

Obama Steps Up War Provocations Against Russia

by Carl Osgood

Oct. 24—The surreal *opera bouffe* which is now playing out within the United States, known as the U.S. Presidential campaign, has been unsuccessful in obscuring the reality of an intensifying world crisis, a crisis deepening and worsening day-by-day. Over the recent weeks the world has witnessed a chain of events and actions which are leading toward open military conflict between the United States and Russia. The mad dog Obama Administration, striking out in several different directions simultaneously, has taken one provocative step after another, each one heightening the potential for war to erupt.

On October 22, 2016, in a discussion with associates, Lyndon LaRouche assessed the current status of Obama's intentions in the following way:

Obama probably would like to destroy everything. But perhaps at the same time, he does not think that he has the power, or his advisors suggest that he does not have the power to make an open move. Or, is he doing a surprise attack by going at a point of attack which other people are not likely to foresee. Those are the issues. A possible, crucial demonstration of action...

Only one thing is really clear on this matter. If they're trying to pretend not to start war because Obama and the British, in particular, are aware of their military weakness,

and therefore, are they going with a special kind of operation, hoping they can pull a stunt which they could not pull in terms of a normal way of getting into warfare. That's what the issue is...

We have to get to the characteristic which suggests that either Obama's ready to go, or he's cowardly. Unless you can determine those things, you don't have a strategic insight. You have to find out the nature of the condition: Are they actually doing things which indicate that they're moving to potential warfare, or are they just making noises, because that's the problem. And this involves the general idea of traps, military traps...

The question is to what degree and in what form is such a potential in place. What it is or is not acting, or seems not to be acting when it might be acting: that's what you have to look for.

Let's look it from that standpoint. Obama's in a tough situation on his side. But he's still acting. The British system and so forth are still doing these things; they have not quit. Now, if they have not quit, that means they have not surrendered. If they have not surrendered, then the war is on.

Obama Acts

Events over the recent days cohere exactly with this analysis by Mr. LaRouche. In



The White House

President Barack Obama

particular, since the time of the September 9 agreement between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on a cease fire in Aleppo, Syria, the Obama Administration has embarked on a course of events that is greatly intensifying the danger of war with Russia at the strategic level. The Obama Administration's sabotage of the Kerry/Lavrov agreement, only days after it went into effect, has been followed by unprecedented nuclear saber rattling by U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter as well as threats by Vice President Joe Biden to carry out massive cyber attacks on Russia.

Vice President Biden, in an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press" that was taped on Oct. 14, issued a threat of cyber warfare against Moscow, stating that this would "send a message" to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "He'll know it," Mr. Biden said. "And it will be at the time of our choosing. And under the circumstances that have the greatest impact." Shortly after the Biden statements were first aired, NBC News reported that the White House has tasked the CIA with developing "options" for a wide-ranging "clandestine" cyber operation designed to harass and "embarrass" the Kremlin leadership. According to the NBC reporter, however, there is doubt among some officials within the Obama Administration of whether or not such a scheme would work or even if Putin is "embarrassable."

Biden's threats followed



CC/Kelly Kline

Vice President Joseph Biden

the Oct. 7 joint statement by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, in which they asserted that the Russian Government had conducted cyber attacks on U.S. election systems, including servers and email systems of the Democratic Party. The Russians, they claim, had then leaked the content of these emails to Wikileaks and DCleaks.com. Not one shred of evidence has been presented by anyone in the Obama Administration to support these accusations. Instead, Clapper and Johnson

assert that the leaks are "consistent with the methods and motivations of Russian-directed efforts," and "are intended to interfere with the U.S. election process." However, one intelligence expert pointed out to *EIR* on Oct. 20 that the use of the word "confident" in the Clapper-Johnson statement indicates that no real evidence exists and that there is widespread disagreement in the intelligence community about who was actually responsible for the hacks.

