

Former military adviser to Colin Powell ‘skeptical’ of ‘politicized’ US intelligence on Syria

By [RT](#)

Global Research, December 09, 2012
[Russia Today](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Syria will never use chemical weapons against its own people, Lawrence Wilkerson, a retired US Army Colonel who was Chief of Staff to Colin Powell told RT. Instead, the reality is that US is “preparing the ground to intervene in Syria.”

An act which would lead to a conflict “that would take at least a decade to settle – and there aren’t going to be too many victors at the end of that decade, just losers,” Wilkerson says, as Washington’s ultimate aim is to overthrow the Iranian leadership.

Simultaneously, some members of Congress are talking about “impeachment” of the US president for not consulting Congress before involving the country in conflicts.

RT: You were Colin Powell’s chief of staff when the decision was made to invade Iraq. In 2003, Powell made a speech that laid out the case for that war. Let’s take a listen to what he said. You helped prepare that speech, and have since described it as the biggest mistake of your life. Why?

Lawrence Wilkerson: Primarily because we – to the American people, to the international community and of course to the members of the US Security Council – presented that speech... it was not accurate, it was not true, it was not valid. We did not know that, but it was not just an intelligence failure. It was also the massive politicization of intelligence by the leadership in Washington.

RT: We’re currently seeing very similar rhetoric in the US in relation to Syria. Will it end in war again?

LW: I would be highly skeptical of any of the intelligence rendered by the \$140-billion-plus US intelligence community as to weapons of mass destruction in possession of another country. Period.

RT: Syria is not signed up the chemical weapons convention, one of the seven countries that isn’t. Does that suggest perhaps that it has a reason to get signed up to it, and it does have chemical weapons?

LW: Well I’m not violating any confidence or any great prohibition in the intelligence community to tell you that we have known for years, years that Syria has chemical weapons stockpiles, just like Iraq had chemical weapons stockpiles for a while. But the fact that President Assad will be moving them around and preparing for use against his own citizens within his own territory, I frankly find preposterous.

RT: Why is it then that the US really wants to pursue this, and is using it for various reasons, not just to justify only rhetoric, but perhaps a serious talk of a military invasion?

LW: Well, Syria's question was just addressed by one of your previous commentators, and that is, why in the world would we put Patriot batteries on the Turkish border adhesively to protect Turkey with the largest and the most powerful army in the region, indeed one of the most powerful in the world? Turkey needs no protection by us against that sort of thing, and it would be utterly stupid for Assad to attack Turkey in that way. So why are we doing those things that look like they're not connected to the reality, unless the reality is that we're preparing the ground to intervene in Syria.

RT: What would be the implications if the US were to intervene in Syria? Some are saying that the fallout will be far more dramatic than what we saw in Iraq – would you agree with that?

LW: I think, if we were to intervene in a substantial way, that is to say if we were to put the troops on the ground, marines, soldiers and so forth; and we were to do in Syria what we began to do in 2003 in Iraq, I think those people are absolutely right. I think it will even be even worse than Iraq. I think, again, it will be as a backdoor into Iran, which as you know is the real threat that we have been putting out there for years now.

And I think we're looking into Syria and Iran being a combination that we would then take on – and you're talking about a conflict that becomes regional and maybe even wider, because we've got Russia, we've got China, we've got other players; as I've just mentioned, the Turks. We've got a significant interest in that region if Iran and Syria are seriously threatened by the US invasion. And I think, you're looking at a configuration that would take at least a decade to settle and there aren't going to be too many victors at the end of that decade – just losers.

RT: Can it actually afford to get involved, and is there an appetite among the American people for yet another military conflict?

LW: Absolutely not, but I'm meeting with several congressmen at the end of the week, and that is next week, and we're going to talk about this very thing. For example about Libya, the way the Libyan operation was conducted without the consultation with the US Congress at all. There are some congressmen that are so concerned about this that they're mentioning words like impeachment and so forth, because you're not supposed to take the American country to war without the permission of the Congress, the Constitution pretty much says that.

And yet we're on this track where executives start wars on their own will, and I think this is the kind of thing that is really dangerous for this republic. Iran will give this a different patina, though, because you have a Congress that is really itching to go to war with Iran. So, I think you're looking at a combination here – not just Syria, and ultimately the target is Iran.

RT: What is the answer then for Syria? Isn't some intervention justified on humanitarian grounds? In fact, that justification was given for the intervention in Libya. In fact many say that is what brought the conflict to an end, disposed of colonel Gaddafi and ended the loss of innocent lives. Can you apply the same to Syria?

LW: Well, I would differ with that resolution in Libya. Libya still has enormous problems. We

have a disconcerted Mali. We have the government being overthrown in Mali, we have Al - Qaeda operating in the North of Mali – all of that is partially a result of what we did in Libya. So, I would be very hesitant to classify Libya as a success. Syria and Iran would be classified even less as a success in my view. What you would have there, a I said, is a long-term occupation, increasing insurgency, increasing civil war-like fighting and so worth.

The answer in Syria, I think, as lamentable as the casualties are, is to let the Syrians settle the situation for the Syrians. There are a lot of Iranians on the ground fighting with Assad's forces, advising with Assad's forces. And since that is taking place, it makes better sense for us to take on Syria because we're going to encounter the Iranians in Syria if we go into Syria. But this is not the time to be doing this.

RT: Do you think rebels could dispose of Assad?

LW: I think Assad's days are numbered. I don't know what those days are, I did not think he would last through 2012, and he is apparently going to do that. He may hang on to several factions in Syria that are powerful and still with him, but I still think the best resolution for Syria is a resolution brought about by the majority of the Syrian people.

If they can get their act together to the point where the opposition, as it were, to Assad is sodded enough, it has enough good leadership to topple him, than that is what should happen. But there should be no outside assistance, and that goes for Iran too. Iran should get its people out of Syria and let Syria handle its problems by itself.

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