

Possible Invasion of Northern Syria

There is some evidence that an invasion of northern Syria to create sanctuaries is in the planning stages. But first a word from the Syrians.

Syria on Monday hit out at the Arab League for the treatment it has meted out to Damascus, accusing it of ignoring the presence of "terrorists" in the country and prematurely imposing economic sanctions.

Foreign Minister Walid Muallem made the accusation at a news conference at which gruesome video footage was shown of what was described as a "mass grave of security force martyrs" that the authorities had discovered.

"I apologize for these horrific images, but at the same time I offer them to the Arab League ministerial committee members who still continue to refuse the presence of these armed groups," said Muallem.

"The Arabs don't want to admit the presence in Syria of groups of armed terrorists who are committing these crimes, abductions and attacks on public places."

He told reporters that his government had opened all windows in talks with the Arab League to end bloodshed in his country, but said that "they have closed all these windows."

The minister also accused the Cairo-based bloc of pushing ahead with a decision to impose economic sanctions on Syria over its crackdown on anti-regime protests despite failing to agree on the dispatch of observers. (<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/28/179714.html>)

And this from Debka:

A group of military officers from NATO and Persian Gulf nations have quietly established a mixed operational command at Iskenderun in the Turkish Hatay province on the border of North Syria, debkafile's military sources report. Hailing from the United States, France, Canada, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with Turkish officers providing liaison, they do not represent NATO but are self-designated "monitors." Their mission is to set up "humanitarian corridors" inside Syria to serve the victims of Bashar Assad's crackdown. Commanded by ground, naval, air force and engineering officers, the task force aims to move into most of northern Syria.

Laying the groundwork for the legitimacy of the combined NATO-Arab intervention in Syria, the UN Independent International Commission set up to assess the situation in Syria published a horrendous report Monday, Nov. 28 on the Assad regime's brutalities. It documented "gross violations of human rights" and "patterns of summary execution, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture including sexual violence, as well as violations of children's rights."

(<http://www.debka.com/article/21524/>)

Please read the entire articles for more important information.

Analysis. The opening paragraphs of the Debka article are a deliberate leak. Bashar is being warned that the GCC and friends will excise his economic center unless he leaves. This is in line with the earlier reports of mobilizations on all of Syria's borders except the border with Iraq. It appears that Syria's northern border will be the focus of any immediate military action.

What is also important to note is Syria's claim that armed groups are working to overthrow the Assad

regime. Also most likely true. Exactly what did Assad expect to happen when he refused King Abdullah's request to throw the Iranians out? Now Assad is being told that he had best stop repressing the demonstrations or redeploy his army to defend against invasion.

Into this conflict the Syrians are bringing the Russians. Actually, the Russians are already involved. The carrier Admiral Kuznetsov is projected to arrive off Syria Wednesday according to Debka. It would not surprise me in the least to see Russian troops being flown into Syria and stationed as advisors around the three towns listed in the Debka article, especially Aleppo. The Soviets threatened to do exactly this in 1973 to protect the Assad regime. I suspect that if they are willing to move their only carrier to prevent the G. H. W. Bush battle group from providing "logistic support" to take down Syria's air defenses that they would move a brigade or two into Syria to block an invasion.

Both the Russians and the Iranians have reasons to defend the Assad regime. While the Iranians can create a certain amount of havoc in the Persian Gulf and around Israel, the Russians have real nuclear weapons and most likely will threaten to use them if Syria is invaded.