

“Two Channels”, Pentagon and CIA: Don’t Be Fooled, the CIA Was Only “Half the Problem” in Syria

By [Steven MacMillan](#)

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The news that President Trump has halted the [CIA program](#) to arm and train rebel groups in Syria should be viewed with caution, as the CIA program only represented half of US involvement in Syria. Even if we take this information as completely accurate, and the CIA will cease to be involved in any covert programs in Syria, there is still a giant arm of US imperialism that is going to be heavily involved in the Syrian conflict for the foreseeable future; namely, the Pentagon.

The notion that the CIA was the only branch of the US establishment involved in the destabilization of Syria is nonsense. The US has always had two operations running simultaneously in Syria, with one being ran by the CIA, and other being ran by the Pentagon. As Reuters reported in an article in May of this year, titled: [Syrian rebels say U.S., allies sending more arms to fend off Iran threat](#), military aid has been provided through “two separate channels:”

“Rebels said military aid has been boosted through two separate channels: a program backed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), known as the MOC, and regional states including Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and one run by the Pentagon.”

These two programs have often clashed, as was the case last year, when militias armed by the CIA [fought](#) against militias armed by the Pentagon.

The Pentagon has been as involved in the disastrous operation to arm and train rebels in Syria as the CIA has, and has contributed heavily to the mess on the ground.

In September 2015 for instance, it was reported that a **Pentagon**-armed group of rebels – named Division 30 – handed over their [weapons](#) to al-Qaeda in Syria, a scenario that was a common outcome from many CIA operations as well. The Pentagon, never shy to blow an obscene amount of taxpayers’ money on imperial matters, has already [wasted hundreds of millions](#) of dollars training and arming rebels in Syria, yet Trump only wants to increase the US war budget.

Trump's decision to halt the CIA program was hardly surprising, considering the support Trump has received from large sections of the military. A look at the backgrounds of the individuals that Trump has given cabinet positions reveals Trump's close relationship with the military.

The Secretary of Homeland Security for instance, John Kelly, is a retired Marine Corps General and former Commander of US Southern Command. Trump's pick for the Director of the CIA is even more telling, as [Mike Pompeo](#) has his roots in the military, graduating from West Point in the 1980s:

“Mr. Pompeo graduated first in his class at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1986 and served as a cavalry officer patrolling the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also served with the 2nd Squadron, 7th Cavalry in the US Army's Fourth Infantry Division.”

Undoubtedly, there are many good forces in the US military (as in any other large organization), and there is nothing wrong with having a military background. But equally, there is also many nefarious forces in the military, and the influence of military-industrial complex is pervasive, constantly agitating for more imperial wars.

With this context in mind, it is hardly surprising that Trump favours the Pentagon program over the CIA one, especially considering the power struggle taking place between the CIA and the military within the US. It should be highlighted that Trump has not completely halted all US programs to arm and train militias in Syria, he has merely shutdown one channel.

Pentagon Using Kurds to Balkanize Syria

The Pentagon has been heavily involved in arming Kurdish forces in Syria, using them as a tool to attempt to [Balkanize](#) and fracture Syria into micro-states. In May of this year, President Trump [approved](#) a plan - supported by many in the Pentagon - to arm the People's Protection Unit (YPG), a Kurdish militia operating predominantly in northern Syria.

The YPG is also the controlling militia in the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which includes an array of other militias. In addition to providing arms to the YPG, US special forces have been [pictured](#) on the ground in northern Syria working in conjunction with YPG fighters.

When most of the public was distracted by the story of Trump halting the CIA program, footage surfaced showing US [armed military vehicles](#) passing through Qamishli - a city in northern Syria on the Turkish border - reportedly on route to Raqqa. The recipients of the vehicles are believed to be either the SDF or US forces directly, who are involved in the battle against ISIS in Raqqa.

If (or when) ISIS is defeated in Raqqa, it will be very interesting to see who ends up controlling the city. It is possible that the Pentagon wants to defeat ISIS in Raqqa, and then hand Raqqa to the Kurds - a scenario that many Kurds would only be too happy with. In March of this year, Saleh Muslim, the co-chair of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) - the political affiliate of the YPG - said that once ISIS is defeated in Raqqa, the city should be [incorporated](#) into a Kurdish state in northern Syria.

The Pentagon's support for Kurdish forces is clearly part of a strategy to break the northern part of the country away from control of the Syrian government in Damascus. A subservient Kurdish state in northern Syria (which would probably join with Kurdish zones in Iraq and other countries in the future) would allow the US to have a permanent military presence in Syria, and easy access to the [natural resources](#) in the Kurdish region.

The creation of Kurdish state in northern Syria would of course cause a severe breakdown in relations with NATO member Turkey, given the views of the current Turkish leadership that is. Turkey considers the YPG to be an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a group Ankara views as a terrorist organization. Turkey has repeatedly denounced US support for Kurdish groups in Syria, with this being a major source of disagreement between the US and Turkey. It is no coincidence that Turkish state media recently [published](#) a list of classified US military bases and outposts in northern Syria, with this information revealing the extent to which the US military is embedded in Kurdish-controlled regions in Syria.

The plan to balkanize Syria is well on its way, and the Pentagon is leading the charge. How Russia positions herself in the coming months will be crucial for the future of Syria.

Steven MacMillan is an independent writer, researcher, geopolitical analyst and editor of [The Analyst Report](#), especially for the online magazine "[New Eastern Outlook](#)".

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