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The Subterfuge of Syrian Chemical Weapons

By Nicola Nasser*

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The U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on this August 26 removed the sword of the alleged Syrian chemical weapons from its sheath and let the snow ball of this subterfuge for a military aggression on Syria roll unchecked, raising the stakes from asking whether "it will happen" to "when" it will happen, promising that President Barak Obama "will be making an informed decision about how" to take on Syria and warning not to make a "mistake" because Obama "believes there must be accountability," making clear that a U.S. - led military action is in the making and imminent.

A 20 - member UN independent commission of inquiry, headed by UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Angela Kane, and led by the Swedish scientist and the veteran "inspector"

for the UNSCOM and UNMOVIC inspection regimes in Iraq, Ake Sellstrom, arrived in Damascus on August 24 for a fourteen - day mission to investigate whether or not chemical weapons were used in Syria.

The fact that this UN mission is in Syria in response to an official request sent by the Syrian government to the UN Security Council on March 19, 2013 to investigate the first chemical attack, which was launched then from the positions of the U.S. - sponsored armed gangs fighting the Syrian regime on the government - held northern town of Khan al_A'ssal, as well as the fact that the U.S. for five months opposed such an investigation unless the UN adopts it as an "inspection" mission all over Syria, are self - evident enough facts to leave no doubt about the real intentions of the United States.

The timing of the reported chemical attack in the eastern suburbs of the Syrian capital on August 21 coincided first with the arrival of the UN investigators in Damascus and second with launching what the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) codenamed the "Reinforcement of the Shield of the Capital" (RSC) military operation to root out the armed gangs operating in the same area, consisting of al-Qaeda - linked Islamists, but mainly of the Jabhat al-Nusra, which the U.S. listed as a terrorist organization last December.

In view of the progress of the RSC operation, following a series of other successful operations by the SAA since their strategic breakthrough in al-Qusayr in June this year, which sealed off the borders with Lebanon through which rebels used to infiltrate, it was noteworthy that the American, French, British and German leaders as well as their Turkish, Qatari and Saudi Arabian allies demanded an immediate "ceasefire," allegedly to allow and facilitate the mission of the UN investigators; alternatively, if the RSC operation did not stop, the Syrian government was accused by them of "systematically" destroying the evidence.

The Syrian foreign minister Walid al-Muallem in his press conference in Damascus on Tuesday reiterated what his government had previously confirmed: The RSC operation will continue.

The Declared Goal

The U.S. - led threats of an imminent military action was the only option left for the western backers of the rebels in Syria; their declared goal is to stem the accelerating successes of the SAA and to return the balance of power to the status quo ante.

When the 18th Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General *Martin E. Dempsey*, before the reportedly chemical attack last week, admitted that the Syrian army was "gaining

momentum," he did not "think it'll be sustainable," not because he was drawing on the facts on the ground, but most likely because he was privy to what was in store with his co- decision makers in Washington.

Maintaining a "balance of power" on the ground is a U.S. precondition to engage in and allow negotiations to solve the Syrian conflict peacefully. The U.S. cannot co - host with Russia the repeatedly postponed Geneva - 2 peace conference on Syria unless the military status quo on the ground is deprived of the gains won by the SAA.

Therefore, the U.S. is impatient to give "enough time" to the UN investigators to finish their mission with conclusive or inconclusive evidence, as requested by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki - moon on Wednesday. The UN envoy for Syria, *al-Akhdar al-Ibrahimi*, on the same day said that the military solution of the conflict is "impossible," but his appeal for a peaceful solution fell on deaf ears in Washington, where plans are being worked out by leaps and bounds for an imminent military strike.

Such a strike would only exacerbate the conflict, which *al-Ibrahimi on August 23 said it "is undoubtedly today the biggest threat to peace and security in the world."*

Would Obama decide on military action to take place while the UN investigators are still in Syria? The U.S. disrespect of the UN has several precedents to make the answer in the positive a realistic probability.

Time will tell however, some say within days, but if it takes place it will be an insult to the United Nations and the world community that will further hurt the international credibility of the United States, which is now pressured into military action as a "face saving move" presumably to save the credibility of its leader who has drawn publicly a "red line" on the use of chemical weapons in Syria at least five times during the last year.

Obama Gives in

Obama, the former professor of constitutional law, who as recently as August 22 warned in a CNN interview that "we have to take into account considerations" like a "U.N. mandate" supported by "international law" and "clear evidence," seems ready now to strike without any respect to the three factors, which they only can give legitimacy to any U.S. - led strike against Syria.

