

# Washington Crossed the Red Line in Syria. Extreme Risk of A Direct Armed Engagement

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Global Research, June 22, 2017

[New Eastern Outlook](#) 20 June 2017

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

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Terrorism](#), [US](#)

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*The actions the Pentagon has recently been taking in Syria resulted in the extreme risk of a direct armed engagement between American troops illegally deployed in Syria and the forces of Syrian president, **Bashar al-Assad**.*

Upon realizing the success of anti-terrorist operation which Syrian armed forces were conducting together with Russian and Iranian forces in bid to liberate regions still under Islamic State control, Washington decided to establish a foothold in the country before the conflict ends. Once Syrian troops reached the border areas with Iraq, it jeopardized all plans Washington has been making toward the establishment of a large US-controlled zone in the east of Syria, a scenario that would have affected both the future of the country and the negotiation process to end the war.

Under these conditions, the United States rushed to redeploy its HIMARS multiple rocket launchers from Jordan to Syria's Al-Zakf, in an urgent attempt to create yet another American military base in the war-torn country. It's reported the operational range of HIMARS systems reaches 300 miles, which is critical for understanding Washington's plans. The systems have been deployed near a strategically important border crossing at Al-Tanf, which means that they can block off the advancement of any government troops that would try to seal all border crossing in a bid to prevent new militants from entering the country.

The advancement of Syrian government troops with the support of Russia and Iran towards the At-Tanf border crossing is not just a strategic event, but a historical one. It won't be an exaggeration to state that at this point in the Syrian war certain areas of Syria have been turned into disputed areas contested by opposing foreign interests. And Washington's attempts to destroy fleeing ISIS detachments before Syrian armed forces reach them reminds us of the situation in the spring of 1945, when the US and its Western allies were racing to capture strategically important areas in Germany, as the Third Reich was crumbling.

Upon embarking on this path, Washington has decided to provide a show of force, acting in complete disregard of all international norms, putting itself in the shoes of an aggressor that violates the sovereignty of the independent Syrian state. The decision of the US-led coalition to intensify air strikes in the al-Raqqa Governorate led to hundreds of civilian deaths and the forced exodus of 160,000 civilians, as it was announced by the head of the United Nations Independent Commission on Human Rights Violations in Syria, Paulo S ergio Pinheir in Geneva.

In an bid to obtain an upper hand in the fight for al-Raqqa, the US coalition decided to use white phosphorus, prohibited from use in residential areas by international law, as it's been reported by the French television channel BFM TV.

In an open demonstration of its aggressive intent, for the last couple of month the US coalition has repeatedly attacked Syrian military units, which has not just resulted in deaths of the Syrian military personnel, but has also claimed dozens of civilian lives.

And now, on Sunday evening, a Syrian Su-22 that was carrying out a mission against ISIS militants in the vicinity of al-Raqqa was shot down by a US F/A-18E Super Hornet fighter. This barbarous step unseen since the days of the Bosnian war has marked new heights in the Pentagon's military aggression against sovereign states. The destruction of an aircraft that was carrying out an anti-terrorist mission over its own territory, in the best interests of its citizens and its country is, without a glimpse of a doubt, a war crime. As the Military Times emphasizes, this is a vivid example of the critical level of tension that exists between the Syrian government, supported by Russia, and US coalition forces.

Therefore, the immediate response of the Russian Defense Ministry, which called the destruction of the Syrian warplane by uninvited US forces in Syrian airspace a cynical violation of the country's sovereignty, committed in disregard of Moscow's repeated warnings about the possible consequences of the repeated destruction of Syrian military assets and personnel which pose no threat to the US. In this regard, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced that it has ceased its cooperation with its American counterparts in the framework of the memorandum on the prevention of incidents and ensuring air safety during operations in Syria and demanded the Pentagon to conduct a thorough investigation of the Su-22 downing, while providing all details to Moscow. Now Russian military forces, stationed in Syria at the request of the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic, will treat as hostile targets any planes and drones of the US coalition operating west of the Euphrates River.

Washington's actions in Syria clearly show that its stated goals have nothing in common with the real goals the US has been pursuing in Syria, repeatedly committing acts of armed aggression against the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian military. Today, everyone understands that by their actions, the Pentagon seeks to stop the the movement of Syrian forces eastward, and also to undermine the joint Syrian-Iraqi strategic defense project against ISIS before it takes off. After all, no opposition group, regardless of its affiliation (Kurds, local tribes, the so-called Free Syrian Army etc.) has the capacity to replace ISIS and its ability to fight Syrian forces, since none of these other proxies can resist the Syrian Arab Army.

However, Washington's recent actions must be regarded more broadly: will it continue supporting terrorists across the globe, trying to put groups like ISIS in power in a bid toward achieving global domination through the use of proxy forces? Will Europe continue suffering from terrorist attacks that are undermining the existing security paradigm, while the US demands its "European allies" to increase their expenditures on arms purchases that are allegedly needed for combating terrorism?

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