

## TOP THREE FLASHPOINTS

# *Syria, Ukraine and Egypt*

As of 2014-02-18

**By John Antal**

Greatest Danger to USA	1
Medium Danger to USA	2
Dangerous to USA	3

**FlashPoints** is a bi-monthly update on the most critical national security issues facing the United States. Author and military expert John Antal will provide you with insights and a quick synopsis of the top three flash points in the world at the time of each report. FlashPoints will list the greatest danger to the USA, and then list risks of medium and serious danger. Keep abreast of the latest impending international crisis by reviewing FlashPoints

as of February 18, 2014

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1. Syria in Chaos

3. Ukraine Turmoil

2. Egypt Shift

as of February 18, 2014



**1. Syria in Chaos**

*Syria's civil war and implications for the US*

- a. President Barack Obama's Syria policy has failed. Syria peace talks are on the verge of collapse as the war heads into its fourth year. The war is internal (Shia verses Sunni) and external (Russia and Iran plus Hezbollah versus Saudi Arabia)
- b. The United Nations says more than 130,000 Syrians have been killed in the past three years of fighting and there is no end in sight to the civil war between the Syrian Ba'athist Government, led by Bashar al-Assad, and several rebel factions.
- c. The US has left a power vacuum in the Middle East and Russia and China are stepping in. Russia and China support Assad. Russia and Iran are arming Assad. Iran's surrogate in Lebanon, Hezbollah, is providing fighters for Assad.
- d. Oil rich Saudi Arabia supports the rebels, several of which are known jihadi extremist groups. The Saudis (Arab Sunnis) fear that a victory for Assad will be a victory for Iran (predominantly Persian Shia). The Saudis are arming, financing and encouraging the jihadists to fight against Bashar al-Assad's Ba'athist government.
- e. When the US failed to destroy the Syrian air force in September 2013, the Saudis increased their support for the rebels.
- f. Al-Assad's main striking force is his air force. The Syrian Air Force is now dropping barrel bombs of high explosives from helicopters to obliterate rebel communities. More Syrians have been killed in the three weeks since peace talks began than at any other time in the civil war.
- g. To counter Assad's air force, the Saudis are reportedly arming the jihadist rebels with shoulder launched surface to air missiles (SAMs).
- h. Once these weapons are in the hands of the jihadi extremists, the accountability and control of these shoulder launched SAMS is problematical.
- i. The US director of national intelligence, Mr. Jim Clapper recently declared there are 26,000 jihadist fighters in Syria.
- j. The good news is that Assad and his backers (Iranian and their surrogates, Hezbollah) have met with bloody opposition from the rebels and this is tying the Iranians down in a war that they seem unable to win.
- k. One analyst, Zachary Keck of The Diplomat, claims that the US is winning in Syria as the Shia's and Sunnis kill each other. Hezbollah, for instance, has lost hundreds of fighters killed and wounded with no victory in sight. Keck says that Iran is getting bogged down in Syria and losing influence in the Middle East.

**Analysis: The war will continue, possibly for years, with no decisive winner. The danger to the USA is that some of these jihadi groups will be trained and armed in Syria and bring terrorism to America. Will a future terror attack on the US generate from battle trained jihadi groups incubated in Syria?**

