

Global Showdown Goes Into Deadly New Phase

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Dec. 2—The Obama Administration national security team has been closeted this weekend, working out final details of the next-phase escalation in the NATO drive to overthrow the Bashar al-Assad government in Syria. On the table, according to several senior U.S. intelligence officials privy to the deliberations, are the formal recognition of the opposition Syrian National Council as the only sovereign representative of the Syrian people—a move already taken by Britain and France; escalation of non-lethal assistance, including upgraded military intelligence on the deployments of the Syrian armed forces; lethal military aid; and direct U.S. and/or NATO military involvement.

While the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff remain adamantly opposed to any direct U.S. military engagement, a back-door approach to a replay of the overthrow of Libya's Muammar Qaddafi is already on the agenda. Turkey's request for NATO Patriot III missile batteries and AWACS surveillance aircraft is to be formally considered by the North Atlantic Council, the policy-making body of NATO, in the next several days; and a decision to deploy is all but certain. The deployment of Patriot III batteries, which are capable of striking incoming ballistic missiles and fighter planes, is tantamount to the creation of a no-fly zone over northern Syria. And that is an act of war, which, by bypassing the United Nations Security Council, represents a severe breach of international law that Russia and China cannot and will not accept.

Indeed, Lyndon LaRouche warned in a Nov. 30 webcast, that the pending NATO actions in Turkey

bring the world to the very brink of global showdown against Russia and China, and that potentially means a thermonuclear war of extinction in the not-too-distant future.

Moscow's Message

Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev was dispatched to Paris last week for two days of meetings with French President François Hollande and top French security officials. Medvedev gave extensive interviews to the major French media prior to his arrival in Paris, and warned that the actions of France and Britain in endorsing the Syrian opposition as the sole sovereign entity were acts of defiance of international law that could not be tolerated by Russia.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who will join the NATO foreign ministers in Brussels on Dec. 4, reiterated Moscow's point of view, including the lessons of the Soviet Union's experience, in a speech Dec. 1 in Moscow: According to the Russian news agency Itar-Tass, Lavrov said:

“Russia is not opposing Western influence by putting a stick in the spokes of Western-initiated projects out of spite. The fact is, advancing democracy through iron and blood just does not work, and this has been made clear in recent months—the past year-and-a-half,” an obvious reference to the Syrian uprising. He added that “in most cases it produces the opposite reaction,” and leads to “the strengthening of extremists and repressive forces, decreasing the chances of real democratic change.”

“What is worrying is that at times of crisis, one is tempted to resort to military methods. Some of our partners find these methods suitable. No one knows, in the end, what will happen in the Middle East, including Syria.”

Beyond the immediate issue of the drive to bring down the Assad government in Damascus, the basing of Patriots and AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) in Turkey is part of a larger redeployment of NATO forces for out-of-area deployments into Africa, the Persian Gulf, and even South Asia. In addition to the deployment of the weapons systems to Turkey, NATO also announced last week that the NATO Land Force, currently deployed in Spain and Germany, will now be consolidated into a single Land Force—to be headquartered in Turkey.

The message to Moscow could not be clearer. NATO officials briefing reporters on the planned redeployment of the Land Force pointed out that the force will now be positioned between the Persian Gulf and Russia’s southern borders.

The accelerated drive to overthrow the Assad government by a foreign-backed military force is the leading edge of a broader showdown, which includes plans for regime-change in Iran as well. It is anticipated that, within the next 30 days, a new round of P5+1 (UN Security Council Permanent Five plus Germany) talks with Iran will take place. An International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team is also scheduled to be in Tehran this coming week, to tighten the pressure on the Iranian government to make major concessions, or face an escalation.

At a forum in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 28, Carter Administration National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski warned against military action against Iran, declaring that it would lead to global instability and war. Nevertheless, barring a diplomatic breakthrough in the next several rounds of negotiations by the P5+1 and Iran, the war drums will be beating louder and louder, going into the Spring of 2013. The forward basing of NATO forces into Turkey is directed as much against Iran as it is against Syria. The ultimate targets, however, are two major thermonuclear powers, Russia and China.

The Rice Question

One measure of just how committed President Obama is to confrontation with Russia and China will be his decision, expected within days or weeks, of who

will replace Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State in his second term. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, a de facto British agent, who is extremely close to Obama, has taken the point in pushing the Administration’s hard line against Russia and China at the UN Security Council, in defense of the pre-emptive war policy of the White House.

Rice is facing heavy opposition, particularly among Republicans, for the role she played in spreading disinformation on the Sept. 11, 2012 al-Qaeda attack on Benghazi which killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three others. Republican Senators John McCain (Ariz.), Lindsey Graham (S.C.) and Kelly Ayotte (N.H.) met with Rice last week, and came out of the meeting more dissatisfied with her than before. Sen. Susan Collins (R-Me.), a moderate Republican who frequently works with Democratic colleagues, delivered a further blow to Rice’s nomination by saying that she, too, was unsatisfied with the answers that she received from Rice in their 75-minute meeting on Nov. 27.

If President Obama goes ahead with the Rice nomination, it will be a clear act of defiance.

McCain has proposed the creation of a Congressional select committee to fully probe the Benghazi tragedy. In an interview on CBS-TV Nov. 25, the Senator focused on Obama’s role in the failure to provide advance security to the endangered Benghazi and Tripoli diplomatic posts, even after there had been two bombing attacks on the Benghazi mission, and an ambush of the British ambassador while he was visiting Benghazi in June 2012. He also pointed out that Obama had told the same lies about the alleged spontaneous mob attack on Benghazi on 9/11 during his speech before the UN General Assembly on Sept. 25, at a point that it was already clear that the attack had been a premeditated assault by al-Qaeda affiliates.

The key question is whether a sufficient number of Members of Congress from both the Republican and Democratic parties will take their Constitutional responsibilities seriously and act against Obama’s abuses of power.

LaRouche warned, in discussions with colleagues on Dec. 1, that if Obama feels that he is being boxed in and facing impeachment, he may go for world war. Despite this, the *only* durable war-avoidance option in the short-term is for the President to be removed from office by impeachment. So long as he remains in office, unchecked, the prospects of war in the immediate months ahead are grave.