

# The US-NATO War on Syria: Western Naval Forces Confront Russia Off the Syrian Coastline?

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)  
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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)  
Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)  
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“As I went back through the Pentagon in November 2001, one of the senior military staff officers had time for a chat. Yes, we were still on track for going against Iraq, he said. But there was more. This was being discussed as part of a five-year campaign plan, he said, and there were a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia, and Sudan.”

Former Nato Commander General Wesley Clark

“Let me say to the soldiers and officials still supporting the Syrian regime — the Syrian people will remember the choices you make in the coming days....”

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Friends of Syria conference in Paris' July 7, 2012

*While confrontation between Russia and the West was, until recently, confined to the polite ambit of international diplomacy, within the confines of the UN Nations Security Council, an uncertain and perilous situation is now unfolding in the Eastern Mediterranean.*

Allied forces including intelligence operatives and special forces have reinforced their presence on the ground in Syria following the UN stalemate. Meanwhile, coinciding with the UN Security Council deadlock, Moscow has dispatched to the Mediterranean a flotilla of ten Russian warships and escort vessels led by the Admiral Chabanenko anti-submarine destroyer. Russia's flotilla is currently stationed off the Southern Syrian coastline.

## The Telegraph

“Polite Diplomacy” (without smiles). Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (L) and Russia's Foreign Minister

Sergey Lavrov meet in St. Petersburg, June 29, 2012

*Back in August of last year, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin warned that “NATO is planning a military campaign against Syria to help overthrow the regime of President Bashar al-Assad with a long-reaching goal of preparing a beachhead for an attack on Iran,...” In relation to the current naval deployment, Russia's navy chief, Vice Admiral Viktor Chirkov, confirmed, however, that while the [Russian] flotilla was carrying marines, the warships would “not be engaged in Syria Tasks”. “The ships will perform “planned military manoeuvres”, said the [Russian Defense] ministry”*

*The US-NATO alliance has retorted to Russia's naval initiative, with a much larger naval deployment, a formidable Western armada, consisting of British, French and American warships, slated to be deployed later this Summer in the Eastern Mediterranean, leading to a potential "Cold War style confrontation" between Russian and Western naval forces.*

*Meanwhile, US-NATO military planners have announced that various "military options" and "intervention scenarios" are being contemplated in the wake of the Russian-Chinese veto in the UN Security Council.*

The planned naval deployment is coordinated with allied ground operations in support of the US-NATO sponsored "Free Syrian Army"(FSA). In this regard, US-NATO has speeded up the recruitment of foreign fighters trained in Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.



( [Russian warships enter the Med, bound for Syria - timesofmalta.com](http://timesofmalta.com), July 24, 2012)



Franco-British War Games: "Warship Diplomacy"

France and Britain will be participating later this Summer in war games codenamed Exercise Cougar 12 [2012]. The games will be conducted in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of a Franco-British "Response Force Task Group" involving Britain's HMS Bulwark and France's Charles De Gaulle carrier battle group. The focus of these naval exercises will be on amphibious operations involving the (planned simulated) landing ashore of troops on "enemy territory".



Britain's HMS Bulwark



France's Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier

### **Smokescreen: The Proposed Evacuation of Western Nationals "Using a Humanitarian Naval Fleet of WMDs"**

Barely mentioned by the mainstream media, the warships involved in the Cougar 12 naval exercise will also participate in the planned evacuation of "British nationals from the Middle East, should the ongoing conflict in Syria further spill across borders into neighboring Lebanon and Jordan.":

The British would likely send the HMS Illustrious, a helicopter carrier, along with the HMS Bulwark, an amphibious ship, as well as an advanced destroyer to provide defenses for the task force. On board will be several hundred Royal Marine commandos, as well as a complement of AH-64 attack helicopters (the same ones used in Libya last year). A fleet of French ships, including the Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier, carrying a complement of Rafale fighter aircraft, are expected to join them.

