



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 26, 2013

War Hawks Urge Military Intervention in Syria

Following reports of ghastly chemical attacks on civilians in the Ghouta region just east of Damascus early in the morning of Wednesday, August 21, preparations for military intervention have begun, urged on by predictable war hawks in Congress and the media.

[Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (Doctors Without Borders), a French medical humanitarian organization, estimated that 3,600 patients were admitted to three hospitals in the area and that 355 of them had already died as of Wednesday evening. The symptoms, predictable effects of nerve agent poisoning, have included muscle spasms, foaming at the mouth, and suffocation leaving bodies that turned blue and emitted smells of a mixture of vinegar and rotten eggs.

The next day preliminary assessments by both American and European sources were that chemical attacks had been launched under the direction of Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, as rebel forces, including the Free Syria Army (FSA) were closing in on Damascus.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said that "these reports are uncorroborated ... but ... if they are verified, it would mark a shocking escalation in the use of chemical weapons in Syria." A senior U.S. State Department official concurred: "There is very little doubt at this point that a chemical weapon was used by the Syrian regime against civilians."

Almost exactly one year earlier, on August 20, 2012, [President Obama warned](#) in a news conference that Assad would be crossing a "red line" by resorting to chemical weapons:

We have been very clear to the Assad regime ... that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons ... being utilized.

That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.

So will the Obama administration soon conclude that Assad definitely crossed this red line and use this as a rationale for going to war in Syria? And will this intervention be launched by Obama without a congressional declaration of war, as required by the U.S. Constitution?

On Saturday the president met with his top security advisers to consider the various options that are open to deal with Syria. [According to a U.S. official](#) who requested anonymity, the Pentagon has developed various "military options" that would "send a message to the regime of President Assad," calling them "limited in scope" and designed to "deter or prevent" him from any further use of chemical weapons. That official was clear that these options weren't designed to remove Assad from power, but just to hamper his ability to continue to use nerve gas against his people. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was more forthright:





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The Defense Department has the responsibility to provide the president with options for all contingencies, and that requires positioning our forces, positioning our assets, to be able to carry out different options, whatever options the president might choose.

One of those options includes the use of Tomahawk cruise missiles that could be launched from off the coast of Syria, located just north of Israel. At present the U.S. Navy has four destroyers in the Mediterranean, each of which has 90 such missiles in its on-board armament. These could be used in a “surgical strike” [as encouraged by Israel’s President Shimon Peres](#):

The time has come to make an international attempt to take out all the chemical weapons in Syria. It’s very complicated, it’s very expensive, but it will be more expensive and more dangerous [if they’re allowed to stay].

[Senator John McCain \(R-Ariz.\) agreed](#). If the United States delays in responding, then this allows Assad to continue such attacks on his people with impunity, according to McCain:

When we do nothing, not only do they have a green light, but this gives green lights to brutal dictators all over the world [that] they can do the same thing....

[Assad] will do it again because we [will] have given him, instead of a red line, we’ve given him a green light....

Our friends and enemies alike, both in the Middle East and across the world, are questioning whether America has the will and the capacity to do what it says.

Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) and Congressman Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) lined up in favor of taking some form of military action without delay. Corker said he “hoped” that President Obama “will ask for authorization from Congress” before doing anything unilaterally but that whatever he decides to do it will be an action “that gets [Assad’s] attention, that causes [him] to understand that we are not going to put up with this.” Engel, reflecting his utter disregard for anything that the Constitution might have to say about declaring war — [his cumulative Freedom Index rating](#) is a dismal 17 percent — said:

I certainly would do cruise missile strikes. You can destroy Assad’s runways. We could even destroy the Syrian Air Force if we wanted to....

The world is a better place when the United States takes action.

In *Foreign Policy* magazine, Kosovo’s Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj recommends that the “international community” intervene in Syria, using as a model NATO’s air war on behalf of the terrorist Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) that sought the separation of Kosovo from Yugoslavia:

The NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 serves as a model for our allies in the West and the Arab world to end Syrian suffering....

We are strong supporters of the idea that sovereignty is not a right but a responsibility.... The time has come for the international community to offer protection to the people of Syria.

Foreign entanglements with the “international community” such as NATO and the United Nations now bring the Washington establishment face to face with two bad outcomes: If either side wins (Assad or the FSA rebels), America loses. In a remarkably candid and revealing analysis, *New York Times* military writer [Edward Luttwak explained](#):

It would be disastrous if President Bashar al-Assad’s regime were to emerge victorious after fully suppressing the rebellion and restoring its control over the entire country. Iranian money, weapons



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and operatives and Hezbollah troops have become key factors in the fighting, and Mr. Assad's triumph would dramatically affirm the power and prestige of Shiite Iran and Hezbollah, its Lebanon-based proxy — posing a direct threat both to the Sunni Arab states and to Israel.

But a rebel victory would also be extremely dangerous for the United States and for many of its allies in Europe and the Middle East. That's because extremist groups, some identified with Al Qaeda, have become the most effective fighting force in Syria. If those rebel groups manage to win, they would almost certainly try to form a government hostile to the United States. Moreover, Israel could not expect tranquility on its northern border if the jihadis were to triumph in Syria....

Given this depressing state of affairs, a decisive outcome for either side would be unacceptable for the United States. An Iranian-backed restoration of the Assad regime would increase Iran's power and status across the entire Middle East, while a victory by the extremist-dominated rebels would inaugurate another wave of Al Qaeda terrorism.

Whatever decision comes out of Obama's meetings with his high-level military advisers about how to deal with Syria, one thing is certain: He, and they, would never have gotten themselves into this fix if they had followed [Thomas Jefferson's advice](#). In his first inaugural address on March 4, 1801, Jefferson laid out his administration's philosophy of government which included this:

It is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principles of our government, and consequently those which ought to shape its administration. I will compress them with the narrowest compass they will bear:

Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.

A graduate of Cornell University and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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