

The Truth About Idlib in the US State Department's Own Words. "The Largest Al Qaeda Safe Haven Since 9/11"

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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On Friday Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued a statement ahead of the imminent Syrian government and Russian campaign to liberate Idlib from jihadist control.

Pompeo said [via Twitter](#):

"The 3 million Syrians, who have already been forced out of their homes and are now in Idlib, will suffer from this aggression. Not good. The world is watching."

Both Washington and the mainstream networks are gearing up for [a possible final US-Damascus-Russia confrontation](#) in response to Assad's military action in Idlib, representing the northwest province as ["the last rebel stronghold"](#) where Damascus simply seeks to "massacre civilians".

But Washington officials often contradict their own past positions, and this is glaringly clear in the case of Idlib, where Brett McGurk — the White House appointed anti-ISIS envoy who essentially acts as the president's personal diplomat in Iraq and Syria — *previously described the true situation on the ground in unusually frank comments*:

IMPORTANT message from The [#US](#) Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL- Brett McGurk- on the situation in [#Idlib](#) [#Syria](#):

"Idlib Province is the largest ALQaeda safe haven since 9/11, tied directly to Ayman al Zawahri (current [#ALQaeda](#) leader) & this is a HUGE problem"
pic.twitter.com/99uLOlpZwi

— Brasco_Aad (@Brasco_Aad) [August 22, 2018](#)

Special US envoy McGurk accurately described:

"Idlib province is the largest al-Qaeda safe-have since 9/11, tied to directly to Ayman al Zawahiri, this is a huge problem."

The rare, honest assessment was spoken a little over a year ago on July 27, 2017 at a Washington D.C. event in which McGurk was a panelist hosted by the Middle East Institute.

During the panel discussion, McGurk [posed](#):

“But we have to ask a question; why and how is Ayman al-Zawahiri’s deputy finding his way to Idlib Province. Why is this happening? How are they getting there? They are not paratroopers...”

Yes, we’ve long wondered the same thing, especially when it was US intelligence directly assisting the al-Qaeda coalition *Army of Islam* (now morphed into *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham*) from [an “operations room” in Turkey](#).

At the time, McGurk’s comments were aimed at NATO ally Turkey, which he accused of facilitating jihadist entry into northern Syria to displace the US-backed Syrian Kurdish SDF.

“The approach by some of our partners to send in tens of thousands of tons of weapons, and look the other way as these foreign fighters come into Syria may not have been the best approach,” McGurk continued during his 2017 comments.

He added that al-Qaeda has taken “full advantage” of Turkey allowing for the free flow of arms and jihadists across its lengthy border with Syria.

Of course McGurk neglected to mention that the United States was a willing partner in all of this throughout most of the entirety of the Syrian war, which sought regime change in Damascus. The Turkish foreign ministry condemned his statements at the time.

The State Department would of course hope that the American public forgets these words were ever spoken.

Meanwhile Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned the West not to interfere in Syrian and Russian forces engaged in anti-terror actions in Idlib:

“I hope our Western partners will not give in to [rebel] provocations and will not obstruct an antiterror operation,” [he said](#).

It appears that the State Department circa 2017 actually agreed with Lavrov’s calling the Idlib militants *terrorists* even in the State Department in 2018 does not. Or it’s also just Washington contradicting itself as usual for the sake of yet more nefarious foreign policy goals in the Middle East.

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