

US Attack in Syria Opens Disturbing and Unpredictable Scenarios. The Danger of “Direct Military Confrontation” between US-NATO and Russia

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We have been seeing in Syria in recent days more and more direct involvement in the conflict by Turkey, Israel and the United States. Air raids, bombing and ground troops, albeit in limited numbers, reveal dissatisfaction and evident frustration by these nations hostile to Damascus.

The most recent example, more useful in emphasizing the disappointment that reigns in Washington, concerns the dynamics that accompanied the signing of the cease-fire between Kerry and Lavrov.

With Aleppo besieged and terrorists trapped, the United States and its allies have been forced to apply for a temporary solution to the conflict in order to halt hostilities.

In spite of the previous failure of the ceasefire, Russia, Damascus and Tehran have preferred to negotiate while continuing their military action. Had they refused to negotiate, they would have been painted by the Western media and international institutions as the reason for the intensification of the conflict. This would have easily opened the door to a greater involvement by Washington's regional allies on account of Moscow's refusal to negotiate.

Russian diplomacy has managed to transform a position of military strength, but of apparent diplomatic weakness, into an overall win. Washington was forced to request that the final terms of the agreement be kept secret. Moscow of course calls for transparency and has demanded that the agreement be made public.

The fact that the United States is opposed highlights Washington's ambiguity concerning the fight against terrorism in Syria. The only hypothetical point of agreement made public covers a future joint coordination to hit Al Nusra Front and Daesh; although the day after the meeting between Kerry and Lavrov, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter promptly denied the agreement, confirming that the US and Russia have different goals in Syria.

The meaning behind this statement leaves little doubt. Washington is unable — or, worse, does not want — to give up on the terrorists it supports in Syria against Assad, and has no intention of abandoning the idea of changing the government of Syria or tearing the country apart.

As evidence of US involvement in Syria on the side of the terrorists, a few days ago an important event occurred in Al-Rai in northern Syria in a town located on the border with Turkey and recently occupied by Ankara with the help of Islamist FSA/I Nusra troops.

A dozen American special forces soldiers present in the Syrian town alongside «moderate rebels» were forced to flee as a result of explicit threats to their lives from their theoretical «allies». A complete short-circuit. The worldview of FSA/I Nusra does not allow it to fight alongside those whom they clearly define as «infidels» (in reality those who finance and arm them.)

The idea that the whole thing was staged, or a media stunt to distance the most radical elements from US troops, was blown away by the news coming from Deir ez-Zor a few hours later.

In Syria on September 17 at 5 pm local time, 2 Danish F-16s, along with 2 Australian or American A-10s and a British Reaper drone, attacked and struck four times positions of the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in Deir ez-Zor, killing 62 soldiers and injuring more than 100, also causing considerable material damage. Shortly afterwards, Daesh advanced on the locations attacked in Jabal Al Tahrdah that had previously surrounded the government positions (the town of Deir ez-Zor has been under siege by ISIS for four years).

The immediate response of Moscow and Damascus was to declare Washington a supporter of Daesh terrorists, while sources in the US State Department offered that it was a mistake, there supposedly having never been any intention to deliberately target the SAA.

Whatever reading one gives to this incident, the US was at the very least guilty of not coordinating with Moscow its attacks on Daesh, a charge Russian diplomacy immediately delivered at the United Nations in an emergency meeting requested by them. The hysteria of American diplomacy expressed by Samantha Power, the US ambassador to the United Nations, stands out. Without even being present at the intervention of the Russian representative, she preferred to organize a press conference accusing Moscow of exploiting the dead in Syria on account of «a simple American mistake».

It is clear that the US and its allies have dug a hole out of which they are unable to climb. They have no ability to militarily reverse the course in Syria, and they know it.

They hit towns of no strategic importance, towns in which the SAA and its allies will neither deploy troops nor materiel for a military confrontation. The locations occupied by Turkey in the north of the country do nothing to stop the siege of Aleppo and free the terrorists trapped in the city. Israel's raids on the Golan Heights do not stop the actions of Hezbollah and the SAA against Al Nusra Front and its affiliates normally protected by Tel Aviv. The attack on the Syrian government troops in Deir ez-Zor did not break down the resistance of a city under siege for four years and defended heroically by the SAA.

As mentioned earlier, the direct involvement of nations opposing Damascus is a sign of weakness and not strength. They reveal their drastically reduced ability to influence events on the ground, leaving them only able to react to facts on the ground. Witness the incident that occurred on the heights near Deir ez-Zor on September 17.

After the recapture of Aleppo and Raqqa, breaking the siege of Deir ez-Zor is one of the pillars of the strategy of Moscow, Damascus and Tehran. The Palmira operations in the past

months have been the first step of a broader operation to break the siege of the city.

Deir ez-Zor is located in the east of the country and is nearly at the center of the supply route for ISIS to Raqqa and Mosul in Iraq. With the siege of the Syrian and Russian troops on the transport routes in the north, the terrorists have a huge interest in keeping open the transit lines in the east between Raqqa Deir ez-Zor and Mosul; it is essential that they keep alive the supply chain of aid, weapons and money coming from the Americans, Jordanians, Turks, Saudis and Qataris.

