



RUSSIA SEETHES ON SIDELINES AS WEST PREPARES SYRIA ACTIONS



August 29, 2013 VOAnews.com reported: "Russia's navy announced Thursday it is sending two warships into the Eastern Mediterranean near the shores of Syria. At the same time, Russia's state-controlled TV showed President Vladimir Putin 6,000 kilometers to the east, touring flooded farmland in Siberia.

All week long, Russia's president has publicly kept quiet on Syria. He is leaving his aides to do the talking as Western powers prepare to punish President Bashar al-Assad for apparently gassing inhabitants of a Damascus suburb last week. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin tweeted: "The West behaves like a monkey with a grenade in the Islamic world."

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was more diplomatic about Western intervention in Syria's civil war.

"If somebody thinks that by bombing the Syrian military infrastructure and leaving the battlefield for the opponents of the regime to win, they will end it - it is an illusion," Lavrov said Monday at a press conference here. "Even if they win in such a way, the civil war will continue. Those who represented the government side will simply become the opposition."

Russian analysts say that one or two days of punishing air strikes will not turn the tide of a war that already has cost 100,000 lives."..."

AP SOURCES: INTELLIGENCE ON WEAPONS NO 'SLAM DUNK'

August 29, 2013 The Associated Press reported: "The intelligence linking Syrian President Bashar Assad or his inner circle to an alleged chemical weapons attack that killed at least 100 people is no "slam dunk," with questions remaining about who actually controls some of Syria's chemical weapons stores and doubts about whether Assad himself ordered the strike, U.S. intelligence officials say.

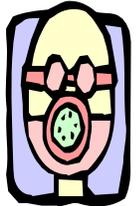
President Barack Obama declared unequivocally Wednesday that the Syrian government was responsible, while laying the groundwork for an expected U.S. military strike.

"We have concluded that the Syrian government in fact carried these out," Obama said in an interview with "NewsHour" on PBS. "And if that's so, then there need to be international consequences."..."

AS U.S., ALLIES WEIGH STRIKE ON SYRIA, NERVOUS ISRAELIS RUSH FOR GAS MASKS

August 28, 2013 washingtonpost.com reported: "A shortage of gas masks caused a mini-melee among panicky moms pushing strollers here Wednesday, as Israelis prepared for possible U.S. airstrikes against Syria that could trigger retaliatory attacks inside Israel.

At a post office distribution center in the Hadar Mall in West Jerusalem, Israelis pushed through yellow security tape and clawed into boxes containing the government-issued kits. Postal authority spokeswoman Maya Avishai described the scene as "a brutal onslaught" against law and order, and police were called to calm the crowd.



Jamie Schwed, mother of a newborn, was frustrated to find all the gas masks already distributed. "They warned us of a possible attack, and they run out of masks? It's ridiculous," she said.

Officials reported a surge in inquiries, deliveries and people lining up for the free kits, as the United States and its Western allies gathered support for a strike on Syria in retaliation for last week's alleged poison gas attack outside Damascus. The Syrian government denies responsibility for the attack, which killed hundreds, including many women and children."..."

SYRIA VOWS 'SURPRISE' AGAINST WESTERN MILITARY STRIKE

August 28, 2013 Voice of America News reported: "Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem is vowing to strike back at any Western military attack with what he calls 'surprise' defenses. Moallem on Tuesday said Syria is hearing war drums. He said the West is using allegations of chemical weapons as an excuse to attack. He again denied that the Syrian government has used such weapons, and he challenged the United States and its European allies to show evidence.

Because of security concerns Tuesday, United Nations investigators postponed their visit to another Damascus suburb where chemical weapons apparently were used. Snipers fired at a U.N. car during a stop in Moadamiyeh Monday. No one was hurt and the Syrian government and rebels blamed each other for the gunfire.

The United States says there is no doubt Bashar al-Assad's military dropped chemical weapons on four Damascus suburbs last week, killing hundreds including entire families in their homes. U.S. officials say President Barack Obama's decision on a response could come within days.

But it is not just the West condemning Syria. The Arab League meeting in Cairo is blaming the Assad government for the attack and is demanding that those responsible be put on trial..."

IRANIAN OFFICIAL: ISRAEL TO BE 'FIRST VICTIM' OF U.S. ATTACK ON SYRIA

August 27, 2013 freebeacon.com reported: "A senior Iranian lawmaker said Israel would be the first casualty of any U.S.-led strike on Syria, according to regional media reports.

