Foreign Intervention in the Syrian Conflict

The increased foreign intervention in Syria’s internal conflict suggests that the anti-Assad coalition is preparing for the end of the “battle for Syria.”

In northern Jordan, a training camp with mockups of typical Syrian towns and an airport has been established alongside the military training range for soldiers of the royal guard and special operations force units. Syrian security forces near Deraa have discovered a secret Jabhat al-Nusra weapons cache with ATGMs brought across the border from Jordan at the direction of Saudi intelligence as part of a plan to create a “liberated area” in the southern part of the country. Jordan is actively cooperating with foreign sponsors of the “Syrian revolution,” but it is pursuing its own interests. For example, several representatives of the Syrian opposition who refused to “assist” the local security agencies have been deported. Attempts have been made to influence Syrian army commanders. The Saudis have been working through the opposition (Michel Kilo and the son of former Defense Minister Manaf Tlass) to persuade a number of Alawi officers in Syria to defect to the anti-government camp in exchange for firm guarantees of safety for themselves and their families. Riyadh is prepared to provide such guarantees. Leaders of Iraq’s Kurdish Autonomous Region are training security force personnel for the Kurdish areas in Syria with the expectation that Kurdish self-government will follow the collapse of the Bashar Assad regime. Pro-Assad forces have also been intervening in Syria’s internal affairs. For example, Hezbollah is striving to keep opposition fighters and foreign jihadists out of Lebanon with national army support. However, they have so far been unable to prevent them from crossing the border in the opposite direction. The Free Syrian Army and armed Islamist groups want to transform areas in Lebanon, particularly Tripoli and its environs, into their operational and logistics base and a site for training jihadists from Muslim countries (Mali, Iraq, Sudan and Jordan, among others). They are relying on the support and ties of local Salafis, including those affiliated with al-Qaeda (Emir H. Sabah, M. Bensur’s groups and a Kuwaiti citizen named Y. Shummari). However, as Anthony Cordesman, who previously worked for the US Department of Defense and the State Department, has said, foreign forces will encounter serious difficulties if they decide to intervene in the Syrian conflict, up to and including the possible use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Army. Given that, the preferred scenario would be an attack on Assad’s headquarters and Syrian leadership bunkers. He said the threat of destroying the Assad government’s senior leadership could be a more effective method of solving the problem than a military intervention. In short, the approach used by Washington and its accomplices to topple undesirable regimes is a familiar one (at least from the events in Iraq and Libya). The forces to initiate that kind of operation in Syria are being actively assembled. Vladimir Platov is an expert on the Middle East. This article was written expressly for New Eastern Outlook.