

The U.S. and Syria: Facts you should know

by

Joyce Chediak

on

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The following timeline reviews the progression of U.S.-NATO intervention in Syria and counteracts the Big Lie in the corporate media aimed at preparing open imperialist military aggression against the Syrian people.

Sanctions follow establishing opposition

- Washington has funneled money to a right-wing Syrian opposition group since at least 2005.
(Washington Post, April 16, 2011)

- The U.S. reopened its embassy in Damascus in January 2011 after six years. This was no thaw in relations. The new ambassador, Robert S. Ford, who served until October 2011, is a protégé of John Negroponte, who organized death squads in El Salvador in the 1970s and in Iraq while ambassador there in 2004-05. There terror squads killed tens of thousands. Ford served directly under Negroponte at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.
- Ford "played a central role in laying the groundwork within Syria as well as establishing contacts with opposition groups." Two months after he arrived in Damascus, the armed insurgency began. (Global Research, May 28)
- Armed opposition to Bashar al-Assad began in March 2011 in Daraa, a small town on the Jordanian border. Mass protest movements usually start in large population centers. Later, Saudi Arabia admitted sending weapons to the opposition via Jordan. (RT, March 13)
- The U. S. and its NATO allies used grassroots protests in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere as a cover to build support for right-wing insurgencies whose goal was not to help the Syrian people but to bring Syria into the pro-imperialist camp. Any excesses or mistakes by the Assad government were not the real issue.
- The Arab League, European Union and U.S. begin imposing economic sanctions, a form of warfare, against Syria in November 2011 on the pretext of stopping state-sanctioned violence against protesters. Stepped-up sanctions and freezing of Syrian assets caused the value of the Syrian pound to drop by 50 percent against the dollar, with the cost of necessities often tripling.
- Exiles who received U.S. funding became part of the Syrian National Council. SNC's Burhan Ghalioun said he would open up Syria to the West, end Syria's strategic relationship with Iran (and with the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance), and realign Syria with the reactionary Arab regimes in the Gulf. (Wall Street Journal, Dec. 2, 2011)

U.S. and NATO escalate involvement

- Ex-CIA agent Philip Giraldi admitted that the U.S. was involved in Syria and laid out the U.S. plan: "NATO is already clandestinely engaged in the Syrian conflict, with Turkey taking the lead as U.S. proxy. Ankara's foreign minister, Ahmet Davitoglu, has openly admitted that his country is prepared to invade as soon as there is agreement among the Western allies to do so. The intervention would be based on humanitarian principles, to defend the civilian population based on the *responsibility to protect* doctrine that was invoked to justify Libya." (theamericanconservative.com, Dec. 19, 2011)
- Giraldi continued: "Unmarked NATO warplanes are arriving at Turkish military bases close to ... the Syrian border, delivering weapons from the late Muammar Gaddafi's arsenals as well as volunteers from the Libyan Transitional National Council who are experienced in pitting local volunteers against trained soldiers. ... French and British special forces trainers are on the ground, assisting the Syrian rebels while the CIA and U.S. Spec Ops are providing communications equipment and intelligence. ...
- "The frequently cited United Nations report that more than 3,500 civilians have been killed by Assad's soldiers is based largely on rebel sources and is uncorroborated. Likewise, accounts of mass defections from the Syrian Army and pitched battles between deserters and loyal soldiers appear to be a fabrication, with few defections being confirmed independently. Syrian government claims that it is being assaulted by rebels who are armed, trained, and financed by foreign governments are more true than false."
- The "Free Syrian Army" has rear bases in Turkey, is funded by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and is made up of defecting Syrian soldiers. Spiegel Online sites a source in Beirut who reports seeing "*hundreds of foreign fighters* who have attached themselves to the FSA. (Feb. 15)
- The U.N.-mandated commission of inquiry, in its February 2012 report, documented torture, taking of hostages, and executions by armed opposition members.

- The first heavy fighting in Syria's capital, Damascus, started in March. Pipelines were blown up, and huge explosions ripped through intelligence and security buildings in Christian areas on March 16, killing at least 27 people. The Syrian government charged then that terrorist attacks supported from abroad have been responsible for eight car bomb attacks since December, killing 328 and wounding 657. This got little Western media attention.

- Human Rights Watch on March 20 accused armed Syrian opposition members of "Kidnappings, the use of torture and executions ... of security force members, individuals identified as members of government-supported militias, and individuals identified as government allies and supporters."

- In the Baba Amr neighborhood of Homs, the armed opposition has formed its own laws, courts and death squads, according to Spiegel Online. Abu Rami, an opposition commander in Baba Amir, interviewed by Spiegel, said in the city of Homs his group has executed between 200 and 250 people. (March 29)

U.N. steps in

- Former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan went to Syria in March at the behest of the U.N. and Arab League to put together a peace proposal. But Annan and the U.N. are not impartial. Annan is an architect of the "responsibility to protect" doctrine, cited by former CIA agent Giraldi as the planned pretext for intervention in Syria. The U.N. endorsed this doctrine under Annan's tenure.