This has not prevented the White House from issuing the threat, however. The fact that it was Biden who delivered the threat, on national television, no less, rather than anonymous U.S. sources in print, indicates that the threat comes from Barack Obama, himself.

Russian officials responded sharply to Biden's cyberwar threat. Russia Channel One featured the Biden threat as the second lead news item after the BRICS summit, reporting that "Moscow took sharp



YouTube

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper

notice of the fact that this threat was voiced at such a high political level. In the U.S.A., by the way, after Biden's statement, the media started reporting that some kind of overall answer to Russia is in preparation. What it might be, no one knows. Recently at the State Department there was talk about Russia losing more planes in Syria and sending its servicemen home in body-bags."

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov issued a statement Oct. 16, declaring, "The fact is, U.S. unpredictability and aggression keep growing, and such threats against Moscow and our country's leadership are unprecedented, because the threat is being announced at the level of the U.S. Vice President. Of

course, given such an aggressive, unpredictable line, we have to take measures to protect our interests; somehow hedge the risks. *Such unpredictability is dangerous for the whole world.*"

Konstantin Kosachov, the head of the Federation Council (upper house) Committee on International Affairs, told Russia Channel One's prime time "Vremya" news program that "This is a direct threat of the use of force by the U.S.A.; an unprecedented event. There has been nothing like this since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. This is a threat of cyber terrorism, coming from a state. It is an emergency, which should be taken up at the level of the UNSC, and which requires Russia to take all possible measures to insure its national security."

Nuclear Threats

On September 26, U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter traveled to Minot AFB in North Dakota, where, with a B-52 bomber parked behind him, he delivered a speech on U.S. nuclear deterrence and the importance of providing "options" to the President should deterrence fail. Biden asserted that the landscape has changed over the last 25 years, saying, "One way the nuclear landscape has changed: we didn't build new types of nuclear weapons or delivery systems for the last 25



DoD/U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley

Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter at Panmunjom, in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

years, but others did, at the same time that our allies in Asia, the Middle East, and NATO did not. . . so we must continue to sustain our deterrence." On Russia, he claimed "there is some doubt about Russian leaders' strategies for the weapons." He expressly called out Russia for its "recent nuclear saber-rattling" that "raises serious questions" about Moscow's commitment to the global post-Cold War nuclear posture. India and China, on the other hand, "are behaving responsibly with their nuclear enterprises."

Carter continued, "Even in 2016, deterrence still depends on perception what potential adversaries see, and therefore believe about our will and ability to act. This means that as their perceptions shift, so must our strategy and actions." A large-scale nuclear attack is not likely, the secretary said. The most likely scenario is "the unwise resort to smaller but still unprecedentedly terrible attacks, for example by Russia or North Korea, to try to coerce a conventionally superior opponent to back off or abandon an ally during a crisis. We cannot allow that to happen, which is why we're working with our allies in both regions to innovate and operate in new ways that sustain deterrence and continue to preserve strategic stability."

Therefore, according to Carter/Obama, the replacement of the entire U.S. nuclear delivery system is re-

quired, all of it, not parts of it, as some have argued, but every bit of it. “If we don’t replace these systems, quite simply they will age even more, and become unsafe, unreliable, and ineffective,” Carter said. And, if some parts of it are lost, “That would mean losing confidence in our ability to deter, which we can’t afford in today’s volatile security environment.”

In truth, Carter’s statements are worthy of the Joseph Goebbels, who, in 1939, proclaimed that the Nazi blitzkrieg against Poland was a “defensive” action to protect Germany against Polish military threats. It was the United States, under George W. Bush in 2002, who unilaterally abrogated the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, thus setting into motion the current arms buildup. It is the United States, under both Bush and Obama, which has pursued an aggressive policy of NATO military expansion into Eastern Europe, right up to the borders of Russia. It was the United States, under Obama, which sponsored the 2014 Ukraine coup d’etat against the constitutionally elected government of the Ukraine, for the purpose of bringing the Ukraine into NATO and establishing a NATO naval base in Crimea. And it is the United States today which is arming and supporting the terrorist armed forces in Syria and threatening to impose a no-fly zone to protect those terrorists, a no-fly zone which could lead directly to U.S.-Russian armed clashes.

