

US Risking World War III in Syria

by Joe Lauria via jess - Consortium News *Saturday, Feb 6 2016, 11:10am*
international / prose / post

Defense Secretary Ashton Carter last October said in a little noticed [comment](#) that the United States was ready to take “direct action on the ground” in Syria. Vice President Joe Biden said in Istanbul last month that if peace talks in Geneva failed, the United States was prepared for a “military solution” in that country.

The peace talks collapsed on Wednesday even before they began. A day later Saudi Arabia said it is ready to invade Syria while Turkey is building up forces at its Syrian border.

The U.N. aims to restart the talks on Feb. 25 but there is little hope they can begin in earnest as the Saudi-run opposition has set numerous conditions. The most important is that Russia stop its military operation in support of the Syrian government, which has been making serious gains on the ground.

A day after the talks collapsed, it was revealed that Turkey has begun preparations for an invasion of Syria, [according](#) to the Russian Defense Ministry. On Thursday, ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said: “We have good reasons to believe that Turkey is actively preparing for a military invasion of a sovereign state – the Syrian Arab Republic. We’re detecting more and more signs of Turkish armed forces being engaged in covert preparations for direct military actions in Syria.” The U.N. and the State Department had no comment. But this intelligence was [supported](#) by a sound of alarm from Turkey’s main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (CHP).

Turkey, which has restarted its war against Kurdish PKK guerillas inside Turkey, is determined to crush the emergence of an independent Kurdish state inside Syria as well. Turkish strongman Recep Tayyip Erdogan stopped the Syrian Kurds from attending the aborted Geneva talks.

A Turkish invasion would appear poised to attack the Syrian Kurdish PYD party, which is allied with the PKK. The Syrian (and Iraqi) Kurds, with the Syrian army, are the main ground forces fighting the Islamic State. Turkey is pretending to fight ISIS, all the while actually [supporting](#) its quest to overthrow Assad, also a Turkish goal.

Saudi Arabia then said on Thursday it was prepared to send its ground forces into Syria if asked. Carter [welcomed](#) it. Of course Biden, Erdogan, Carter and the Saudis are all saying a ground invasion would fight ISIS. But their war against ISIS has been half-hearted at best and they share ISIS’ same enemy: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. If the U.S. were serious about fighting ISIS it would have at least considered a proposal by Russia to join a [coalition](#) as the U.S. did against the Nazis.

The Prize of Aleppo

The excuse of the Geneva collapse is a ruse. There was little optimism the talks would succeed. The real reason for the coming showdown in Syria is the success of Russia’s military intervention in defense of the Syrian government against the Islamic State and other extremist groups. Many of these groups are supported by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States in pursuit of

overthrowing Assad.

These three nations are all apparently poised for a ground invasion of Syria just as, by no coincidence, the Syrian Arab Army with Russian air cover is pushing to liberate perhaps the greatest prize in the Syrian civil war — Aleppo, the country's commercial capital. The Russians and Syrians have already cut off Turkey's [supply lines](#) to rebels in the city.

The U.S. cannot stand by and watch Russia win in Syria. At the very least it wants to be on the ground to meet them at a modern-day [Elbe](#) and influence the outcome.

But things could go wrong in a war in which the U.S. and Russia are not allies, as they were in World War II. Despite this, the U.S. and its allies see Syria as important enough to risk confrontation with Russia, with all that implies. It is not at all clear though what the U.S. interests are in Syria to take such a risk.

From the outset of Russia's intervention the U.S. and its allies have wanted Moscow out of the Syrian theater. They seem to be only waiting for the right opportunity. That opportunity may be now — forced by events.

Former U.S. national security adviser and current Obama adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski [said](#) last October in the Financial Times that, "The Russian naval and air presences in Syria are vulnerable, isolated geographically from their homeland. They could be 'disarmed' if they persist in provoking the U.S."

Turkey's downing in November of a Russian warplane that allegedly veered 17 seconds into Turkish territory appeared to be very much a provocation to draw Russia into a conflict to allow NATO to drive Moscow out of Syrian skies. But Russia was too smart for that and instead imposed sanctions on Turkey, while urging Russian tourists not to visit the country, which has [hurt](#) the Turkish economy.

A Battleground of Empires

As a fertile crossroad between Asia and Africa backed by desert, Syrian territory has been fought over for centuries. Pharaoh Ramses II defeated the Hittites at the Battle of Kadesh near Lake Homs in 1247 BCE. The Persians conquered Syria in 538 BCE. Alexander the Great took it 200 years later and the Romans grabbed Syria in 64 BCE.

Islam defeated the Byzantine Empire there at the Battle of Yarmuk in 636. In one of the first Shia-Sunni battles, Ali failed to defeat Muawiyah in 657 at Siffin along the Euphrates near the Iraq-Syria border. Damascus became the seat of the Caliphate until a coup in 750 moved it to Baghdad.

Waves of Crusaders next invaded Syria beginning in 1098. Egyptian Mamluks took the country in 1250 and the Ottoman Empire began in 1516 at its victory at Marj Dabik, 44 kilometers north of Aleppo — about where Turkish supplies are now being cut off. France [double-crossed](#) the Arabs and gained control of Syria in 1922 after the Ottoman collapse.

We may be now looking at an epic war with similar historical significance. All these previous battles, as momentous as they were, were regional in nature.

What we are potentially facing is a war that goes beyond the Soviet-U.S. proxy wars of the Cold War era, and beyond the proxy war that has so far taken place in the five-year Syrian civil war. Russia is

already present in Syria. The entry of the United States and its allies would risk a direct confrontation between the two largest nuclear powers on earth.

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[If Americans are in any doubt regarding neocon intentions to plunge the world into WWII, then simply vote for Hillary and watch that insane agenda become reality.]

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