The UN mandate and legitimacy cannot be provided by a decision taken by the NATO, which is led by the U.S. A selective "responsibility to protect" pretext for a unilateral U.S. - led

intervention militarily cannot replace the UN charter and international law. A fig leaf political approval of an attack on Syria from the Arab League, which is now no more than a U.S. rubber stamp, cannot provide Obama with any credible "Arab" justification for a war on Syria; similar approvals in Libya and Iraq were counterproductive examples. Obama cannot draw on artificial legitimacy to justify what will be no more than a flagrant violation of international law and UN charter to cover up what will be merely a bare - to - all - to - see aggression.

Moreover, Obama seems even ready to bypass a U.S. constitutional obligation to consult with and get the consent of the Congress, now in a month - long recess until September 9.

According to the Los Angeles Times on Tuesday, Rep. Scott Rigell (R-Va.) has collected nearly three dozen signatures of House members to a letter he intended to send to the White House to remind the president that military action without a congressional vote "would violate the separation of powers that is clearly delineated in the Constitution."

Obama told CNN: "Sometimes what we've seen is that folks will call for immediate action, jumping into stuff that does not turn out well, gets us mired in very difficult situations."

Writing in the Los Angeles Times on August 27, Kathleen Hennessey, Michael A. Memoli and Christi Parsons said that the poison gas attack in the suburbs of the Syrian capital on August 21 was "testing" Obama's views "as no previous crisis has done;" unfortunately Kerry announced Monday that the U.S. president has failed this test.

However, Kerry's statement in his news conference in Washington Monday, which was described by mainstream media as "emotional" and "highly charged," sounded like an official declaration that Obama had done with whatever "considerations" might prevent him from taking a decision to strike, even if he risks to get "mired in" exactly the "very difficult situations" he has been trying to avoid.

It was a declaration that Obama has at last given in to the warmongers who have been leading a media blitz that has been beating the drums of war on Syria for two and a half years now; Kerry only added "chemical fuel" to it.

Kerry Mobilizes Passive Public

On the one hand, Kerry's statement was emotionally highly charged with the intention of defusing a mounting pressure for action that was exacerbated with the reported chemical attack in the suburbs of Damascus.

On the other, its emotionality was intended as a prelude to mobilize a passive public opinion for a possible imminent military action against Syria.

Several recent polls showed that the majority of Americans oppose U.S. involvement in the Syrian conflict, let alone militarily. In this week's Reuters/Ipsos survey, only 25 percent of Americans said they would support U.S. intervention if Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces used chemicals to attack civilians, while 46 percent would oppose it. About 60 percent of Americans surveyed said the United States should not intervene in Syria's civil war, while just 9 percent thought Obama should act. A Pew Research Center poll taken June 12-16 found 70 percent of Americans opposed Obama's decision to provide arms to Syrian rebels in response to smaller-scale chemical weapons attacks there; 68 percent said the U.S. military is "too over-committed" to get involved in the Syrian conflict.

If Kerry's intention was to mount pressure on Syria, the country's foreign minister Walid al-Muallem on Tuesday declared Syria will not yield to "blackmail" and its only option is to defend itself with whatever means are available, some of which will be a "surprise," he said.

However, Kerry's statement sounded not a message to Syria per se as much as it was a message to American, European and Arab warmongers, who ever since the Syrian crisis erupted have been lobbying his administration to take action against Syria long before the first chemical attack was launched from the positions of the U.S. - sponsored armed gangs on Khan al_A'ssal five months ago.

Investigating a Forgone Conclusion

In view of the Syrian government's confirmation of the use of chemical weapons, Kerry's statement on Monday that it "is real, that chemical weapons were used in Syria," and the confirmation of their use by the Syrian so called "opposition" and its western and Arab sponsors, their use is already a forgone conclusion.

Is it not surprising and a waste of time then to send the UN independent commission of inquiry to investigate a forgone conclusion that all parties take for granted as a fact!

Kerry quoted Ban Ki - moon as saying last week that "the U.N. investigation will not determine who used these chemical weapons, only whether such weapons were used."

If the investigators' mandate is only to confirm what is already "is undeniable," in Kerry's words, why were the UN investigators stripped of the mandate of determining "who" used the chemical weapons in Syria, if not to leave it up to the U.S. & partners to decide in advance as a

prejudged conclusion that "There's no doubt who is responsible: The Syrian regime," according to Vice President Joe Biden on Wednesday, to be consistent with their plans for a regime change in Damascus, and let the truth go to hell.