

# US and Allied Warships off the Syrian Coastline: Naval Deployment Was Decided “Before” the August 21 Chemical Weapons Attack

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

Global Research, September 02, 2013

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD, US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

A massive US and allied naval deployment is occurring in the Eastern Mediterranean off Syria's coastline as well as in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

While this display of military might may not be part of an immediate attack plan on Syria, it is creating an atmosphere of fear and panic within Syria.

The US Navy has deployed the USS San Antonio, an amphibious transport ship to the Eastern Mediterranean. The San Antonio is joining five US destroyers which “are already in place for possible missile strikes on Syria, a defense official said Sunday.”

The USS San Antonio, with several helicopters and hundreds of Marines on board, is “on station in the Eastern Mediterranean” but “has received no specific tasking,” said the defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. [US Navy deploys five warships, one amphibious ship to Mediterranean for Syria](#)

While the USS San Antonio has amphibious landing equipment, which can be used to land some six thousand sailors and marines, “no boots on the ground”, however, remains the official motto.

So why then has the US deployed its most advanced amphibious landing ship? The reports suggest that this is routine and there are no attack plans:

“No amphibious landing is in the works, however, as President Barack Obama has ruled out any “boots on the ground” (Ibid)



USS San Antonio

There are currently five destroyers off the coast of Syria: the USS Stout, Mahan, Ramage, Barry and Graveley, not to mention the San Antonio amphibious landing vessel.

The destroyers are equipped with Tomahawk cruise missiles which *“are ready to fire ... if Obama gives the order.”*

On 28 August the U.S. Navy announced the deployment of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Stout en route to join four other destroyers “amid allegations that the regime of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against civilians on August 21”.

In a not unusual twist, this deployment of US and allied naval forces preceded the chemical weapons attack which is being blamed on president Bashar al Assad.

According to Naval records, the guided missile destroyer USS Stout (DDG 55) departed Naval Station Norfolk, Va. on August 18, 2013, “for deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet area of responsibility” (see image below upon its departure in Norfolk on August 18).

The USS Ramage destroyer left Naval Station Norfolk on August 13 for the Eastern Mediterranean, “to relieve the Mahan”.

Yet in fact what was decided was to deploy all five destroyers along the Syrian coastline. This decision was taken by the Pentagon well in advance of the chemical attacks of August 21, which constitute Obama’s pretext to intervene on humanitarian grounds.

The amphibious transport dock San Antonio, carrying elements of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, has joined the five Navy destroyers in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, a defense official confirmed [August 30].

“No specific tasking has been received at this point,” the official said, speaking

on condition of anonymity. "The San Antonio is being kept in the sea as a prudent decision should ship capabilities be required."

The five destroyers positioned near Syria are the: Barry, Gravelly, Mahan, Ramage and Stout.

The Navy had been operating with three destroyers in the Med, and the Ramage and Stout were expected to replace Mahan and Gravelly, respectively, when they arrived there this month. But officials decided to keep all five in place as the U.S. weighs an attack. Each destroyer is capable of carrying up to 90 Tomahawk cruise missiles, although they usually have fewer on hand during deployment. [marinecorpstimes.com](http://marinecorpstimes.com), August 30, 2013



USS Stout leaving Norfolk on August 18. USS Stout was used as part of Operation Odyssey Dawn in the 2011 US-NATO war on Libya.

This massive naval deployment which also includes strategic submarines was ordered prior to the tragic event of August 21, which begs the question:

*If the chemical weapons attack is a justification for intervening, why was the order to launch an R2P "humanitarian" naval operation against Syria decided upon "Prior" to August 21?*

*Was there advanced knowledge or intelligence regarding the timing and occurrence of the 21 August Chemical Weapons attack?*

A strike against Syria in the immediate short-term is unlikely. Obama announced on August 31st that he would seek formal approval of the US Congress, which reconvenes on September 9.

With independent news reports providing firm evidence that the US sponsored Al Qaeda rebels (recruited and trained by Allied Special Forces) have chemical weapons in their possession, this delay does not favor the president's political credibility.