All of Russia’s current actions must be placed within the context of the war threat coming from the Obama Administration and NATO. This is the case with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decree, just approved by the State Duma this week, suspending the U.S.-Russia plutonium disposal treaty. The Russians have specifically cited the deterioration in U.S.-Russian relations, a deterioration largely the result of U.S. actions, as a significant factor, alongside inadequate compliance by the U.S., in the decision to suspend the treaty.

In a direct response to Ash Carter’s Minot speech, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a reply on September 29, saying that Russia will have to take into account U.S. approaches on nuclear deterrence and take counter measures to ensure its national security. That reply stated, “Carter’s statement means that if Russia comes under attack from U.S. allies, the Americans will be ready to back it and threaten to use their nuclear weapons against us. We would like to think that Washington understands the meaning of such statements and their

possible consequences for international security and stability.

“It is not only their over-the-top Russophobia, which has unfortunately become of late a norm for public speeches by representatives of the outgoing administration,” the ministry said, but there is also a “serious concern over the mentioned readiness to use their nuclear potentials in case of an armed conflict with Russia, with an aim to prevent our country from a possibility to use nuclear weapons to rebuff aggression [i.e. a strategic doctrine to pre-emptively knock out any Russian “second strike” potential]... Of course we will have to keep in mind U.S. approaches and take necessary counter measures to ensure our national security.

“We note that the Pentagon chief’s belligerent rhetoric helps to a large extent clarify the real goals behind the ongoing modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said. “The strategy of pressuring Russia by force, which in the logic of its Pentagon ‘planners’ apparently means nuclear brinkmanship, will receive a more sophisticated and dangerous military-technical foundation.”

While Carter was issuing his nuclear threat, the Obama Administration was preparing to ramp up its dispute with Russia over the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Through unnamed officials and members of the U.S. Congress, the Obama administration unleashed a new torrent of accusations against Russia for alleged violations of the INF Treaty, via the *New York Times* on October 19. “Russia appears to be moving ahead with a program to produce a ground-launched cruise missile, despite the Obama administration’s protests that the weapon violates a landmark arms control agreement,” wrote the *Times*’ Michael Gordon. “American officials are now expressing concerns that Russia is producing more missiles than are needed to sustain a flight-test program, spurring fears that the Kremlin is moving to build a force that could ultimately be deployed.”

Escalating the pressure against Russia, the Obama Administration has called a meeting of the Special Verification Commission, the body set up by the treaty to deal with verification issues, despite the fact that the Commission hasn’t met since 2003.

Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Tex.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), the chairman of the House Intelli-



en.wikipedia.org

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov: "There will be no more 7-day truces, because they allow the jihadis to regroup and rearm." Here, a Russian Su-34 conducting an airstrike in Syria

gence Committee, have jumped on board the Obama war-confrontation drive. In an October 17 letter, they called on Obama to "confront Russia's violation" of the treaty. "The United States must finally impose penalties for Russia's near decade long pattern of violations that undermine this seminal arms control treaty and place it on the verge of collapse," they write. "It has now become apparent to U.S. that the situation regarding Russia's violation has worsened and Russia is now in material breach of the treaty," and the U.S. must act accordingly."

