

Australia has learned nothing since Gallipoli Massacre -- Foreign command and another Syrian Fiasco

by Mike Whitney via mitch - Couterpunch Wednesday, Oct 26 2016, 10:08pm

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Rogue Mission: Did the Pentagon Bomb Syrian Army to Kill Ceasefire Deal?

History records that Australian fighting forces under foreign imperial command were often NEEDLESSLY sent to their slaughter and treated as expendable -- those peasant, slave, colonialists! Well, General Blamey changed the status quo on foreign command and attempted to ensure that Oz forces would never again fall victim to such treachery and/or incompetence. Australian troops must be commanded in the field by Australians, it's as simple as that, as too many times since Gallipoli Australians have paid the price for foreign treachery and incompetent command. Yet [TODAY](#) we have learned that the current, apron-string, Turnbull government has been blindly led by American forces to commit another war crime in Syria. One which could land Australia in very serious trouble in international courts.



Lackey, un-Australian Defence Minister, Marise Payne

If Australia learned an extremely valuable lesson in WWI, what excuses are offered by the Turnbull government and his female (compliant) minister for defence, for the debacle in Syria? Short answer, none, the matter of this war crime and Australia's illegal, uninvited involvement in Syria, has been swiftly brushed under the media carpet.

This incident reflects very badly on useless Turnbull and his acquiescing minister of defence BUT ALSO on Bill Shorten and the opposition, which have a DUTY to get to the bottom of this fiasco and ensure that Australia never becomes involved in illegal wars and participates in the war crimes of other foreign nations AGAIN.

Perhaps placing John Howard on trial for his flagrant lies (aluminium tubing) and complicity in war crimes in Iraq may sober today's knee-walking conservatives and GUTLESS Labor politicians. This issue must be addressed and pursued until the truth is known, as it is known that 'president' Obama has been overruled by the Pentagon regarding the Syrian ceasefire deal with Russia.

Background report follows:

“Everything suggests that the attack..... was deliberately committed by forces inside the US government hostile to the ceasefire....Claims that US fighters were unaware of who

they were bombing are simply not credible, and are flatly contradicted by other accounts in the media..." -- Alex Lantier, World Socialist Web Site

A rift between the Pentagon and the White House turned into open rebellion on Saturday when two US F-16s and two A-10 warplanes bombed Syrian Arab Army (SAA) positions at Deir al-Zor killing at least 62 Syrian regulars and wounding 100 others. The US has officially taken responsibility for the incident which it called a "mistake", but the timing of the massacre has increased speculation that the attack was a desperate, eleventh-hour attempt to derail the fragile ceasefire and avoid parts of the implementation agreement that Pentagon leaders publicly opposed. Many analysts now wonder whether the attacks are an indication that the neocon-strewn DOD is actively engaged in sabotaging President Obama's Syria policy, a claim that implies that the Pentagon is led by anti-democratic rebels who reject the Constitutional authority of the civilian leadership. Saturday's bloodletting strongly suggests that a mutiny is brewing at the War Department.

The chasm that's emerged between the Pentagon warhawks and the more conciliatory members of the Obama administration has drawn criticism from leading media outlets in the US (The New York Times) to high-ranking members in the Russian cabinet. On Saturday, at an emergency press conference at the United Nations, Russia's UN ambassador Vitaly Churkin referred to the apparent power struggle that is taking place in Washington with these blunt comments:

"The big question that has to be asked is 'Who is in charge in Washington? Is it the White House or the Pentagon?' ...Because we have heard comments from the Pentagon which fly in the face of comments we have heard from Obama and Kerry..." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bID01gJEIOY> See-10:15 second)

Churkin is not the only one who has noticed the gap between Obama and his generals. A recent article in the New York Times also highlighted the divisions which appear to be widening as the situation in Syria continues to deteriorate. Here's an excerpt from the New York Times:

(SECDEF Ash) "Carter was among the administration officials who pushed against the (ceasefire) agreement ... Although President Obama ultimately approved the effort. On Tuesday at the Pentagon, officials would not even agree that if a cessation of violence in Syria held for seven days — the initial part of the deal — the Defense Department would put in place its part of the agreement on the eighth day..."

"I'm not saying yes or no," Lt. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigian, commander of the United States Air Forces Central Command, told reporters on a video conference call. "It would be premature to say that we're going to jump right into it." ("Details of Syria Pact Widen Rift Between John Kerry and Pentagon", New York Times)

Think about that for a minute: Lt. General Harrigian appears to be saying that he may not follow an order from the Commander in Chief if it's not to his liking. When exactly did military leaders start to believe that orders are optional or that the DOD had a role to play in policymaking? Here's more from the NYT:

“The divide between Mr. Kerry and Mr. Carter reflects the inherent conflict in Mr. Obama’s Syria policy. The president has come under increased fire politically for his refusal to intervene more forcefully in the five-year civil war, which the United Nations says has killed more than 400,000 people, displaced more than six million and led to a refugee crisis in Europe. But keeping large numbers of American ground forces out of Syria has also created space for Russia to assume a greater role there, both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table.....

The result is that at a time when the United States and Russia are at their most combative posture since the end of the Cold War, the American military is suddenly being told that it may, in a week, have to start sharing intelligence with one of its biggest adversaries to jointly target Islamic State and Nusra Front forces in Syria.