- In 2004, Annan gave U.N. approval to the U.S., French and Canadian intervention that deposed Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Annan's stated reasons were the same then as now in Syria: an alleged impending "humanitarian catastrophe." Annan provided a similar U.N. cover for France to tighten its colonial grasp on the Ivory Coast in 2006. In Syria, Annan's calls for a Syrian government ceasefire and for outside "humanitarian" aid are really calls for foreign intervention.

- Syria agreed to an Annan-brokered ceasefire March 27. The opposition refused. While the Western heads of state and the corporate media heaped blame on Assad for "not honoring" the ceasefire, the West kept arming the opposition.

- What the U.S. government really thought of the ceasefire was revealed by Robert Grenier, former director of the CIA's Counter-Terrorism Center, who called upon those who would "help" Syria "to climb metaphorically into the ring and dirty themselves," adding, "what the situation needs is not high-minded sentiments, but effective, lethal aid." (Al Jazeera, March 29)

- As the imperialists "climbed into the ring," they continued to blame Assad. Speaking at an anti-Assad "Friends of Syria" meeting in Istanbul on April 1, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Assad had "defiled" the ceasefire. She called for Damascus to unilaterally stop fighting and withdraw from areas of heavy right-wing infiltration. She said the U.S. had pledged at least \$25 million in "nonlethal" aid to the Syrian opposition, which included satellite communication equipment.

- By May, the reactionaries "have begun receiving significantly more and better weapons ... paid for by Persian Gulf nations and coordinated ... by the U.S." (Washington Post, May 15) "The Syrian rebels have received their first *third generation* anti-tank weapons. They are supplied by Saudi and Qatari intelligence agencies following a secret message from President Barack Obama." (debkafile.com, May 22)

The Houla massacre

- Right before a scheduled visit to Syria by Annan, news broke of a horrible massacre of 108 people in Houla on May 25, which included whole families and as many as 48 children. Headlines worldwide blamed the Syrian government, and all Western capitals called for increased sanctions and more international pressure on Assad.

- By May 27, the imperialists had coordinated their "international outrage" and expelled Syrian

diplomats from the U.S., the Netherlands, Australia, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria and Canada.

- The U.N. Security Council reacted to the massacre — with no investigation as to who was responsible — by unanimously condemning Syria for allegedly using tanks and artillery after agreeing to a ceasefire. Ignored were statements from the Assad government that it was not responsible. A closer look showed this was the case.

- Marat Musin, reporting for Russia's ANNA News, was in Houla and interviewed witnesses right after the massacre. Musin determined that the massacre was committed by the so-called Free Syrian Army, not the Assad forces. His report concluded: "The attack was carried out by a unit of armed fighters from Rastan, in which more than 700 gunmen were involved. They brought the city under their control and began with a cleansing action against loyalist [pro-Assad] families, including elderly people, women and also children. The dead were presented to ... the U.N. and the *international community* as victims of the Syrian army." (May 31) The conservative German newspaper, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, corroborated the ANNA report on June 7.

- Residents knew many of the killers by name and identified them as local criminal elements now working for the FSA. (Syria News, May 31) Anti-Assad forces then posed as villagers and invited the U.N. observers in. Some put on uniforms of the Syrian soldiers they had killed and said they were defectors.

- A widely shown photo of dozens of shrouded bodies, which the BBC first presented as the aftermath of Houla, was really taken by photographer Marco di Lauro in Iraq in March 2003.

- BBC world news editor Jon Williams admitted in his blog June 7 that there was no evidence whatsoever to identify either the Syrian Army or Alawite militias as the perpetrators of the May 25 massacre. United Kingdom's Channel 4 senior reporter Alex Thomson said June 7 that the opposition led him into a line of fire and tried to get him killed by Syrian military forces so it would "look bad" for Assad.

- There has been no independent investigation of Houla to date, yet at a June 7 meeting, Annan and current U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon again made statements putting the responsibility for the Houla massacre on Assad.

- Major General Robert Mood, head of the U.N. Supervision Mission in Syria, suspended patrols of the 300-member team on June 16, citing "spiraling violence in restive areas." The suspension was right before the G-20 Summit in Mexico, providing another opportunity for imperialism to criticize Assad.

- In initial remarks, Annan called the Houla massacre the "tipping point." The deaths at Houla have been used by the U.S. and NATO to more aggressively and openly organize for Assad's overthrow. U.S. officials and Arab intelligence officers admit that the CIA is in southern Turkey funneling weapons to the FSA. It is also there to "make new sources and recruit people." (New York Times, June 21)

- As a result, "The onetime ragtag militias of the Syrian opposition are developing into a more effective fighting force with the help of an increasingly sophisticated network of activists here in southern Turkey that is smuggling crucial supplies across the border including weapons, communication gear, field hospitals and even salaries for soldiers who defect. The network reflects an effort to forge an opposition movement ... that together can not only defeat ... Assad but also replace his government." (New York Times, June 26)