

Security Council Authorizes 300 Syrian Monitors

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On April 21, the Security Council unanimously adopted a Russian/EU resolution. It calls for deploying up to 300 unarmed military Syrian observers for three months.

Russia pushed hard for compromise language. An initial US urged EU draft was one-sided. A provision Moscow rejected involved invoking Article 41 of the UN Charter. It states:

“The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures.”

“These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, severance of diplomatic relations.”

It’s a short leap to Article 42, stating:

“Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.”

“Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.”

Explicit language is excluded, but implies war. Washington’s itching for another one.

Resolution 2043 isn’t perfect. It falls short of full even-handedness.

Provision 2 “(c)alls upon the Syrian government to implement visibly its commitments in their entirety, as it agreed to do in the Preliminary Understanding and as stipulated in resolution 2042 (2012), to (a) cease troop movements towards population centres, (b) cease all use of heavy weapons in such centres, (c) complete pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres, as well as to withdraw its troops and heavy weapons from population centres to their barracks or temporary deployment places to facilitate a sustained cessation of violence.”

Omitted is Assad’s obligation to protect civilians. No responsible leader would leave them defenseless. Insurgent violence continues. He justifiably vows to respond.

Provision 3 “(c)alls upon all parties in Syria, including the opposition, immediately to cease all armed violence in all its forms.”

Note the difference between provision 2 and 3 language. The former is hardline and detailed. The latter seems almost an afterthought.

It excludes Turkey providing border area safe havens. Free Syrian Army insurgents use them to stage cross-border attacks. They return to launch new ones. Daily, the process repeats.

Provision 8 burdens Assad with full implementation responsibility.

It calls on him “to ensure the effective operation of UNSMIS by: facilitating the expeditious and unhindered deployment of its personnel and capabilities as required to fulfil its mandate; ensuring its full, unimpeded, and immediate freedom of movement and access as necessary to fulfil its mandate, underlining in this regard the need for the Syrian government and the United Nations to agree rapidly on appropriate air transportation assets for UNSMIS; allowing its unobstructed communications; and allowing it to freely and privately communicate with individuals throughout Syria without retaliation against any person as a result of interaction with UNSMIS.”

Provision 9 merely calls on “the parties to guarantee the safety of UNSMIS personnel without prejudice to its freedom,” but places “the primary responsibility” on Assad.

He’s committed to comply with all provisions, but can’t control insurgent behavior. Only Washington, key NATO partners, and regional allies can do it. They could end violence today and provide no need for monitors. They refuse because regime change plans depend on it. With or without monitors, expect it to continue.

It makes Provision 14 more worrisome. Like SC Resolution 2042 authorizing deployment of an advance military observer team, it mandates consideration of unspecified “further steps as appropriate.” Doing so could provide wiggle room for war.

Therein lies the problem. On April 19, the Christian Science Monitor headlined, “Leon Panetta: US military planning for greater role in Syria conflict,” saying:

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, he said Pentagon officials are “reviewing and planning for a range of additional measures that may be necessary to protect the Syrian people.”

Libya’s model is considered a potential intervention template. He suggested employing similar steps in Syria. More must be done, he stressed. “Make no mistake,” he added. (O)ne way or another, this regime ultimately will meet its end.”

Syrian National Council (SNC) and Free Syrian Army members openly urge Western intervention. On April 21, an SNC statement said:

“We call anew on the U.N. Security Council to act with all urgency to intervene militarily to bring an end to the crimes committed by the bloody regime against the unarmed Syrian people.”

On April 19, Free Syrian Army leaders urged military intervention with or without UN authorization.

On April 20, Today’s Zaman headlined, “Clinton urges tougher UN pressure on Syria,”

saying:

Among other steps, she called for implementing UN Charter's Chapter 7: "Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression."

Specifically, she wants tougher sanctions, an arms embargo, and other unspecified measures on Assad. She stopped short of endorsing military intervention, but suggested it, saying:

"We have to keep Assad off balance by leaving (all) options on the table."

Secretary-General Ban K-moon implied support, saying:

"Despite the government's agreement to cease all violence, we still see deeply troubling evidence that it continues. The past few days, in particular, have brought reports of renewed and escalating violence, including the shelling of civilian areas, grave abuses by government forces and attacks by armed groups."

Assad gets blamed for insurgency violence. It continues daily. Monitors won't change things. Of concern is who'll choose them? Will they be independent or mostly pro-Western? Will their reports be even-handed or what Washington wants to hear?

Moroccan Colonel Ahmed Himmische heads them. Morocco's part of the Arab League anti-Assad coalition. Its monarchy replicates Bahrain's. King Mohammed VI likely endorsed Himmische's appointment. How much say he has over other monitors remains to be seen, but his voice will be loudest.

Sudanese General Mohammed Ahmed Mustafa al-Dabi headed the December/February observer team until Arab League officials suspended operations. Al-Dabi's candor caused the pullout. He contested a Western-generated insurgency. His assessments weren't what Washington wanted to hear.

Himmische likely assures no repeat. Monitors may be compromised before arriving. One-sided reports may follow.

Pressure will increase for tougher measures. Expect Western intervention to follow with or without UN authorization. Pretexts are easy to arrange. Any number of scenarios are possible. Invoking NATO Charter Articles 4 or 5 are possible.

Article 4 calls for members to "consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any" is threatened.

Article 5 considers an armed attack (real or otherwise) against one or more members, an attack against all, and calls for collective self-defense. Turkey threatened to invoke it. Hillary Clinton suggested Article 4.

War draws closer. Monitors may be an intermediary step. Washington and key ally plans may be in place.

Whether Russia and/or China contest remains unknown. They have vital reasons for doing so. The worst ahead is possible. As developments unfold, future articles will assess them.

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