

War Danger Escalates on Syrian-Turkish Border

Special to EIR

Oct. 9—“This is how to incite a third world war,” said Turkish parliamentarian Muharrem Ince from the opposition Republican People’s Party, in response to the resolution passed by the Turkish Parliament Oct. 4. The Turkish government had passed a bill authorizing the conducting of operations inside Syria, after shelling from northern Syria had killed five Turkish nationals. The Turks had also gone to NATO, where they received a statement of support under Article 4 of its Charter.

As of this writing, events on the ground strongly support Ince’s evaluation. The danger of a regional or global war erupting over ongoing crises in the Middle East has grown, with exchanges of mortar fire between Turkish and Syrian troops across the border. After the initial killing Oct. 4, the Turkish Army retaliated by firing on Syrian Army positions near the border, and several follow-on incidents have occurred over the last six days.

Already, both U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, and Russian President Vladimir Putin have acted to try to cool down the crisis, by communicating with the Turks, in particular. Should the Turks esca-

late, and try to invoke the common defense clause of its NATO partners, the situation would be ripe for a confrontation between NATO, and Syria’s military ally Russia, sooner or later, particularly because this conflict is only one reflection of the escalating global confrontation between the British-Saudi-Obama crowd on one side, and Russia and China on the other.

As Russian government officials have consistently pointed out, the policy of the U.S. and its NATO and



Turkish military

Exchanges of mortar fire between Turkish and Syrian troops across their border have increased the danger of a regional, or even global war. Here, Turkish tanks on the border with Syria, Oct. 10.

Gulf allies, particularly in pursuit of “regime change” policies in violation of the fundamental United Nations principles of respect for national sovereignty, has created both a degree of global instability, and a challenge to Russia’s national security, which, if it continues, will lead to a potential “thermonuclear winter.” From Syria, to Iran, to Eastern Europe, to the Asia-Pacific, tensions are rising, strictly due to the British Empire’s intention to wipe out all challengers to its global hegemony, by war if necessary. And Russia and China will *not* submit.



Year-End Deadline?

No one, however, should be confused into thinking that the British war drive is a long-term process. Lyndon LaRouche has recently stressed that the hyperinflationary blowout of the world economy has set a boundary condition for the empire, after which it could not pursue its thermonuclear confrontation with Russia and China. The crisis, LaRouche emphasized, is coming in the immediate months ahead, before Christmas—and has to be stopped now by the removal of Obama, and the installation of a policy of positive cooperation between the U.S., Russia, and China on the common aims of mankind.

The Facts Are Not Clear

Senior U.S. military sources have voiced skepticism about the role of the Syrian Army in the initial mortar incident, pointing to the fact that Free Syrian Army (FSA) rebels, operating in the same border region, possess the same 120 mm mortars, and have actually posted videos on YouTube, showing the relevant weapons. One of the sources emphasized that the situation on the border, as a result, is “precarious.”

One senior retired U.S. military expert, Col. Patrick Lang, posted a series of questions on his widely followed website, suggesting that the Syrian Army leaders that he knew would not provoke a potential NATO intervention by such an obvious cross-border provocation.

On Oct. 6, Russia Today (RT) noted that one of its correspondents reported that the shelling is originating from areas of Syria that are controlled by rebel forces, “which prompts some observers to speculate that the rebels are trying to provoke their ally Turkey into a military intervention against the government of Bashar al

Assad.” Even the *New York Times* admitted, in its coverage of the Oct. 3 incident, that “it was unclear” who fired the mortar shells.

London-based journalist Afshin Rattansi told RT that these border incidents, and the rhetoric they generate could trigger World War III. “Turkey is a NATO member. NATO says it will defend any NATO member. If Turkey continues like this, Syria might see itself getting increasingly desperate and relate with full force,” Rattansi said. “Then it is up to the US and Britain and European NATO allies just to figure out what to do.”

What needs to happen instead, Rattansi proposed, is a peace conference, but since the UN and the Arab League have both proved useless, “It is up to China and Russia because they are the only people stopping a full-scale war that will only help forces such as Al Qaeda.” Russia, in fact, called on Turkey Oct. 5 to exercise restraint and to avoid any actions that would increase tensions with Syria. “We express the hope that the Turkish side will show restraint and will not take any steps that would lead to further aggravation of the situation,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. On Oct. 8, President Putin himself called Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan.

