

'Guns of July' Danger as Syria Remains Hair-Trigger

by Jeffrey Steinberg

June 2—Two events over the past week further underscore that the Syrian crisis, now well into its second year, has become a hair-trigger for a general war that could quickly turn into a thermonuclear war of extinction.

First, a nasty disinformation operation was run last week, claiming that Russia had already deployed S-300 advanced air defense systems to Syria. President Bashar al-Assad gave an interview to a Lebanese TV station affiliated with Hezbollah, and reported that Russia had delivered a new shipment of weapons to Syria, as part of a long-standing arms contract between the two nations. The news reports, released in advance of the airing of the interview, claimed that Russia had delivered the S-300s. The story went out internationally, despite the fact that Assad was misquoted in the leaked news accounts and, in fact, Russia had *not* delivered the air defense components.

Israel has threatened to launch preemptive military strikes before Syria could deploy the S-300s. An Israeli attack against the Russian air-defense systems would be a potential trigger for a direct conflict between the West and Russia.

Col. W. Patrick Lang, a retired U.S. Army officer, who ran the Defense Intelligence Agency's Middle East and human intelligence programs, warned that Israel's threats could trigger world war. In his widely read website, Sic Sempter Tyrannis, he wrote last week:

"What a great way to start WW3 this would be. Israel attacks Russian missile deliveries, kills Russians, Russians attack Israel... Presto! The Guns of July. Guess who would lose the most in that deal. What the hell are we playing at?"

He added a scathing attack against both Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Secretary of State John Kerry for provoking the danger of world war: "And then there are the two Johns. McCain can't help himself. He has become a raving madman bent on war everywhere against anyone available. Kerry is just pathetic, a bumbling, conceited fool who thinks charm is the touchstone that will open all doors for him."

Within 24 hours, the international media was forced to acknowledge that President Assad had not made any mention of the S-300s. Indeed, Russian military industry officials made clear that no such delivery had taken place, and that furthermore, there was no prospect of S-300 deliveries before the middle of the Summer, at the earliest.

U.S. intelligence officials independently reported that Russian officials had pledged that they would withhold the S-300s until after the upcoming Geneva II summit on Syria, co-sponsored by Washington and Moscow. (No date has yet been set for the summit.)

Nonetheless, the disinformation could have provided Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the pretext to attack Syrian targets, thereby escalating

the ongoing conflict, and preempting any possibility of the Geneva II summit from succeeding.

Sarin Seized from Rebels

The second incident this past week was the raid by Turkish intelligence on a safehouse in the southern city of Adana, near the Syrian border. Seven members of the jihadist group al-Nusra were arrested, and two kilograms of deadly sarin gas were seized in the raid. Not only was the fact that the Syrian rebels were in possession of chemical weapons exposed, but the raid also preempted a terrorist attack that would have been potentially blamed on the Syrian government, providing a *casus belli* for a Western military intervention.

According to one senior U.S. intelligence source, the agreement to crack down on al-Nusra and other jihadist factions of the Syrian opposition was reached during Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's mid-May visit to Washington.

Had either a chemical warfare attack, or another Israeli strike on Syrian targets, taken place, the entire region could have erupted in a larger war, potentially drawing in the United States and Russia. Any chance for a successful Geneva II conference would have been wiped out altogether.

These near-miss incidents underscore just how fragile the situation is in the Greater Middle East. On June 14, Iranians will go to the polls in presidential elections. Sometime soon after that, serious talks will resume between Iran and P5+1 (UN Security Council Permanent Five plus Germany).

The Russian Response

The Russian leadership is responding, in its way, to the Syrian crisis, by moving ahead with modernization of its strategic nuclear arsenal. And, for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has reconstituted a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, just this week, President Vladimir Putin announced plans to expand Russia's fleet of nuclear weapons-armed submarines; for the first time since the end of the Cold War, Russia will deploy nuclear-armed submarines to the waters of the Southern Hemisphere.

These are not acts of aggression by Moscow. They are measures aimed at making clear that Russia will not abandon Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)—unless it is part of a deal to revive President Ronald

Reagan's and Lyndon LaRouche's proposal for joint Russian-American deployment of a strategic defense system (SDI) to render nuclear weapons obsolete.

1914 Redux

While a "realist" faction in Washington is committed to working with both Russia and China on a war-avoidance agreement, initially centered on the upcoming Geneva II meeting, British-allied Zionist, neoconservative, and "humanitarian" interventionist factions in the U.S. are working overtime to sabotage the initiatives. They have strong backing from the Cameron government in Britain, the Hollande government in France, and the Netanyahu government in Israel.

Both Britain and France are pressing for the immediate arming of the Syrian rebels, and Israel is threatening military action against the (so far, non-existent) Russian S-300 missiles. *Ha'aretz* reported this week that senior Israeli diplomats are putting out the line that Russia would not retaliate if Israel bombed storage sites of the S-300s, as long as no Russian technicians were killed, and Russia had already been paid by Syria for the air-defense systems. This is brinksmanship of the most insane form.

Colonel Lang is not the only astute military analyst to draw the parallels between the current situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and that in the Balkans in the Summer of 1914, on the eve of World War I. Lyndon LaRouche has repeatedly warned that the Middle East crisis could trigger thermonuclear war between the major world powers, and that such a war would likely be a war of extinction for humanity as a whole. Between the U.S. and Russian fleets of nuclear-armed submarines, a global conflict could be triggered within a matter of moments.

This is the danger emanating from the British Crown. With the trans-Atlantic financial system on the brink of meltdown, some lunatic factions in the British oligarchy are contemplating a war provocation, in a desperate attempt to save their dying system, and, at the same time, fulfilling their Malthusian objective of drastically reducing the world's population.

In the coming weeks, President Barack Obama is scheduled to meet separately with Russian President Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Both meetings will likely take place prior to the Geneva II meeting on Syria. If these June diplomatic initiatives fail, we could be facing a "Guns of July" existential crisis for all of mankind.