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Has the US and Its Allies Used Covert Airdrops, Drones to Supply the Islamic State (ISIS-Daesh)?

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Is there a way the United States or one of the Islamic States admitted state sponsors could be airdropping supplies without triggering suspicion? How has modern airdrop technology and techniques evolved that might make this possible?

When asking these questions, they must first be understood in the context that:

> (A.) According to Wikileaks, within the e-mails of former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton it was acknowledged that the governments of two of America's closest allies in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, were providing material support to the Islamic State (IS);
>
> (B.) That according to the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) (PDF), the US and its allies sought to use a "Salafist principality" in eastern Syria as a strategic asset against the Syrian government, precisely where the Islamic (Salafist) State (principality) eventually manifested itself and;
>
> (C.) That the fighting capacity of the Islamic State is on such a large and sustained level, it can only be the result of immense and continuous state sponsorship, including a constant torrent of supplies by either ground or air (or both).

Within this context, we can already partially answer these questions with confirmed statements made by another of America's closest allies in the region, and a long-time NATO member, Turkey.

It was a May 2016 Washington Times article titled, "Turkey offers joint ops with U.S. forces in Syria, wants Kurds cut out," that quoted none other than the Turkish Foreign Minister himself admitting (emphasis added):

> Joint operations between Washington and Ankara in Manbji, a well-known waypoint for Islamic State fighters, weapons and equipment coming from Turkey bound for Raqqa,would effectively open "a second front" in the ongoing fight to drive the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, from Syria's borders, [Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu] said.

And clearly, by simply looking at maps of the Syrian conflict over the past 5 years, the supply corridors used by the Islamic State, via Turkey, to resupply its region-wide warfare

were significant until Kurdish fighters reduced them to one, now the epicenter of a questionable Turkish military incursion into northern Syria.

With the Islamic State's ground routes hindered, is there another way the US or at the very least, admittedly its Islamic State-sponsoring allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar could deliver food, ammunition, weapons and even small vehicles to the militant group, still held up in Syria's eastern city of Al Raqqa?

The answer is yes.

Modern American Airdrop Capabilities

A system developed years ago for the United States military called Joint Precision Airdrop System (JPADS) allows cargo aircraft to release airdrops of supplies from as high as 25,000 feet and as far from a drop zone as 25-30 kilometers. A Global Positioning System (GPS) and an airborne guidance unit automate the drop's trajectory to land within 100 meters of a predetermined drop zone. The system also makes it possible to release several drops at once and have them directed toward different drop zones.

The US military has already received this system and it has been in use for years. At least one Persian Gulf state has taken delivery of the system as well, the United Arab Emirates.

Defense Industry Daily would report that in 2013, the UAE would order the system for use with its C-130H and C-17 aircraft. The same report would note that the system is used by several other NATO allies.

The US has admittedly used this system to drop supplies to both Kurdish fighters and anti-government militants in Syria, including at least one instance where supply pallets ended up "accidentally" with the Islamic State.

In addition to airdrops made by large, manned cargo aircraft, the US has admittedly used drones to drop supplies across the region, the Guardian would admit.

The US Already Makes Airdrops to the Islamic State

The Washington Post in a 2014 article titled, "U.S. accidentally delivered weapons to the Islamic State by airdrop, militants say," claims:

> The Islamic State has released a new video in which it brags that it recovered weapons and supplies that the U.S. military intended to deliver to Kurdish fighters, who are locked in a fight with the militants over control of the Syrian border town of Kobane.

The Washington Post also admits (emphasis added):

> The incident highlights the difficulty in making sure all airdrops are accurate, even with GPS-guided parachutes that the Air Force commonly uses. Airdrops of food and water to religious minorities trapped on mountain cliffs in northern Iraq in August hit the mark about 80 percent of the time, Pentagon officials said at the time.

This (and similar incidents) may represent an accident in which JPADS performed poorly. Or it could represent an intentional airdrop meant to resupply Islamic State terrorists with the Washington Post article attempting to explain away how GPS-guided airdrops could "accidentally" end up in enemy territory.

Reports from Qatari-based Al Jazeera claim the US has also dropped weapons to militants other than Kurdish fighters. In an article titled, "US drops weapons to rebels battling ISIL in Syria," Al Jazeera claims:

> The US has reportedly dropped weapons to rebel fighters in Syria as the UN Security Council considers dropping food and medicine by air to civilians.

It also claims that:

> The weapons supplies were airdropped to rebels in Marea, a town in the northern province of Aleppo, on Friday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said.
>
> "Coalition airplanes dropped ... ammunitions, light weapons and anti-tank weapons to rebels in Marea," Rami Abdel Rahman, the SOHR head, said.

The Guardian would also admit to the US carrying out similar airdrops in Syria.

Knowingly Dropping Supplies into Terrorist-Held Territory

And more recently, there has been a push to drop supplies into eastern Aleppo in an attempt to prolong the fighting and prevent the complete collapse of a militant presence there, specifically using JPADS, according to the Guardian.

Another Guardian article reveals that US drones have previously been used to make airdrops in the region and might be used again to create an "air bridge" to militant-held areas of Syria.

However, even most US and European sources have admitted to a heavy presence of Al Qaeda's Syrian franchise in the city, Jabhat Al Nusra, a designated foreign terrorist organization even according to the US State Department.

If the US would seriously consider airdropping supplies to Al Qaeda to prolong fighting and to continue confounding Syrian forces, why wouldn't they also airdrop supplies to the Islamic State to do the same?

With the ability to drop supplies from as high as 25,000 feet and from as far away as 25-30 kilometers (and possibly even further as was envisioned by future designs), the US or its allies could appear to be resupplying what it calls "moderate rebels" on one part of the battlefield, while diverting a percentage of its drops into Al Qaeda or Islamic State territory. Drones could also be utilized to create "air bridges" harder to detect than those created using larger cargo aircraft.

With the Islamic State's fighting capacity still potent both in Iraq and Syria, and with Kurdish fighters sealing off ground routes along the Syrian border, unless Turkey within its "buffer

zone" is passing weapons onward to the Islamic State, what other means could this terrorist organization be using to resupply its regional war effort, if not by air?

For those seriously committed to defeating the Islamic State and other armed groups operating within Syrian territory, answering this question will bring peace and security one step closer.

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