Whatever the truth about the incident, the exchange of mortar fire has created a crisis. Meanwhile, the prospects of any advances by the armed rebels has greatly diminished in recent weeks, as the Syrian Army delivered a serious blow to the rebels in the second “battle for Aleppo.” The FSA now openly admits that there are no longer defectors from the Syrian Army coming over to their side; and after the U.S. military expressed concern about the growing clout of jihadis in the opposition, particularly following the killing of U.S. Amb.

Christopher Stevens in Benghazi, Libya on Sept. 11, the London *Independent* and other news outlets report that the flow of weapons and funds to the rebels has been temporarily halted.

Under these circumstances, suspicions have been raised that the incident along the Turkish-Syrian border could be a ploy to help set up outside intervention. At the recent UN General Assembly session, and during a meeting of the Friends of Syria war coalition on the sidelines, there was immense pressure from British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President François Hollande for the U.S. to initiate a no-fly zone. At a recent Capitol Hill press conference, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson (USA ret.), who had served as chief of staff to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, warned that such a no-fly zone would trigger a much larger war. Russia, he stated, would provide Syria with advanced air defense systems, and American fighter planes patrolling the no-fly zone would likely be shot down.

Persian Gulf Tensions

The situation in the nearby Persian Gulf region also remains on a hair-trigger, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu still contemplates an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. A recent article in *Foreign Policy* by historian Mark Perry, spelling out details of Israel's war options against Iran, has further spotlighted the danger of an Israeli unilateral attack, but the danger is still present that Netanyahu will order the attack, even before the Nov. 6 U.S. Presidential elections.

Highlighting the continuing danger, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates has given a series of high-visibility speeches, in which he has warned of the "catastrophic consequences" of an Israeli or American attack on Iran. Among the consequences he pointed to: an Iranian rush to get a nuclear bomb, and an asymmetric retaliation against both Israeli and American targets in the region and around the globe, leading to a larger war.

Meanwhile, the Obama Administration continues to indicate its intention to escalate the conflict with Iran, by proposing intensified sanctions, in hopes of starving or destabilizing the country into submission. On Oct. 5, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement declaring that the sanctions were creating a humanitarian disaster in Iran—similar to that created by years of sanctions against Iraq (although he did not make that comparison). The reality, as leading military experts know, is that sanctions do constitute war against populations, and only lessen the chances for any negotiated

settlement on the issue of alleged nuclear weapons development.

Perhaps the height of lunacy was reached Oct. 9, when U.S. "commentator" David Rothkopf wrote in an article in *Foreign Policy* that the Obama Administration is considering working with Israel to carry out a military strike against Iran before the elections. Rothkopf said the policy's advocates believe that it would set back Tehran's nuclear program, while being "more politically palatable" within the United States. Regional benefits would include "saving Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, reanimating the peace process, securing the Gulf, sending an unequivocal message to Russia and China, and assuring American ascendancy in the region for a decade to come."

Many Theaters of Potential War

In the Asia-Pacific region, a conflict over disputed islands in the East China Sea between Japan and China has escalated in the past week as well. In response, the U.S. Navy dispatched two aircraft carriers to the area, the *USS Eisenhower* and the *USS Stennis*, along with Marine amphibious teams. China is already wary that the U.S. "Asia pivot" is actually a military plan to contain China, in partnership with Japan, South Korea, and other neighbors. The North Korean government has warned that any escalation of U.S. military involvement in the area could lead to thermonuclear war.

In the aftermath of the Benghazi attacks of 9/11/12, there are also increasing reports that the Obama Administration is building up military assets in Africa, including new drone bases for counter-terror operations. African diplomats have expressed fear that Obama is planning an African "October Surprise," possibly, a commando and drone assault on the terrorists alleged to have been behind the killing of Ambassador Stevens and three other American personnel. The situation in Mali is also reaching a crisis point, with al-Qaeda-aligned separatists, who are heavily armed by the weapons that were grabbed from the Qaddafi stockpiles following his overthrow and murder (see following article).

The intensity of military deployments, combined with the escalating frictions in the Persian Gulf, eastern Mediterranean, and Africa all point to an increased danger of war. This coincides with the panic on the part of the Obama camp over his diminishing prospects of winning the Nov. 6 elections, and the escalating financial crisis in Europe, both of which put the imperial war drive on a fast track.