

# The March to War: Syria Preparing for US-Israeli Attacks

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Global Research, May 25, 2007

24 May 2007

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

“To the east there is the Resistance in Iraq, to the west there is the Resistance in Lebanon and to the south there is the Resistance of the Palestinian people. We, in Syria, are at the heart of all these events!”

-Basher Al-Assad, 10th President of Syria (April 30, 2007)

Syria was in the sights of the White House and Pentagon since the advent of the “Global War on Terror.” Attacks on Lebanon and Syria have long been expected as a phase in the American-led war march unfolding in the Middle East and Central Asia in the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

The U.S. government itself has clarified that it was considering invading Syria after the fall of Baghdad in 2003. [1] The U.S. Congress in 2003 also started to re-evaluate strengthening the Syrian Accountability Act. *The Guardian*, a major British newspaper, reported during the initial days of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in April of 2003 that Syria was a potential military target:

In the past few weeks, the U.S. defence secretary, Donald 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.” [2]

The 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon was also initiated for strategic reasons, which included the subjugation of Syria, as a continuation of the Pentagon’s plans to strike Syria. This has been acknowledged by Israeli and U.S. government officials and there are numerous international press reports to validate this. In fact on October 8, 2003, months after the fall

of Baghdad to U.S. tanks and soldiers, Israeli fighter jets made air raids inside Syrian territory. The Syrians restrained themselves, refusing to be baited into a war. The Syrian President gave a rare public response to the Israeli air strike in Syria accusing Ariel Sharon and the Israeli government of trying to drag Syria and the entire region into a “new war.” [3]

Syria is now the subject of intense covert and overt diplomatic U.S. and E.U. pressure as the Anglo-American war machine is running out of time. Attempts are also underway to create a wedge between Iran and Syria. Military provisions are additionally underway on the immediate borders of Syria for a possible war in the Levant and a broader Middle Eastern war that would stretch from the borders of Egypt and Turkey to the frontier of Western China. Israel is also making preparations for yet another war, while the U.S. and British militaries continue to marshal their armed forces into Afghanistan, Iraq, and the broader Middle East.

Controlling Syria can heavily influence the geo-strategic realities and environment in the Middle East. The geo-strategic position of Syria places it at a critical juncture between Lebanon, Palestine, and Anglo-American occupied Iraq; three fronts that the U.S. and its allies are actively engaged in. Three intertwined wars of intelligence, proxy, public relations, civil, covert, and military dimensions are being waged in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. The conquest of Damascus is a prerequisite to winning these fronts and would greatly strengthen the American-led position in a possible showdown against Iran and its allies. Although, it should be mentioned that after the strategic 2006 defeat of Israel in Lebanon, it seems that preparations are now being made for a simultaneous war against both Syria and Iran.

### Allegations of Syrian Weapons of Mass Destruction

Both Syria and its ally Iran, since the invasion of Iraq, face the real threat of American-led and Israeli aggression. The threat of war looms high over both Middle Eastern republics and a dossier of pretexts for war has been steadily built against both nations.

It is no coincidence that in mid-2003, with the initiation of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, that Jack Straw, the British foreign minister at the time, visited both Tehran and Damascus to guarantee both Iran and Syria that there would be no Anglo-American wars launched against them. When asked about the possibility of future wars against Syria and Iran after the invasion of Iraq, Jack Straw responded: “it would worry me if it were true. It is not true, and we would have nothing whatever to do with an approach like that.” [4]

Jack Straw’s statements proved to be without foundation. Merely days after his statements in Tehran and Damascus the British, including Jack Straw and Tony Blair, and the U.S. governments began to threaten Damascus and accuse the Syrians of also trying to produce weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) just like Iraq. [5] The Syrian Ambassador to Britain, Mouafak Nassar, sharply questioned the motives of the Anglo-American accusations of Syrian weapons of mass destruction (WMDs): “I will say I am wondering why they are targeting one Arab country after the other. They are ignoring totally the country that has mass destruction weapons—Israel.” [6]

The weapons of mass destruction (WMD) allegations were toned down and eventually evaporated in the wake of the blowback from the U.S. and British allegations of Iraqi

weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as a pretext for invading Iraq. The White House and 10 Downing Street would have to find other pretexts for initiating hostilities with Damascus. These pretexts would eventually emerge after the Valentines Day assassination of the late Rafik Hariri, former prime minister of Lebanon (February 14, 2005).