Those forces are expected stay offshore and could escort specially chartered civilian ships meant to pick up foreign nationals fleeing Syria and surrounding countries. ([ibtimes.com](http://ibtimes.com), 24 July 2012).

Sources in the British Ministry of Defense, while confirming the Royal Navy's "humanitarian mandate" in the planned evacuation program, have categorically denied "any intention of a combat role for British forces [against Syria]".

The evacuation plan using the most advanced military hardware including the HMS Bulwark, the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier is an obvious smokescreen. The not so hidden agenda is military threat and intimidation directed against a sovereign nation located in the historical cradle of civilization in Mesopotamia:

"The Charles De Gaulle alone is a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier with an entire squadron of jets more advanced than anything the Syrians have — is sparking speculation that those forces could become involved in a NATO operation against Syrian forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad...

The HMS Illustrious, which is currently sitting on the Thames in central London, will likely only be sent to the region after the end of the Olympics." (Ibid)

This impressive deployment of Franco-British naval power could also include the USS John C. Stennis aircraft carrier, which is to be sent back to the Middle East:

[On July 16, 2012], the Pentagon also confirmed that it would be redeploying the USS John C. Stennis, a nuclear-powered supercarrier capable of carrying 90 aircraft, to the Middle East... The Stennis would be arriving in the region with an advanced missile-launching cruiser, .... The carrier USS Eisenhower is already expected to be in the Middle East by that time (two carriers currently in the region are to be relieved and sent back to the U.S.).

**Amid unpredictable situations in both Syria and Iran, that would have left U.S. forces stretched and overly burdened if a firm military response were needed in either circumstance.** (Ibid, emphasis added)



USS Stennis aircraft carrier

The USS Stennis strike group is to be sent back to the Middle East "by an unspecified date in the late summer" to be deployed to the Central Command area of responsibility:

"The Defense Department said that the early deployment had come from a request made by Marine Corps General James N. Mattis, the commander for Central Command (the U.S. military authority area that covers the Middle East), partly out of concern that there would be a short period where only one carrier would be located in the region." ([Strike group headed to Central Command early - Stripes Central - Stripes](#), July 16, 2012)

Marine Gen. James Mattis, commander of U.S. Central Command, "asked to move up the strike group's deployment based on "a range of factors," and Defense Secretary Leon

Panetta approved it"... (Ibid)

A Pentagon spokesman stated that the deployment shift of the USS Stennis strike group pertained to "a wide range of U.S. security interests in the region". "We're always mindful of the challenges posed by Iran. Let me be very clear: This is not a decision that is based solely on the challenges posed by Iran, ... " **This is not about any one particular country or one particular threat.**" intimating that Syria was also part of planned deployment. (Ibid, emphasis added)

### **"Intervention Scenarios"**

This massive deployment of naval power is an act of coercion with a view to terrorizing the Syrian people. The threat of military intervention purports to destabilize Syria as a nation state as well as confront and weaken Russia's role in brokering the Syrian crisis.

The UN diplomatic game is at an impasse. The UN Security Council is defunct. The transition is towards Twenty-first Century "Warship Diplomacy".

While an all out allied military operation directed against Syria is not "officially" contemplated, military planners are currently involved in preparing various "intervention scenarios":

'Western political leaders may have no appetite for deeper intervention. But as history has shown, we do not always choose which wars to fight - sometimes wars choose us. **'Military planners have a responsibility to prepare for intervention options in Syria for their political masters in case this conflict chooses them. 'Preparation will be proceeding today in several Western capitals and on the ground in Syria and in Turkey.** 'Up to the point of Assad's collapse, we are most likely to see a continuation or intensification of the under-the-radar options of financial support, arming and advising the rebels, clandestine operations and perhaps cyber warfare from the West. 'After any collapse, however, the military options will be seen in a different light.' ([Daily Mail](#), July 24, 2012, emphasis added)

### **Concluding Remarks**

The World is at a dangerous crossroads.

The shape of this planned naval deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean with US-NATO warships contiguous to those of Russia is unprecedented in recent history.

