

# ISSUE BRIEF

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## Syria: Heritage Foundation Recommendations

*The Heritage Foundation*

In the aftermath of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons against Syrian opposition forces, the U.S. urgently needs to develop a strategy not only to counter Assad's use of chemical weapons but protect American interests in the Syrian crisis.

The Heritage Foundation has long been focused on developing such policies, as seen in the following writings.

### **Iran Warns of Retaliation over Syrian Crisis**

By James Phillips and Charlotte Florance

*The Foundry*

September 6, 2013

<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/09/06/>

[iran-warns-of-retaliation-over-syrian-crisis/](http://blog.heritage.org/2013/09/06/iran-warns-of-retaliation-over-syrian-crisis/)

If the Obama Administration follows through with its planned “shot across the bow” of Assad's Syrian regime, it should be prepared to deal with the unintended consequences of such action. Some of the most troubling repercussions could come from Iran, Assad's chief ally.

### **Can There Be a “Humanitarian War”?**

By Jim Weidman

*The Foundry*

September 6, 2013

<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/09/06/can-there-be-a-humanitarian-war/>

In pressing Congress to approve military action against Syria, both President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry have argued that the U.S. must strike for humanitarian reasons, if no other. But does the Syrian situation really support a moral argument for war?

### **5 Reasons Congress Should Press Obama on Syria**

By Brett Schaefer

*The Foundry*

September 4, 2013

<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/09/04/morning-bell-5-reasons-congress-should-press-obama-on-syria/>

House and Senate hearings gave Members of Congress an opportunity to question the Obama Administration on Syria and its strategy—and question they should. Here are five reasons Congress should press the Administration for answers.

### **Obama Punts to Congress on Syria**

By James Phillips

*The Foundry*

August 31, 2013

<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/08/31/obama-punts-to-congress-on-syria/>

Having carelessly established a “red line” for intervening in the Syrian civil war without a clear

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<http://report.heritage.org/ib4041>

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strategy or appropriate course to protect U.S. interests, the President has now dumped the whole mess in the lap of Congress.

It is appropriate for the President to consult Congress, but he has a tall order in convincing many skeptical Members that he is doing the right thing.

### **Russian Missiles to Syria Endanger U.S. Foreign Policy Goals**

By Ariel Cohen, PhD

*Issue Brief* No. 3950

May 29, 2013

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/05/russian-missiles-to-syria-endanger-us-foreign-policy-goals>

Russia is planning to supply Syria game-changing weapons, which will shift the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean in favor of President Bashar al-Assad's regime and may make any future operations against the Assad forces considerably more difficult.

The Russian advanced weapons systems would be able to target NATO ships as far as 300 kilometers off the coast of Syria and shoot down aircraft in a radius of up to 200 kilometers, including over Turkey, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, and the Mediterranean. This would interfere with any potential U.S.- or NATO-led military or humanitarian operations, including no-fly zones, safe zones, supply routes, or refugee assistance projects.

### **Syria Crisis: U.S. Leadership Needed to Coordinate Allies**

By James Phillips

*Issue Brief* No. 3939

May 16, 2013

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/05/syria-crisis-us-leadership-needed-to-coordinate-allies>

One negative implication of the Obama Administration's "lead from behind" efforts on the worsening Syria crisis is that U.S. allies have independently stepped forward to advance their own interests by backing various rival groups within the ad hoc Syrian opposition coalition. These external aid efforts, often pursued with little coordination, have bolstered Islamist extremist groups within Syria, exacerbated tensions between rival opposition groups, and undermined the unity of the rebel forces.

### **Syria's Chemical Weapons: U.S. Should Engage Syria's Opposition to Defuse Threat**

By James Phillips

*Issue Brief* No. 3925

May 1, 2013

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/05/syria-s-chemical-weapons-us-should-engage-syria-s-opposition-to-defuse-threat>

Washington cannot allow al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, or other hostile forces to cart off Assad's lethal chemical munitions for use outside Syria. That threat, more than Assad's limited use of chemical weapons inside the country, is the chief threat to vital U.S. national interests.

The Obama Administration needs to reach out to non-Islamist factions of Syria's splintered opposition in order to better address that threat, accelerate the fall of Assad, and contain the influence of al-Qaeda in post-Assad Syria.

### **Kerry Offers More Aid but Still Lacks Sound Strategy on Syria**

By James Phillips

*Issue Brief* No. 3865

February 28, 2013

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/02/secretary-john-kerry-s-first-trip-overseas-and-the-syrian-crisis>

Kerry's challenge will be to chart a more effective course for salvaging a stable post-Assad Syria that does not threaten U.S. national interests and those of U.S. allies.

### **The Arab Spring Descends into Islamist Winter: Implications for U.S. Policy**

By James Phillips

*Background* No. 2754

December 20, 2012

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/12/the-arab-spring-descends-into-islamist-winter-implications-for-us-policy>

Proactive, thoughtful engagement centered on protecting U.S. interests and promoting peace and prosperity in the region is a more cost-effective alternative to the cycle of violence and repression that is likely to emerge from the Arab uprisings if met with American indifference.

### **Syrian Uprising: U.S. Inaction Contributes to a Wider Regional Conflict**

By Steven P. Bucci, PhD, Morgan Lorraine Roach, and James Phillips

*Issue Brief* No. 3769

November 5, 2012

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/11/syrian-uprising-us-inaction-contributes-to-a-wider-regional-conflict>

American policy toward the Syrian uprising has been an unmitigated failure. President Obama's glacially slow and overly cautious policies that were intended to avoid turning the Syrian uprising into a wider regional affair have had exactly the opposite effect. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's call for new leadership in the anti-Assad resistance is likely to amount to an example of too little too late.

### **No-Fly Zone over Syria: Wrong Policy at the Wrong Time**

By Luke Coffey and James Phillips

*Issue Brief* No. 3702

August 15, 2012

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/08/no-fly-zone-over-syria-wrong-policy-at-the-wrong-time>

There has been speculation that the U.S. might support the idea of establishing a no-fly zone (NFZ)

over Syria. Under the current conditions, an establishment of an NFZ would be a costly and risky action that would do little to stop the killing on the ground while entangling the U.S. in an intensifying civil war.

### **Counter-Proliferation Contingency Planning Is Needed for Syrian WMD**

By Steven P. Bucci, PhD

Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, U.S. House of Representatives

July 23, 2012

<http://www.heritage.org/research/testimony/2012/07/counter-proliferation-contingency-planning-is-needed-for-syrian-wmd>

The situation in Syria could collapse into chaos at any moment with many dangerous consequences for the surrounding region. A major concern is that chemical and biological weapons, or possibly even radioactive material from Syria's nuclear program, could fall into the hands of terrorists. The U.S. needs to be planning for the worst-case scenario. Washington must closely monitor the evolving situation in Syria and make contingency plans.