A few days before the American strike, the airport of Deir ez-Zor was used to land and deploy a contingent made up of a thousand newly trained Syrian soldiers and other Iranian groups, ready to engage in the upcoming operations to break the siege.

Facing these facts already achieved on the ground, the United States decided to take reckless and dangerous actions in reaction.

Ignoring all international norms and every principle of common sense, hoping to achieve beneficial results on the battlefield, the International Coalition (IC) decided to send two F-16s, two A-10s, and a drone to hit SAA positions situated on the hills of Jabal al-Thardah. Hitting the government positions in Jabal, the Americans hoped to encourage the advance of Daesh to take control of the strategic hill, which is what promptly occurred.

The hills of Jabal al-Thardah are strategic because they offer a unique view on the airport adjacent Deir ez-Zor under the control of Damascus. American strategists imagined the action would assist ISIS in conquering SAA positions. In this way they would then be able to hit the runways of the airport from the al-Thardah mountains, thereby preventing the SAA from providing reinforcements to liberate the city and from there shut down the terrorists' communication links between Iraq and Syria.

The hopes and plans of Daesh, shared by the Americans, vanished shortly afterwards following the intervention of Syrian government troops assisted by the Russian Air Force, who quickly regained the abandoned positions.

Washington had yet again reacted violently when faced with an accomplished fact, namely incoming reinforcements for the liberation of the city. It is also interesting to analyze the secondary arguments that probably pushed Washington to put this plan into action. In the minds of strategists in Washington, confused and disheartened by their continuing failures, it continues to attempt to provoke a reaction from Damascus, Tehran or Moscow in the face of such senseless actions.

This explanation also applies to the actions of Israel and Turkey in Syria. The logic behind this reasoning is the following: if Syria, Russia and Iran were ever to react to one of the endless provocations, this would justify an even tougher response, paving the way for an escalation of the conflict. A sterile tactic that does not work and does not bear any fruit, let us remember the attitude of Moscow in the affair in Donbass and Ukraine in particular.

Another reason that may have impelled Washington to engage in direct action against the SAA is the lack of confidence held by terrorists in their «friendly» nations. The expulsion of US Special Forces in northern Syria is symptomatic of frustration that Nusra/Daesh/FSA troops are building up in the face of continuous defeats.

However, the main motivation behind this unprecedented challenge remains the attempt to

sabotage the ceasefire agreement signed recently. The United States feels its hand has been forced by terms established elsewhere, namely in Damascus and Moscow.

They feel in a corner and in a deep hole.

They obtained the obligation of confidentiality for the document, but this does nothing but damage their strategy, showing how the White House is concerned not to let its allies and terrorists in the field know the terms of what has been agreed.

The strategic long-term vision of Moscow on the Syrian conflict.

Prevailing as a basis of the Kremlin's reasoning is a realist and diplomatic approach that endeavors to avoid a direct military confrontation with the United States. At the same time, there is the awareness that such conflict could occur, and so preparations are made for this contingency.

Putin and his advisers would prefer to keep the United States bound by a pact signed and guaranteed by the United Nations. With the US presidential elections approaching, and the possibility of a Clinton presidency, it is easy to assume that the conflict could quickly escalate. With a peace plan and an agreement to stop the hostilities signed by Kerry-Obama, everything would be more complicated for Clinton and the neocons.

They would be forced to find plausible and justifiable grounds to invalidate the deal before the whole world. The consequences would be devastating, with a further loss of credibility and international support (excluding allies), being further proof in the eyes of the world demonstrating US failure to respect any agreements made.

The plan to stop hostilities is a possibility worth exploring by Moscow. Were it to work, it could start a serious discussion on ending the conflict and decreasing the violence.

Anyway, it serves to show Moscow's effective tactic in revealing the true intent of the United States in Syria, namely to overthrow Assad at any cost and by any method, including terrorism.

In this regard, there is another scenario, much less diplomatic, much more militaristic, which is something that Moscow has always tried to avoid; and that is the prospect of a direct confrontation with the United States.

It is also possible that a red line for Moscow was crossed by Washington's actions on September 17. An idea is floating around, and has so far only been discussed informally, in regards to the possible creation of a no-fly zone controlled by the Russians and Syrians together, barring from Syrian skies aircraft of the international coalition.

Following recent military and diplomatic developments, Moscow could declare Syrian skies off-limits to the US Air force, denying that precious method of reconnaissance with drones that directly assists friendly terrorists in the field.

With two months to the presidential elections and Obama completely overwhelmed by events, a decision of this significance would shatter American plans and be a strong and clear signal that Russia will no longer tolerate the ambiguity of the United States and would rather consider the US an integral part of the terrorist front, with the attendant consequences.

In such a hypothetical scenario, it would be good that someone close to the POTUS repeat to him a concept. No one knows if Moscow is willing to go as far as declaring Syrian skies a no-go zone for US aircraft, but in the event that this occurs, it is important to know that a violation of this no-fly zone would be met by S-400 batteries, ready to disintegrate enemy aircraft, including American ones.

Does Obama want to be remembered as the president who chose to violate a hypothetical no-fly zone in Syria, sparking apocalyptic scenarios? The choice is his, and hopefully he is still able to put to a stop the possible consequences that millions of US citizens would face stemming from a misstep on his part.

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