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No-fly zone over Syria an act of war that would carry risks: US general

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NATO's top military chief, General Philip Breedlove has warned that imposing a no-fly zone over Syria would be an "act of war" and carry grave risks.

"It would absolutely be harder than Libya," he said, referring to NATO's 2011 air strikes in Libya that dragged on for eight months. "This is a much denser, much more capable defense system than we'd faced in Libya."

Any effort to dismantle Syria's air defenses to set up a no-fly zone would be synonymous to a declaration of war, Gen. Breedlove said.

"It is quite frankly an act of war and it is not a trivial matter," said Breedlove, a four-star American general who was recently appointed as NATO's new supreme allied commander.

Earlier it was reported that the White House was considering "all options" in Syria, asking the Pentagon to draw up the plan for a no-fly zone.

Gen. Breedlove, however, noted that NATO is not engaged in any official war planning for Syria now, but added commanders were contemplating what would be required if NATO were called upon.

The four-star general dismissed a widespread perception that setting up a no-fly zone would simply mean sending in a few aircraft.

“I know it sounds stark, but what I always tell people when they talk to me about a no-fly zone is ... it’s basically to start a war with that country because you are going to have to go in and kinetically take out their air defense capability,” Breedlove said.

A new opinion poll by Gallup showed an overwhelming majority of Americans say the United States government should avoid taking any military action in Syria.

68 percent of the U.S. citizens are against any U.S. military involvement in Syria even if diplomatic and economic efforts fail to resolve the two-year old conflict, the poll found.

As Washington has been toying with the idea of establishing a no-fly zone over Syria, critics stress that the term is merely a “euphemism” for military involvement.

“It is an ominous development because ‘no-fly zone’ is really a euphemism for attacking a nation,” Dr. Kevin Barret, a renowned critic of U.S. wars, said in an interview with Press TV’s U.S. Desk.

“We’ve seen this in other countries. We’ve seen it, for example, in Libya where the so-called no-fly zone was actually an excuse to bomb and attack Libya and overthrow its government,” Barret explained.

“If the U.S. actually did try to impose a no-fly zone over Syria, it would be risking a direct confrontation with Russia as well as Syria,” Barret said.

Damascus has repeatedly said that the crisis, which started in March 2011, is being engineered from outside the country. On May 18, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said militants from 29 different countries were fighting against his government in different parts of the country.