

Russia Reignites The Proxy War: Putin Offers “Complete Support” To Iraq Prime Minister Scorned By Obama

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [Russia](#)
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Two days ago, before it was formalized that the US tacitly, if not explicitly, now supports the removal of the Iraqi Prime Minister whom it itself had helped elect, [we summarized](#) the geopolitical tensions and “national interests” in Iraq, which is shaping up to be a proxy war that makes last year’s Syrian escapade pale by comparison, as follows:

The situation in Iraq, already a jumble of domestic sectarian violence, is now pitting virtually all major (and regional) international players against each other as well. There is:

- US which tacitly supports Iran intervention in the region, but may have suddenly cooled in its support of Maliki despite sending naval and troop forces in the country after partially evacuating its embassy
- Saudi Arabia which wants to remain friendly with the US but is antagonistic to the Iraq regime, is potentially aiding the ISIS forces, and clearly refuses to allow Iran entrance in Iraq
- Iran, which has suddenly become America’s best friend in the region, which is willing to enter Iraq and protect its holy sites
- Syria, whose president is sitting back amused at last year’s failed campaign by the US to remove him from power, and whose army is at a stalemate with the local US-armed and funded rebels
- Qatar, which is supporting the Syrian rebels, but so far has not made its stance clear on Iraq. Like Saudi, it too may be indirectly backing ISIS
- Jordan, which is a close friend the US, and which may have hosted ISIS in a secret base on its territory with the US instructing the jihadist group according to an unconfirmed report
- Turkey, which is on constant alert to Kurdish escalation across the border, the same Kurds which now have far more leverage courtesy of ISIS crushing the Iraq army in the north and handing over Kurds access to oil fields in the north.
- And of course Russia: because while Putin clearly benefits from rising crude prices, it is his Lukoil that is developing (and investing vast amounts of money in) the vast Iraqi West Qurna-2 oil field. It is not clear how he would feel about it falling into ISIS hands.

It was the bolded text that was of biggest interest because [as we noted the next day](#), when discussing the next steps for ISIS, we said that “One wonders how long until the mercenary force finds its latest major backer, because for all the western, US-led intervention, both

Russia and China are oddly missing from the scene. We expect that to change soon.”

Because clearly one can’t have a global proxy war without China, and certainly without Russia.

Well, we said we expected Russia’s conspicuous absence to “change soon”, and so it did: within just 24 hours. Because apparently all Putin was waiting for was for Obama to pick sides (i.e., not Maliki) before the Russian leader made it clear whom he sides with. US, helpfully obliged yesterday morning when we also reported that [“US Slams Its Former Iraq Puppet: ‘The Maliki Government, Candidly, Has Got To Go’.”](#)

So what does Putin – *who as a reminder is heavily invested in Iraq’ massive [West Qurna-2 oil field via Lukoil](#)* – do? Why announce his undying support for Maliki, of course, and as [AP reported](#), the former KGB spy offered Iraqi premier Nuri al-Maliki Russia’s total backing for the fight against fighters who have swept across the country, as well as his full support for the embattled prime minister.



More:

Russian President Vladimir Putin has spoken by phone to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, expressing Moscow’s support for his action against the militant offensive.

The Kremlin said in a statement that al-Maliki informed Putin on Friday about his government’s steps to combat the “terrorist groups in the north of the country.” It added that the insurgency threatens security of the entire region.

Putin confirmed Russia’s “full support for the Iraqi government’s action to quickly free the territory of the republic from terrorists,” the Kremlin said, adding that Putin and al-Maliki also discussed bilateral cooperation.

Putin’s expression of support for the embattled Iraqi prime minister comes as al-Maliki’s rivals have mounted a campaign to force him out of office, with some angling for support from Western backers and regional heavyweights.

And just like in Syria from 2012 to 2013, the chessboard is once again set, with a regional middle-east conflict, this time in Iraq, merely serving as the proxy staging ground in which the Iraqi PM, once an obedient US puppet but now an enemy of Saudi Arabia and thus the US, “simply has to go” in the words of Dianne Feinstein, has suddenly become the fulcrum issue behind yet another soon to escalate conflict between Russia and the US.

One thing is certain: the more the US (and Saudi Arabia, and Qatar) pushes for Maliki’s ouster, the more involved Russia will become with its offers of support and bilateral cooperation. And if the Syrian fiasco (for John Kerry) is any indication, Russia is about to expand its “national interest” sphere of influence by one more country.

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