

New York Times Brands Russia An “Outlaw State” for Fighting Al Qaeda Rebels in Syria

By [Bill Van Auken](#)

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Amid mounting public threats that the US is preparing an escalation of its military intervention in Syria, the New York Times Thursday published a lead editorial branding Russia as an “outlaw state.”

This ratcheting up of rhetoric that has grown increasingly hysterical in regard to Russia is a response to the debacle suffered by US imperialism in its over five-year-long proxy war for regime change in Syria. Syrian government forces, backed by Russian air power, appear to be on the brink of retaking all of the eastern portion of Aleppo, the last major bastion of the US-backed “rebels,” composed principally of Al Qaeda-affiliated Islamist militias.

Secretary of State John Kerry issued an ultimatum to his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov Wednesday: either Russia grounds both its own and the Syrian government’s warplanes, or Washington will break off all negotiations with Moscow on Syria.

The significance of this threat was further spelled out in a press briefing by State Department spokesman John Kirby, who told reporters that as a consequence of Russia failing to bow to US demands, “extremists and extremist groups will continue to...expand their operations, which will include, no question, attacks against Russian interests, perhaps even Russian cities, and Russia will continue to send troops home in body bags, and they will continue to lose resources—even, perhaps, more aircraft.”

The provocative and utterly reckless character of Kirby’s remarks was no accident. That Washington intended to communicate a threat to unleash CIA-sponsored terrorism against Russia was underscored by a *Washington Post* column by Philip Gordon, who until last year was the White House coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf. The piece, which warned in its headline that “Russia will pay the price,” used almost identical language, stating that continued Russian action in Syria “could very well result in terrorist attacks against Russia.”

Gordon went on to warn that the Obama administration could take actions to “increase costs on Russia,” adding, “Arming the opposition with shoulder-fired missiles capable of hitting Russian and Syrian planes over Aleppo is among the options.”

The ex-White House aide finally cautioned Moscow that if “Hillary Clinton becomes the next U.S. president, Putin could be facing a U.S. leader who has long supported a no-fly zone in Syria and robust support for the opposition, has expressed skepticism about Russia’s intentions in Syria, and will be looking to more clearly reassert American leadership in the

Middle East.”

It is evident, however, that the question of whether an escalation of the US intervention in Syria can wait until after the US election of November 8 has become the subject of heated debate within the US ruling establishment.

The Reuters news agency cited unnamed senior officials as saying that the Obama administration is considering “tougher responses to the Russian-backed Syrian government assault, including military options,” including the provision of heavier weaponry to the Al Qaeda-linked “rebels” and air strikes on Syrian government positions. (This second option was already put into practice with the September 17 US bombing that killed and wounded close to 200 Syrian troops near Deir Ezzor, which Washington claimed was an accident.)

With its editorial denunciation of Russia as an “outlaw state,” the *New York Times* is effectively weighing in on the debate within America ruling circles over the US intervention in Syria. It wants a military escalation and it wants it now—against Russia.

The *Times* writes:

“President Obama has long refused to approve direct military intervention in Syria. And Mr. Putin may be assuming that Mr. Obama is unlikely to confront Russia in his final months and with an American election season in full swing. But with the rebel stronghold in Aleppo under threat of falling to the government, administration officials said that such a response is again under consideration.”

To bolster its case, the *Times* throws in unsubstantiated charges made in an investigation driven entirely by “evidence” supplied by the Ukrainian secret police that Russia was responsible for the July 2014 shutdown of a Malaysia Airline jet over the war-torn Donbass region.

Putin, the newspaper declares, is guilty of “butchering civilians in Syria and Ukraine, annexing Crimea, computer-hacking American government agencies,” and “crushing dissent at home.”

Putin’s government represents Russia’s ruling oligarchy, which enriched itself through the theft of state property during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism. Its intervention in Syria, though of a defensive character, in response to US attempts to encircle and isolate Russia, represents the interests of this oligarchy and provides no progressive solution to the catastrophe unleashed by imperialism on Syria and the broader Middle East.

That being said, the crimes of Putin pale in the face of those carried out by successive US administrations, all of them with the complicity and propaganda support of the *New York Times*.

The US government is responsible for over a million deaths in Iraq and hundreds of thousands more from Afghanistan to Libya and Yemen. It instigated the regime-change operations in both Ukraine and Syria that gave rise to the “butchery” in those countries, much of it inflicted with weapons supplied by the CIA.

Moreover, even as the *Times* attacked the Russians' "butchery" in Syria, the Pentagon announced that it is sending another 600 US troops to Iraq to prepare for a siege of Mosul, which, like the previous assaults on Fallujah and Ramadi, will entail massive crimes against the civilian population.

As for Russian computer hacking, the *Times* speaks on behalf of the US government, which, through the NSA, engages in the most massive spying operation the world has ever seen. And as for "crushing dissent at home," the US, it should be recalled, is a country where the police murder over 1,000 people every year and the so-called "justice system" keeps some 2 million people behind bars. In brief, the *Times* editorial is a piece of war propaganda.

The term "outlaw state" was first put into official use by Ronald Reagan. It was later rendered as "rogue state" under Bill Clinton and, then, under George W. Bush, became the "axis of evil." Invariably, these terms were used to describe oppressed, semi-colonial countries targeted by US imperialism for war and conquest: Nicaragua, Grenada, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, North Korea, Iran, etc.

Now, in the pages of the *New York Times*, the term is used to describe Russia, a country of 146 million people armed with nuclear weapons. The implications could not be more ominous.

While the motivations of the *Times* editors may include short-term political considerations—the possibility of an "October surprise" in Syria boosting the prospects of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton—the anti-Russia propaganda campaign that the newspaper is leading has far deeper roots in the crisis of American capitalism and the protracted drive by US imperialism to overcome its historic decline through the instrument of militarism.

If words have any meaning, the *Times* editorial is a warning: behind the backs of the people of the United States and the entire planet, the preparations for a third world war are advancing rapidly.

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Articles by: [Bill Van Auken](#)

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