

THE HOULA MASSACRE

U.S. Military, Russia, Reject Obama's Drive for Syria War

by Michele Steinberg and Jeffrey Steinberg

June 3—The people of the Syrian town of Houla were not killed by the Syrian government's tanks. Period.

The establishment of that simple fact, thanks to the emergency actions of the Russian government to call a full session of the United Nations Security Council, and to the statements and briefing to the Council given by Norwegian Gen. Robert Mood, head of the UN Observer Mission in Syria, during several crucial hours on Sunday, May 27, is what stood in the way of full-scale war between "the West," led by the United Kingdom and its puppet Barack Obama, and Russia. The confrontation with Russia and China is the aim of the Western powers, crippled by the meltdown of their trans-Atlantic financial system and desperate to hold onto their power, and the continuing boiling tensions over Syria and Iran are the likely trigger.

In the face of global hysteria over the gruesome scenes of the Houla massacre, actions by Russia on May 27 prevented a British-U.S.-French effort to blame the massacre on Syria, and end the mission of UN Special Envoy Kofi Annan that seeks to put a stop to the violence, and lead to a negotiated political settlement between Assad and the opposition. The British-U.S.-French bloc had already written a letter (which has not been made public) that reportedly would condemn Syria and prepare the way for a Libya-style UN military action.

In brief, Russia's convening of the UN Security

Council, with a briefing from General Mood, resulted in an new letter that *does not* blame the Syrian government for the killings, but condemns the violence in the most uncompromising terms and calls for a full investigation of the incident. But the temporary success at the UN on May 27 does not prevent an extra-UN Libya-style war against Syria from being launched.

Lyndon LaRouche stressed on May 30, that the Russians have foiled the British and Obama with respect to Syria. But the danger is that Obama and his British controllers will "manage to panic people into saying, there's a *casus belli* in Syria or someplace like that." And, "once they start to operate on a *casus belli* assumption, they're on the edge of actually going to thermonuclear war, or they're going to steps which will lead to thermonuclear war." Noting the desperation of the British and Obama, LaRouche added, "We're on the edge, except for what the Russians did in particular in this case." Russia "called the bluff" of the British and Obama by exposing the lies about the Houla massacre, and the Anglo-Americans backed off, but, LaRouche warned, "the pattern is increasingly, less and less tendency to back off, more and more tendency to go all the way. We are very close to a thermonuclear event."

So committed is this British faction to war, that Obama, through his Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice,

on May 30, made the threat against Russia explicit. Rice threatened that if Russia does not capitulate to Obama's British policy of regime-change in Syria, other members of the UN Security Council, working with other members of the international community, will resort to action outside the authority of the United Nations.

After the meeting of the Security Council, in which Kofi Annan delivered a briefing on Syria, Rice said that the most probable scenario is "that the violence escalates, the conflict spreads and intensifies, it reaches a higher degree of severity, it involves countries in the region, it takes on increasingly sectarian forms, and we have a major crisis not only in Syria but in the region. The Council's unity is exploded, the Annan plan is dead, and this becomes a proxy conflict with arms flowing in from all sides. And members of this Council and members of the international community are left with the option only of having to consider whether they're prepared to take actions outside of the Annan plan and the authority of this Council."

The following day, Rice went so far as to condemn Russia for delivering arms to Syria, even while admitting that there is nothing illegal about this, since there is no arms embargo against Syria.

Rice is voicing the intent of the British warmongers. This was the message delivered by Obama's current puppet-master Tony Blair as far back as 1999, when Blair laid out the doctrine of abolishing national sovereignty through "humanitarian intervention." It is the message of the "Responsibility To Protect" (R2P) mafia, of which Rice, Samantha Powers, head of the Atrocities Prevention Board at the White House, and newly confirmed Assistant Secretary of Defense Derek Chollet, are all members. It is a British war doctrine, and it is currently the doctrine of President Obama.

