

CIA Activities in Syria: US Never Stops to Step on Same Rake

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According to the Washington Post (CIA Ramping up Covert Training Program [for Moderate Syrian Rebels](#), Oct.3), the CIA is expanding a clandestine effort to train opposition fighters in Syria, as U.S. officials said. The newspaper reports the CIA's mission has been defined by the White House's desire to seek a political settlement, a scenario that relies on an eventual stalemate among the warring factions rather than a clear victor. As a result, US officials said, limits on the agency's authorities enable it to provide enough support to help ensure that politically moderate, U.S.-supported militias don't lose but not enough for them to win.

The Washington Post informs that US officials spoke on the condition of anonymity and said the agency has sent additional paramilitary teams to secret bases in Jordan in recent weeks in a push to double the number of rebel fighters getting [CIA](#) instruction and weapons before being sent back to Syria. The effort led by the CIA was described as an urgent bid to bolster moderate Syrian militias, which have been unable to mount a serious challenge to Assad. The CIA is «ramping up and expanding its effort», said a U.S. official familiar with operations in Syria, because «it was clear that the opposition was losing, and not only losing tactically but on a more strategic level»...

Back in June the US deployed Patriot air defense systems F-16 fighter jet aircraft to Jordan as part of the annual military exercise called Eager Lion leaving 700 combat-equipped troops and 200 military planners in Jordan to assist in long-term planning with Jordanian forces in case of a chemical weapons crisis or a large-scale humanitarian relief mission. Then the US announced that it would send light arms to the rebels. In September the New York Times ran an interesting article called President Gains McCain's Backing on Syria Attack [saying](#), «Officials said that in the same conversation, which included Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican, Mr. Obama indicated that a covert effort by the United States to arm and train Syrian rebels was beginning to yield results: the first 50-man cell of fighters, who have been trained by the C.I.A., was beginning to sneak into Syria».

Back in May there had been reports that this training program had already been underway for some time and the LA Times caught up with it in June, disclosing that the program began at least as far back as November 2012 on US bases [in Jordan and Turkey](#).

On August 23 French [Le Figaro](#) reported that CIA-trained rebels crossed the Syrian border from Jordan. They had been trained for several months in a training camp on the Jordanian-Syrian border by CIA operatives, as well as Jordanian and Israeli commandos, the paper said. The first group of 300 handpicked Free Syrian Army soldiers crossed the border on August 17 into the Deraa region, and a second group was deployed on August 19, the paper

reported. The paper quoted a researcher at the French Institute for Strategic Analysis as saying the trained rebels group was passing through Ghouta, on their way to Damascus.

CIA activities today

The CIA training effort is centered in Jordan. The program is aimed at shoring up the fighting power of units aligned with the Supreme Military Council, an umbrella organization led by General Idris, that is the main recipient of U.S. support. The training is led by small teams of operatives from the CIA's Special Activities Division, a paramilitary branch that relies heavily on contractors and former members of U.S. Special Operations forces. Officials said the instruction is rudimentary and typically spans four to six weeks.

The Obama administration has explored the idea of using the U.S. military to expand the training program to what some officials have described as «industrial strength». It is unclear whether Jordan would welcome such a large U.S. military footprint, which would mean converting a covert program into one officially acknowledged by the United States.

There are also legal impediments, including a measure known as the Leahy Law that would require a determination that no recipients of U.S. military assistance had committed human rights abuses. The officials said the agency had sent more paramilitary teams to secret bases in Jordan in recent weeks in a push to double the number of rebel fighters getting CIA instruction and weapons before being sent back to Syria. The CIA was «ramping up and expanding its effort», said a US official familiar with operations in Syria, because “it was clear that the opposition was losing, and not only losing tactically but on a more strategic level”. The CIA declined to comment. The latest setback came last month, when the largest armed factions in Syria, including some backed by the US, announced the formation of an alliance with a goal of creating an Islamic state.

Trends in the ranks of Syrian opposition

On Sept. 24, 2013 the death bell rang for the West-supported Syrian armed opposition. 13 of the leading armed opposition organizations inside Syria decided to unite their efforts under an Islamist-jihadist banner as the «Islamist Alliance» claiming to represent more than 75 percent the rebels fighting the Assad administration. The Alliance is to spread sharia laws throughout Syria formally rejecting the Western-backed Syrian National Coalition (SNC) as its legitimate representative. Significantly, the group includes some of the largest ostensibly moderate Free Syrian Army (FSA) elements as well as [Al Qaida](#) affiliated organizations. The supreme leadership of Al Qaida warmly endorsed the new alliance in a special communiqué. «A group of powerful mujahedin units rejected the authority of the pro-Western Syrian opposition leadership abroad and called for it to be reorganized under [an Islamic framework](#)».

It is not just a serious set-back, but rather the total and absolute failure of the US and the West in general to influence the opposition, as well as the whole Syria policy and a challenge to those who presented the view that the majority of the Syrian opposition is liberal and moderate, like US State Secretary John Kerry did. The US administration officials were misleading the public and Congress about the composition of Syrian rebel forces deliberately minimizing the role of Islamist groups in the opposition.

The unification of radicals has become a clear trend. The Army of Islam has been established as another Islamist actor. Rebel brigades operating in and around Damascus

announced by the end of September that they had united under a single command comprising 50 groups and numbering some thousands of fighters. The formation of the Army of Islam strengthens Salafist jihadis under the influence of Saudi Arabia another radical group – the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), an al Qaeda branch which has in recent weeks taken control of territory from other Islamist forces in parts of northern and eastern Syria.

All of these groups formally commit themselves to sharia as the «sole source of legislation». Bottom line, they were all Islamist from the start. Something Russia had many times warned the West about.

The US-led Western myope policy in Syria has resulted in radical Islam gaining the upper hand inside the Syria opposition to endanger Europe and the entire Mideast. A new safe haven for al-Qaeda-linked jihadists and local radicals is being established in the north and east of Syria threatening neighboring Iraq. The goal is a Sunni emirate on the Mediterranean shore and Turkish border. The seasoned fighters will one day go or return to the countries of Western Europe or former Soviet space. Within Iraq, they are trying to revive the Sunni-Shiite civil war with a wave of suicide bombs, something that has become a routine daily news on TV. They are also stirring up tensions inside neighboring countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. This is a universal problem, a threat posed for the USA, NATO, the EU, Russia and a lot of other states. And this is the time the CIA is involved in activities aimed at making Syria an al-Qaeda safe haven and base camp. Like it or not, but there is a reality – the government of President Assad now is the only force capable of standing up to the radicals offensive in Syria. Russia and the US will discuss the issue at the level of foreign chiefs on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific summit next week in Bali.

They have a lot to talk about. I wonder what the US State Secretary will say about his previous affirmations the Syrian opposition is predominantly moderate or the CIA activities to enhance Islamists capabilities in the country. There is also one more issue to discuss and one more threat to United Nations activities against the background revelations about what the CIA is doing. On October 3 Russian president's Middle East envoy Mikhail Bogdanov said that Russia fears that radical opposition in Syria may stage provocations in the process to eliminate chemical weapons. «Objectively speaking this cannot be ruled out, and we have certain understanding with our western partners in this respect that there are real risks and different kind of provocations because terrorists and extremists who are not interested in a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis might put different obstacles, quite serious, in the process to eliminate chemical weapons», said Bogdanov, who is Deputy Foreign Minister.

He explained that, «one can get to the depots that are controlled by the government only in crossing regions that are controlled by the opposition». «That is why the question arises how to cross these regions and ensure the safety of experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons who will work there», Bogdanov [added](#). (6) The CIA is aiding those who pose this threat.

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