Syria Threats

The September 9 Kerry-Lavrov agreement, according to the text that was later leaked by the Associated Press, called for the separation of the U.S.-backed opposition groups from Jabhat Fateh al Sham, the group that was formerly known as the Al Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat al Nusra. The group had changed its name and formally broke with Al Qaeda in July, as a way of increasing the confusion on the ground as to who is a terrorist and who is a "moderate." Nonetheless, for a few days, at least, after the Kerry-Lavrov agreement was announced, the Obama Administration gave the appearance of joining with Russia to fight terrorists in Syria. That was blown apart, however, when U.S. and Danish warplanes bombed Syrian army positions on

hilltops outside of Deir Ezzor on September 17, killing at least 62 to 82 Syrian soldiers and wounding about 100 more. U.S. Central Command alleged in a statement that the bombing was an accident and lied outright that the U.S. military had informed the Russian command in Syria that the U.S. would be carrying out air strikes in that area. When Russia called an emergency U.N. Security Meeting that evening to discuss the U.S. attack, the Obama Administration's U.N. ambassador, Samantha Power, went ballistic

Two days later, a UN/Red Crescent humanitarian aid convoy in southwestern Aleppo province was attacked and burned, destroying 18 of the 31 trucks and killing

about 20 aid workers. The U.S. immediately blamed Russia, even though, as the Russian Defense Ministry pointed out, images of the aid convoy didn't show the kind of damage consistent with air-dropped, high explosive munitions. Following that attack, the U.S. and UK governments, with no evidence whatsoever to support their claims, launched an intense campaign to accuse Russia of committing war crimes in Syria, threatening to take Russia to the International Criminal Court, as well as a "plan B" military response to "stop the massacre of civilians."

State Department spokesman John Kirby went so far as to issue a threat against Russia, one noted by many Russian officials, saying to reporters, on September 28, that the consequences of Russia not obeying America's diktats in Syria "are that the civil war will continue in Syria, that extremists and extremists groups will continue to exploit the vacuums that are there in Syria to expand their operations, which will include, no question, attacks against Russian interests, perhaps even Russian cities, and Russia will continue to send troops home in body bags, and they will continue to lose resources—even, perhaps, more aircraft. The stability that they claim they seek in Syria will be ever more elusive..." Any illusion that the U.S. was aligning with Russia to fight terrorism in Syria was demolished by that statement, replaced by intense war

propaganda from the Obama Administration and statements from Moscow that the U.S. was actually aligned, now, with the terrorist groups.

At the Russian Foreign Ministry, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was uncompromising. There will be no more 7-day truces, because they allow the jihadis to regroup and rearm, he said, and the failure of the diplomatic track “is going on due to Washington’s inability to fulfill its obligations and promises,” and is therefore on the conscience of decisions made by the U.S. “We are outraged at the ultimatum-like tone of the signals that we are getting. Sometimes we even hear cynical threats against us and those who are really fighting terrorists in Syria. We can’t consider it anything else but de-facto support of terrorists by the U.S.” Ryabkov called Washington’s threats “an emotional breakdown amid the inability of the Obama administration to implement its part of the agreements” on Syria. “The U.S. is in fact bringing grist to the terrorists’ mill providing them with undisguised support.”

The Russian Foreign Ministry, in an October 3 statement, effectively charged Obama with being in league with the same terrorists who brought down the World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001. “In conditions when all seem to recognize that in question is a terrorist organization having direct links with Al Qaeda which committed terrific terrorist attacks in the United States 15 years ago, the Barack Obama administration is in no hurry to separate anti-government groups oriented towards Washington from it,” the ministry said. “On the contrary, it shields it by opposition groups that have formally declared their commitment to the ceasefire regime but in fact merged into it.”

The “plan B” military options, according to numerous news reports through the month of October, include a no fly zone over Aleppo and/or a safe zone in northern Syria, air or cruise missile strikes against Syrian air force bases, supplying the Western-Gulf



DoD photo/Cherie Cullen

U.S. Army Gen. David Petraeus

states-backed jihadi opposition groups with heavier weapons, including shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. Publicly, Hillary Clinton and many of her supporters in the neo-con war party are calling for the establishment of an aggressive no-fly zone over parts of Syria, the parts where the Russian air contingent is active, along with the Syrian air force. Retired General and former CIA director David Petraeus told PBS host Charlie Rose on September 29 that he thought it was “not too late” to set up a no-fly zone. “It’s

not too late to declare a safe zone. And it’s not too late to declare a no-fly zone. And indeed if the regime air force, for example, bombs folks we’re supporting or we’re concerned about, we tell them we’re going to ground your air force,” Petraeus said. During the third presidential debate on October 19, Clinton defended the idea, claiming that “A no-fly zone can save lives and hasten the end of the conflict,” adding that a larger war could be avoided with proper planning. Neither she nor Petraeus really addressed the question of what should be done should Russian planes challenged a U.S.-imposed no fly zone.