Syria almost immediately faced efforts to diplomatically isolate it, led by France and America. The initiative to hammer Syria had commenced. It was before February 2005 that the “Atlantic Rift” between France and Germany on the one hand and the U.S. and Britain on the other hand really started to close, leading to significantly better relations.

An understanding between the Franco-German entente and the Anglo-American alliance, the two branches of NATO, had been initiated. The result was an unfolding consensus which is now supported by pro-U.S. governments in both France and Germany. This in turn has a bearing on the creation of respective spheres of responsibility and influence in the Middle East.

NATO Supreme Commander’s Hunting Words: After Afghanistan, Seven Additional Countries to be Conquered

The Syrians and the Iranians were well aware that what was unfolding on their immediate borders was the resurrection of a multi-phased historic Anglo-American campaign drafted in London before the First World War. The Syrians, like others throughout the globe from Riyadh and Cairo to Moscow, Berlin, and Beijing, were fully aware of this Anglo-American vision for the Middle East and Central Asia— dreams that were now in the process of being implemented as reality and in due course shared with France and Germany.

In an interview, General Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO in Europe, frankly stated that the U.S. has been set on initiating a major military road map of international warfare that would start in Afghanistan and Iraq and end with Iran;

This was on or about the 20th of September. I said, “We’re going to war with Iraq? (...) So I said, “Well, did they find some information connecting Saddam to Al-Qaeda?” He said, “No, no.” He says, “There’s nothing new that way. They just made the decision to go to war with Iraq.”

(...)

So I came back to see him [a high ranking military officer in the Pentagon] a few weeks later, and by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan. I said, “Are we still going to war with Iraq?” And he said, “Oh, it’s worse than that.” He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, “I just got this down from upstairs” — meaning the Secretary of Defence’s office — “today.” And he said, “This is a memo that describes how 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.” [7]

Starting from 1991 and the end of the Cold War, there have been continuous U.S. and NATO military build-ups in and around the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central Asia. There is a long-term strategy at play in these regions. General Wesley Clark’s assertions help put into focus just one stage of this military build-up. NATO expansion around Russia and the

militarization of China's eastern flank constitute another stage of this military roadmap.

The nations that were mentioned by the former NATO commander in his interview are Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and finally Iran. The events in Yugoslavia and the Balkans are part of this military list or "long war." The latter is characterised by the following stages:

- .1. Iraq, like Afghanistan, has been invaded and is under occupation;
- .2. Libya has submitted to the edicts of the White House and 10 Downing Street; Colonel Qaddafi, the leader of Libya, knew very well that Libya was a target and therefore surrendered peacefully so that Libya would not suffer the same fate as Iraq.
- .3. Somalia is presently a theatre of operations and a war zone. Information has also been revealed about coveted Anglo-American oil interests in Somalia.
- .4. Sudan is under threat with humanitarian pretexts being used against it just as they were used against Yugoslavia. Sudan also knows that it is a targeted nation and is pacing towards a military pact with Iran.
- .5. The conventional military phase of the Lebanese theatre involved the Israeli attacks in 2006 and is over — for now. The current phase of the war in Lebanon is not being fought by conventional armies, but by client forces supported by the Anglo-American alliance and Franco-German entente.
- .6. Syria is presently being beleaguered. Syria was driven out of Lebanon and targeted initially by attempts at international isolation by the U.S. and European Union. It seems that the war in Lebanon was a point in the military roadmap where plans did not go as exactly planned and the Israelis could not attack Syria, but almost certainly the military roadmap has optional settings and alternative routes or flexible allowances.
- .7. It has been maintained that the war with Iran has already started on the low spectrum level. Preparations seem to be underway for military confrontation with Iran.

France and Germany, the Franco-German entente, are partners in this historic neo-colonial project: thus the project is no longer strictly Anglo-American, it is a NATO project. It is no coincidence that all these targeted nations, aside from Libya, fall within the operational-level military command boundaries of United States Central Command (CENTCOM). NATO expansion is also linked to the wars and the pending wars in this vast region.

