**Seymour Hersh’s Blockbuster: Obama On The Red Line And On The Rat Line**

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Read Seymour Hersh’s devastating account of Obama’s Red Lines and Rat Lines and weep for the Republic. It is no more.

For the first time in a half-century American voters actually elected the “peace candidate” in 2008 and sent Obama to the White House to end the interventionist foreign policy that had lead to disaster in Iraq, and, implicitly, to wind down the vast war machine that had been left over from the Cold War. The latter had  been converted  by the Bush’s and Clintons into an armada of invasion and occupation that had rained death and destruction from Bosnia to Baghdad to Kandahar for no reasonable or justifiable purpose of national security.  These aggressions were simply what a war machine does, making up rationalizations as it goes along.

But the Warfare State was not about to let peace happen. Soon Obama learned the Washington pivot, rehired the core of Bush’s War Cabinet and became enmeshed in the “national security” plots and schemes which were in the pipeline when he arrived at 1600 Pennsylvanian Avenue— much like JFK inherited the disastrous Bay Of Pigs invasion. Like the despicable Alan Dulles, he inherited ambitious scoundrels like so-called General David Petraeus, who soon had him convinced that the non-sensical and bloody “surge” in Anbar Province had been a roaring success, and that it should be exported to the quagmire in Afghanistan.

Indeed, after the Afghan surge was launched in 2009 there was no turning back. The peace candidate had already become co-opted—emerging as a pliant tool of America’s rogue Warfare State that functions almost entirely outside of the Constitution and often beyond statutory law, as well. Ironically, the former editor of the Harvard Law Journal and self-proclaimed constitutional expert apparently had no qualms whatsoever about any of this. The spy agencies were nourished with massive new resources and widened mandates; Rumsfeld’s disgraceful and illegal detention operation at Guantanamo Bay was not closed as he had promised; Bush’s cowardly and counter-productive drone wars were drastically escalated; and the defense budget grew by more than $100 billion from the already bloated levels he had inherited from the “decider”.

And this gets us to Hersh’s expose. By 2011 Obama had donned the full regalia of the imperial presidency. With not so much as even a casual nod to the War Powers Act—-the first piece of legislation I worked on 43 years ago as a young aide on Capitol Hill outraged by Johnson’s and Nixon’s immoral, illegal and genocidal war on Vietnam—-the peace candidate conducted an air war and subversion campaign in Libya because he could.

Upon the bloody end of the Gadhafi regime, Obama than turned to making war on the Assad regime in Syria—without a sliver of logic as to why intervention in an age old sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Alawites would make the citizens of Nebraska one wit safer. This time he did it through the establishment of a CIA annex in Benghazi to gather and accumulate the former Libyans dictator’s lethal arsenals for transfer to the Syrian rebels—many of whom where jihadists and terrorists of the type we were allegedly trying to erase from the earth.

Moreover, as Seymour Hersh explains, the Benghazi weapons were then transited by means of an illegal CIA “rat line” through Turkey to the rebels. And the rat line was absolutely illegal because all CIA covert operations since the 1970s have been required as a matter of law to be disclosed to the Congressional leadership—-for whatever that has become worth in the post Frank Church era where shaking down the military-industrial complex for campaign money, rather than thwarting its propensity for rogue operations, has become a bipartisan pursuit of choice.

But our constitutional scholar-in-chief apparently had no problem splitting hairs. The “rat line” was deemed a “liaison” operation with England’s MI6 and thereby exempt from reporting requirements. So when the rat line operation blew up in Benghazi during the middle of the Presidential campaign in September 2012 in the incident that lead to the death of Ambassador Chris Stevens, the Obama White House just lied. No, the consulate where the deadly attack occurred was not a CIA annex and weapons depot; and, no, we never supplied any weapons to any rebels in Syria. All a pack of lies.

But when you are knee deep in intrigue and covert operations and enmeshed in plots to overthrow governments with thugs like Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey, one calamity soon leads to another. As Hersh explains, Barrack Obama in his usual manner had authorized an outright aggression, but than wimped out after the Benghazi fiasco and abruptly shutdown the rat line.

Needless to say, this left Prime Minister Erdogan and his chief of clandestine operations high and dry. By the fall of 2012, the latter were deeply committed to the overthrow of Assad and the establishment of a client regime in Damascus. But the tide of war had already turned—the squabbling gangs of rebels were in retreat, notwithstanding the substantial aid and support they had received from Saudi Arabia, Qatar,Turkey and the West. And from there emerges the main theme of Hersh’s expose.

