

Week Eighteen of the Russian Intervention in Syria: A Dramatic Escalation Appears Imminent

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The situation in Syria has reached a watershed moment and a dramatic escalation of the war appears imminent. Let's look again at how we reached this point.

During the first phase of the operation, the Syrian armed forces were unable to achieve an immediate strategic success. This is rather unsurprising. It is important to remember here that during the first weeks of the operation the Russian did not provide close air support to the Syrians. Instead, they chose to systematically degrade the entire Daesh (Note: I refer to *all* terrorist in Syria as "Daesh") infrastructure including command posts, communication nodes, oil dumps, ammo dumps, supply routes, etc. This was important work, but it did not have an immediate impact upon the Syrian military. Then the Russians turned to two important tasks: to push back Daesh in the Latakia province and to hit the illegal oil trade between Daesh and Turkey. The first goal was needed for the protection of the Russian task force and the second one hit the Daesh finances. Then the Russians seriously turned to providing close air support. Not only that, but the Russians got directly involved with the ground operation.

The second phase was introduced gradually, without much fanfare, but it made a big difference on the ground: the Russians and Syrians began to closely work together and they soon honed their collaboration to a quantitatively new level which allowed the Syrian commanders to use Russian firepower with great effectiveness. Furthermore, the Russians began providing modern equipment to the Syrians, including T-90 tanks, modern artillery systems, counter-battery radars, night vision gear, etc. Finally, according to various Russian reports, Russian special operations teams (mostly Chechens) were also engaged in key locations, including deep in the rear of Daesh. As a result, the Syrian military for the first time went from achieving tactical successes to operational victories: for the first time the Syrian began to liberate key towns of strategic importance.

Finally, the Russians unleashed a fantastically intense firepower on Daesh along crucial sectors of the front. In northern Homs, the [Russians bombed a sector for 36 hours in a row](#). According to the [latest briefing of the Russian Defense Ministry](#), just between February 4th and February 11th, the Russian aviation group in the Syrian Arab Republic performed 510 combat sorties and engaged 1,888 terrorists targets. That kind of ferocious pounding did produce the expected effect and the Syrian military began slowly moving along the Turkish-Syrian border while, at the same time, threatening the Daesh forces still deployed inside the northern part of Aleppo. In doing so, the Russians and Syrian threatened to cut off the vital resupply route linking Daesh to Turkey. According to Russian sources, Daesh forces were so demoralized that they forced the local people to flee towards the Turkish border and attempted to hide inside this movement of internally displaced civilians.

This strategic Russian and Syrian victory meant that all the nations supporting Daesh, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the USA were facing a complete collapse of their efforts to overthrow Assad and to break-up Syria and turn part of it into a “Jihadistan”. The Americans could not admit this, of course; as for the Saudis, their threats to invade Syria were rather laughable. Which left the main role to Erdogan who was more than happy to provide the West with yet another maniacal ally willing to act in a completely irresponsible way just to deny the “other side” anything looking like a victory.

Erdogan seems to be contemplating two options. The first one is a ground operation into Syria aimed at restoring the supply lines of Daesh and at preventing the Syrian military from controlling the border. Here is a good illustration ([taken from a SouthFront video](#)) of what this would look like:



Credit: SouthFront

According to various reports, Erdogan has 18,000 soldiers supported by aircraft, armor and artillery poised along the border to execute such an invasion.

The second plan is even simpler, at least in theory: to create a no-fly zone over all of Syria. Erdogan personally mentioned this option several times, the latest one [on Thursday the 11th](#).

Needless to say, *both plans are absolutely illegal under international law and would constitute an act of aggression*, the “supreme international crime” [according to the Nuremberg Tribunal](#), because “it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.” Not that this would deter a megalomaniac like Erdogan.

