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## Engineering Potential Disaster in Syria

By Stephen Lendman

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The old saying goes be careful what you wish for. You may get more than you bargained for. Washington's wars often don't turn out as planned.

Middle East, North African, Eurasian countries are embroiled in conflict. No end game looms. Unresolved conflicts continue. Escalation's likely.

US-sponsored death squads infest the region. They commit mass murder and destruction.

Official silence followed Al Nusra militants massacring 450 Kurdish civilians. The mainstream media reported nothing. Mostly women and children were slaughtered. Assad's often blamed for terrorist crimes.

Syria's infested with extremist fighters. They've come from dozens of countries. They want Islamofascist rule. They want it in all or part of the Syria.

On August 6, the Wall Street Journal headlined "CIA Official Calls Syria Top Threat to US Security," saying:

CIA's "second-in-command warned that Syria's volatile mix of al Qaeda extremism and civil war now poses the greatest threat to US national security."

“Michael Morell says the risk is that the Syrian government, which possesses chemical and other advanced weapons, collapses and the country becomes al Qaeda’s new haven, supplanting Pakistan.”

“His forecast is all the more worrisome because it comes from a top official.”

“I don’t remember a time when there have been so many national-security issues on the front burner as there are today,” he said.

He calls Syria his top concern. “It’s probably the most important issue in the world today because of where it is currently heading.”

It’s infested with foreign fighters. They’re involved with Al Qaeda-affiliated groups. They’re in greater numbers than in Iraq during “the height of the war there.”

Regional spillover’s likely. It’s happening in Lebanon. Low-level conflict threatens to increase. Jordan’s at risk. So is Israel. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and other Gulf states may get a taste of their own medicine.

According to Executive Intelligence Review’s Lawrence Freeman:

Al Qaeda’s “virtually in control of (Libya), and we’ve created a monster that is out of control except if you recognize that that’s the intention.”

Syria’s “a continuation of the Libyan operation. (If) regime change policy” continues, “more death and destruction and possibly war with Russia” will follow.

“(W)e could see massive chaos throughout the entire Middle East and Persian Gulf region and most dangerously a direct military conflict with Russia.”

Sovereign Libya doesn’t exist. Militias run things. It’s “the closest thing (to) a country run by Al Qaeda.”

Recent political assassinations killed dozens. Victims include Gaddafi supporters, political activists, judges, security agency members, and others.

Benghazi and Darna are hard hit. No one claimed responsibility. So-called Libyan governance is in name only. Large parts of the country are a cauldron of violence.

Gun battles, bombings, and assassinations happen multiple times daily. Libya’s in crisis. It’s close to anarchy.

In late July, car bombs targeted government security officials in Benghazi. Army protection force head Ahmed al-Barnawi was killed.

Tripoli’s Radisson Blu hotel was targeted. A powerful car bomb exploded outside. A rocket narrowly missed the Corinthia hotel. A grenade struck the UAE ambassador’s residence.

In late June, CNN reported fear and panic in Tripoli. Days of clashes caused dozens of casualties. Sounds of gunfire and explosions echoed across the city.

“An armed group attacked the headquarters of the Petroleum Facilities Protection Guard (PFG) in the Salaheddin district of the capital.”

“Tripoli’s Supreme Security Committee (SSC)” was attacked. Car bomb explosions caused casualties in other cities. It bears repeating. Libya’s a cauldron of violence.

On June 1, The New York Times headlined “As Syrians Fight, Sectarian Strife Infects the Mideast,” saying:

“Renewed sectarian killing has brought the highest death toll in Iraq in five years.” Daily car bombings rock the country. Baghdad’s especially hard hit.

America’s imperial legacy reflects violence, mass slaughter, instability, and unconscionable misery and pain.

“Young Iraqi scholars at a Shiite Muslim seminary volunteer to fight Sunnis in Syria,” said The Times.

“Far to the west, in Lebanon, clashes have worsened between opposing sects in the northern city of Tripoli.”

Beirut and other areas are affected. Syria’s conflict is contagious. It reignited Sunni/Shiite tensions. It’s rocking the region. Ordinary people pay the price of imperial arrogance.

Turmoil rocks Egypt. Millions reject coup d’etat rule. Civil war’s possible. Scores, perhaps hundreds, died. Violence threatens to increase. Democracy’s a figure of speech.

