

America's "Train and Equip" Program in Syria: When Was Financing Actually Stopped?

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Coming at a time when the fate of the Syrian war is more or less locked in place, the mainstream media in the week commencing from July 17th, 2017, started to disseminate certain information that was originally reported by the [Washington Post](#), citing "US officials", that a decision was recently made in the White House to halt all financing for vetted opposition groups fighting in Syria. However, according to the same newspaper in a 2015 [article](#), already at that time a decision had been voted for in the House Intelligence Committee "to cut as much as 20 percent of the classified funds flowing into a CIA program that U.S. officials said has become one the agency's largest covert operations, with a budget approaching \$1 billion a year".

It follows from the same 2015 article, citing documents obtained from none other than Edward Snowden, that "at \$1 billion, Syria-related operations account for about \$1 of every \$15 in the CIA's overall budget". Incidentally, at a ratio of 1:15, CNN, of course coupled with the usual anti-Russian overtones, described the funding of the "CIA program in Syria" as "small".



The ending of funding for such a "small" program as spending billions of US tax payer money across half a decade on overthrowing the legally-elected government of yet another Middle Eastern country, of course, is not simply everyday news, and thus it should not be treated as such. However, at the same time the "news" (published by the Washington Post) should also not be treated as the reality. The President of the US Donald Trump was very quick to refute information published by the Washington Post, but he also did not completely deny it:

The Amazon Washington Post fabricated the facts on my ending massive, dangerous, and wasteful payments to Syrian rebels fighting Assad.....

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [July 25, 2017](#)

So, to summarise the aforementioned facts: The Washington Post claims the White House has now ended the funding to "moderate rebel" groups, but, according to Trump, what was written by the Newspaper is not strictly true. Also, there were reports from the same Newspaper in 2015 that funding had been cut (~20%). Proceeding from this summary, the following question naturally arises:

- Did the US end financial support for its “vetted” militant groups in Syria, and if so, when?

As was [noticed by others](#) with a keen eye, Reuters already reported earlier this year – February 2017 – that funding to vetted “moderate” groups had been “frozen”...



...and the Financial Times published an “interview” with a “US-backed rebel commander”, in which the newspaper’s interlocutor gives the impression that the US have more or less flushed him and his comrades down the toilet.



Did Washington cut the program’s funding in July 2017? February 2017? In 2015? Sometime in 2016...say...August 19th at 17:36:59 on the dot?

This question, of course, is impossible for non-State employees to definitively answer. The only barometer external observers have is the content that is published in the media – whether it be official statements or primary research. In other words – simulacrum. The map is most certainly not the territory. However, what the layperson in the street can do is connect some dots in order to triangulate some logical conclusion. For example, the author of the following tweet noticed that the quantity of videos published on channels with the notorious green-white “Syrian revolution” flag featuring the use of TOW-missiles against the Syrian Arab Army haven’t been as numerous as of late:

I haven't seen TOW missiles in Syrian combat film in at least a couple of months. I think president Trump stopped this practice

— Libertymark (@Libertymark8) [July 4, 2017](#)

And this observation is backed up by the fact that the number of documented TOW launches in [February 2017](#) – the month Trump took office – was [less than in previous months](#).



Source: [@yarinah1 / Twitter](#)

This observation of course does not directly prove that the US’ financing of groups in Syria has stopped at this or that time, but what it does show is that the number of documented launches reduced. It can be assumed that the armed groups didn’t suddenly lose the ability to record videos or were warned against filming, because TOW launches by either the “Free Syrian Army” or their jihadists comrades from Jabhat al-Nusra/Ahrar al-Sham have been captured on camera since February 2017.

combat vid 18+

Let's hope they just listened to the "Wax Tiger"? [#ATGM](#) targets a huge crowd of shia mercs in [#Hama](#), followed by rout. [pic.twitter.com/4qkxBsiPb5](#)

— XI. (@Interbrigades) [March 25, 2017](#)

So, the short answer to the question earlier asked is: we can't be sure when the funding stopped, because the Pentagon's *"arm and train"* program is not transparent, for obvious reasons. But the number of TOW launches captured on video and posted online has in fact decreased.

Does this correlate with the events on the ground in Syria? Yes it does. The *"FSA"* [structure](#) itself has collapsed due to the Turkish pivot East since the coup attempt seemingly by the CIA back on 15th July, 2016. The recent Qatar-Saudi spat has also contributed to the decimation of the holographic so-called *"Syrian revolution"* – now, despite previous collaboration in supporting the terrorist groups in Syria, Saudi and allies are fighting (proxy, of course) against Qatar and allies in Idlib province, the result of which is Turkish domination of the Jihadist stronghold. This means that the US was presented with a choice: to try to mediate the infighting and repair the crumbling jihadist multi-headed hydra, or to place a stake on another actor. The Trump administration placed a stake instead on the Kurds. Why?

Because the project involving *"Free Syrian Army"* militants acting as a trojan horse to arm al-Qaeda affiliated groups like Jabhat al Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham is no longer viable. Thanks to social media proof that the weapons the US sent to the *"FSA"* intentionally ended up in the hands of jihadist groups was accumulating to levels that were becoming very dangerous for people like John McCain. The general public becoming aware that the US government was aiding and abetting the very terrorist organisations that – according to America itself – flew three planes into buildings in New York in 2001 is absolutely unacceptable for the war hawks in D.C. Thus, Kurdish militias such as the *"Syrian Democratic Forces"* (SDF) and the *"People's Protection Units"* (YPG) present for Trump a much safer option to consolidate what is left, i.e. to occupy the northeast of the Syria. It's a nice romantic story too – the Kurdish people are the largest ethnic group without a State, they were attacked by Saddam Hussein, they are being currently attacked by Turkey, etc. When compared to the narrative *"supplying Al-Qaeda with weapons"*, the Kurdish plot is much more digestible for the media consumers over the world.

So, in all likelihood because of the developments on the ground Trump most likely did cut funding to *"moderate"* groups in Syria – simply because the time came to cut losses. Instead, the Kurds now receive not only the weapons given in the past to the *"FSA"*, but also some bonus goodies that could not be given to *"vetted moderate groups"* like Nour al-Din al-Zenki, for fear of the US' involvement with al-Qaeda being blatant:



According to the report [published by Sabah](#), these are the weapons the U.S. military has given to the YPG: 1,000 AT-4 anti-tank missiles, 3,000 RPG-7 anti-tank weapons, 3,800 DShK heavy machine guns, 7,500 PK heavy machine guns, 350 SPG-9 recoilless guns, 120 60mm mortar systems, 75 82mm mortar systems, 450 night vision goggles and laser sights.

Why these reports about Trump cutting *"rebel"* funding were released in July 2017 can only but cause speculation. Whether it is because the Democrats in the US Congress and Senate want to make it look like Trump is colluding with Russia in Syria, or because the Gulf and Israeli lobbies desperately want the war to continue and thus feel the need to put Trump into a corner is the topic of another article. None of this changes the fact that the US tax payer was robbed of billions by the [same people](#) who have pushed for pointless wars for decades.

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