Central Asia, the Caspian Basin, and the underbelly of Russia will be exposed as the next stage of this "long war," once the Pentagon finishes with Iran and the Middle East. NATO can not project full power in these former Soviet areas until it has a secure opening which is what Iran, along with NATO-garrisoned Afghanistan, can provide as forward bases. The entry of NATO into Central Asia will effectively create a barrier between Russia, China, and India.

Syria is a U.S. and Israeli Military Target

Originally, Syria seems to have been willing to cooperate with both the Franco-German

entente and the Anglo-American alliance, to a limited extent. But it now seems that similar to the case in Uzbekistan, relations have so to speak been spoiled. The Syrian-Iranian alliance is also the oldest partnership in the Middle East dating back to the pre-Revolutionary period in Iran, under the Pahlavi Dynasty.

It seems that Syria and NATO allies were at loggerheads because the resolve of the Syrians was underestimated and more importantly the Anglo-American alliance and Franco-German entente subsequently lost the trust of the Syrians because of attempts to destabilize Syria. This included covert attempts at inciting regime change in Damascus. Syrian troops quickly left Lebanon in 2005, not just because of the will of the majority of the Lebanese people, but because of the fear that the Syrian position in regards to Lebanon would quickly be portrayed like that of Iraq in regards to Kuwait in 1991. Syria left Lebanon because the Syrian government was aware that the Pentagon was looking for a justification to march U.S. troops and tanks into Damascus. [8]

Several pretexts were given by the White House, which frankly told the international media it was contemplating operations against the Syrians after the fall of Baghdad. These pretexts included Syrian support to Iraq and Syrian help to Palestinian and Lebanese groups opposed to Israel. *The Observer* (U.K.) also noted that the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq was the first stage of a military campaign to control the Middle East in April of 2003;

...the next phase of its 'war on terror' in a move which could threaten military action against President Bashar Assad's regime in Damascus.

The move is part of Washington's efforts to persuade Israel to support a new peace settlement with the Palestinians. Washington has promised Israel that it will take 'all effective action' to cut off Syria's support for Hezbollah— implying a military strike if necessary, sources in the Bush administration have told *The Observer*.

(...)

The undertaking [to attack/invoke Syria] dovetails conveniently into 'phase three' of what President George Bush calls the 'war on terror' and his pledge to go after all countries accused of harbouring terrorists.

It also fits into calls by hawks inside and aligned to the [Bush Jr.] administration who believe that [the] war in Iraq was [the] first stage in a wider war for American control of the region. Threats against Syria come daily out of Washington. [9]

It is also important to examine the terminology used by Bush Jr. Administration officials in regards to the portrayal of an attack/invasion of Syria. They have referred to a military campaign in the Levant as "phase three" of the "Global War on Terror." It should be noted that "phase one" of the wider war was the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) in Central Asia, "phase two" the invasion of Iraq (2003) and "phase three" has become the Israeli war against Lebanon (2006).

Syria has become bolder due to the events of 2006 in Lebanon. Syrian officials knew very well that Syria was also part of the intended theatre of Israeli operations and were expecting military strikes. Public statements about a "New Crisis" in Lebanon and Syria that would be initiated by the United States were being made by Iranian, Lebanese, and Syrian leaders in 2003, right after the fall of Baghdad. [10]

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported in May of 2003 that Mohammed Khatami, the Iranian president at the time, while in Beirut warned that Lebanon and Syria were jointly in the sights of the military campaign the U.S. and Britain had launched in the Middle East;

Iran is not interested in escalating tensions in the Middle East and opposes anything that created instability in the region, President Mohammad Khatami has said.

On a landmark visit to Lebanon (...) But he said Syria, Iran and Lebanon would not simply bow to U.S. pressure, and warned America against creating "a new crisis" following its [invasion] of Iraq. [11]

At the start of the Israeli campaign against Lebanon, Iran warned Israel of "unimaginable damage" if it attacked Syria and Syrian diplomats stated that their country felt strengthened by Iran's support and that Damascus "knows that the U.S. would want to prevent a wider conflict involving Iran [at the time]." [12]

This seems to have been true at the time in 2006 and during that past phase of the military roadmap in the Middle East, which was intended on simultaneously subjugating Syria and Lebanon. But it now seems, despite the diplomatic rhetoric, that the United States is preparing for potentially starting a war with both Iran and Syria. The military preparations that are underway speak louder than U.S. diplomacy and public statements.