It is only due to the resistance by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, backed up by the ranks of retired high-level military officers, diplomats, and intelligence officials, that keeps the Obama Administration from launching that world war—starting with an outlaw attack on Syria or Iran, without the approval of the UN Security Council or of the U.S. Congress. This is a danger that will not go away—regardless of concessions by the governments of Syria and Iran—unless it is unequivocally defeated by removing Obama from office, and cancelling all efforts to replace the UN Charter with atrocities like the R2P sham.

Russia Responds

Less than 24 hours after Rice's threats against Syria—and Russia and China, which had vetoed the attempted Syrian regime-change resolution in February 2012—she was contradicted by U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, acting under apparent pressure from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to repudiate Rice and declare point blank that there will be no military action against Syria without approval of the Security Council. A reporter traveling with Panetta on his way to Singapore, confronted the Defense Secretary with the question of whether the U.S. would go to war "outside of the UN." "No, I cannot envision that," Panetta said, although he still insisted that "all options" remain on the table for "any contingency." As Washington and Moscow both know, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led by Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey, have been working tirelessly behind the scenes, and with carefully crafted public statements, to do their utmost to prevent any action that would lead to thermonuclear confrontation with Russia.

But Russia is taking the Obama-British actions and statements about Syria very seriously, with almost daily statements from the top leadership to prevent another British war.

On June 2, Russian President Vladimir Putin, while touring European capitals, continued to push back hard against any kind of foreign military intervention in Syria. During meetings in Berlin and Paris with Chancellor Angela Merkel and President François Hollande, Putin acknowledged that "We are seeing nascent elements of a civil war today. This is extremely dangerous." But he also categorically opposed outside military force, warning, "You cannot do anything by force." At the end of their meeting in Berlin, Merkel acknowledged that she and Putin agreed that the only way forward was to press for the Annan mission to succeed.

In his press conference in Paris with Hollande, the differences were more pronounced, after Hollande said that "no solution is possible without the departure of Bashar al-Assad." Putin said that sanctions don't work, and that Assad's ouster was not the solution. "Do you think that just by removing the president there will be happiness across the country? Just look at what has happened in Libya."

As Putin was touring Europe, the Russian Foreign Ministry released a strongly worded statement, blaming foreign countries, unnamed, for the Houla massa-

cre. The killings, the statement charged, “showed what can result from supplying rebels with financial aid, and smuggling modern weaponry to them, hiring foreign mercenaries and flirting with different kinds of extremists.” Then, on June 3, the Russian Foreign Ministry condemned a U.S.-authored resolution passed by the UN Human Rights Council last week: “The text of the UN Human Rights Council resolution goes beyond its mandate and actually runs counter to the UN Security Council Statement of May 27,” the Ministry said in a statement.

“The attempts by some countries to name the culprits without waiting for the findings of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) regarding the Houla events and therefore exert pressure on the UN Security Council, and also exploit the tragedy in their own interests and foil the implementation of the plan of the UN and LAS special envoy Kofi Annan, cause very serious concerns,” the statement said. “Our country speaks against involving the UN Human Rights Council for ‘triggering’ a use-of-force scenario in Syria,” the statement said. The final resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council denounced “solely the [Syrian] government” for the massacre, the statement added, and also noted that Russia, China, and Cuba had cast “no” votes at the Human Rights Council meeting.

What Happened in Houla?

When General Mood reported that it had not been Syrian tank fire or artillery shelling that killed the Houla victims, including young children, but that they had been shot at close range, stabbed, and hacked to death, the effect on those who heard it was like a high-powered stun gun. Mood’s statements, broadcast instantly on Arab media, were followed by those of Russian diplomats, who warned that the killings might have been the work of “third parties” and “foreign interveners.”

At the closed-door UNSC meeting, Mood added that the evidence was “murky” as to who had carried out the brutal killings. In his answers to questions posed to him by Security Council members, the general elaborated on statements he had earlier made to Al-Jazeera in an interview.

Asked by Al-Jazeera how the UN believed the people had died, Mood said, “We have observed that the impact in the area were from a range of weapons—

small arms, rifles, machine guns, artillery shells, tank shells. . . . The circumstances that led to the tragic deaths are still unclear. . . . The specific circumstances will become clearer in the coming hours and the coming days as we have UN teams on the ground that will be digging in. . . .” Asked by Al-Jazeera, “Is this a massacre?” he replied, “It is too early to determine the exact circumstances that led to these tragic killings. . . . What I have learned [here in Syria] is that I must not, should not, jump to conclusions.”