History tells us that wars are often triggered unexpectedly as a result of "political mistakes" and human error. The latter are all the more likely within the realm of a divisive and corrupt political system in the US and Western Europe.

US-NATO military planning is overseen by a centralised military hierarchy. Command and Control operations are in theory "coordinated" but in practice they are often marked by human error. Intelligence operatives often function independently and outside the realm of political accountability.

Military planners are acutely aware of the dangers of escalation. Syria has significant air defense capabilities as well as ground forces. Syria has been building up its air defense

system with the delivery of Russian Pantsir S1 air-defense missiles.

Any form of US-NATO direct military intervention against Syria would destabilize the entire region, potentially leading to escalation over a vast geographical area, extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border with Tajikistan and China.

Military planning involves intricate scenarios and war games by both sides including military options pertaining to advanced weapons systems. A Third World War scenario has been contemplated by US-NATO-Israeli military planners since early 2000.

Escalation is an integral part of the military agenda. War preparations to attack Syria and Iran have been in “an advanced state of readiness” for several years.

We are dealing with complex political and strategic decision-making involving the interplay of powerful economic interest groups, the actions of covert intelligence operatives.

The role of war propaganda is paramount not only in moulding public opinion into accepting a war agenda, but also in establishing a consensus within the upper echelons of the decision-making process. A selective form of war propaganda intended for “Top Officials” (TOPOFF) in government agencies, intelligence, the Military, law enforcement, etc. is intended to create *an unbending consensus in favor of War and the Police State*.

For the war project to go ahead, it is essential that both politicians and military planners are rightfully committed to leading the war “in the name of justice and democracy”. For this to occur, they must firmly believe in their own propaganda, namely that war is “an instrument of peace and democracy”.

They have no concern for the devastating impacts of advanced weapons systems, routinely categorized as “collateral damage”, let alone the meaning and significance of pre-emptive warfare, using nuclear weapons.

Wars are invariably decided upon by civilian leaders and interest groups rather than by the military. War serves dominant economic interests which operate from behind the scenes, behind closed doors in corporate boardrooms, in the Washington think tanks, etc.

Realities are turned upside down. War is peace. The Lie becomes the Truth.

War propaganda, namely media lies, constitutes the most powerful instrument of warfare.

Without media disinformation, the US-NATO led war agenda would collapse like a deck of cards. The legitimacy of the war criminals in high office would be broken.

It is therefore essential to disarm not only the mainstream media but also a segment of the self proclaimed “progressive” alternative media, which has provided legitimacy to NATO’s “Responsibility to protect” (R2P) mandate, largely with a view to dismantling the antiwar movement.

The road to Tehran goes through Damascus. A US-NATO sponsored war on Iran would involve, as a first step, the destabilization of Syria as a nation state. Military planning pertaining to Syria is an integral part of the war on Iran agenda.

A war on Syria could evolve towards a US-NATO military campaign directed against Iran, in

which Turkey and Israel would be directly involved.

It is crucial to spread the word and break the channels of media disinformation.

A critical and unbiased understanding of what is happening in Syria is of crucial importance in reversing the tide of military escalation towards a broader regional war.

Our objective is ultimately to dismantle the US-NATO-Israeli military arsenal and restore World Peace.

It is essential that people in the UK, France and the US prevent “the late Summer” naval WMD deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean from occurring.

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[SYRIA: NATO's Next “Humanitarian” War?](#)

- by Prof. Michel Chossudovsky - 2012-08-15

ONLINE INTERACTIVE I-BOOK. The insurgency in Syria is based on the “Libya Model”: it is integrated by mercenaries and Al Qaeda affiliated paramilitary brigades supported by British, French and Turkish Special Forces...

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*-John McMurtry, Professor of Philosophy, Guelph University*

"In a world where engineered, pre-emptive, or more fashionably "humanitarian" wars of aggression have become the norm, this challenging book may be our final wake-up call."

-Denis Halliday, Former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations

Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world's only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

-Ellen Brown, author of 'Web of Debt' and president of the Public Banking Institute

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