## 2. Egypt Shift

### *Egypt moving closer to Russia...*

- Egypt is an important country in the Middle East. It is the most populous Arab country in the world and has signed a peace treaty with Israel. It controls the strategically important Suez Canal. The Suez Canal provides the shortest maritime route between Europe and the Indian and western Pacific oceans. It is one of the world's most heavily used shipping lanes.
- Egypt was a strong ally of the Soviet Union in the 1960s. In 1972, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat turned away from the Soviet Union and expelled Soviet advisors and trainers for the Egyptian army. He invited US President Richard Nixon to Egypt and gradually turned Egypt into a key ally of the United States.
- Egypt is a close ally of the US in the Middle East. The US provides Egypt with roughly \$1.55 Billion annually, second only to Israel in US bilateral aid. Most of this aid goes directly to the Egyptian military. For an exact look at US aid to Egypt go to: <http://dcodeefc.com/military-aid/>
- The US curtailed some of its \$1.55 billion annual aid to Egypt in October 2013 to protest the coup led by Field Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi led that toppled Muslim Brotherhood leader and elected President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. Morsi remains in jail and is charged with treason.
- On Thursday, FEB 13, 2014, el-Sisi was in Moscow to discuss closer ties to Russia with Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- Putin supports el-Sisi bid to run for Egypt's presidency and said: "I wish you luck both from myself personally and from the Russian people."
- Russia also pledged a \$2 Billion arms deal with Egypt and to provide Egypt with 24 MiG-29 fighter jets, air defense systems, advanced KORNET anti-tank missiles and Ka-25, Mi-28 and Mi-25 combat helicopters.

**Analysis:** As US influence in the Middle East wanes and with a lack of US leadership concerning Egypt, el-Sisi is maneuvering to become President of Egypt and to keep the Egyptian Army in power. To do this he believes he must move closer to Russia.



Field Marshal  
Abdel Fattah  
Saheed Hussein  
Khalil el-Sisi (born  
19 Nov 1954)  
Commander-in-  
Chief of the  
Egyptian Armed  
Forces and defacto  
ruler of Egypt  
since the July 3,  
2013 coup.

### 3. Ukraine Turmoil

- a. The leaders of the Ukraine, President Viktor Yanukovich, faces riots, demonstrations, the occupation of government buildings and continuing unrest as he moves Ukraine away from the European Union (EU) and closer to Russia.
  1. On September 21, 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovich reneged on the decision to join the EU Association Agreement in favor of closer ties to Russia. Protests erupted across the Ukraine.
  2. Ukraine is now divided between fiercely independent factions that support closer ties with the EU and those, primarily in the eastern portion of the Ukraine, who want to maintain a close relationship with Russia.
  3. On January 16, 2014, Yanukovich signed Anti-Protest Laws restricting free speech and assembly. The protests surged and the Parliament repealed 9 of the 12 restrictive laws days later. Despite this move, the protests continued.
  4. By January 27, 2014, ten of the country's 27 regional governments had been overturned and others had come under threat from the protest movement.
  5. Ukraine is at a dangerous tipping point and on the verge of another internal revolution, civil war or external intervention.
- b. On FEB 14, 2014, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov warned the West against interference in Ukraine and declared that the EU is seeking to create a sphere of influence in Ukraine.
- c. On February 16, 2014, anti-government protesters ended demonstrations in Kiev's city hall in exchange for the release of all 234 protesters jailed by police.



**Analysis: The Russians will not permit Ukraine to side with the EU. As soon as the Sochi Olympics end on February 23, 2014, Putin will apply tremendous pressure on the Ukraine and President Yanukovich to suppress the protestors. This will not end well for the protestors.**

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**Ralph Peters**, Fox News Strategic Analyst and author of  
*Cain at Gettysburg*

If you want to raise your leadership awareness, read:

*7 Leadership Lessons of the American Revolution: The Founding Fathers, Liberty, and the Struggle for Independence*