Erdogan, and his backers in the West, will, of course, claim that a humanitarian disaster, or even a genocide, is taking place in Aleppo, that there is a “responsibility to protect” (R2P) and that no UNSC is needed to take such clearly “humanitarian” action. It would be “Sarajevo v2” or “Kosovo v2” all over again. The western media is now actively busy demonizing Putin, and just recently has offered the following topics to ponder to those poor souls who still listen to it:

1. Putin [‘probably’ ordered the murder of Litvinenko](#).
2. Putin ordered the murder of Litvinenko because [Litvinenko was about to reveal that Putin was a pedophile](#) (seriously, I kid you not – check for yourself!).
3. WWII could start by [Russia invading Latvia](#).
4. According [to the US Treasury, Putin is a corrupt man](#).
5. According to George Soros, [Putin wants the “disintegration of the EU” and Russia is a bigger threat than the Jihadis](#).
6. Russia is so scary that [the Pentagon wants to quadruple the money for the defense of Europe](#).
7. The [Putin is strengthening ISIS in Syria](#) and [causing a wave of refugees](#).

There is no need to continue the list – you get the idea. It is really Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Libya all over again, with the exact same “humanitarian crocodile tears” and the exact same rationale for an illegal aggression. And instead of Sarajevo “martyr city besieged by Serbian butchers” we would now have Aleppo “martyr city besieged by Syrian butchers”. I even

expect a series of false flags inside Aleppo next “proving” that “the world” “must act” to “prevent a genocide”.

The big difference, of course, is that Yugoslavia, Serbia, Iraq and Libya were all almost defenseless against the AngloZionist Empire. Not so Russia.

In purely military terms, Russia has taken a number of crucial steps: she declared a large scale “verification” of the “combat readiness” of the Southern and Central military districts. In practical terms, this means that all the Russian forces are on high alert, especially the AeroSpace forces, the Airborne Forces, the Military Transportation Aviation forces and, of course, all [the Russian forces in Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet](#). The first practical effect of such “exercises” is not only to make a lot of forces immediately available, but it is also to make them very difficult to track. This not only protects the mobilized forces, but also makes it very hard for the enemy to figure out what exactly they are doing. There are also report that Russian Airborne Warning and Control (AWACS) aircraft - A-50M - are now regularly flying over Syria. In other words, Russia has taken the preparations needed to go to war with Turkey.

Needless to say, the [Turks and the Saudis have also announced joint military exercises](#). They have even announced that [Saudi aircraft will conduct airstrikes from the Incirlik air base in support of an invasion of Syria](#).

At the same time, [the Russians have also launched a peace initiative](#) centered around a general ceasefire starting on March 1st or even, according to the latest leaks, on February 15th. The goal is is transparent: to break the Turkish momentum towards an invasion of Syria. It is obvious that Russian diplomats are doing everything they can to avert a war with Turkey.

Here again I have to repeat what I have said already a million times in the past: the small Russian contingent in Syria is in a very precarious position: far away from Russia and very close (45km) to Turkey. Not only that, but the Turks have over 200 combat aircraft ready to attack, whereas the Russians probably has less than 20 SU-30/35/34s in total. Yes, these are very advanced aircraft, of the 4++ generation, and they will be supported by S-400 systems, but the force ratio remains a terrible 1:10.

Russia does, however, have one big advantage over Turkey: Russia has plenty of long-range bombers, armed with gravity bombs and cruise missiles, capable of striking the Turks anywhere, in Syria and in Turkey proper. In fact, Russia even has the capability to strike at [Turkish airfields](#), something which the Turks cannot prevent and something which they cannot retaliate in kind for. The big risk for Russia, at this point, would be that NATO would interpret this as a Russian “aggression” against a member-state, especially if the (in)famous [Incirlik air base is hit](#).

