

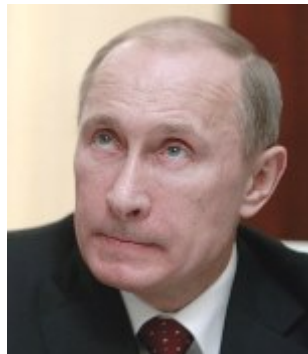
Putin May be Defeating Himself by Stupidly Attempting to Avoid War with America

by Mike Whitney via claire - Counterpunch Sunday, Jun 25 2017, 12:58am

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Indeed, Putin is sane though his hesitancy and cowardice are known in Washington. He has failed to realise that the lunatic real leaders of the US are hell bent on war, in fact they have published as much and are following the PNAC manifesto to the letter. So Mr Putin, REALITY is staring you in the face, apprehend it or suffer a DEVASTATING, preemptive nuclear strike. There are NO indications to the contrary.

The US invasion and occupation in Syria is in breach of numerous international laws and conventions, why do you tolerate such brazen criminality when the LAW is behind you, Mr Putin, the mouse? You know you are dealing with a criminal rogue state; simply demand that the USA withdraws from Syria and cite the many breaches of international law while doing so. What is your problem, you gutless wonder?



Vladimir Putin, chicken shit

"The shooting down of the Syrian SU-22 is another demonstration that the US is prepared to resort to the most reckless means to defend its footholds in Syria and lay the basis for the broader war that is being prepared."

-- Peter Symonds, WSWS

The downing of a Syrian warplane by a US F-18 Super Hornet on Sunday proves that Washington's real objective in Syria is not to defeat ISIS but to topple the government, carve up the country and install a puppet who will follow Washington's directives. ISIS doesn't have an airforce nor is there any chance that the lumbering Soviet-era SU-22 was mistaken by the American pilot before it was shot down. No, the Syrian plane was positively identified on a clear day flying over Syrian territory. The US ignored the normal protocols, failed to communicate their activities on the "de-confliction" hotline (as per their agreement with Moscow) and -- BAM -- the Syrian warplane was taken out with two missiles over Ja'Din in the western part of Raqqah province. The attack was a clear provocation.

The downing comes on the heels of three other similar incidents in which Syrian troops were attacked by US-coalition forces in the area around al Tanf near the Jordanian border. All four of these provocations have taken place within the last month, suggesting that Washington intends to prevent the Syrian army from liberating its cities and territory in the east where US-proxy militias are operating.

In late May, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) launched Operation "Grand Dawn" which combined the 800th Battalion of the Republican Guards, Hezbollah, Iranian combat troops, and Russian Special Forces (to assist in an advisory capacity.) Grand Dawn, which is the biggest operation of the war, is aimed at clearing the eastern border, liberating ISIS-held cities and territory east of the Euphrates, and reopening the corridor between Damascus to Baghdad. The campaign is an attempt to reestablish the central government's control over its land, its resources and its population centers in the East.

So far, the operation has made great strides as two main Syrian armies have pressed ahead on parallel tracks killing or routing jihadist fighters on the way. Sunday's attack (on the Syrian warplane) may have been a desperate attempt to slow the forward-progress of loyalist troops rapidly advancing on the cities of Raqqa, Deir Ezzor and Abu Kamal, all located on the banks of the Euphrates.

The surge of Syrian troops poses a clear threat to Washington's operational strategy called Plan B, which is aimed at (a) splintering the state into smaller, US-controlled enclaves, (b) blocking the critical land-bridge between Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and Tehran, and (c) establishing a secure base for training Sunni militants to reenter Syria-proper and engage in future regime destabilizing operations. Seen in this light, the downing of a Syrian SU-22 might have been an attempt by coalition leaders to wave off the Syrian assault which is undermining Washington's fallback strategy.

The Russian response to the attack was fast and ferocious. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov condemned the action as "a massive violation of international law and military aggression."

He said: "This strike has to be seen as a continuation of America's line to disregard the norms of international law".(It is) an act of aggression" designed to help to the very terrorists the US says it is fighting."

Not surprisingly, the Russian Defense Ministry (MoD) announced it would end its cooperation with the US military under the terms of the Memorandum on the Prevention of Incidents and Ensuring Air Safety in Syria. In practical terms, that means that Moscow will terminate the use of a military hotline for preventing accidents in Syrian airspace. So while media giants like the Wall Street Journal applaud the reckless attack as "signaling an increased willingness by the Trump administration to directly challenge President Bashar al Assad and his allies," more sober analysts anticipate that the move will only ratchet up the tensions increasing the probability of a clash between the two nuclear-armed superpowers.

The Russian MoD statement added that, "any airborne objects, including aircraft and unmanned vehicles of the [US-led] international coalition, located to the west of the Euphrates River, will be tracked by Russian ground and air defense forces as air targets."

If the attack was intended to provoke a response, then it appears to have succeeded. If another Syrian warplane is shot down, Moscow will have to retaliate. Was that the intention?

Russia does not want to deepen its involvement in Syria. Its primary goal is to defeat ISIS, preserve the elected government, and prevent the country from disintegrating into failed state anarchy. Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed this topic recently in an interview where he was asked: "Can you explain why you sent troops to Syria and what your objective was?"

Putin answered: "It's very easy to explain. We saw what was happening to other countries in the region, particularly Iraq and Libya... due to the forceful ousting of their governments. The

governments were destroyed, not simply ousted from power, and their leaders were killed. We don't want to see the same thing happen in Syria or the whole region will be plunged into chaos."

There it is in black and white. Russia has no territorial ambitions in Syria nor does it have any designs on Syria's resources , industry or pipelines. This isn't about money, oil or land. It's about Russia's national security which has been greatly impacted by the scourge of terrorism. It's also about defending "sovereignty," which is the bedrock principle upon which global security rests. This is why Russia is in Syria.

That said, it's not in Russia's interest to shoot down American aircraft, intensify the war on coalition-proxies or take any action that would lead to a military escalation. Putin does not want to prolong or expand the war, he wants to end it.

Unfortunately, there are so many players sharing the same, crowded battlespace that even the slightest miscalculation could lead to a serious conflagration. It's going to take enormous restraint to tip-toe through the Syrian minefield without triggering a Third World War. We'll have to see if Putin is up to the task or not.

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