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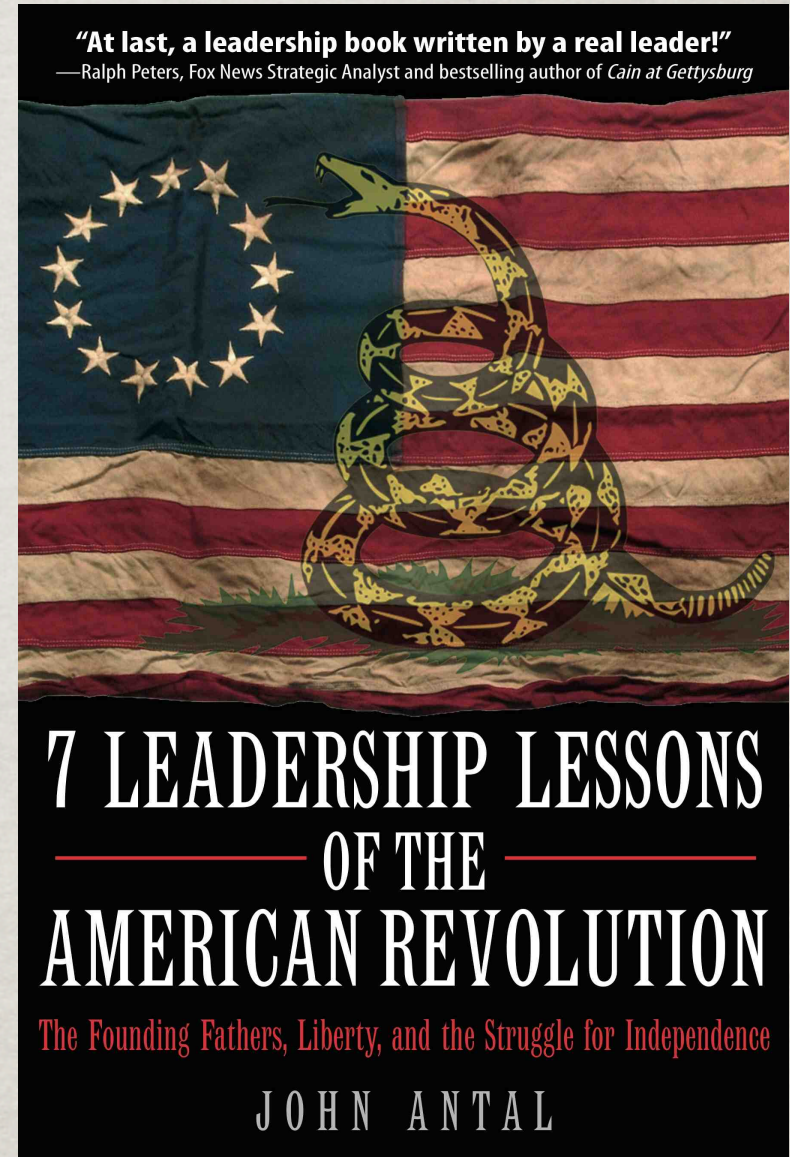
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## ***FLASHPOINTS*** by John Antal, Colonel US Army (Retired)

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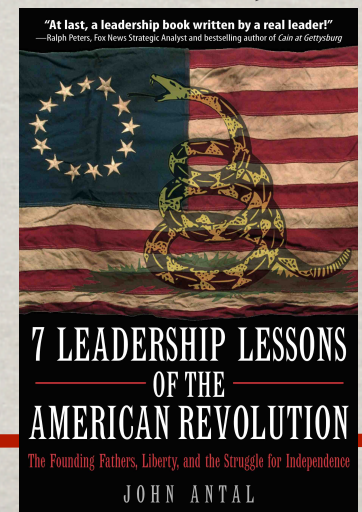
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"John Antal's timely book, *7 Leadership Lessons of the American Revolution* is succinctly written and easily understood. On the surface, it demonstrates how those who risked all to create this republic used specific leadership principles to overcome tremendous challenges in that endeavor. These same techniques are just as valid in this century as in theirs. Along the way, Antal paints these revolutionaries as living, breathing human beings with high-risk tasks to accomplish. But Antal's study actually goes much farther – because behind his straightforward storytelling lies something much more important: an examination of what principles that leadership came from, and what principles it should serve. You'll come away with the feeling that the founders of this country weren't "historical figures" but living, breathing human beings with huge problems to solve, for which they used methods available to any one of us who cares to learn."

**Bradley Thompson, television writer and producer and the co-writer for the hit TV series' Battlestar Galactica and the second season of Falling Skies.**

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