

“Train and Equip” the Islamic State: White House Might Still Be Arming ISIL

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A few days after US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel visited Georgia in early September a foreign observer happened to be passing through Tbilisi International Airport. He told this author, “The first thing I saw when I landed on September 10 was a large US Air Force cargo plane taxiing and another on the tarmac being guarded. This was a huge Ukrainian Antonov plane; it was truly awesome in [size](#).”

Usually there are five of these big cargo planes on the runway at Ramstein, a NATO airbase in Germany—on the day of the sighting there were only four.

On Sunday the cargo plane was still there. It was an Antonov model 124-100-150, tail number UR 82072. The US Military plane was still there too, but the one plane spotted seemed to have no number, which is somewhat unusual. Though it was impossible to get close enough to see the entire plane, there were no numbers on the tail, where they would usually be. I did not see the armed guards, but the Antonov at the Tbilisi airport did have a Ukrainian flag. Whatever it was carrying was being handled by soldiers rather than civilian baggage handlers, as they were repeatedly going in and out of the plane, as baggage handlers who work at the airport told me.

This first hand observation is consistent with others being made in the region’s airports, and the fact that defence contractors are being seen in Tbilisi more frequently, as they have been since it became clear that Georgia would sign an EU Association Agreement. It is also consistent with Ukraine’s claim that its NATO friends are now resupplying it with a variety of weapons and non-lethal [materials](#).

Ukrainian Defense Minister Valery Geletey has said that he has held consultations with “the defence ministers of leading countries, those that can help us, and they heard us. We have the supply of arms underway, and I feel that this is exactly the way we need to go”. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, who attended the Sept. 4-5 NATO summit in Wales, also announced following it that he had negotiated direct modern weapons supplies with a number of NATO member states. Although NATO denied this, the Antonov is there, and apparently arrived from a NATO airbase, with an escort, which it would not have unless it were carrying some sort of supplies.

Ratline of weapons

Is supplying an ally with weapons a big deal? Perhaps not. But if not, why the denials, when they come from the very countries which publicly supported the disturbances in Maidan Square and the “cause” they insisted they were about, despite the participants insisting otherwise?

The reason for the denials is that this is not a one-off delivery of legal weapons to an ally. The same ratline has long been used to transport illegal weapons to people who have no right to have them.

If previous experience is a guide, some of the weapons Ukraine says are bound for its Ministry of Defence will never get there. Some, or most, of them will be diverted to ISIS, and some will remain in Georgia as commission for allowing its airport to be used. The Georgian Armed Forces will not see these weapons either, as there are always other customers for such weapons, contacts intensively cultivated by the previous Georgian government to line party members' pockets and occasionally fill holes in the budget.

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh is one of those who has raised the issue of these ratlines and the criminality they foster at all levels of state. Hersh has detailed how weapons from Benghazi, spoils of war gained as a result of UN Resolution 1973 and the destruction of Libya, were ultimately transited through Turkey to the rebels, allegedly as part of rogue operations, through a similar illegal CIA ratline rather than any legal, accountable supply route, which cannot be used to supply [terrorists](#).

This article merely confirmed what intelligence insiders have known for years: that America's "train and equip programs", offered as "defence partnerships" and "technical assistance" to states prepared to turn a blind eye in exchange for cash, are flimsy fronts for covert operations. These do not only involve trafficking conventional weapons but chemical agents, manufactured at one of the string of Soviet-era labs which are one relic of Communism the West has made no attempt to destroy, contrary to all its Cold War promises.

All this is dangerous enough in itself. But the big picture here is that going along with such schemes is the unspoken quid pro quo for signing trade deals, such as the EU Association Agreement recently signed by Georgia, which these countries need to survive and prosper. The US is setting out, not to spread democracy and respect for human rights, but to deny any country the possibility of earning an honest living. Most citizens of the countries now chained to these schemes, those same who have seen enough death and destruction without them, would not consider this an acceptable price to pay for their bread and butter.