Obama had foolishly drawn a “red line” on Syrian use of chemical weapons in a civil war which was already engulfed in bloody savagery from both sides.  So the Turks decided to call his bluff, and enable their main rebel ally, the jihadist al-Nusra Front, to stage a false flag attack with what was known to be the signature weapon in Assad’s Soviet supplied chemical weapons arsenal– the deadly sarin gas.

Seymour Hersh explains in chapter and verse, based on a DIA secret report among other high level sources, how this abomination unfolded, and became the horrific gas attack in Ghouta on August 21, 2013. But the gravamen of the piece is his description of how the Obama White House came within two days of launching a Bush style war on Syria after it had already been warned that the proof of Assad’s complicity was lacking; and that a weapons testing lab in England had already concluded that a sarin sample obtained on the scene was of a homemade variety and not of the military grade known to be in the Assad arsenal.

Despite all this, the White House apparatus pushed an increasingly resistant Joint Chiefs of Staff through more than 35 iterations of an attack plan that had nothing to do with spanking Assad for his alleged barbarity or surgically disabling his chemical weapons capacity. The attack was to involve an armada of British, French and American air strikes along with sea-based barrage of Tomahawk missiles ***to take out Assad’s entire military capacity.***

In short, a power-drunk amateur in the White House came within two days of launching a massive military campaign to ***bring about regime change in Syria—-an action of stupendous folly which would have ignited  a cauldron of fire throughout the Middle East like never before:***

In the aftermath of the 21 August attack Obama ordered the Pentagon to draw up targets for bombing. Early in the process, the former intelligence official said, ‘the White House rejected 35 target sets provided by the joint chiefs of staff as being insufficiently “painful” to the Assad regime.’ The original targets included only military sites and nothing by way of civilian infrastructure. Under White House pressure, the US attack plan evolved into ‘a monster strike’: two wings of B-52 bombers were shifted to airbases close to Syria, and navy submarines and ships equipped with Tomahawk missiles were deployed. ‘Every day the target list was getting longer,’ the former intelligence official told me. ‘The Pentagon planners said we can’t use only Tomahawks to strike at Syria’s missile sites because their warheads are buried too far below ground, so the two B-52 air wings with two-thousand pound bombs were assigned to the mission. Then we’ll need standby search-and-rescue teams to recover downed pilots and drones for target selection. It became huge.’ The new target list was meant to ‘completely eradicate any military capabilities Assad had’, the former intelligence official said. The core targets included electric power grids, oil and gas depots, all known logistic and weapons depots, all known command and control facilities, and all known military and intelligence buildings.

Britain and France were both to play a part. On 29 August, the day Parliament voted against Cameron’s bid to join the intervention, the *Guardian* reported that he had already ordered six RAF Typhoon fighter jets to be deployed to Cyprus, and had volunteered a submarine capable of launching Tomahawk missiles. The French air force – a crucial player in the 2011 strikes on Libya – was deeply committed, according to an account in *Le Nouvel Observateur*; François Hollande had ordered several Rafale fighter-bombers to join the American assault. Their targets were reported to be in western Syria.

By the last days of August the president had given the Joint Chiefs a fixed deadline for the launch. ‘H hour was to begin no later than Monday morning [2 September], a massive assault to neutralise Assad,’ the former intelligence official said.

At the eleventh hour Obama backed down when General Dempsey said flat out no—and then lied that he had changed his mind after a walk around the White House with his clueless chief of staff. The foolish incumbent in the White House and his clownish Secretary of State, the man with the big head of hair and self-evidently not much underneath, then had to suffer the indignity of being rescued from their disastrous schemes and misadventures by Vladimir Putin.

Does that not explain their subsequent insensible campaign to destabilize the Ukraine and then to provoke the current insane showdown with Russia that has resulted from the putsch against a legitimately elected government in Kiev? Does not Obama’s incredible follies and abuses of power here described provide a palpable warning that it is time to dismantle the Warfare State? That is, before still another election turns out to be a mere ratification of an American Imperium being conducted by a permanent rogue regime buried deep within the Warfare State that our national security no longer requires?

As I said, read Seymour Hersh’s devastating expose and think about it:

***Seymour M. Hersh on Obama, Erdoğan and the Syrian rebels***

[*http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n08/seymour-m-hersh/the-red-line-and-the-rat-line*](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n08/seymour-m-hersh/the-red-line-and-the-rat-line)

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