Hossein Sheikholeslam, the director general of the Iranian parliament's International Affairs bureau, claimed the United States would not dare attack Syria but said that if it does, "the Zionist regime will be the first victim."

"No military attack will be waged against Syria," Sheikholeslam was quoted as saying on Monday by Iran's state run Fars News Agency.

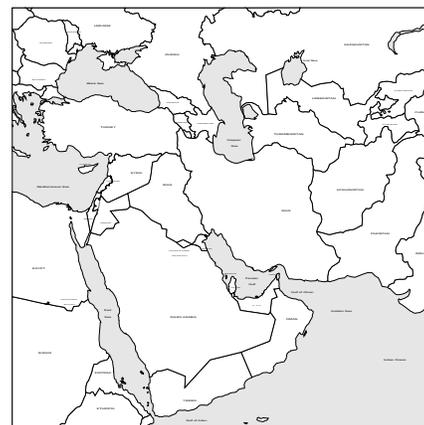
"Yet, if such an incident takes place, which is impossible, the Zionist regime will be the first victim of a military attack on Syria," Sheikholeslam said in an apparent response to the Obama administration's increasingly stern rhetoric against Syria.

Iran has been one of embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's chief allies. It has sent Hezbollah reinforcements to battle rebel forces and acted as Assad's chief defender in the Middle East."

Sheikholeslam said Assad would immediately respond to a U.S. attack by going after the Jewish state with the full force of his military. Syria can "heavily attack and raze the occupied territories," Fars reported him as saying.

Another senior Iranian lawmaker said on Monday that the U.S. military is not prepared to handle an operation in Syria. Mohammad Esmayeeli, a member of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, claimed Washington is not ready for any new military invasion.

He said that if the Obama administration does decide to launch an attack, Moscow will support Damascus."..."



AL-QAIDA MUSLIMS DECLARE WAR ON HEZBOLLAH MUSLIMS

August 26, 2013 WND.com reports: "A car bomb explosion in the Shiite Hezbollah stronghold Dahiyeh in south Beirut that killed at least 18 people and wounded some 340 may be the beginning of a new round of Shiite-Sunni sectarian violence in Lebanon and shows al-Qaida has declared war on the Iranian-backed group, according to report from Joseph Farah's G2 Bulletin.

The impact of this attack in a Hezbollah high security area may well prompt the resistance group, which the United States and Israel regard as a terrorist organization, to confront directly the al-Qaida-affiliated group al-Nusra. The result could become urban warfare in Beirut and the surrounding area.

Jabhat al-Nusra is linked to the armed Syrian opposition seeking to topple the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Hezbollah and Iran back the embattled Syrian president and have sent fighters to assist the Syrian military to roll back the opposition.

In response, al-Nusra had threatened to send fighters into Lebanon to attack areas controlled by Hezbollah..."

NAVY READY TO LAUNCH FIRST STRIKE ON SYRIA

August 25, 2013 The Telegraph reported: "Britain is planning to join forces with America and launch military action against Syria within days in response to the gas attack believed to have been carried out by President Bashar al-Assad's forces against his own people.

Royal Navy vessels are being readied to take part in a possible series of cruise missile strikes, alongside the United States, as military commanders finalise a list of potential targets.

Government sources said talks between the Prime Minister and international leaders, including Barack Obama, would continue, but that any military action that was agreed could begin within the next week.

As the preparations gathered pace, William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, warned that the world could not stand by and allow the Assad regime to use chemical weapons against the Syrian people "with impunity". Britain, the US and their allies must show Mr Assad that to perpetrate such an atrocity "is to cross a line and that the world will respond when that line is crossed", he said.

British forces now look likely to be drawn into an intervention in the Syrian crisis after months of deliberation and international disagreement over how to respond to the bloody two-year civil war. The possibility of such intervention will provoke demands for Parliament to be recalled this week."..."

LEW TELLS CONGRESS TREASURY TO HIT DEBT LIMIT IN MID-OCTOBER

August 26, 2013 bloomberg.com reported: "The U.S. will hit the \$16.7 trillion debt ceiling in mid-October, Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew said in a letter urging Congress to raise the limit "as soon as possible."

"Extraordinary measures are projected to be exhausted in the middle of October," Lew said in the letter today to House Speaker John Boehner and other lawmakers..."..."

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