

CIA Abuses “Journalist” Cover to Spy on Al-Qaeda in Syria - Media Acquiesce - Endanger Real Journos

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On August 9 we [reported here](#) on a U.S. spy, Lindsey Snell, who worked with Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria and was arrested when crossing the border from Syria into Turkey:

The Turkish military recently “[rescued](#)” a CIA spy who was wounded in the north Latakia region of Syria. The U.S. send helicopters to help its asset. The spy turned out to be journalist [Lindsey Snell working on](#) a report with Nusra for the [intelligence outfit Vocativ](#). She was [put into Turkish jail](#) for illegally crossing the border.

There is no doubt from the available information that Snell was a spy. The Turkish media call her such. She was with Nusra, not for the first time, had some trouble and needed to get out. The U.S. military launched a huge operation to help her. That is not the treatment a real journalist would get.

Three weeks after our report some *professional* journalist finally picked up on the story and [asked](#) during the U.S. State Department briefing:

QUESTION: Do you have any information about a U.S. citizen who was arrested in Turkey?

MR KIRBY: Who was arrested in Turkey? Yes. I can confirm that U.S. citizen Lindsey Snell was detained in Turkey on the 7th of August, 2016. She is currently being held in a prison facility in Hatay Province. I believe that’s how you say it. Consular officers from the consulate in Adana visited Ms. Snell most recently on the 26th of this month and are providing all possible consular assistance. The embassy and the department are following this case closely. State Department officials have been in contact with Turkish Government officials regarding this case.

...
QUESTION: [...] was the arrest at all related to her profession as a journalist or in any case – any way associated with that?

MR KIRBY: What I – what we understand is that she has been charged with violating a military zone, but I can’t speak to her reasons for being in Syria, for traveling there. I can’t speak to that. What I can tell you is that we’ve been informed she was charged with violating a military zone.

The State Department “can’t speak of” what Snell did in Syria – twice. Why? Is that secret? Note that Kirby does not even call that “U.S. citizen” a “journalist”, even while his keyword provider calls her such.

Despite the reluctance of the State Department to call Snell a journalist the main stream “western” media, picking up from the State briefing, now calls her such and does not mention that Snell is obviously a spy. The [BBC](#), [CBS](#) and [NBC](#) have reports of the issue. But none of those reports touches on the very weird circumstance of Lindsey Snell’s “rescue” and “arrest”. None of them will tell you that she was a spy.

NBC goes the [furthest](#) by digging up another State source and quoting the Hatay regional governor:

A State Department official said the U.S. government was aware of Snell’s presence in Syria and that helping her to get to a safe location was the agency’s consistent and overriding goal. U.S. personnel were dispatched to the Turkey-Syria border to support Snell’s safe exit from the war-ravaged country but Snell was subsequently detained by Turkish authorities, the official said.

... Hatay’s governor, Ercan Topaca, told the state-run Anadolu Agency: “A U.S. journalist was captured while she was trying to cross the border illegally; she was taken to court and remanded. The trial phase is ongoing. For now, we do not know if she is a spy or not.”

NBC just mentions that “U.S. personnel were dispatched”. That sounds like a bureaucrat drove to the border to help the “journalist” to enter Turkey. But that “U.S. personnel” consisted of two armed drones and several military helicopters which flew in the area over several days while the exfiltration of Snell was ongoing. Has anyone ever heard of any journalist for whom the U.S. military would launch such an extensive operation? The Turkish media had made no secret of what happened. As Hurriyet [reported](#) on August 7:

A female intelligence agent from the United States has been saved by Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) soldiers after a two-day operation on the Syrian border, according to a report. Drones and helicopters participated in the operation to save the agent, who had been wounded in Syria. Two U.S. helicopters landed in a village in the Yayladağı district of the southern province of Hatay on Aug. 5, prompting locals to call officials and report the landing.

Is there any real freelance “journalist” who embeds with Jabhat al-Nusra and for whom the U.S. would “dispatch U.S. personnel” in the form of helicopters and Hellfire armed drones? No. It is obvious that there was some very “special interest” for Snell and unlike the usual “western” media Hurriyet has no problem reporting that:

[T]he U.S. agent, whose name was not revealed as she was on a confidential operation, was assigned to a task in Syria and wounded on Aug. 3, after which she called for evacuation. She reportedly sent her coordinates to U.S. officials, allowing them to determine her exact location.

... Two U.S. drones scanned the area for two days, as two U.S. helicopters were on standby on the Turkish side of the border.

Snell was picked up by Turkish agents and arrested for crossing the border unauthorized. The Turkish intelligence service MIT will dislike any U.S. spy who tries to get involved with one of its best assets in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra aka al-Qaeda.

The Turks want to keep Nusra under their own control. Even after [making nice with Russia](#) Turkey continues its nefarious relations with the UN designated terrorists. According to the Russian military Turkey is up to today [supplying](#) Nusra in Idlib and Aleppo:

“We see that the opposition in general and Jabhat Fatah Al-Sham in particular keep receiving enforcements through the Syrian-Turkish border [...]” Rogachev told RIA Novosti.

The mainstream “western” media must be intentionally holding back on the case of agent Lindsey Snell. None of them mentions the use of U.S. helicopters and drones with regards to the “journalist”. The governor of Hatay had [confirmed](#) their extensive use. Isn’t such a use of military assets extraordinary? The facts about the “rescue” are openly available and have been reported by serious Turkish media. Why leave them out? Why let the cover-up stand?

I would have expected more inquisitiveness and concern from CBS, NBC and from the BBC about the “journalist” cover the CIA uses for this agent.

There [is](#) an official ban on the CIA use of “journalist” cover for foreign operations since 1977. There are of course *exceptions* and whoever expects the CIA to stick to regulations or laws needs some lessons in reality perception. Still, any such use by the CIA makes the life of real journalist more difficult and more dangerous.

One would expect of serious media and real journalists to point that out, to raise some public hell with the CIA and to generally show more concern about the issue.

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