In London, the answer to that question is simply: Shoot them down. Andrew Mitchell, a Tory member of Parliament and a former development secretary, told an emergency session of the House of Commons on October 11 that Western air forces must be willing to confront Russian military jets over the skies of Syria to enforce a no-fly zone. Incredibly, Mitchell likened the Russian attacks on the terrorist forces in Aleppo with the fascist bombardment of Guernica during the Spanish civil war. “What we are saying is very clear. No one wants to see a firefight with Russia, no one wants to shoot down a Russian plane,” Mitchell told BBC Radio 4. “But what we do say is that the international community has an avowed responsibility to protect, and that protection must be exerted. If that means confronting Russian air power defensively, on behalf of the innocent people on the ground who we are trying to protect,



VOA

In Syria, members of the Al-Nusra Front, another name for Al Qaeda, claims of separation notwithstanding.

then we should do that.” David Petraeus, according to the London *Guardian*, is among Mitchell’s military advisors on the no-fly zone question.

Also under consideration, according to a report in the October 23 *Washington Post*, is a plan, by the Obama Administration, to supply U.S.-backed armed terrorist groups with heavier weapons, to be used against both the legitimate Syrian government and Russian military forces.

Putin Responds

In an interview with French TF-1 television, recorded on October 12, Putin refuted the accusations coming from Europe and the U.S. that Russia is committing war crimes in Syria, and he succinctly explained why Russia is in Syria. The war crimes charges are “political rhetoric that does not have great significance and does not take into account the real situation in Syria,” he said. “I believe deeply that some of the responsibility for what is happening in the region in general and in Syria in particular lies especially with our Western partners, above all the U.S.A. and its

allies, including the main European countries. ... Remember what Libya or Iraq looked like before these countries and their organizations were destroyed as states by our Western partners’ forces?” Prior to the Western military interventions, “these states showed no signs of terrorism. They were not a threat for Paris, for the Cote d’Azur, for Belgium, for Russia, or for the United States,” Putin pointed out. “Now, they are the source of terrorist threats. Our goal is to prevent the same from happening in Syria.”

When asked why Russian planes were not bombing ISIS instead of Aleppo, he said: “It is another terrorist group, Jabhat al-Nusra, that controls the situation in Aleppo. This group was always considered a wing of Al Qaeda and is included in the UN’s list of terrorist organizations. What we find particularly depressing and hard to understand is that our partners, especially the Americans, are always finding a way to try to exclude this group from the list of terrorist organizations. ... They want to use these terrorist organizations’ and radicals’ combat potential to pursue their own

political aims, in this case, to combat President Assad and his government, and do not understand that they cannot simply stall them [the rebels] and get them to live by civilized rules after they have tasted victory over someone.”

As for humanitarian access to Aleppo, Putin said that everyone agrees on this. Everyone agrees that the Syrian army should pull back from the side of the road that it occupies, and the militants should pull back from the other side. “They either do not want to or cannot pull the militants back,” he said. “It has been proposed that our armed units, Russian military personnel, be deployed on the road to ensure transit safety. The Russian military, who are courageous and decisive people, have said they would do it,” he went on. “But I told them that this could only be done jointly with the U.S., and ordered them to make the proposal. We have proposed this, and they [the Americans] promptly refused. They do not want to deploy their troops there, but they also do not want to pull these opposition groups back, who are really terrorists. What can we do in this situation?”