At the time, in 2006, the U.S. and Israel were not logistically ready for a war with Iran, but they had been preparing for the long awaited and anticipated military project. Permanent Anglo-American super-bases have been constructed in Iraq as forward bases into Iran. Large naval armadas are marshaling in the waters of the Middle East, from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, in preparation for war and also to enforce a naval blockade against Syria, Lebanon, and Iran.

An interview with Meyrav Wurmser, the wife of David Wurmser, Advisor on Middle Eastern Affairs to U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney, reveals part of the intentions to attack Syria, one of the seven countries listed by General Clark as being a target of the Pentagon. Madame Wurmser unmistakably indicates that Syria was the main military target during the Israeli war on Lebanon;

But the anger [in U.S. ruling circles] is over the fact that Israel did not fight against the Syrians. Instead of Israel fighting against Hezbollah, many parts of the American administration believe that Israel should have fought against the real enemy [objective], which is Syria and not Hezbollah [in Lebanon]."

(...)

The neocons are responsible for the fact that Israel got a lot of time and space...[e.g. the obstruction of U.N. resolutions for a ceasefire and emergency deliveries of jet fuel from the U.S. to Israel] They believed that Israel should be allowed to win. A great part of it was the thought that Israel should fight against the real enemy, the one backing Hezbollah. It was obvious that it is impossible to fight directly against Iran, but the thought was that [Iran's] strategic and important ally [Syria] should be hit.

"It is difficult for Iran to export its (...) revolution [meaning influence] without joining Syria, which is the last nationalistic [meaning independent] Arab country. If Israel had hit Syria, it



would have been such a harsh blow for Iran, that it would have weakened it and changes the strategic map in the Middle East. [13]

An article titled *Israel Should Hit Syria First* that was released by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), which represents the innermost thoughts and perspectives of the American foreign policy circle from the White House to the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Congress, also advocates that Israel should have attacked Syria. [14] The article by Maximilian Boot, a senior U.S. national security fellow for the CFR and an advocate of the use of military force to impose American dominance on a global scale, originally appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Israel is also making louder and continuous noises about an imminent Syrian attack; this is in anticipation of a war against the Syrians. The Syrians are naturally aware of the plans to attack their country and have started their defensive preparations, which the mainstream Israeli media originally portrayed as an initiative to attack Israel, but later redefined as defensive preparations for fuzzy unclear reasons.

Leaving the Door open for Syria: Formulating the surrender of Tehran's ally

*"If Syria does engage more broadly with the West, that leaves Iran almost entirely isolated in the Middle East..."*

-Jon Alterman, Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington D.C.)

It is also no mere coincidence that Jalal Talabani of Iraq and Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine, two vassals of the Anglo-American alliance, visited Damascus in the same week. [15] The Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, came under the pretext of negotiating with the leaders-in-exile of Hamas in Damascus to reach a political settlement between Fatah and Hamas. Jalal Talabani's trip to Syria was also a sham. Both men undoubtedly came representing the White House in negotiations with Syria to get Damascus to capitulate just as Libya did in 2003 after the fall of Baghdad.

The Anglo-American war machine has lost some momentum and the international foxtrot has become more complicated; it seems that a door is being opened to Syria for a Libya-like surrender to avoid or skip one phase of the "long war." Javier Solana, the E.U. Foreign Policy Chief, traveled to Syria in what was being termed as a "groundbreaking" visit to Damascus. France, until the visit by Javier Solana, had blocked almost all contact between the E.U. and Syria. [16] Germany has also been sending continuous signals to Syria along with other E.U. countries. Chancellor Merkel while in Lebanon, visiting to show support for the Lebanese government and to see German sailors posted in the Eastern Mediterranean, demanded that the Syrians cooperate with the stipulations of the E.U., the U.S., and Israel. [17]

