

Experts to Obama: Here Is What to Do in Syria

By Daniel Halper

A big group of foreign policy experts, from across the ideological spectrum, is calling on President Obama to impose "meaningful consequences on the Assad regime" for their use of chemical weapons.

"At a minimum, the United States, along with willing allies and partners, should use standoff weapons and airpower to target the Syrian dictatorship's military units that were involved in the recent large-scale use of chemical weapons. It should also provide vetted moderate elements of Syria's armed opposition with the military support required to identify and strike regime units armed with chemical weapons," the experts write.

"Moreover, the United States and other willing nations should consider direct military strikes against the pillars of the Assad regime. The objectives should be not only to ensure that Assad's chemical weapons no longer threaten America, our allies in the region or the Syrian people, but also to deter or destroy the Assad regime's airpower and other conventional military means of committing atrocities against civilian non-combatants. At the same time, the United States should accelerate efforts to vet, train, and arm moderate elements of Syria's armed opposition, with the goal of empowering them to prevail against both the Assad regime and the growing presence of Al Qaeda-affiliated and other extremist rebel factions in the country."

The signatories on the letter addressed to President Obama include Senator Joe Lieberman, Bernard-Henri Levy, Karl Rove, Bill Kristol, Elliott Abrams, Leon Wieseltier, and many others. Right now, 66 experts have signed the letter.

Here's the full letter and list of signatories:

Dear Mr. President:

Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has once again violated your red line, using chemical weapons to kill as many as 1,400 people in the suburbs of Damascus. You have said that large-scale use of chemical weapons in Syria would implicate "core national interests," including "making sure that weapons of mass destruction are not proliferating, as well as needing to protect our allies [and] our bases in the region." The world—including Iran, North Korea, and other potential aggressors who seek or possess weapons of mass of destruction—is now watching to see how you respond.

We urge you to respond decisively by imposing meaningful consequences on the Assad regime. At a minimum, the United States, along with willing allies and partners, should use standoff weapons and airpower to target the Syrian dictatorship's military units that were involved in the recent large-scale use of chemical weapons. It should also provide vetted moderate elements of Syria's armed opposition with the military support required to identify and strike regime units armed with chemical weapons.

Moreover, the United States and other willing nations should consider direct military strikes against the pillars of the Assad regime. The objectives should be not only to ensure that Assad's chemical weapons no longer threaten America, our allies in the region or the Syrian people, but also to deter or destroy the Assad regime's airpower and other conventional military means of committing atrocities against civilian non-combatants. At the same time, the United States should accelerate efforts to vet, train, and arm moderate elements of Syria's armed opposition, with the goal of empowering them to prevail against both the Assad regime and the growing presence of Al Qaeda-affiliated and other extremist rebel factions in the country.

Left unanswered, the Assad regime's mounting attacks with chemical weapons will show the world that America's red lines are only empty threats. It is a dangerous and destabilizing message that will surely come to haunt us—one that will certainly embolden Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons capability despite your repeated warnings that doing so is unacceptable. It is therefore time for the United States to take meaningful and decisive actions to stem the Assad regime's relentless aggression, and help shape and influence the foundations for the post-Assad Syria that you have said is inevitable.

Sincerely,

Ammar Abdulhamid
Elliott Abrams
Dr. Fouad Ajami
Dr. Michael Auslin
Gary Bauer
Paul Berman
Max Boot
Ellen Bork
Ambassador L. Paul Bremer
Matthew R. J. Brodsky
Dr. Eliot A. Cohen
Senator Norm Coleman
Ambassador William Courtney
Seth Cropsey
James S. Denton
Paula A. DeSutter
Larry Diamond
Dr. Paula J. Dobriansky
Thomas Donnelly
Dr. Michael Doran
Mark Dubowitz

Dr. Colin Dueck
Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt
Ambassador Eric S. Edelman
Reuel Marc Gerecht
Abe Greenwald
Christopher J. Griffin
John P. Hannah
Bruce Pitcairn Jackson
Ash Jain
Dr. Kenneth Jensen
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Dr. Robert G. Joseph
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Martin Peretz
Danielle Pletka
Dr. David Pollock
Arch Puddington
Karl Rove
Randy Scheunemann
Dan Senior
Ambassador John Shattuck
Lee Smith
Henry D. Sokolski
James Traub
Ambassador Mark D. Wallace
Michael Weiss
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Dr. Radwan Ziadeh