



Western Leaders Consider Options for Syria Intervention

As the crisis in Syria heats up amidst allegations that the government has used chemical weapons against civilians, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel (shown) — speaking on August 26 at a news conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, with Indonesian Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro — said that the United States is “looking at all options” concerning a possible U.S. response.



“The United States is looking at all options regarding the situation in Syria,” Hagel was quoted as saying by Britain’s [Telegraph](#). “We’re working with our allies and with the international community. We are analyzing the intelligence, and we will get the facts. And if there’s any action taken, then it will be in concert with the international community and within the framework of legal justification,” said the defense secretary.

Reports that still have not been confirmed have alleged that more than 1,300 Syrian civilians were killed in an attack by Syrian government forces near Damascus on August 21 that used chemical weapons. President Obama’s Deputy Press Secretary Josh Earnest posted a statement on the White House website that same day that condemned chemical weapons but carefully avoided making unproven charges against the Assad regime.

In an interview on CNN’s *New Day* program on August 23, President Obama — when asked about allegations made by anti-government activists in Syria that President Bashar al-Assad’s forces had used chemical weapons — said that officials are “right now gathering information” and that “what we’ve seen indicates that this is clearly a big event of grave concern.”

A news article posted on the [Department of Defense website](#) on August 23 quoted Hagel’s statement to reporters, as he embarked on his trip to Asia: “The president has asked the Defense Department for options. [As] always, the department is prepared, has been prepared, to provide ranges for all contingencies for the president of the United States, and we’ll continue to do that.”

“We’re dealing with a very serious issue,” Hagel added. “We are working with our international partners, the international community [and] the United Nations. We are looking at every option.”

As for the big question on everyone’s mind, Hagel said: “On the specific option of military use or force in response to what we will determine at some point here very shortly what did happen, and we’re still assessing that,” he added. “I think the range of military options is always part of the range of options the president has.”

Whether the U.S. government is seriously considering military intervention in Syria or not, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, speaking at a news conference on August 26, said his government does not intend to be drawn into a military conflict over the civil war in Syria, [reported Reuters News](#). Lavrov also stated the the United States and its allies would be repeating “past mistakes” if they intervened in Syria.

“The use of force without the approval of the United Nations Security Council is a very grave violation



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 26, 2013

of international law,” said Lavrov, at the news conference, during which he addressed accusations made by rebel forces that Syrian government forces have used chemical weapons.

Furthermore, reported Reuters, Lavrov stated his opinion that the alleged chemical attack was probably the work of rebels who wanted to derail plans by Washington and Moscow to hold talks on Syria’s future.

Lavrov urged the the United States and its allies not to go down the “dangerous path” it had taken several times before, adding: “We have no plans to go to war with anyone.”

“If anybody thinks that bombing and destroying the Syrian military infrastructure, and leaving the battlefield for the opponents of the regime to win, would end everything — that is an illusion,” said Lavrov.

While Lavrov argued that U.S. military intervention “without the approval of the United Nations Security Council” would be “a very grave violation of international law,” as a Russian, he naturally would have little appreciation for U.S. constitutional law and that the U.S. Constitution delegates the power to declare war to *Congress* — not to the president or any international agency.

Another report about Lavrov’s news conference published by [USA Today](#) cited Lavrov’s charge that Western nations calling for military action against Syria have no proof that the Syrian government is behind the alleged chemical weapons attack.

Lavrov said that the countries calling for action have assumed the role of “both investigators and the U.N. Security Council” in investigating the incident.

“They cannot produce evidence, but keep on saying that the ‘red line’ has been crossed and they cannot wait any longer.”

Even before such evidence is collected, there are voices among U.S. officials eager to get involved in Syria. In his article posted yesterday, “[War Hawks Urge Military Intervention in Syria](#),” Bob Adelman quoted a statement from one of the U.S. Senate’s leading saber rattlers, John 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.

While the United States has yet to commit to direct military intervention in Syria, our government has been busily at work training the forces attempting to overthrow the Assad government. As *The New American’s* [noted earlier](#), citing intelligence originating with Israeli intelligence and analysis service DEBKAfile, “opposition fighters were trained in ‘special operations tactics’ by U.S. and Jordanian instructors and armed with Russian-made weapons supplied by the Obama administration and the Islamist rulers of Saudi Arabia.” The report stated that the anti-Assad rebels are fighting under U.S. and Jordanian commanders based in Jordan.

Since U.S.-trained and directed operations began well before the recent alleged chemical attacks, it is obvious that our government is already committed to intervention in Syria, and is awaiting justification for escalating our involvement.



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 26, 2013

Photo of Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel speaking in Jakarta, Indonesia: AP Images

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