

Putin Makes Obama an Offer He Can't Refuse

By [Mike Whitney](#)

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Why is John Kerry so eager to convene an emergency summit on Syria now when the war has been dragging on for four and a half years?

Is he worried that Russia's air campaign is wiping out too many US-backed jihadis and sabotaging Washington's plan to topple Syrian President Bashar al Assad?

You bet, he is. No one who's been following events in Syria for the last three weeks should have any doubt about what's really going on. Russia has been methodically wiping out Washington's mercenaries on the ground while recapturing large swathes of land that had been lost to the terrorists. That, in turn, has strengthened Assad's position in Damascus and left the administration's policy in tatters. And that's why Kerry wants another meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pronto even though the two diplomats met less than a week ago. The Secretary of State is hoping to cobble together some kind of makeshift deal that will stop the killing and salvage what's left of Uncle Sam's threadbare Syrian project.



On Tuesday, Reuters reported that Iran had been invited to the confab which will be held in Vienna on Thursday. The announcement is bound to be ferociously criticized on Capital Hill, but it just shows to what extent Russia is currently setting the agenda. It was Lavrov who insisted that Iran be invited, and it was Kerry who reluctantly capitulated. Moscow is now in the drivers seat.

And don't be surprised if the summit produces some pretty shocking results too, like a dramatic 180 on Washington's "Assad must go" demand. As Putin has pointed out many times before, Assad's not going anywhere. He's going to be a part of Syria's "transitional governing body" when the Obama team finally agrees to the Geneva Communique which is the political track that will eventually end the fighting, restore security, and allow millions of refugees to return to their homes.

The reason the administration is going to agree to allow Assad to stay, is because if they don't, the Russian Airforce is going to continue to blow US-backed mercenaries to smithereens. So, you see, Obama really has no choice in the matter. Putin has put a gun to his head and made him an offer he can't refuse.

That doesn't mean the war is going to be a cakewalk for Russia or its allies. It won't be. In fact, there have already been some major setbacks, like the fact that ISIS just seized a critical section the Aleppo-Khanasser highway, cutting off the government's supply-lines to Aleppo. This is a serious problem, but it is not a problem that can't be overcome nor is it a problem that will effect the outcome of the war. It's just one of the obstacles that has to be

dealt with and surpassed. Taking a broader view, the outlook is much more encouraging for the Russian-led coalition which continues to cut off supply-lines, blow up ammo dumps and fuel depots, and rapidly eviscerate the ability of the enemy to wage war. So, while the war is certainly not a walk in the park, there's no doubt about who's going to win.

And that might explain why the US decided to bomb Aleppo's main power plant last week plunging the entire city into darkness; because Obama wants to "rubblize" everything on his way out. Keep in mind, that the local water treatment plants require electrical power, so by blowing up the plant, Obama has condemned tens of thousands of civilians to cholera and other water-borne diseases. Apparently, our hospital-nuking president isn't bothered by such trivial matters as killing women and children. Now check this out from the *Daily Star*:

U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq and Syria carried out a large-scale attack on Syria's Omar oil field as part of its mission to target ISIS's ability to generate money, a coalition spokesman said Thursday.

Operations officer Maj. Michael Filanowski told journalists in Baghdad that airstrikes late Wednesday struck ISIS-controlled oil refineries, command and control centers and transportation nodes in the Omar oil field near the town of Deir el-Zour. Coalition spokesman Col. Steven Warren said the attack hit 26 targets, making it one of the largest set of strikes since launching the air campaign last year.

The refinery generates between \$1.7 and \$5.1 million per month for ISIS.

"It was very specific targets that would result in long-term incapacitation of their ability to sell oil, to get it out of the ground and transport it," Filanowski said.

ISIS seized a number of oil refineries and other infrastructure in Iraq and Syria as it sought to generate revenue to build a self-sufficient state. ("[US-led forces strike ISIS-controlled oil field in Syria](#)", Daily Star)

Isn't it amazing how- after a year of combing the dessert looking for ISIS targets- the USAF finally figures out where the goddamn oil refineries are? No wonder the western media chose to ignore this story. One can only conclude that Obama never had any intention of cutting off ISIS's main funding stream (oil sales). What he really wanted was for the terrorist group to flourish provided it helped Washington achieve its strategic goals. Putin even pointed this out in a [recent interview](#). He said:

The mercenaries occupy the oil fields in Iraq and Syria. They start extracting the oil-and this oil is purchased by somebody. Where are the sanctions on the parties purchasing this oil?

Do you believe the US does not know who is buying it?

Is it not their allies that are buying the oil from ISIS?

Do you not think that US has the power to influence their allies? Or is the point that they don't wish to influence them?

Putin was never taken in by the whole ISIS oil charade. He knew it was a farce from the get-go, ever since Financial Times published their thoroughly laughable article on the topic

which claimed that ISIS had its own group of “headhunters” offering “competitive salaries” to engineers with the “requisite experience” and encouraged “prospective employees to apply to its human resources department.”

The ISIS “human resources department”?? Have you ever read anything more ridiculous in your life? (Read the whole [story here](#).)

In an interview with NPR, FT fantasist Erika Solomon (who wrote the article) explained why the US could not bomb the oil fields or refineries. Here’s what [she said](#):

What ISIS has done is managed to corner control of the extraction process, which is smart because they can’t get bombed there. It would cause a natural disaster. So they extract the oil, and then they immediately sell it to local traders – any average person who can buy a truck that they can fill with a tank of oil.