Where and why?

More and more countries are getting involved in these ratlines without their public's knowledge. Turkey, Jordan and Georgia have long worked together to provide weapons to various hotspots around the world. Libya and Azerbaijan have also become involved in more recent years, their links developing in direct proportion to Western involvement in developing their countries, through regime change in Libya and energy exploitation in Azerbaijan.

The weapons go two ways. Not only are illegal weapons sent from the West but trophies of war and legally supplied Western weapons are intercepted on their way back from Afghanistan and other places to provide a further source of unaccounted-for armaments. This isn't hard when US military personnel write the manifests at each end, if they are allowed to ask any questions, that is.

Georgia has been subject of an unofficial arms embargo since the 2008 Georgian-Russian war, as too many weapons used in that war suddenly disappeared, and many of those

intended for it never got to the Georgian Army in the first place. So if a large cargo plane, probably carrying weapons, is on the runway at Tbilisi Airport it is not carrying legal arms supplies. Nevertheless, such planes, and their escorts, do not land anywhere by accident, or ferry soldiers in and out of them, as airport staff have been watching them doing even when they are nothing to do with the ground crew.

Regional Airports and Supply Lines

Jeffrey Silverman, Bureau Chief for Veterans Today, wrote two years ago that representatives of the so-called Syrian opposition had been in Georgia before the parliamentary elections meeting with Georgian government representatives, most likely with the support of foreign intelligence services. He has supplied full tapes and transcripts of various illegal arms deals involving Georgia to the Georgian Prosecutor's [Office](#).

It is also significant that John Bass, the former US Ambassador to Georgia and previously Iraq, will be the next Ambassador to Turkey. These three countries are part of a well-established Northern Distribution Route, along which more military bases have been created, hospitals set up and logistics improved. This is being done to lay the groundwork for a possible war with Iran, the only one of the seven US targets identified by General Wesley Clark still standing. Bass has longstanding connections with Bechtel National and KBR and is an expert in logistics and covert operations, being a career professional who specialised in these questions.

ISIS was inserted into Iraq as the fighting force able to state this war and seize the means to pay for it, which the US is too scared to fight in person after its recent failures in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Foreign troops and advisors have been involved with ISIS from the beginning, recruited in Train and Equip Program recipient countries such as Georgia and Turkey. Syria and Iraq are still being used as training grounds for this war, in time honoured Great Power fashion, serving the same purpose as Spain did in the 1930s and Vietnam until the 1970s.

Conclusion

After Chuck Hagel's visit Georgian Defence Minister Irakli Alasania said that a "silent embargo" on Georgia appeared to have been lifted. "The Pentagon's foreign military sales system is notoriously slow, but, under the right circumstances, it can move adroitly. It should move more quickly to fulfill Georgia's orders," he said. But if it had moved so quickly that a plane full of weapons arrived three days later we would know all about it, as this would be a coup for the present government.

The Antonov plane has had plenty of time to refuel, but is still at the airport at the time of writing. This indicates that Georgia is still a viable transport hub for illegal and legal weapons deliveries to terrorists, all depends on the paperwork, and that include transit via smaller regional airports as well.

Any time Georgia, or any other US ally, wants to make progress it must get further involved in these schemes to do so, as the defence relationships with these countries invariably intensify when economic agreements are signed. This is why stopping terrorism is not as simple as cutting off the arms supplies.

Countries would lose a thousand positive benefits if they tried to withdraw from such

schemes. As long as the terrorists and freedom fighters are kept from the government ministers, they are prepared to maintain the lie that politics must always be dirty and no one can ever act honestly if they want to serve their country.

The US created ISIS, the Islamic State, and other nasty groups it now vilifies for one reason. Americans abroad have shown for generations that they can never understand why many people in countries they think they are helping don't like the USA. The guardian of democracy has now discovered that terrorists are the only people whose language they can understand.

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