

Ending Mideast Wars Demands Abolishing Weapons of Mass Destruction

Once again the US is alleging that the Syrian government has used Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the form of chemical weapons. President Obama has taken these allegations as justification for inflaming the wars in the Middle East and specifically attacking Syria. Secretary of State John Kerry is cocksure that the Syrian government is responsible, as was Colin Powell a decade earlier cocksure that Saddam Hussein had WMD.

If the U.S. really wanted to remove nuclear and other WMD from the Middle East why late in 2012 did it unilaterally scuttle a conference in Helsinki, Finland, that could have created a zone free of WMD in the Middle East.

The march to an expanded war on Syria is reaching fever pitch. According to media reports, U.S. and NATO attacks are imminent. Evidence takes a back door to expediency.

WMD include chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, all of which cause mass murder and fail to discriminate between combatants and noncombatants. Banning WMD is nearly a century-long struggle. A 1925 Convention banned use of biological and chemical weapons. In 1972 and 1993, international Conventions banned the creation, retention, stockpiling and transfer of biological and chemical weapons, respectively. In 1945, nuclear weapons were added to the list of WMD. There are now 9 known nuclear-weapons states: China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, United Kingdom and the U.S.

Each August for the last 68 years, the world has commemorated the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by calling for nuclear-weapons abolition. There is no time to wait. It is necessary to include the demand for concrete actions to ban WMD in the Middle East.

Syria, Iraq, Iran, Israel, the United States

Syria

In mid June, the Obama administration claimed that the Syrian government used the lethal nerve gas Sarin against the Syrian people and therefore had crossed over an artificial “red line” that the administration created on the use of WMD. It then publicized that it would send weapons to rebel groups¹. This week, based on videos of hundreds of people allegedly killed by chemical weapons, Obama has stated that all options are on the table – all, except peace that is. It is widely acknowledged that these rebel groups include Al-Qaeda and other groups the U.S. calls terrorists some of which the U.S. has been fighting against for over a decade.

The Obama Administration’s claim that sending weapons to Syria is new policy is not credible. The U.S. has sanctioned its allies Jordan, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to deliver weapons since the initiation of the war two years ago². The Obama Administration claims that it is supporting Syrian democracy. Let us be clear that the autocratic and tyrannical rulers of Saudi Arabia and Qatar are neither acting without U.S. approval, nor supporting rebellion in Syria on behalf of democracy.

¹ Obama Authorizes Sending Weapons To Syrian Rebels, Matthew Lee and Julie Pace, 2013 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/13/obama-syrian-rebels_n_3438625.html>

² The Peace Movement’s Silence in the Face of Imperialistic Military Escalations in Africa and the Middle East is Unjustified and Unacceptable!, statement of U.S. Peace Council, 2013 <<http://uspeacecouncil.org/?p=2266>>

Importantly, there were in June significant doubts that Sarin was in fact used³, or if used then used by the rebel forces⁴ - thus suggesting that the Obama administration was then looking for and found an excuse to escalate its interference in Syria on behalf of outside forces. Similarly, the latest allegations of chemical use are devoid of evidence or, alternatively, the evidence points to the acts of non-Syrian interventionists⁵. When planning and carrying out aggression, as is well known truth is the first casualty. (Please see the comprehensive analysis of the crisis in Syria referenced in footnote 2.)

Iraq

In 2003, the Bush administration trod a similar path. It concocted a story that Saddam Hussein's Iraq had WMD, propagandized and spread this story and then started a devastating war. No such weapons were ever found. The results predictably included the violent deaths of hundreds of thousands, more thousands wounded, millions caused to flee their homes, communities turned to rubble and an ancient civilization left in ruins. Secretary Kerry's outrage that chemical weapons were used in Syria notwithstanding, Iraqis continue to be exposed to the toxic and radioactive heavy metal "depleted" uranium that "was used in armor-piercing munitions fired by US

³ Sarin Gas Use Doubted, Experts Don't See Evidence, Matthew Schofield, 2013
<<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article35294.htm>>

⁴ Russia Says Syrian Rebels Used Sarin Gas, Joe Lauria, 2013
<<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324507404578596153561287028.html>>

⁵ New Allegations of Chemical Weapons Use in Syria Based on US Political Motives, not Facts, Stephen Gowans, 2013
<<http://gowans.wordpress.com/2013/08/22/new-allegations-of-chemical-weapons-use-in-syria-based-on-us-political-motives-not-facts/>>; Important Doubts About the Syrian Chemical Attack, 2013
<http://www.popularresistance.org/important-doubts-about-the-syrian-chemical-attack/>

and Coalition forces during both the 2003 invasion and the 1991 Gulf War in Iraq"⁶. Today Iraqis live with daily explosive violence but no clean water or electricity. Tens of thousands of our youth who invaded Iraq have returned dead or severely wounded physically and mentally. Although the giant oil companies have rushed in to claim Iraqi oil, seen as a primary impetus for the invasion and occupation, they do so without the privatization law that the Bush administration worked to force the Iraqi parliament to pass⁷.

