

Syria and Lebanon: The Pentagon's "Phase III" and NATO's War in the Levant

Excerpt from The Globalization of NATO

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What follows is a minor excerpt of chapter 14 (NATO and the Levant: Lebanon and Syria) of The Globalization of NATO which was published in the Milli Gazette of India on page 17 under the title "Nato and the Middle East" in November 2012. It gives an excellent background to the Pentagon's plan to invade Syria and the invasion plan's ties to NATO and Israel.

Following are pages from Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya's just published book, *THE GLOBALIZATION OF NATO* (Clarity Press):

...The tragic 9/11 attacks were the start of a seismic change for the Levant. A tectonic shift began pushing the borders of the Euro-Atlantic Zone further into the Middle East from its frontier in the Mediterranean Sea. The first step was the creation of Operation Active Endeavour, which saw NATO permanently deploy itself in the Eastern Mediterranean with a naval armada facing the Levantine coast. Iraq, to the east of the Levant, would fall after the Anglo-American invasion in 2003 that had various forms of NATO involvement. The Levant with NATO's Israeli outpost as a center of influence would become the next Atlanticist target for expansion under the guidelines of the Pentagon's military roadmap to encircle and penetrate Eurasia.

The Pentagon War Plans for Lebanon and Syria

In January 2001, eight months before 9/11, according to Daniel Sobelman, a correspondent for Israel's Haaretz, the US government warned Lebanon that the US was planning on going after Hezbollah. Hezbollah had just defeated the Israelis in 2000, forcing Tel Aviv to end its eighteen-year occupation of the southernmost area of Lebanon. The US threats directed at Lebanon were made at the start of the presidential term of George W. Bush, Jr., eight months before the events of September 11, 2001.

The Global War on Terror was not a plan drafted after the 9/11 attacks, but had been preconceived by US officials for reigning in the broader Middle East. The blueprints for the Bush Jr. Administration's assaults were actually written under the Clinton Administration. The fight against international terrorism was merely a cover under which these plans were launched targeting the "central" theatre of Eurasia - hence the CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) and CENTCOM acronyms - manned by a group of predominately Muslim and

Arab state and non-state holdouts and opponents of US influence and penetration.

After Afghanistan and Iraq the US and its allies were set on targeting Lebanon and Syria as Wesley Clark, the former supreme commander of NATO, has publicly admitted. In Clark's own words he was told: "We're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and, finishing off, Iran."

Another former supreme commander of NATO, Alexander Haig, Jr., would argue for an attack on the Levant, specifically Syria, before Iraq in 2002 and after the invasion of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

Also in 2002, Pentagon advisor Richard Perle would casually tell a panel of Canadian international affairs experts in a guest appearance on TV Ontario's Diplomatic Immunity that after Afghanistan the US was planning to go to war with Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran.

The Pentagon began preparing for a potential invasion of Syria in 2003 while its tanks were still rolling through Baghdad and other Iraqi cities. The US Congress would also pass the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act to open the door for operations in Syria and Lebanon. *The Guardian* reported on April 15, 2003:

[US Defense Secretary Rumsfeld ordered] contingency plans for a war on Syria to be reviewed following the fall of Baghdad.

Meanwhile, his undersecretary for policy, Doug Feith, and William Luti, the head of the Pentagon's office of special plans, were asked to put together a briefing paper on the case for war against Syria, outlining its role in supplying weapons to Saddam Hussein, its links with Middle East terrorist groups and its allegedly advanced chemical weapons programme. Mr. Feith and Mr. Luti were both instrumental in persuading the White House to go to war in Iraq.

Mr. Feith and other conservatives now playing important roles in the Bush administration, advised the Israeli government in 1996 that it could "shape its strategic environment... by weakening, containing and even rolling back Syria."

The plans for Pentagon operations against the Syrians were referred to as "phase three" of the Global War on Terror by the White House, which logically meant Afghanistan was the first phase of the war and Iraq the second.

Let us pause to analyze the meaning of the White House's terminology and the clear link US officials were making between the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq on the one hand and a potential invasion of Syria on the other. The way the White House linked these countries is an admission that the Global War on Terror is simply a campaign of conquest. If the actual reasons for the invasions were different as seemed to be the case by the official casus belli, how could they be phases in the same war?

Soon after the buzz about US tanks rolling into Damascus began the Iranians would step into the arena. Iranian President Mohammed Khatami visited Lebanon on a landmark visit in May 2003 marking Israel's 2000 defeat in Lebanon, to show Tehran's commitment to all its allies in the Levant. Iranian officials would send repeated messages to the US that Tehran would not tolerate an attack on itself and its Levantine allies, which the Pentagon took seriously. Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani, the defence minister of Iran, gave an interview to Al Jazeera in

August 2004 that explained why the Pentagon was cautious about launching an attack in the Levant. Shamkhani pointed out that US troops occupying Iran's neighbours did not give Washington the upper hand; on the contrary US and NATO forces would literally become Tehran's prisoners or "hostages" as he put it. He also explained that insofar as Tel Aviv and Washington were working in tandem, any attack launched from Israel would not be viewed as an isolated act. Shamkhani warned that Iran could regionally engage the US militarily anywhere: "America is not the only one present in the region. We are present, from Khost to Kandahar in Afghanistan. We are present in the Persian Gulf and we can be present in Iraq."

In addition to Iran's capabilities of intervening in Afghanistan and Iraq, Tehran's ballistic missiles - that could reach Israel and all the Pentagon's bases in the Middle East - made Washington suspend its ideas of direct attacks.

Thus the plans for attacking Syria were delayed due to a combination of the international fallout caused by the widely opposed invasion of Iraq, lack of credible pretexts at the time, fears of Iranian intervention, and caution about jeopardizing Israeli security. Iranian officials also said they could halt their oil exports to hurt Israel's NATO allies if an attack on Syria was launched. The system of alliances that tied Beirut and Damascus to Tehran and by extension to Beijing and Moscow did not make an attack on either Lebanon or Syria by the Pentagon and NATO feasible either.

Neither the US nor NATO were ready for the consequences of a direct attack. It was felt that Israel, which all along had wanted the US and NATO to conduct the operations, would have to play a role in the invasions. The Pentagon transferred responsibility for Lebanon and Syria from United States European Command (EUCOM) to United States Central Command (CENTCOM) on March 10, 2004 - leaving Israel in EUCOM's area of responsibility (AOR) under the watch of NATO's supreme commander...

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