 17, [Al Manar](#) headlined “Russia: We Won’t Allow Imposing a no-Fly Zone in Syria,” saying:

Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Ocahevch said:

“We will not permit such scenarios, and these maneuvers on a fly-zone and humanitarian passages in Syria are caused by the lack of respect for the International Law.”

“We have seen how they imposed no-fly zones in Libya, so we will not allow repeating the same scenarios in Syria.”

“The Syrian crisis cannot be settled by double stances – refusing the military track on one hand and arming the militants on the other.”

A same day [Al Manar](#) article headlined “Putin: Russia Arming Legitimate Gov’t in Syria, West Arming Organ-Eaters,” saying:

“You will not deny that one does not really need to support the people who not only kill their enemies, but open up their bodies, eat their intestines in front of the public and cameras.”

“Are these the people you want to support? Is it them who you want to supply with weapons? Then this probably has little relation to humanitarian values that have been preached in Europe for hundreds of years.”

He unequivocal on Russian policy. He wants conflict ended. He wants it diplomatically resolved. He wants Syrians alone to decide who’ll govern them. Let them defeat foreign “extremists,” he stresses.

On June 17, Lebanon’s [Daily Star](#) quoted Assad saying:

“If the Europeans deliver weapons, the backyard of Europe will become terrorist and Europe will pay the price for it.”

At issue is exporting “terrorism” to Europe. “Terrorists will gain experience in combat and return with extremist ideologies,” he warned.

On June 16, London’s [Telegraph](#) headlined “Boris Johnson: Don’t arm the Syria maniacs,” saying:

London’s mayor warned David Cameron. Don’t use Syria for “political point-scoring or muscle-flexing.” Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg echoed similar sentiments.

So did former army head Lord Dannatt and Archbishop of York John Sentamu. Johnson urged “total ceasefire. This is the moment (to) end the madness.”

Cameron faces growing internal opposition. Associates warn he faces a no-confidence defeat.

Clegg insists Britain won’t arm insurgents. “We’ve taken no decision to provide lethal assistance, so we clearly don’t think it is the right thing to do now, otherwise we would have decided to do it,” he said.

Tory MP Julian Lewis spoke for others saying arming insurgents would be “suicidal.” Cameron will “struggle” to get parliamentary approval.

Shadow foreign minister Douglas Alexander said MPs from all parties express unease.

“For months Labour has called on the government to answer basic questions about their approach, such as how the prime minister would ensure that weapons supplied did not fall into the wrong hands, and how this step would help to de-escalate the conflict rather than prolong it.”

Unnamed US defense officials warn that creating safe or protected areas inside Syria involve enormous complexities.

Thousands of US ground forces may be needed to enforce them. Deploying them involves invasion and occupation. A protracted quagmire may follow.

No-fly zone imposition is just as daunting. Justifiable Syrian responses will follow.

On June 14, [Foreign Policy](#)'s Gordon Lubold headlined "Why the Pentagon really, really doesn't want to get involved in Syria," saying:

"Top Pentagon brass have been ambivalent in the extreme about getting involved in the Syrian crisis since it began more than two years ago."

"And now, even as the Obama administration signals its intention to provide direct military aid to opponents of the Syrian regime, there remains deep skepticism across the military that it will work."

Escalating conflict entails enormous risks. Success is unlikely. "(T)op brass is extremely reluctant to commit assets."

According to an unnamed senior Pentagon commander:

"There is no way to ensure" that arming insurgents won't make matters worse. Supplying heavier weapons, no-fly zone protection and safe areas sound good on paper.

Reality suggests otherwise. Failure's more likely than success. Former head of US European Operation Command and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe General Philip Breedlove sees "no military value in no-fly zone imposition inside northern Syria.

Northern and Southern Watch over Iraq was operationally exhausting and expensive.

Military intervention entails unintended consequences. Afghanistan and Iraq are protracted quagmires. Libya's a cauldron of violence.

Syria could be worse. Cross-border fallout could be disastrous. Escalated conflict affects Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and perhaps other regional countries.

On June 14, [Politico](#) headlined "DOD brass has long urged caution on Syria," saying:

Obama's planned greater involvement reflects what Pentagon brass warned against for months. At issue is another protracted quagmire.

"In hearings, speeches and interviews, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey have been deeply skeptical every time they've been asked about potential US involvement in Syria."

Unintended consequences worry planners most. They've seen it all before. They're loathe to repeat past mistakes. National security/military strategist Micah Zenko said:

"I've never spoken to anyone at the (military) O-5 level or above who thinks intervening in Syria is a good idea."

Hagel warned that military intervention "could embroil the United States in a significant, lengthy, and uncertain military commitment."

It could have "the unintended consequence of bringing the United States into a broader regional conflict or proxy war."

“You better be damn sure, as sure as you can be, before you get into something, because once you’re into it, there isn’t any backing out, whether it’s a no-fly zone, safe zone, protect these – whatever it is.”

“Once you’re in, you can’t unwind it. You can’t just say, ‘Well, it’s not going as well as I thought it would go, so we’re going to get out.’ “

Dempsey said supplying insurgents heavier weapons won’t make a difference. “Not in my military judgment,” he stressed. Don’t expect Syria to take escalation lightly, he added.

“I have to assume, as the military member with responsibility for these kind of activities, that the potential adversary isn’t just going to sit back and allow us to impose our will on them, that they could in fact take exception . and act outside of their borders with long-range rockets and missiles and artillery and even asymmetrical threats.”

In other words, be careful what you wish for. Best laid plans often fail. US military history reflects failure. Quagmires more than victories result.

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