Erdogan also has to consider another real risk: that, while undoubtedly proficient, the Turkish forces might not be a match for the battle-hardened Kurds and Syrians, especially if the latter are supported by Iranian and Hezbollah forces. The Turks have a checkered record against the Kurds whom they typically do overwhelm with firepower and numbers, but whom they never succeeded in neutralizing, subduing or eliminating. Finally, there is the possibility that Russians might have to use their ground forces, especially if the task force in Khmeimim is really threatened.

In this regard, let me immediately say that the projection of, say, an airborne force so far from the Russian border to protect a small contingent like the one in Khmeimim is not something the Airborne Forces are designed for, at least not “by the book”. Still, in theory, if faced with a possible attack on the Russian personnel in Khmeimin, the Russians could decide to land a regimental-size airborne force, around 1,200 men, fully mechanized, with armor and artillery. This force could be supplemented by a Naval Infantry battalion with up to another 600 men. This might not seem like much in comparison to the alleged 18,000 men Erdogan has massed at the border, but keep in mind that only a part of these 18,000 would be available for any ground attack on Khmeimin and that the [Russian Airborne forces can turn even a much larger force into hamburger meat](#) (for a look at modern Russian Airborne forces please see [here](#)). Frankly, I don’t see the Turks trying to overrun Khmeimin, but any substantial Turkish ground operation will make such a scenario at least possible and Russian commanders will not have the luxury of assuming that Erdogan is sane, not after the shooting down of the SU-24. After that the Russians simply have to assume the worst.

What is clear is that in any war between Russia and Turkey NATO will have to make a key decision: is the alliance prepared to go to war with a nuclear power like Russia to protect a lunatic like Erdogan? It is hard to imagine the US/NATO doing something so crazy but, unfortunately, wars always have the potential to very rapidly get out of control. Modern military theory has developed many excellent models of escalation but, unfortunately, no good model of how de-escalation could happen (at least not that I am aware of). How does one de-escalate without appearing to be surrendering or at least admitting to being the weaker side?

The current situation is full of dangerous and unstable asymmetries: the Russian task force in Syria is small and isolated and it cannot protect Syria from NATO or even from Turkey, but in the case of a full-scale war between Russia and Turkey, Turkey has no chance of winning, none at all. In a conventional war opposing NATO and Russia I personally don’t see either side losing (whatever ‘losing’ and ‘winning’ mean in this context) without engaging nuclear weapons first. This suggests to me that the US cannot allow Erdogan to attack the Russian task force in Syria, not during a ground invasion and, even less so, during an attempt to establish a no-fly zone.

The problem for the USA is that it has no good option to achieve its overriding goal in Syria: to “prevent Russia from winning”. In the delusional minds of the AngloZionist rulers, Russia is just a “regional power” which cannot be allowed to defy the “indispensable nation”. And yet, Russia is doing exactly that both in Syria and in the Ukraine and Obama’s entire Russia policy is in shambles. Can he afford to appear so weak in an election year? Can the US “deep state” let the Empire be humiliated and its weakness exposed?

The latest news strongly suggests to me that the White House has taken the decision to let Turkey and Saudi Arabia invade Syria. [Turkish officials are openly saying that an invasion is imminent](#) and that the goal of such an invasion would be to [reverse the Syrian army gains along the border and near Aleppo](#). The latest reports are also suggesting that [the Turks have begun shelling Aleppo](#). None of that could be happening without the full support of CENTCOM and the White House.

The Empire has apparently concluded that Daesh is not strong enough to overthrow Assad, at least not when the Russian AeroSpace forces are supporting him, so it will now unleash the Turks and the Saudis in the hope of changing the outcome of this war or, if that is not possible, to carve up Syria into ‘zones of responsibility’ - all under the pretext of fighting

Daesh, of course.

The Russian task force in Syria is about to be very seriously challenged and I don't see how it could deal with this new threat by itself. I very much hope that I am wrong here, but I have to admit that [a *real* Russian intervention in Syria might happen after all](#), with [MiG-31s and all](#). In fact, in the next few days, we are probably going to witness a dramatic escalation of the conflict in Syria.

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