Ousting Mubarak accomplished nothing. Junta power rules. Revolutionary fever grips the country. Perhaps it’ll spin out of control. Maybe Al Qaeda and other extremist elements will get involved.

Egypt’s the region’s most important country. So far, it’s military manages to keep things under control. Imagine if Egypt replicates Libya. Imagine the entire region that way.

Assassinating key opposition leader Mohamed Brahmi threatens to unravel Tunisia. In December 2010, revolutionary spirit began there. People haven’t forgotten.

Major issues remain unaddressed. Things are as bad or worse than under Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. It’s the same throughout the region. It’s in crisis. People take so much.

Once red line threshold pain is crossed, anything is possible. Tunisians want their Islamist-dominated government replaced.

Bahrainis keep protesting for justice. Human rights keep deteriorating. Prominent defenders are imprisoned. Ruthless crackdowns continue.

Washington supports the worst of what’s going on. So Does Britain. David Cameron welcomed King Hamad. He’s a ruthless despot. It doesn’t matter.

They met ahead of planned pro-democracy rallies. King Hamad banned them. He escalated crackdowns. People protest anyway. Freedom’s too precious to sacrifice. Bahrainis and others are willing to die for it.

On August 7, Reuters headlined “Exclusive: Saudi offers Russia deal to scale back Assad support – sources.”

Economic incentives were offered. They include “a major arms deal and a pledge not to challenge Russian gas sales.”

“The proposed deal was set out by Saudi intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow last week,” unnamed sources said.

Bandar allegedly offered to buy up to \$15 billion worth of Russian weapons. He promised generous investments. He said whatever comes after Assad will be “completely” in Saudi hands.

It won’t sign any deal letting Gulf countries transport gas across Syria to Europe. Doing so would compete with Russia.

In 2009, Assad refused a Qatar pipeline offer. It wants one transporting Gulf oil to Europe. It wants it via Syria. Assad declined. He did so to protect Russian interests.

An unnamed Arab diplomat said “President Putin listened politely to his interlocutor and let him know that his country would not change its strategy.”

In response, Bandar said “the only option left in Syria was military and that they should forget about Geneva because the opposition would not attend.”

Bandar wants Moscow support for anti-Assad Syrian Security Council resolutions.

He wants what he won’t get. Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov couldn’t be reached for comment.

Russia supports Syrian sovereignty. An unnamed Western diplomat said he’s unlikely “to trade Moscow’s recent high profile” for an arms deal. He won’t abandon Syria for blood money.

According to Reuters, Russian officials are “skeptical that Saudi Arabia had a clear plan for stability in Syria if Assad fell.”

Moscow-based defense think tank CAST director Ruslan Pukhov has no knowledge of the offer. It may involve 150 T-90 tanks.

An order “was stopped for mysterious reasons,” he said. It’s reinstated, the Saudis likely want something in return. It “could be linked to Syria,” said Pukhov.

“If the Saudis want Moscow to outright drop Assad, they will refuse the deal, but they may have a more nuanced position, which they could possibly agree to.”

Ahram Online said “Moscow rejected a Saudi proposal to abandon (Assad for) a huge arms deal and pledge to boost Russian influence in the Arab world.”

An unnamed Syrian official said:

“As was the case before with Qatar and Lavrov (in talks), Saudi Arabia thinks that politics is a simple matter of buying people or countries.”

“It doesn’t understand that Russia is a major power and that this is not how it draws up policy.”

“Syria and Russia have had close ties for over half a century in all fields and it’s not Saudi rials that will change this fact.”

Military expert Alexander Goltz called Putin agreeing Bandar’s deal “extremely improbable.”

“Support for Assad is a matter of principle for Vladimir Putin. Even the bait of \$15 billion” won’t change things.

Security expert Andrei Soldatov said “(t)his disinformation is aimed more at destabilizing Assad and his entourage.”

His “position is growing stronger and stronger, and the Kremlin knows this. Turning against (him) in this situation would be very stupid.”

“And don’t forget that in general the Saudis take years to keep their promises.” They’re known for not doing so. They’re despots. They’re ruthless. They can’t be trusted. They’re duplicitous.

They’re close to Washington. They’re funding and arming extremist anti-Assad elements. Putin’s no fool. He won’t tolerate turning Syria into post-Gaddafi Libya 2.0.

He wants Syria freed from Western-backed death squads. So does the overwhelming majority of Syrians.

Note: Russia said nyet to Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz’s offer. Blood money was rejected.