Moreover, there is evidence that the US sponsored rebels used chemical weapons against civilians. (see image right)

In providing those chemical weapons to al Qaeda "rebels", the US-NATO-Israel alliance is in violation of international law, not to mention their own anti-terrorist legislation.

Overtly supporting Al Qaeda has become the "New Normal".

When the various pieces of evidence are put together, the picture which emerges is that of a covert "flag flag operation" carried out by the US sponsored "rebels" and special forces, intent upon blaming president Bashar Al Assad for killing his own people. As mentioned above, the naval deployment was decided upon *ex ante*, before the 21 August chemical Weapons attack.

This diabolical false flag attack which consists in killing civilians and blaming the Syrian government constitutes the justification for military intervention on "humanitarian grounds".

The US and its allies are still in the process of deploying their naval forces off the Syrian coastline.

The Pentagon has confirmed that aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and its carrier strike group has moved into the Red Sea from the Indian Ocean, but, according to official statements, "it has not been given orders to be part of the planning for a limited U.S. military strike on Syria"

"The official said the carrier strike group has not been assigned a mission and the move to the Red Sea was a prudent move in case its resources are needed to "maximize available options".

The other ships in the USS Nimitz strike group are: USS Princeton and three destroyers: USS William P. Lawrence, USS Stockdale and USS Shoup.





USS Nimitz

Latest reports are that The USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier and strike group is in the northern Arabian Sea.

Meanwhile reports confirm that France has dispatched its anti-air warfare frigate “Chevalier Paul” to the eastern Mediterranean. The French warship is joining the flotilla of US and British warships “including US navy destroyers and British and American submarines, which are armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles.”

Syria is being portrayed in the French media as the aggressor:

The Chevalier Paul vessel is one of France’s “most up-to-date destroyers of the Horizon-class, ...[ it ] will be “extremely useful” if Syria decides to launch its air attacks against the international flotilla.”

Nuclear-powered French aircraft carrier the Charles de Gaulle remains in dock at the southern French naval port Toulon, according to news agencies.”

#### Russian Warships to the Syrian Coastline

A critical situation is unfolding:

Moscow has announced that is also sending two warships to the Eastern Mediterranean to reinforce its naval strength which operates out of Russia’s naval base at the port of Tartus in Southern Syria.

The agency quoted a source in the armed forces’ general staff as saying an

anti-submarine vessel and a missile cruiser would be sent in the coming days because the situation “required us to make some adjustments” in the naval force. [French and Russian warships ‘head for Syria’ – SYRIA – FRANCE 24](#)

### Syria’s Air Defense System

The Russian built S-300 is functional. The deployment of the S-300 Surface to Air Missile system in Syria has been on the drawing board of the Russian Ministry of Defense since 2006.



Syria also possesses the [Pechora-2M air defense system](#). The Pechora-2M is a sophisticated ground to air multiple target system which can also be used against cruise missiles.

Had this air defense not been in place, the implementation of a US-NATO led “no fly zone” would no doubt have been contemplated at an earlier date.



#### Description

The Pechora-2M is a surface-to-air anti-aircraft short-range missile system designed for destruction of aircraft, cruise missiles, assault helicopters and other air targets at ground, low and medium altitudes.

Moreover, in response to the US-allied missile deployments of Patriot missiles in Turkey, Russia delivered advanced Iskander missiles to Syria, which are now fully operational.

[The Iskander is described as a surface-to-surface missile](#) system “that no missile defense system can trace or destroy”:

The superior Iskander can travel at hypersonic speed of over 1.3 miles per second (Mach 6-7) and has a range of over 280 miles with pinpoint accuracy of destroying targets with its 1,500-pound warhead, [a nightmare for any missile defense system](#).



Iskander Mach 6-7

### Concluding Remarks

The World is at a dangerous crossroads.

The US and allied naval deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean with US-NATO warships is contiguous to the deployment of Russian warships out of Russia' naval base in Tartus.

Syria has an advanced air defense system which will be used in the case of a US sponsored attack. Russian military advisers are assisting Syrian forces.

Syria also has significant ground forces.

Syria has been building up its air defense system with the delivery and installation over the last few years of the Russian S300 system.

