

## Getting Tougher With Syria

It appears that life is about to get tougher on Bashar Assad and Syria. The European Union has cut off all imports of Syrian oil. And that may not be all.

*Monday night and Tuesday, Aug-29-30, three international heavyweights - Russia, the European Union and key Muslim nations – gave Syrian President Bashar Assad tough ultimatums for ending his ferocious crackdown on protest. Nevertheless, on Monday, his troops shot dead 17 people in Syrian cities - even as he received Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov who arrived in Damascus with a last warning from President Dmitry Medvedev: Recall you soldiers to their bases immediately and implement changes or Moscow will endorse UN Security Council sanctions stiff enough to stifle the Syrian economy. ( <http://www.debka.com/article/21255/> ).*

In addition, the Emir of Qatar went to Tehran to have some serious talks with the Iranian government.

*Debkafile's exclusive Iranian sources reveal that the Qatari ruler slapped down a blunt warning: Assad was finished, he said, and advised Iran to face up to this. For the sake of even minimal relations with the Arab world, Iran must ditch the Assad regime in Damascus or face the real danger of the Syrian crisis deteriorating into a regional conflict – whether against Syria or by Syria, he did not explain.*

*Ahmadinejad turned the emir down flat, according to our sources. He said Iran would never renege on its pact with Assad. (Same article)*

Please read the entire article for more important information.

**Analysis.** I don't like using only one source for any article but so far have not found any confirmation other than Assad is still killing protesters. However, none of the actions discussed in the article are new. Turkey has threatened for some time to set up an enclave in northern Syria to protect refugees while not letting them into Turkey proper. Turkey did call up reserves several weeks ago to “handle the influx of refugees”. While this is undoubtedly true, these same reservists can just as easily climb into a tank and head south to protect refugees in their towns along the Turkish-Syrian border.

There was a teaser of an article on Debka a few weeks ago in the paid section that talked about Saudi Arabia cutting off part of eastern Syria and annexing it to western Iraq, specifically Anbar Province. This would form a physical block to the completion of the Shiite crescent. While this move appears to be a little bit of wishful thinking, even the consideration of such an action shows how scared the Saudis are of Iran completing the Shiite Crescent.

This may also be why the Debka article discusses the possibility of a southern enclave on the Syria-Jordan border created by a Gulf Cooperation Council force. While this somewhat parallels the GCC force sent into Bahrain to quell protests against the al-Khalifa family rule, there at least the Saudi/GCC force was requested by the ruling family. I doubt Bashar Assad would request such “help”.

Note that in the last few months the Saudis have purchased some 277 German Leopard 2 A7 tanks from Germany and 108 Abrams M1A2 tanks from the US to be converted to M1A2S specifications. Whether these tanks are replacements of lesser capable tanks or designated for new units is unknown.

Also, we still don't know if the Egyptian Field Army that was exercising with the Saudi corps last November around El Alamein actually did follow the Saudi corps home and is sitting somewhere in a military town in Saudi Arabia right now. If the Saudis are even hinting at a southern enclave inside Syria, we may have our answer. Egypt was recently invited to become a member of the GCC according

to Debka. Jordan already is a GCC member in all but name only.

I have postulated for a long time that the two Egyptian field Armies plus their Air Force would be required to defend the Two Mosques against a full Syrian Army attack. If the GCC is contemplating an invasion of Syria, however small, this may be the answer to the question. The GCC will use this excuse of protecting the same Syrian civilians it is undoubtedly supplying with money and arms to preempt Syria and the Iranians.

There are still a few actions that must be accomplished before anything like this can occur. There is the obligatory Security Council Resolution authorizing the use of force to protect the Syrians civilians against their government. Right now the Russians and the People's Republic of China are holding up such a draft resolution. If the Russians change their position on such a resolution, that would be an indication that force was about to be used.

Behind this whole mess is the Sunni-Shiite religious struggle. Both sides are pretty good at counting noses and figuring out the optimum time and window of opportunity for the other side to act. Time is not with the Iranians. Nor is strategic alignment. Saving the Assad regime is a major imperative for the bringing forth of the Mahdi and commencing a two pronged attack on Saudi Arabia and the Two Mosques. That is why there are some 20,000 members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Qods Force in Syria propping up the Assad regime. That is why the Iranians will make up any money lost due to the European boycott of Syrian oil.

The Iranians have already made clear that an attack by Turkey on the Assad regime would be met with missile fire from Iran and possibly ground action on the Turkey-Iran border. Even with the cover of a Security Council Resolution, Iran is still likely to defend its ally Syria and plunge the area into a very messy war. And there is a reasonable chance that the PRC would veto a Security Council Resolution authorizing the use of force against the Assad regime to prevent Iran from closing the Straits of Hormuz to GCC and allied ships and disrupt the tanker traffic in and out of the Persian gulf. The PRC does not yet have sufficient land access to oil to make up for the loss of the tanker traffic.

However, Ahmadinejad is a disciple of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi AKA the crocodile. It is most certainly the Yazdi faction that inspired the production of the DVD *The Coming is Upon Us* ( <http://atimetobetray.com/blog/iran-leaders-the-coming-is-upon-us-%E2%80%93-israel-shall-be-destroyed-watch-the-video/> ). Whether or not he has the backing of Ali Khamenei in this is unknown. However, he probably would not have rebuffed the Emir of Qatar without at least the tacit backing of Khamenei.

It would appear from this action that Iran is willing to go to war even if it is not totally prepared to do so. Iran must also have some reasonable expectation that the PRC will defend Syria in the Security Council. Exactly how far the PRC may be willing to go is unknown. They will not allow the Straits of Hormuz to be interdicted and the tanker traffic to stop if they can prevent it. While the PRC does have a strategic petroleum reserve, its size is unknown. The length of a major war in the Middle East will undoubtedly far exceed the capacity of everybody's strategic petroleum reserve.

Then there is Israel. Syria has said, probably with Iran's blessing, that if there was no peace in Syria there would be no peace for Israel. The recent terrorist attacks in the souther Negev and the barrage of somewhere around 150 GRAD rockets and mortar shell from Gaza is proof of that. There has been speculation that Hamas may have lost control to the "rejectionists" such as Jihad Islami that are supported by Iran through Hezbollah. Hamas has supposedly been cut off by Hezbollah for not supporting the Assad regime. This lack of funds has probably severely hurt Hamas' ability to control the smaller but more violent jihadi groups.

In response to indications of additional terrorist activity in the Sinai, Israel has moved two destroyers

towards the Israel-Egypt border are of the Sinai. They may also be positioning these ships to provide anti-submarine patrols in the Gulf of Aqaba and the southern opening to the Suez Canal. Closing the Straits of Hormuz would be bad enough. However, the Saudis have large pipelines running from the eastern oil fields to ports along their west coast through which some oil could be exported. Closing the Suez Canal for any length of time would only add to the burden of the lack of oil in the West and the PRC.

At the root of this problem is the conflict over the succession to Mohammad. Until that is finally resolved by war, we are all at risk.