

Syria: Upping the Stakes. Edging Closer to Full-scale US-NATO Military Intervention

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Things appear heading closer toward full-scale US intervention. The fullness of time will have final say.

On April 28, The [New York Times](#) headlined “Lawmakers Call for Stronger US Action in Syria,” saying:

Republicans “took President Obama to task Sunday for what they characterized as dangerous inaction in Syria....”

Senators John McCain (R. AZ) and Lindsey Graham are Armed Services Committee members. They “warn(ed) that failure to intervene in Syria would embolden nations like Iran and North Korea.”

“If we keep this hands-off approach to Syria, this indecisive action toward Syria, kind of not knowing what we’re going to do next, we’re going to start a war with Iran because Iran’s going to take our inaction in Syria as meaning we’re not serious about their nuclear weapons program,” said Graham.

Michigan Republican Representative Mike Rogers claims Assad’s been using chemical weapons for the past two years. Obama’s “red line” can’t be a “dotted line,” he said.

On April 28, the [Wall Street Journal](#) headlined “US Weighs Syria Response,” saying:

“Lawmakers pressed the Obama administration to intervene in Syria’s civil war, citing the regime’s alleged chemical-weapons use....”

They urge intervention short of troops on the ground. The White House and Pentagon have concerns about Syrian air defenses.

Joint Chiefs chairman General Martin Dempsey calls them the single biggest obstacle to US intervention. Since 2007, Russia’s been involved in upgrading them.

US officials believe its technicians provide assistance on the ground. According to US intelligence, Russia began shipping SA-22 Pantsir-S1 units to Syria.

It’s a combination surface-to-air missile and 30 mm antiaircraft gun. It has a digital targeting system. It’s mounted on a combat vehicle. It’s mobile, easy to move and conceal.

In 2009, Moscow began upgrading Syria’s outdated analog SA-3 surface-to-air missile

systems. SA-26 Pechora-2M systems replaced them. They have a 17-mile operational range.

Syria's SA-5 also concerns Washington. Their operational range is 175 miles. They can take out US planes from Cyprus. It's a NATO base used during Libyan bombings.

Despite no credible evidence, Washington, Britain and Israel claim Assad used chemical weapons at least twice.

Pressure mounts toward intervention. At issue is whether, Russia, Iran and/or Hezbollah will respond. Doing so would embroil the region. Possibly it could escalate to a global conflict.

According to Haaretz military correspondent [Amos Harel](#), Washington's in "no hurry to go after Assad's chemical weapons." A major operation means boots on the ground. Obama wants it avoided.

Last year, IDF chief Benny Gantz addressed two possible options. One involved a large-scale ground operation. The other was a targeted air assault. If Israel attacks Syria, he prefers the latter.

Obama administration officials believe controlling Syrian chemical weapons requires at least 75,000 US troops. Other countries would likely send more.

Washington claims knowledge of at least 18 sites. A military operation against them "would require precise intelligence at an extraordinary level," said Harel.

Intelligence experts aren't sure if Iran and/or Hezbollah "would help defend the Syrian chemical weapon sites in the event of a US-led military operation targeting them."

Doing so "would just be the beginning of America's headache." Weapons would have to be discovered, collected, and perhaps taken outside Syria.

It's a "task of rare proportions," said Harel. Completing it would take many months. Faulty intelligence might miss other sites. Uncertainties provide "good reasons....to avoid action as much as possible."

According to Arab media, US forces in Jordan have been training for intervention. [Al-Monitor](#) calls itself "the pulse of the Middle East." On April 26, it said demonstrators gathered in downtown Amman.

They did so after Friday prayers. A pickup truck loudspeaker blared "No Americans in our country." Demonstrators chanted "We reject the American army's presence in Jordan!"

Two marches followed. One headed toward the Royal Court. Mostly young and older men participated. Some women joined them. One protester spoke for others, saying:

"We came out to affirm our rejection of foreign forces on Jordanian lands. We did not come down to defend any regime. King Abdullah cannot decide for the Jordanian people."

Demonstrators burned US flags. The Muslim Brotherhood affiliated Islamic Action Front also denounced the presence of US forces in Jordan. Days earlier, they issued a statement calling on Jordan's government to rethink its authorization.

On April 28, [Al-Monitor](#) headlined “Why Russia Does Not Believe Syria Used Chemical Weapons,” saying:

Moscow believes that “news about the alleged chemical weapons in Syria, relying on intelligence from Israel and the United States, is naturally perceived as a step to an inevitable escalation.”

Independently obtained credible evidence of potential chemical weapons use would clarify things. UN chemical inspectors lack legitimacy. Global Research explained. They take orders from Washington. It shouldn't surprise. America dominates UN policy.

“Moscow does not believe that Assad” used chemical weapons, said Al-Monitor. He's “not a madman....For now, this entire story rather resembles an informational attack.”

Accusations persist. On April 29, an unnamed [Israeli official](#) said intelligence sources have “concrete and unequivocal evidence” of Syrian chemical weapons use.

“There is substantial material about the use of chemical weapons by Assad's army. It is known to all intelligence agencies. All intelligence elements have been updated. No one has any doubts on the matter.”

No one presented credible evidence for proof. Accusations don't wash. They persist. Expect more. They'll make headlines. Repeated enough gets most people to believe them.

According to the official, “one of the central dangers in Israel's view is the transfer of Syrian weapons to Hezbollah and Lebanon, as well as to terrorist organizations trying to reach the border.”

“The possibility of them acquiring chemical or conventional weapons they never had before has implications for the State of Israel.”

Last weekend, Netanyahu told his ministers to remain silent on this issue. His diplomatic-security cabinet discussed it for hours. They focused on Israel's likely response.

Environmental Protection Minister Amir Peretz spoke publicly before the meeting, saying:

“With or without chemical weapons, the world can't remain silent in the face of what's happening in Syria.”

“The international community should have actively intervened long ago, with military force if necessary.”

“Naturally, if there is evidence of the use of chemical weapons, we would expect those who have set red lines to also do what's necessary – first and foremost the United States – and of course the entire international community.”

On April 27, [London's Guardian](#) headlined “Syria nerve gas claims undermined by eyewitness accounts,” saying:

Contradictions and uncertainties abound. Eyewitness contradict official sources. The Guardian attributes it to “the confusion of battle.” It stopped short of affirming Western claims that don't wash.

On April 29, the [Syrian Arab News Agency](#) (SANA) headline “Lavrov: Pretext of Chemical Weapon Use Dangerous,” saying:

He warned about using this pretext to “fulfill geopolitical interests for foreign powers and states against Syria,” said SANA.

They’re considering all ways to topple Assad. Claiming “weapons of mass destruction (use) is very dangerous and unacceptable.”

With regards to Western investigation demands, Lavrov stressed “the supporting evidence of such allegations were not given to any side or by any side in whatever time before, but rather intelligence circles including ours talked about the non- existence of any facts that support these allegations.”

“No change has taken place in the Russian stance regarding the crisis in Syria.”

Separately, Syrian officials informed Moscow that “unidentified forces launched two ground-to-air missiles which exploded in the air very close to a civilian aircraft belonging to” Norwind Airlines.

It’s a Russian charter air carrier. The pilot maneuvered out of harm’s way. It was en route to Kazan, Tatarstan. It departed from Sharm el-sheikh, Egypt.

Expect similar incidents to follow. Washington seems heading toward full-scale intervention. The fullness of time will explain more.

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