“I remain skeptical about anything to do with the Russians,” Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, who recently stepped down as NATO’s supreme allied commander, said Monday in an interview. “There are a lot of concerns about putting out there where our folks are.” (New York Times)

So warhawk Supremo, Ash Carter, and his Russophobe colleagues want to intensify the conflict, expand America’s military footprint in Syria, and confront Russia directly. They don’t approve of the President’s policy, so they’re doing everything they can to torpedo the ceasefire deal. But why now, after all, the ceasefire began five days ago? If Carter and Co. saw the cessation of hostilities as such a threat, why didn’t they act before?

There’s a simple explanation for that. The real danger was not the ceasefire per se, but the parts of the agreement that required the US military to work collaboratively with the Russian Airforce to defeat terrorist organizations operating in Syria, namely al Nusra and ISIS. This is the part of the deal the Pentagon openly opposed, and this is the part of the deal that was set to be implemented on Monday, September 19, less than 48 hours after the attacks on Saturday. Now the future of the accord is greatly in doubt which is precisely what Carter and his generals wanted. Here’s a little more background from Churkin’s comments on Saturday:

“It was quite significant and not accidental that it (the attack) happened just two days before the Russian-American arrangements were supposed to come into full force....

The purpose of the joint implementation group, is to enable expanded coordination between the US and Russia. The participants are to work together to defeat al Nusra and Daesh within the context of strengthening the cessation of hostilities and in support of the political transition process outlined in UNSC 2254. These were very important arrangements which—in our view—could really be a game changer and greatly assist our efforts to defeat al Nusra and ISIL while also creating better conditions for the political process.....

The implementation day was set for the Sept 19, so if the US wanted to attack ISIS or al Nusra, they could have waited two days and coordinated those attacks together and been sure they were striking the right

people...One can only conclude that the airstrike was conducted in order to derail the operation of the Joint Implementation Group and actually prevent it from being set in motion.” (Watch the entire video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bID01gIEIOY>)

The reason Moscow sees the “expanded coordination between the US and Russia” as a “game changer” is because neither Putin nor his advisors believe the war can be won militarily. That’s why Putin reduced Russia’s military presence in Syria in December. He wanted to reduce tensions and create opportunities for negotiations. Moscow realizes that there will never be a settlement to the conflict unless the major participants agree to a political solution. That’s why Putin is doing everything in his power to draw the US into an arrangement where Moscow and Washington share security responsibilities. That is the goal of the ceasefire, to create a situation where both superpowers are on the same team, involved in the same process, and working towards the same goal.

Unfortunately, the Pentagon warhawks and their allies in the US political establishment and the intelligence community, will have none of it. The objectives of the hawks, the liberal interventionists and the neocons are the same as they have been from the very beginning. They want to topple Assad, splinter Syria into multiple parts, install a US-puppet in Damascus, control critical pipelines corridors from Qatar to Turkey, and inflict a humiliating defeat on Russia. For this group, any entanglement or cooperation with Russia only undermines their ultimate objective of escalating the conflict, strengthening their grip on the Middle East, and rolling back Russian influence.

This is what makes the unprecedented attack on Syrian Army positions so suspicious; it’s because it looks like a last-ditch effort by a desperate Pentagon rebels to terminate the ceasefire and prevent Washington from partnering with Moscow in the fight against militant extremism. As to whether the attacks were “intentional” or not; military analyst Pat Lang posted this illuminating tidbit on his website Sic Semper Tyrannis on Saturday:

“The SAA (Syrian Arab Army) has been occupying these positions for six months or so. Presumably US imagery and SIGINT analysts have been looking at them all that time and producing map overlays that show who is where in detail. These documents would be widely available especially to air units and their targeteers. US coalition led air has not struck previously in the Deir al-Zor area.”

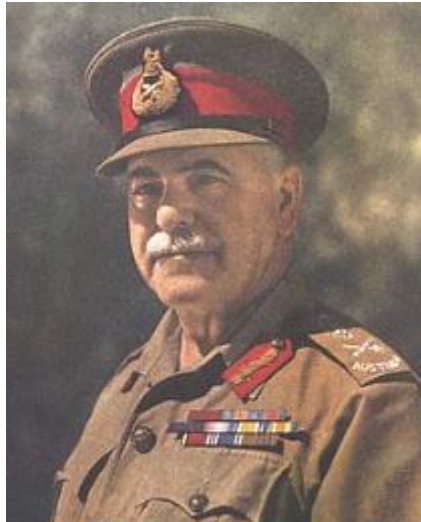
So, yes, the attacks might have been a “mistake”, but the chances of that are extremely slim. The more probable explanation is that the orders for the attack came from the highest levels of the senior command, probably Ash Carter himself, whose determination to derail the Obama-Putin ceasefire agreement may have been the impetus for the savage bloodbath that took place in Deir al-Zor on Saturday.

It’s impossible to overstate the significance of the clash between the DOD and the White House. Resistance to Obama’s Syria policy has suddenly escalated into open rebellion between dissenting members of the military hierarchy and the elected representatives of the people. The tragic bombing in Deir al-Zor is probably just the first skirmish in this new war. We expect there will be more confrontations in the days to come.

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For an AUSTRALIAN perspective on involvement in illegal wars, see works by legal academic and

practicing barrister, James O'Neill, [here](#) and [here](#).



General Blamey, vehemently against foreign command of Australian forces



PM, Malcolm Turnbull, 'not worth a pinch of shit!'

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/09/20/rogue-mission-did-the-pentagon-bomb-syrian-army-to-kill-c-easefire-deal/>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-2388.html>