

Obama's War Policies Spark Resistance from Many Sides

by Jeffrey Steinberg

July 21—The Russian government is reviewing Edward Snowden's application for temporary political asylum, and is about to move him from the transit lounge at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport to a facility where pending asylum applicants are housed. While President Obama has threatened to cancel a meeting with President Putin in St. Petersburg in retaliation for Putin's handling of the "Snowden Affair," the Russian action comes in the context of a much broader revolt against the policies of the Obama Administration.

A Swedish professor, Stefan Svallfors, has nominated Snowden for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize, writing to the Committee that Snowden's courageous actions have made the world a safer place by revealing illegal American espionage activities that jeopardize world peace.

- Former President Jimmy Carter has praised Snowden for revealing illegal operations by U.S. intelligence agencies, carried out with White House approval.

- American diplomats, retired flag officers, and Members of Congress are demanding that the Obama Administration seriously pursue diplomacy with the Iranian government of the newly elected President Hassan Rouhani. A letter from 29 retired diplomats, admirals, and generals calls on the Administration to immediately begin bilateral talks with the new government, to parallel the anticipated resumption of the talks between Iran and the UN Permanent Five Security Council members plus Germany (P5+1) over the Iranian nuclear program. The letter was signed by former top State Department official Thomas Pickering; Gen. Joseph Hoar, former

head of the Central Command; Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell; and Ambassador Chas Freeman.

- Several days after the open letter to President Obama was released, a petition signed by over 100 Members of Congress from both parties similarly called for serious dialogue.

The Israeli Factor

These actions were intended to push back against a renewed campaign by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to force the Obama Administration to take military action against Iran. Earlier this year, when Obama visited Israel, he and Netanyahu reaffirmed an earlier agreement that the United States would use all means at its disposal, including military force, to block Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapons capability. Netanyahu claims that Iran has already reached the threshold of obtaining a bomb, and that prolonged negotiations will assure that Iran "goes nuclear."

To press the case, Netanyahu has appointed a new Ambassador to the United States, Ron Dermer. Dermer is an American-born, rabid neoconservative, who was sent to Israel in 1997 to promote the "Clean Break" plan to eradicate the Oslo Accords and press for regime change in Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Dermer is a protégé of the "Prince of Darkness," Richard Perle, and has been an aide to Netanyahu and to prominent Israeli hawk Natan Sharansky since renouncing his American citizenship in 2005. A senior U.S. intelligence source has



Gen. Martin Dempsey, JCS chairman, is pulling no punches in his opposition to a U.S. military involvement in Syria.

confirmed to *EIR* that Dermer's assignment in Washington will be to rally neocon support for military action against Iran before Obama leaves office.

Drawing the Lines in Washington

With "humanitarian interventionists" Susan Rice and Samantha Power now in critical positions in the Obama inner circle, the White House is also contemplating direct military involvement in the Syrian crisis.

There are also hints of a rotten deal between the White House and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). McCain, who was a harsh critic of Rice and Power, following the Sept. 11, 2012 terrorist assault on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, in which Amb. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were killed, has suddenly thrown his support behind Power's nomination as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and has supported recent statements by Rice on Syria.

Rice, in her valedictory speech at the UN Security Council, assailed Russia and China for blocking military action against Syria's Assad government and accused the UN of failure to act to prevent genocide.

In Senate confirmation hearings last week for Gen. Martin Dempsey, who has been nominated for a second term as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, McCain launched a vitriolic attack on the general for opposing U.S. military intervention in Syria, and actually placed a hold on the nomination until Dempsey answers more questions. Following the hearing, McCain and Michigan Democrat Carl Levin, the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, sent a letter to Dempsey demanding that he answer an additional series of questions, indicating his "per-

sonal" opinions about the military option against Syria.

Dempsey has played a leading role in blocking direct U.S. military involvement to overthrow the Assad government, arguing that the U.S. strategic relationship with Russia and China would be severely damaged by any such U.S. action. For Dempsey, the danger of a strategic confrontation between the United States, and Russia and China, is the greatest strategic threat, and everything must be done to maintain positive ties with the two other leading nuclear-weapon states.

To underscore the danger of a strategic confrontation between the great powers, Russian President Vladimir Putin last week presided over large military maneuvers in the Russian Far East. The maneuvers, which involved 160,000 Russian troops and sailors, were the fifth and largest of such surprise maneuvers to take place this year (and the largest since Soviet times). Russia has also accelerated deployment of new generation strategic weapon systems.

Last week, U.S. intelligence agencies confirmed that a bombing attack on a military site in northern Syria had been carried out by the Israeli Air Force, which was targeting a shipment of Russian surface-to-sea missiles. Israel has also threatened to destroy any Russian air defense systems sent to Syria, threatening a broader strategic confrontation.

In his testimony at the Senate, Dempsey acknowledged that the Joint Chiefs had recently presented President Obama with updated options for U.S. military action against Syrian targets. While he made clear that he and the Chiefs strongly oppose such direct U.S. involvement, he acknowledged that the President has the new plans on his desk and that the ultimate decision rests with the President. While Obama, under normal circumstances, would find it hard to ignore the advice of his generals, there is nothing normal about the present situation, and Obama is seriously considering U.S. military action.

McCain's assault on Dempsey can be properly understood only in the context of the pressure for the U.S. to be sucked deeper into the Syrian quagmire. The British policy of promoting a permanent sectarian war within the Islamic world, between Sunnis and Shi'ites, would be greatly advanced, were Obama to order U.S. military action against the Syrian Army and the Assad government. The "London Factor" with Obama can never be underestimated.