History tells us that wars are often triggered unexpectedly as a result of "political mistakes" and human error. The latter are all the more likely within the realm of a divisive and corrupt political system in the US and Western Europe.

US-NATO military planning is overseen by a centralised military hierarchy. Command and Control operations are in theory "coordinated" but in practice they are often marked by human error. Intelligence operatives often function independently and outside the realm of political accountability.

While military planners are acutely aware of the dangers of escalation, civilian politicians responding to dominant economic interests ultimately decide on the launching of a major theater war.

Any form of US-NATO direct military intervention against Syria would destabilize the entire region, potentially leading to escalation over a vast geographical area, extending from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border with Tajikistan and China.

Military planning involves intricate scenarios and war games by both sides including military options pertaining to advanced weapons systems. A Third World War scenario has been contemplated by US-NATO-Israeli military planners since early 2000.

Escalation is an integral part of the military agenda. War preparations to attack Syria and Iran have been in “an advanced state of readiness” for several years.

We are dealing with complex political and strategic decision-making involving the interplay of powerful economic interest groups, the actions of covert intelligence operatives.

In the case of Syria, US intelligence and its Western and Israeli counterparts are supporting an armed insurgency largely integrated by Al Qaeda mercenaries and death squads.

The role of war propaganda is paramount not only in molding public opinion into accepting a war agenda, but also in establishing a consensus within the upper echelons of the decision-making process. A selective form of war propaganda intended for “Top Officials” (TOPOFF) in government agencies, intelligence, the Military, law enforcement, etc. is intended to create *an unbending consensus in favor of War and the Police State*.

For the war project to go ahead, it is essential that both politicians and military planners are rightfully committed to leading the war “in the name of justice and democracy”. For this to occur, they must firmly believe in their own propaganda, namely that war is “an instrument of peace and democracy”.

They have no concern for the devastating impacts of advanced weapons systems, routinely categorized as “collateral damage”, let alone the meaning and significance of pre-emptive warfare, using nuclear weapons.

I should be noted that the Humanitarian warfare consensus is extremely fragile will large sector of public opinion taking a stance against the war-makers.

Wars are invariably decided upon by civilian leaders and corporate interests rather than by the military. War serves dominant economic interests which operate from behind the scenes, behind closed doors in corporate boardrooms, in the Washington think tanks, etc.

Realities are turned upside down. War is peace. The Lie becomes the Truth.

War propaganda, namely media lies, constitutes the most powerful instrument of warfare.

Without media disinformation, the US-NATO-Israel led war agenda would collapse like a deck of cards. The legitimacy of the war criminals in high office would be broken.

It is therefore essential to disarm not only the mainstream media but also a segment of the self proclaimed “progressive” alternative media, which has provided legitimacy to NATO’s “Responsibility to protect” (R2P) mandate, largely with a view to dismantling the antiwar movement.

The road to Tehran goes through Damascus. A war on Iran would involve, as a first step, the destabilization of Syria as a nation state. Military planning pertaining to Syria is an integral part of the war on Iran agenda.

The war on Syria could evolve towards a US-NATO-Israel military campaign directed against Iran, in which Turkey and Israel would be directly involved.

*It is crucial to spread the word and break the channels of media disinformation.*



*A critical and unbiased understanding of what is happening in Syria is of crucial importance in reversing the tide of military escalation towards a broader regional war.*

*Our objective is ultimately to dismantle the US-NATO-Israeli military arsenal and restore World Peace.*

*It is essential that people in the US, Canada, UK, France, Italy, Israel, Turkey and around the World prevent this war from occurring.*

Updated September 03, 2013

*Spread the word. Forward this article. Post it on Facebook.*

[part of these concluding remarks was written in August 2012]

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#), Global Research, 2013

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

#### About the author:

Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of Global Research. He has taught as visiting professor in Western Europe, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Latin America. He has served as economic adviser to governments of developing countries and has acted as a consultant for several international organizations. He is the author of 13 books. He is a contributor to the Encyclopaedia Britannica. His writings have been published in more than twenty languages. In 2014, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit of the Republic of Serbia for his writings on NATO's war of aggression against Yugoslavia. He can be reached at [crgeditor@yahoo.com](mailto:crgeditor@yahoo.com)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)