

Is Fighting Al-Qaeda In Aleppo Good Or Bad? - U.S. Unable To Decide

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There is currently a barrage of propaganda in the “western” media in support of “rebels” in east-Aleppo. It is all about “hospitals” and “children” but the aim is to stop a Syrian army assault on the “rebel” held quarters of the city. U.S. officials are again talking about “intervention”, meaning open war, to prevent the Syrian army and its allies from storming the “rebel” held eastern parts. It [would not work](#) but that is not the only reason why it is a strange idea.

“It is primarily al-Qaeda that holds Aleppo,” [said](#) (vid) the spokesperson of the U.S. led ‘Operation Inherent Resolve’, Colonel Warren. That was back in April and al-Qaeda (aka Jabat al-Nusra) has since strengthen its capacities in the city. The French Syria expert Fabrice Balanche [tells](#) Le Monde Le Figaro (translate from French):

[Al-Qaeda’s] grip on Aleppo’s east has only increased since the spring of 2016, when it sent 700 reinforcement fighters while moderate brigades fighters began to leave the area before the final exit was closed. The provisional opening of a breach of the siege of Aleppo in August 2016 (Battle of Ramousseh) has further increased its prestige and influence on the rebels.

The UN Special Envoy for Syria DeMistura [told](#) (vid, 27:43) the UN Security Council:

We have seen information from other sources that tell us more than half of the fighters present in eastern Aleppo are al-Nusra. We have also seen reports alleging the intentional placement of firing positions close to social infrastructure, inside and aside civilian quarters.

So why does the U.S. want to stop the Syrian government forces in their attempt to free the parts of the city which are undoubtedly held by al-Qaeda?

The U.S. voted “Yes” on several UN Security Council resolutions that [demand](#) to fight al-Qaeda and “to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Syria.”

Following the UNSC demand, Syria and its allies have surrounded the al-Qaeda held parts of east-Aleppo. They currently bomb targets of opportunity, take starting positions all around it and prepare to eventually storm and capture it. Measures have been taken to [allow](#) civilians to escape from the area.

This whole operation is primarily in defense of west-Aleppo where 1.5 million civilians live under the protection of the government. Daily artillery strikes from al-Qaeda held east-Aleppo have killed and wounded many people in the government held parts.

But some U.S. officials [believe](#) that defeating al-Qaeda in east-Aleppo will be useful for al-Qaeda:

A U.S. official says Jabhat al-Nusra has been the “main beneficiary” (other than the Assad regime) of Russia’s onslaught. “Until Moscow stops bombing hospitals and aid workers, Nusra will continue to exploit the situation . . . and portray itself as the defender of the Syrian people,” the official explained.

“Hospitals and aid workers,” are often unfortunate collateral damage in urban fighting. That will not surprise the U.S. military, especially after its bombing of several hospitals in Afghanistan and after it recently practically destroyed Kobani in Syria and Fallujah in Iraq to eradicate the Islamic State from those cities.

The claim that fighting al-Qaeda in Aleppo strengthens al-Qaeda seems dubious to me. But even if that is the case what is the alternative to fighting it in the city areas it holds?

U.S. Secretary of State Kerry is urging a new ceasefire with a pause in fighting and aerial bombing of at least seven days. State Department spokesperson Toner explained that yesterday. But he also [admitted](#) (vid @14:50) that al-Qaeda and other militant groups use such ceasefire periods to regroup and to resupply:

... we can talk about that some rebel groups or opposition groups may have used the pause to resupply...

It is even more than that. Al-Qaeda wins in every ceasefire (even if those generally do not apply to it) in many other ways. A [new study](#), specifically about al-Qaeda and ceasefire, details that and concludes:

While the establishment of the truces was supposed to help to weaken the most radical factions of the insurgency, Jabhat al-Nusra emerged indisputably strengthened ...

Another ceasefire would help al-Qaeda to resupply and regroup and to regain strength in east-Aleppo and elsewhere.

Despite that and despite agreeing to the UNSC resolution the U.S. does not want the Syrian government and its allies to fight al-Qaeda in east-Aleppo because it believes that would strengthen al-Qaeda. It wants a new ceasefire. But any ceasefire or truce strengthens al-Qaeda.

Somehow the U.S. position does not compute.

It gets even more [confusing](#):

“..,” one senior administration official said. “The CIA and the Joint Staff have

said that the fall of Aleppo would undermine America's counterterrorism goals in Syria."Fighting al-Qaeda in east-Aleppo and "eradicating" it from the area it holds, as the UNSC demands, would undermine U.S. counterterrorism goals? That is strange. The alternative in east-Aleppo is to keep al-Qaeda well and alive and to let it hold the area it currently holds. Would that further U.S. counterterrorism goals? How?

What then are the actually goals?

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