Well, that sure didn’t stop Maj. Michael Filanowski, now did it? He seems to have blown up those ISIS refineries without batting an eye, which just proves that Solomon’s “natural disaster” fairytale is pure bunkum.

But if it was all baloney, then why did the USAF decide to hit the targets now? What changed?

Here’s a clue from an article that popped up on RT just one day before the attacks:

“Russia’s airplanes cut off routes used by Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) to deliver supplies to Syria from Iraq by bombing a bridge over the Euphrates River, the Russian General Staff said

The bridge over the Euphrates River near [the Syrian city of] Deir ez-Zor was a key point of the logistics chain [of IS]. Today Russian pilots carried out a surgical strike against the object,” the deputy chief of the General Staff of Russia, Colonel General Andrey Kartapolov, said on Thursday during a news briefing, adding that the terrorist group’s armament and ammunition delivery route had been cut off.

([“Russian Air Force cuts off ISIS supply lines by bombing bridge over Euphrates”](#), RT)

There it is: The Russians blow up a critical bridge over the Euphrates making oil transport impossible, and the next thing you know, BAM, the US goes into scorched earth-mode leveling everything in sight. Coincidence?

Not bloody likely. The whole incident suggests the mighty CIA is rolling up its pet project in Syria and headed for the exits. (It’s worth noting that ISIS has never been a self sustaining corporate franchise netting over a million bucks a day on oil receipts as western propaganda would have one believe. That’s all part of the public relations coverup used to conceal the fact that the Gulf allies and probably CIA black ops are funding these homicidal maniacs.)

In any event, the Russian intervention is forcing Washington to rethink its Syria policy. While Kerry is bending over backwards to end the fighting, Obama is busy tweaking the policy in a way that appeases his critics on the right without provoking a confrontation with Moscow. It’s a real tight-wire act, but the White House PR team thinks they can pull it off. Check this

out from NBC News:

“Defense Secretary Ash Carter today revealed that the U.S. will openly begin “direct action on the ground” against ISIS forces in Iraq and Syria.

In his testimony before the Senate Armed Services committee on Tuesday, Carter said “we won’t hold back from supporting capable partners in opportunistic attacks against ISIL...or conducting such mission directly, whether by strikes from the air or direct action on the ground.” ([“Sec. Carter: U.S. to Begin ‘Direct Action on the Ground’ in Iraq, Syria”](#), NBC News)

This sounds a lot worse than it is. The truth is, Obama has no stomach for the type of escalation the hawks (like Hillary Clinton and John McCain) are demanding. There aren’t going to be any “safe zones” or “no-fly zones” or any other provocations which would risk a bloody conflagration with Moscow. What Obama is looking for is the best face-saving strategy available that will allow him to retreat without incurring the wrath of the Washington warmongers. It’s a tall order, but Sec-Def Ash Carter has come up with a plan that might just do-the-trick. This is from *The Hill*:

Defense Secretary Ash Carter on Tuesday described new ways the U.S. military plans to increase pressure on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, after months of criticism that the administration is not doing enough to defeat the terrorist group.

“The changes we’re pursuing can be described by what I call the ‘three R’s’ — Raqqa, Ramadi and Raids,” Carter testified the Senate Armed Services Committee.

First, Carter said the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS plans to support moderate Syrian forces to go after Raqqa — the terrorist group’s stronghold and administration capital.

The secretary also said he hopes to pursue a new way of equipping the Syrian Arab Coalition, which consists of about a dozen groups.

“While the old approach was to train and equip completely new forces outside of Syria before sending them into the fight, the new approach is to work with vetted leaders of groups that are already fighting ISIL, and provide equipment and some training to them and support their operations with airpower,” he said.

He also said the coalition expects to intensify its air campaign with additional U.S. and coalition aircraft, and to target ISIS with a higher and heavier rate of strikes.

“This will include more strikes against ISIL high-value targets as our intelligence improves, and also its oil enterprise, which is a critical pillar of ISIL’s financial infrastructure,” Carter said, using a different acronym for ISIS.” ([“Pentagon chief unveils new plan for ISIS fight”](#), The Hill)

See anything new here? It’s a big nothingburger, right?

They’re going to kill more “high-value targets”?

Big whoop. That’s always been the gameplan, hasn’t it? Of course, it has.

What this shows is that Obama is just running out the clock hoping he can keep this mess on the back-burner until he's out of office and working out the terms of his first big book deal. The last thing he wants is to get embroiled in a spitting match with the Kremlin his final year in office.

Unfortunately, the problem Obama is going to encounter is that Putin can't simply turn off the war machine with the flip of a switch. It took Moscow a long time to decide to intervene in Syria, just like it took a long time to marshal the forces that would be deployed, build the coalition and draft the battleplan. The Russians don't take war lightly, so now that they've put the ball into motion they're not going to stop until the job is done and the bulk of the terrorists have been exterminated. That means there's not going to be a ceasefire in the immediate future. Putin needs to demonstrate that once Moscow commits its forces, it will persevere until it achieves victory. That victory could come in the form of "liberating Aleppo" and a subsequent sealing off of the Turkish-Syria border or he might have some other goal in mind. But it's a matter of credibility as much as anything. If Putin pulls back, hesitates or shows even the slightest lack of resolve, Washington will see it as a sign of weakness and try to exploit it. So Putin has no choice but to see this thing through to the bitter end. At the very least, he needs to prove to Washington that when Russia gets involved, Russia wins.

That's a message Washington needs to hear.

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