

After “Liberation,” U.S. To Give Control Of Raqqa To “Rebels”, Not Syrian Government

The Syrian city of Raqqa – the “stronghold” of terror group ISIS – will be governed by a “civilian council” with the support of U.S. troops following its “liberation” from terrorists. Their refusal to return the city to the Syrian government will only worsen the nation’s six-year-long civil war.

By [Whitney Webb](#)

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While the public justification for the presence of United States troops in Syria has long been focused on fighting the terror group Daesh (ISIS), the recent actions of the U.S. and its allies within Syria continue to suggest that fighting terrorism is merely a cover for a very different type of operation, one that seeks to keep Syria fragmented and destabilized long after any terrorists are defeated.

On Tuesday, the U.S.-allied militias that have been encircling Raqqa – the de facto stronghold of Daesh – [announced that they had formed](#) a “civilian council” to govern Raqqa after its capture from Daesh militants. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a U.S.-backed militia that comprises a large number of Syrian Kurds, claim to have spent six months setting up the council, with a preparatory committee having met “with the people and important tribal figures of Raqqa city to find out their opinions on how to govern it,” [Middle East Eye reported](#).

SDF spokesman Talal Selo stated that some towns near Raqqa had already been turned over to the council following a successful operation to drive out Daesh forces.

The U.S. military had previously hinted that power would be given to rebel groups following Raqqa’s “liberation” when the head of U.S. Central Command [General Joseph Votel told the Senate](#) in early March that military officials anticipated “that America’s allies will need assistance preventing their [Daesh’s] return and establishing Syrian-led peacekeeping efforts” after a successful operation.

Considering that the Syrian government is far from being one of “America’s allies,” Votel’s statement implied that the U.S.-backed militias would be given control of Raqqa and the surrounding area, despite the implications this would have for Syrian sovereignty and further destabilization in the war-torn country.

As [MintPress previously reported](#), Votel also told senators that “conventional U.S. forces would be required to stabilize the region once ISIS fighters are flushed from Raqqa,” meaning that the current U.S. troop build-up around Raqqa is by no means a temporary deployment, but rather the foundation for creating a standing army.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has not been surprised as to what the U.S.-backed operation to remove Daesh from Raqqa would bring.

Last week, Assad [told Agence France-Presse](#):

“We support whoever wants to liberate any city from the terrorists, but that doesn’t mean to be liberated from terrorists and being occupied by American forces, for example, or by another proxy, or other terrorists. So, it’s not clear who is going to liberate Raqqa. Is it really Syrian forces that are going to hand it over to the Syrian army? Is it going to be in cooperation with the Syrian army? It’s not clear yet.”

Given that the Trump administration’s current position [involves the removal of Assad](#) from power, keeping Raqqa out of the Syrian government’s control via a U.S.-backed militia seems like a clear attempt to force Assad’s hand.

While Assad [had previously stated](#) that the country’s civil war would likely conclude this year – barring foreign intervention – a U.S.-military-supported rogue government in Raqqa would prevent the Syrian government from reacquiring its territory. Any attempts by the Syrian Army to take back Raqqa from the SDF and U.S. military could allow U.S. officials to demonize Assad and take stronger actions to remove him from power.

However, the U.S. plan is unlikely to go smoothly, given the Kurds’ dominant presence in the SDF. Turkey, Syria’s northern neighbor, will probably not be happy to see a Kurdish-majority group gain governing power over a region near its border, as the Turkish government has long considered Syrian Kurdish militias, including those backed by the U.S., [to be terrorist groups](#). Turkey has [repeatedly bombed](#) U.S.-backed Syrian Kurds [for this very reason](#).

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