Mood added that, “understandably” some witnesses had blamed the government, and that other witnesses blamed opposition terrorists. “I’m going to await my firm conclusions until I’ve seen all the material that has been collected by my observers on the ground and until I have seen all the reporting. . . . Whatever we do, we need to stick to reporting the facts. Both facts are going to be reported when we have clarified in the coming hours and days. . . .” The killing of 34 children is an attack on the future of Syria, and therefore, “whoever started, whoever responded, and whoever took part in the deplorable act of violence, that is unacceptable.”

By the time Mood had spoken to Al-Jazeera, the Syrian government had deplored the killings, reported the same numbers of dead that had been released by the UN, and announced that it would conduct a full investigation of the incidents. The Syrian government attributed the killings to foreign-backed opposition terrorists—but, as in the past, the Anglo-American-Saudi-led Western propaganda machines kept churning out the same script—blaming Syria, and lying about the initial findings, not only of the Syrians, but also those of the UN observers.

According to U.S. intelligence sources, the U.S. intelligence community knows that the regular Syrian military did not carry out the killings in Houla. The sources also confirm that neo-Salafi killers, backed and paid by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, are running rampant in Syria, carrying out killings of high-level Syrian government loyalists in the military and political arenas. The only “evidence” that the killings were not done by the Syrian opposition, according to one high-level American intelligence source, was that the opposition “denied that they were responsible, and we believe them.” The same source added, however, that U.S. institutions have concluded that the only solution to the Syria crisis at present is the suc-

cess of the Annan mission.

On May 31, the Syrian government's investigative committee issued its preliminary report on the Houla massacre. Gen. Qassem Jamal Suleiman, head of the investigation, held a press conference at the Syrian Foreign Ministry to provide some details of the investigation to date. The preliminary findings were also presented to General Mood.

According to General Suleiman, the massacre was preceded by an attack by armed rebels on five law enforcement posts around Houla. He said that 600-800 well-armed men gathered in Houla after the May 25 Friday prayers, and launched the attacks on the law enforcement posts in an effort to secure the area. While the Syrian police were pinned down in a battle with the rebels, who had machine guns, anti-tank rockets, and mortars, other armed rebels carried out the massacre, which he said began with the targeting of the family of People's Assembly member Abdul-Moa'ti Mashlab, but soon extended to other families.

The details provided by Suleiman were consistent with the initial report delivered on May 27 by Dr.

Bashar Jaafari, Syria's Ambassador to the United Nations, immediately following the Security Council emergency session. Dr. Jaafari condemned the massacre, announced the investigation, and described the attacks on the police posts and the deployment of heavily armed anti-regime forces.

There has been no investigative body that has contradicted the Syrian government's report of the horrific massacre. Instead, there has only been a rush to judgment—attempts to bulldoze a regime-change war against Syria by whatever means possible, including the corrupt effort by the UN Human Rights Council to use its powers to produce a London-controlled farce of an investigation to try to force the UN Security Council to declare war on Bashar al-Assad.

Russia has exposed the fraud of the Human Rights Council, and earlier efforts to distort what is happening in Syria. It has warned that pre-emptive wars can lead to world wars. It is folly to ignore the reality of which the Russian leaders speak.

As LaRouche warned this week, with the Obama/British policy, "We are on the edge ... very close to a thermonuclear event."

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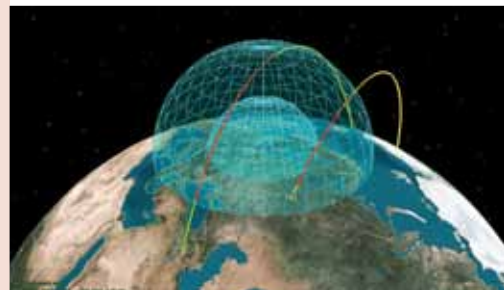
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