Iran

The U.S. and Israel have been threatening to attack Iran claiming it intends to build nuclear bombs. President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu both have repeatedly stated that no options are off the table, implying the option of a first strike use of nuclear weapons. The claim against Iran belies the fact that there exists no evidence to back it up⁸. To pressure and weaken Iran, the U.S. has instituted heavy economic sanctions and used cyber warfare⁹ to slow Iran's nuclear power program. Seven Iranian nuclear scientists have been assassinated leading many to believe that the U.S. and Israel are

⁶ Depleted Uranium Contamination is Still Spreading in Iraq, Mike Ludwig, 2013

<<http://truth-out.org/news/item/15168-depleted-uranium-contamination-is-still-spreading-in-iraq>>

⁷ Big Oil's Scorecard in Iraq, How an American disaster paved the way for Big Oil's rise—and possible fall—in Iraq, Greg Muttitt, 2012

<<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/08/big-oils-scorecard-iraq>>

⁸ U.S. Agencies See No Move by Iran to Build a Bomb, James Risen and Mark Mazetti, 2012
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/25/world/middleeast/us-agencies-see-no-move-by-iran-to-build-a-bomb.html?_r=0>; IAEA Former Inspector: No Evidence of Iranian Nuclear Weapons Activity at Parchin, Jay Paul interviews Robert Kelley, 2013

<http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=9477>

⁹ Obama Order Sped Up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran, David E. Sanger, 2012
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all>>

responsible¹⁰. These assaults have so far failed the intended consequence of causing the Iranian government to capitulate.

The United States has historically pursued a policy of forced regime change against governments and leaders that don't accept its corporate "free market" demands or its foreign policy goals - Iran 1953, Guatemala 1956, Congo 1960, Chile 1973, Nicaragua 1980's, Honduras 2009, among many others.

It is logical to conclude, therefore, that the assertion that Iran pursues nuclear weapons development is a ruse whose purpose is first overthrowing the current Iranian government and replacing it with one like the former Shah's that is more compliant. Such a regime would permit installing U.S. military bases in Iran and place the vast resources of this region under full U.S. control assuring more profitable access to Iran's oil. Another goal of replacing the current regime is to eliminate a substantial source of support for stateless Palestinians.

It is logical to conclude that the charges regarding WMD that the U.S. levels at the current Syrian and Iranian and former Iraqi governments have been and continue to be directed to preparing the broad public to accept violent, foreign-orchestrated regime change in these countries in order to gain total political, military and economic control of the region.

¹⁰ Who Assassinated an Iranian Nuclear Scientist? Israel Isn't Telling, Karl Vick and Aaron J. Klein, 2012
<<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2104372,00.html>>;

Iran's nuclear scientists are not being assassinated. They are being murdered; Killing our enemies abroad is just state-sponsored terror – whatever euphemism western leaders like to use, Mehdi Hasan, 2012
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jan/16/iran-scientists-state-sponsored-murder>>

Nuclear Weapons and a WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East

In May 2010, the United Nations unanimously (with the concurrence of the U.S.) agreed to hold a conference to create a zone free of nuclear weapons and WMD in the Middle East¹¹. The U.S., Russia, Britain and Finland were with the Secretary General to be co-sponsors. The conference was scheduled for December 2012 in Helsinki, Finland. As of May 2012 the Finnish Deputy Foreign Minister stated that the conference was on track. But in late November, the U.S. State Department announced that it had indefinitely postponed the Helsinki conference¹².

The world was urging the Helsinki conference to generate a pathway to eliminate nuclear weapons and other WMD in the Middle East, thus demolishing the rationale the U.S. has been using to instigate wars in that region. A WMD-free Zone in the Middle East would be a significant step toward global nuclear-weapons abolition.

The Helsinki conference would also lead to a critical discussion that is much needed in the halls of government, the major media and among the people - that the only states that now possess and threaten to use nuclear weapons in the Middle East are Israel and the U.S., which maintains 60-70 nuclear

¹¹ Disarmament Times, Ray Acheson, 2010
<http://disarm.igc.org/index.php?view=article&catid=147%3Adisarmament-times-summer-2010&id=357%3Athe-2010-npt-review-conference-where-do-we-go-from-here&option=com_content&Itemid=2>

¹² Ministry For Foreign Affairs Of Finland Press Release On Postponement Of Helsinki Middle East Conference, November, 2012 <<http://www.acronym.org.uk/official-and-govt-documents/ministry-foreign-affairs-finland-press-release-postponement-helsinki-middle-east-conference-november>>;

Statement of the Pugwash Executive Committee on the Postponement of the Helsinki Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (MEW MDFZ), 2012
<http://www.pugwash.org/reports/rc/me/MEW MDFZ_november_2012/MEW MDFZ_statement_2012.htm>

weapons in Turkey¹³ and a nuclear-armed Navy based in Bahrain. Iran has expressed willingness to take part in Helsinki. What is essential for this conference to take place and to succeed is the honest participation of the U.S. and Israel.

If the two existing Middle Eastern nuclear powers want to preclude Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, then they should be willing to go to Helsinki to create the means for doing so – a zone in the Middle East free of WMD.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the people's movements throughout the world to **insist that our governments comply with the UN's decision to hold the Helsinki conference**. We must insist that Helsinki devise a workable plan to promptly create a WMD-free Zone in the Middle East. The global millions who commemorate August 6 and 9 must accept leadership in this task.

U.S. Peace Council
August 2013

¹³ NonStrategic Nuclear Weapons, Hans M. Kristensen, 2012
<https://www.fas.org/_docs/Non_Strategic_Nuclear_Weapons.pdf>