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US on brink of launching war against Syria based on lies

By Bill Van Auken

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President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry laid out a case for war against Syria Friday that represented a compendium of bald-faced lies and rank hypocrisy. Their statements made clear that Washington is on the brink of launching yet another unilateral war of military aggression in violation of international law, and in direct opposition to the sentiments of both the people of the Middle East and the American public.

While both Obama and Kerry indicated that no decision has yet been taken in relation to military action against Syria, this, like everything else put out by the administration, is patently false. The US Navy has positioned a fifth warship in the Mediterranean, while Air Force units are being beefed up at the US base in Qatar for a military assault that is planned and imminent. A possible target date is September 5, with a New Moon—the same conditions chosen for launching “shock and awe” against Iraq more than a decade ago.

The entire operation is being prepared in contempt of international law, democratic processes and American public opinion. This was made abundantly clear in the presentation Kerry delivered from the State Department Friday afternoon.

He was followed shortly afterward by a perfunctory statement from Obama during a taped photo-op with three Baltic heads of state. The occasion only underscored the lack of international support for the coming US aggression, particularly in the wake of the British parliament's stunning vote to reject participation in a new war.

Obama's statement was aimed at assuring the American public that any US assault on Syria would be a "limited, narrow act" with no "boots on the ground" or "open-ended commitment." Kerry made similar promises that the Syrian intervention "will bear no resemblance to Afghanistan, Iraq or even Libya."

There is no reason to lend any credibility to these claims either. The *Washington Post* Friday carried a front-page story based on interviews with US military personnel, calling the action "very dangerous" and warning that the US could not simply fire a few cruise missiles into Damascus and walk away.

Former US Central Command chief General James Mattis was quoted as warning: "If Americans take ownership of this, this is going to be a full-throated, very, very serious war."

The article also cited Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey's warning to Congress that "Once we take action, we should be prepared for what comes next. Deeper involvement is hard to avoid."

In his televised statement, Kerry portrayed the administration as "consulting" with Congress and discussing the impending military action "directly with the American people." With the majority of the American people opposed to any military intervention and, according to the latest polls, fully 80 percent opposed to attacking Syria without a vote by Congress authorizing military action, such claims are not only false, but insulting.

As evidence of the supposed forthrightness of the Obama administration with the public, Kerry cited the release of an "unclassified estimate" produced by US intelligence on the alleged August 21 chemical weapons attack outside Damascus—the pretext chosen by Washington to justify its war.

"I'm not asking you to take my word for it," said Kerry. "Read for yourself, everyone, those listening, all of you, read for yourselves the evidence from thousands of sources."

However, anyone who reads this report, which surfaced on the Internet shortly after Kerry's speech, will find not one shred of probative evidence. The document, barely three pages long, includes a series of unsubstantiated assertions that are tailored to the US policy aim of manufacturing a pretext for direct intervention in a US-provoked civil war aimed at toppling the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad.

It is precisely the “word” of Kerry, who is as phony as his Botox face, and that of the CIA officialdom that the American people are being told to take as good coin.

The document consists of a series of assertions that begin with the words, “The United States government assesses with high confidence” and then indict the Syrian government for the alleged August 21 attack.

It makes unsupported claims about the Syrian government carrying out previous chemical weapons attacks, deploying chemical weapons personnel in advance of the attack, and discussing the attack afterwards, all without giving one piece of verifiable evidence.

It cites an unspecified “body of evidence, including past Syrian practice” to claim that the Assad regime was “witting of and directed the attack.”

It claims that the launching of the attack by the Western-backed rebels, a collection of fascistic, Al Qaeda-affiliated militias, was “highly unlikely.” This, despite the fact that the Assad regime had everything to lose from such an attack, launched on the very day that UN weapons inspectors began their work in Damascus. On the other hand, “rebels,” facing a string of military defeats and desperate for direct US military intervention on their behalf, had everything to gain.