In March of 2007, officials of the Bush Jr. Administration also visited Damascus after a period of diplomatic boycotts intended to isolate Syria. These visits took place in Syria under the justification that talks between the Syrian government and the Bush Jr. Administration were focused solely on the millions of Iraqi refugees that were trying to escape the chaos and violence in Iraq. It was after the initial visits from Bush Jr. Administration officials that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also visited Syria in a highly publicized visit. The White House declared that it opposed the House Speaker's visit to Damascus even though Ellen Sauerbrey, an assistant secretary at the U.S. State Department and a representative of the

White House, was in Syria for negotiations. [18]

All rhetoric put aside, outside of public posturing, the implementation of U.S. foreign policy has historically been one of the subjects that the two main political parties in the United States, the Democrats and the Republicans, are virtually indistinguishable in their actions. There exists no liberalism or conservative dogma or partisanship in U.S. foreign policy. The bills approved after the November 2006 U.S. Congressional elections by the U.S. Congress, which is controlled by the Democrats, are merely a continuation of the Bush Jr. Administration's agenda. The U.S. Congress has approved and passed bills for the funding of the continued occupation of Iraq, given the White House additional powers, and paved the way for future wars in the Middle East.

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi visited Syria with a delegation that included Democrats and a Republican. [19] The visits to Damascus from the U.S. State Department and the House Speaker essentially were part of a combined effort and served the exact same interests, which was to get the Syrians to capitulate. Congresswoman Pelosi went to Damascus as a representative of the larger ruling establishment in the U.S., to which the White House is a member, and her discussions are what opened the door for the hollow talks in Egypt between Condoleezza Rice and the Syrian Foreign Minister in early-May, 2007.

#### Washington D.C. seeks Regime Change in Damascus

Abdel-Halim Khaddam, the former vice-president of Syria, now in exile because of apparent corruption charges is being supported by the White House as an opposition figure against Damascus. He is also being alluded to as a democratic alternative for Syria, just as the corrupt Ahmed Chalabi has been for Iraq by the White House. Abdel-Halim Khaddam is also establishing an office in Washington D.C., which in itself is a negative omission for an exiled Arab opposition figure. [20]

It is no mere coincidence that fighting has broken out in Lebanon between Fatah Al-Islam, a previously unheard of radical militant group, and the Lebanese Armed Forces, days after David Welch, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. State Department, held unprecedented meetings with General Michel Sulaiman (Solomon) the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Although Saudi Arabian, Jordanian, and American channels created Fatah Al-Islam, Syria is conveniently being blamed as the perpetrator in a calculated move to strengthen the manufactured war dossier against Damascus.

#### NOTES

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[7] General (ret.) Wesley Clark, 92 Street Y Exclusive Live Interview, interview by Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now*, March 2, 2007.

[8] Ed Vulliamy, Syria could be next, warns Washington, *The Observer* (U.K.), April 13, 2003.

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[17] Nadim Ladki, Merkel urges Syria to cooperate on Lebanon, *Reuters*, April 2, 2007.

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L02332343.htm>

[18] [Stephen Kaufman, Syria, United States Exchange Views on Iraqi Refugees: Talks in Damascus described as “useful” and “straightforward,” U.S. State Department, March 12, 2007.](#)

[19] Hassan M. Fattah, Pelosi’s Delegation Presses Syrian Leader on Militants, *The New York Times*, April 5, 2007, p.A3.

The delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives was comprised of;

Nancy Pelosi (Democrat)-California; Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives;

Tom Lantos (Democrat)-California; Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs;

David L. Hobson (Republican)-Ohio;

Henry A. Waxman (Democrat)-California,;

Louise M. Slaughter (Democrat)- New York;

Nick J. Rahall II (Democrat)-West Virginia;

Keith Ellison (Democrat)-Minnesota.

[20] Claude Salhani, [Interview: Khaddam Cautions on Damascus](#), *United Press International* (UPI), April 24, 2007.

The interview is extremely revealing. The former Syrian official has all the characteristics of a “Chalabi-like” turncoat. He criticizes Syrian political institutions, but refuses to say anything critical about the rest of the Arab World. The former Syrian official was also one of the Syrian government’s top proponents and a vocal opponent of the U.S. government.

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