

Washington Wants the Pentagon and NATO To Have “Carte Blanche” In Syria

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Washington wants the [UN] envoy to have no influence on military and political issues in Syria, giving the US and NATO a carte blanche.

So, the West claims that all it wants is to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and enhance democracy there, but the very nature of the anti-Assad coalition puts in doubt these good intentions.

The Friends of Syria group is to meet in the Netherlands Thursday. This group of countries and bodies supports Syria's opposition in its struggle to oust President Bashar al-Assad.

The session will be held amid escalating conflict in the country and a new UN envoy for Syria, ex-Algeria's Foreign Minister, Lakhdar Brahimi, taking up his office.

Our political observer Pyotr Iskenderov comments on the situation.

The Friends of Syria: whose foes are they?

The Friends of Syria was initiated by France's leader Nicolas Sarkozy who openly spoke about his intention to apply the Libyan scenario to Damascus. Before striking Libya, NATO gathered a collection of countries and organizations to ensure support of its actions. Then, France, the UK and the US were strongly backed by the Arab League, mainly Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Those who masterminded the operation knew that if it had been initiated by Arab countries, this would have sparked a conflict between the West and the Muslim world.

The administration of Barack Obama contrasted to George W. Bush is pursuing a more exquisite foreign policy. It keeps emphasizing that after withdrawing its troops from Iraq, all it cares about is Afghanistan. In other hot spots, like Libya or Syria, the US prefers to operate through its allies, mainly France, the UK or the Arab League, being behind the operation.

This worked in Libya and could well work with Syria but it's more complicated to mount military interference in Damascus than in Libya back in 2011. This time there is no UN Security Council resolution which has at least an subtext allowing an operation. In the case of Libya it was a no-fly zone imposed by the UN, but this time Russia and China vetoed UN resolutions against Syria. So, the move was taken at creating a broad though quite vague coalition of countries, activists and bodies to internationally legitimize pressure put on Damascus.

Recently, Syria has attempted to reinforce ties with other international unions, less broad but more diverse. In the run-up to the Netherlands meeting, a contact group on Syria met in Cairo. It features Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey which treat Assad's regime differently and are all key players in the region.

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi proposed to send the group's own observers to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict without foreign intervention.

It was quite timely, as in August the UN and the West decided to withdraw its observers from Syria.

However, the West obviously will do its best to prevent countries which it doesn't control from monitoring the situation in Syria.

As some UN leaks reveal, delegates from the West were the ones skeptical about the necessity of a UN envoy at all.

Richard Gowan of New York University stated:

"I doubt that any U.N. envoy can really prevent the current conflict from getting worse, although the U.N. has an absolute obligation to keep up efforts to get humanitarian aid into the country alongside the Red Cross and Red Crescent."

This means that Washington wants the envoy to have no influence on military and political issues in Syria, giving the US and NATO a carte blanche.

So, the West claims that all it wants is to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and enhance democracy there, but the very nature of the anti-Assad coalition puts in doubt these good intentions.

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