It goes on to state, “We assess that the opposition has not used chemical weapons,” a statement that flies in the face of the boasting by Al Qaeda elements that they had such weapons and the conclusions of Carla del Ponte, a leading member of the UN commission of inquiry on Syria, who stated last May that the bulk of the evidence indicated chemical weapons use by the rebels.

“Our intelligence sources in Damascus did not detect any indications in the days prior to the attack that opposition affiliates were planning to use chemical weapons,” the report claims.

In summing up its findings, the report admits that its “assessment” falls “short of confirmation,” while promising, “We will continue to seek additional information to close gaps in our understanding of what took place.”

In other words, Washington is launching a war based on unconfirmed allegations and speculation that it has fashioned into a pretext for military aggression. Moreover, it has no interest in confirming its trumped-up charges, dismissing the investigation on the ground in Syria by UN weapons inspectors as “irrelevant,” even as they began interviewing Syrian soldiers suffering the effects of “rebel” gas attacks.

If one seriously examines the language of this report, it is clearly a crooked lawyer’s brief. The words are carefully chosen. “The United States government assesses with high confidence” that the Assad regime was responsible for the attack”—in other words, we are not sure.

It is “highly unlikely” that the Al Qaeda-led rebels carried out. Or “it’s possible.” And US intelligence assets “did not detect any indications” that the US-backed opposition forces were planning a gas attack. In other words, if you kept digging, they could be there.

One could not convict an individual of a third-rate burglary on the basis of such evidence in a US court of law, where the standard is proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Yet the United States government is proposing to use it as the justification for launching a bombardment on Damascus in which thousands will lose their lives.

Not one word of this is to be believed. If one really wanted to know what happened on that day, it would require the interrogation of the CIA, Mossad and Qatari and Saudi intelligence agents who are arming and directing the murderous operations of the anti-Assad forces and undoubtedly played the leading role in organizing the chemical weapons provocation to lay the groundwork for US military action.

Kerry’s remarks Friday only underscored that a principal qualification for the office of US Secretary of State is being a skilled liar and forger. With his aristocratic manners, Kerry reminds one of no one so much as Hitler’s foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, and the objective content of his speech consisted of a global arrogance and criminality that goes beyond that of the German Nazi regime.

One can dispense with all of Kerry’s rhetoric about the “indiscriminate, inconceivable horror of chemical weapons” and about Washington’s supposed unique mission of upholding “universal values” and “fundamental principles of the international community.”

Who is he kidding? US imperialism has the least right to preach morality in the Middle East or anywhere else on the planet. Over the past decade of war it directly killed tens of thousands Iraqis, including through the use of depleted uranium munitions and white phosphorus shells, while creating the catastrophic conditions that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands more.

What were napalm and Agent Orange, massively deployed during the war in Vietnam that claimed over 3 million lives, if not chemical weapons? And it is US imperialism alone that has employed the most horrific of weapons, the atomic bomb, killing nearly a quarter of a million Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Every war it has waged over the past period has been based on lies, from the fabricated Gulf of Tonkin incident in Vietnam to the nonexistent weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The impending war on Syria is no exception.

The claim that Washington is only carrying out a “limited” and “tailored” action is false on its face, as the CIA and the Pentagon have been involved over the past two years in fomenting a sectarian civil war and arming the Al Qaeda gangs that are tearing Syria apart. If the Obama

administration were truly interested in stopping the bloodshed than it would get the hell out of Syria and stop interfering in its affairs.

It intends to do no such thing, of course. The coming attack threatens the lives of thousands of Syrians. Significantly, Kerry described Syria's President Bashar al-Assad as a "thug and a murderer," echoing the language used to describe Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. As in their cases, US aims clearly include toppling his regime and murdering him and his family.

Stripping away the lies and demagogic, Kerry's speech outlined a US doctrine of naked aggression. US national security interests were at stake in Syria, the Secretary of State affirmed, because Assad could not be allowed to defy American dictates. If he got away with it, other countries would "believe that they can do as they will." Implicit in this warning is that the attack on Syria represents only the antechamber of a far wider war that can engulf Iran, Russia, China and the entire planet.