

Training “Moderate Terrorists”: A Half-A-Billion-Dollar Waste...Or Was It?

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While most of the world is chuckling with Schadenfreude over the US' apparent \$500 million waste on training “moderate rebels” in Syria, American taxpayers are furious at their government's perceived ineptitude in wasting such an astronomical sum for the sake of [only 60 fighters](#). It seems as though the policy was such a miserable failure that not a single success could be gleaned from it, hence what most people falsely assumed was the project's full cancellation last Friday. That's not exactly what happened, however, in either sense – the scheme wasn't as bad of a failure as the US is purposely making it out to be (although it was definitely an absolute embarrassment relative to its publicly stated goals), and secondly, it was tweaked, not scrapped. Let's pull back the curtain for a moment and see what's really going on with what everybody assumes is the US' largest covert flop in decades.

Exposing The False Narrative

The popular understanding among most people is that the US ran through half a billion dollars in less than a year, all in the name of vetting and training what turned out to be a little more than half a hundred “moderate rebels”. Reuters has contributed to this myth by [calculating](#) that the cost came out to around \$10 million per trained fighter, leading readers to assume that the money had already been spent in full and solely on those individuals. Well, if that truly was the case, then the program would ironically have been the US government's most ‘successful’ one ever, as it would mean that unlike anything else ever attempted by Washington (let alone its intelligence agencies), for once all of the funds went entirely and solely towards their stated objective, no matter how failed it ultimately turned out to be.

Of course, when viewed from that perspective, the myth is dispelled and it becomes clear that such a scenario isn't at all what happened. Looking at the facts, no US government representative ever indicated that the full sum was entirely spent, and there's no conceivable way that it could ever cost that much money to vet and train such a small amount of people. The New York Times also [reported](#) that the US “will instead use the money to provide ammunition and some weapons for groups already engaged in the battle” as per its tweaked policy, thus confirming that enough of it still exists [from January](#) to fund the reworked and expanded operation. Nonetheless, Washington seems content with cleverly feeding the myth that the whole initiative was a failure, and it's doing this to distract attention away from what it was really up to this entire time.

A Convenient Excuse

Between when Congress allocated the money in January until the time that the program was

terminated in early October, the casual information consumer is led to believe that the US government was clumsily bungling its Syrian-directed efforts on this epic mess of a project, and that it somehow occupied all of its time and resources. Average people all across the world are so overwhelmed with the ubiquitous criticism of the moment that many of them have forgotten that the American destabilization of Syria actually began as early as the mid-2000s, as documented by independent investigative journalist and Pulitzer Prize-winner Seymour Hersh in "[The Redirection](#)". With the US' [grand strategy](#) in forcefully creating "The New Middle East" being [dramatically disrupted](#) by the [Russian anti-terrorist intervention](#) in Syria, Washington is eager to look for an excuse to occupy the masses' attention until it can fully formulate its response, and the globally flogged scapegoat of the "moderate rebel" program fits the role perfectly.

Not only that, but the US also wanted to retroactively obscure its prior activity in Syria through the unveiling of a ridiculously expensive program that would 'justify' any of its earlier investments that might accidentally leak out to the public. For example, the American arming of ISIL, Al Nusra, and other terrorist groups could now be explained away as a 'mistake' of "rebel weapons" "falling into the wrong hands", be it through "[surrender](#)", "retreat", or "[accidentally](#)" [airdropping](#) such equipment to them. It doesn't matter if such evidence emerged before the program was publicly announced or even if it happened in Iraq and not Syria, since the intended narrative was always to pin it on this project, 'for better or for worse'. The problem was that the 'plausibly deniable' intermediaries, the so-called "moderate rebels", never materialized in the number that they were supposed to, but such a point is moot and never dwelled on by Washington's narrative guiders, who have shifted all Syrian-related criticism to this much-hated project.



Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., (left) and Jack Reed, D-R.I., hear testimony on operations against ISIS from Gen. Lloyd Austin, Sept 2015

Using the \$500 million "moderate rebel" program as the unquestionable scapegoat for the US' failures in Syria is copied from the same tactic that it uses against Russia to explain away whatever happens in Eastern Europe. The massive weapons-running operation that the US conducted throughout the course of the War on Syria (including [looted deposits](#) shipped from post-Gaddafi Libya by former US Ambassador Christopher Stevens) and the '[untraceable](#)' [Toyotas](#) that it supplied to the Wahhabis can always, if push came to shove, somehow be linked to the training program in order to absorb any domestic criticism. And that's the thing - this psychological operation of self-effacing 'civil servants' 'admitting' the supposed grand failure of one of their previous plans is only aimed at the domestic (Western) public, not at the multipolar media or foreign intelligence agencies that know better. By accepting one highly publicized false failure (which as was explained, only failed in the sense of not establishing the proper media cover for terrorist-destined weapons and equipment transfers), the US can shield itself from rising public anger over its other unsavory actions towards Syria, which are increasingly being brought to light by international media outlets such as Sputnik.

From The Darkness To The Light

This brings one to the topic of what the US' tweaked program actually looks like in practice, and how much it really differs from that which was going on before it. Remember, it was reported that the US would give "ammunition and weapons" to its allied proxies in Syria, and no sooner was this announced than an entirely new umbrella organization was created called the "Democratic Forces of Syria", [described](#) by Reuters as comprising " the [Kurdish] YPG, various Arab groups including Jaysh al-Thuwwar (Army of Rebels) and the Arab tribal Jaysh al-Sanadeed, and an Assyrian Christian group", with the Arab gangs forming a subgroup called the "Syrian Arab Coalition". The same day that it was announced, it was revealed that the US [airdropped](#) 50 tons of weapons to the northeast Syrian-based entity, thus proving that it had a hand behind its formation and intends for the group to be its on-the-ground proxy from now on (or until it's defeated by or surrenders to ISIL, at least).

When one thinks about it, the only thing that's changed between the 'failed' policy and the tweaked one is that what was previously being done covertly is now being carried out in the open. The US has been arming and equipping militants in Syria since before the conflict first started, it's just that back then, it vehemently denied that this was the case. When irrefutable evidence continued to emerge that the US was lying, it invented the meant-to-fail spectacle of the "moderate rebel" training program to 'explain away' all the material that ended up in the terrorists' hands, even if it's means of doing so were intellectually sloppy and acceptable only to the largely uninformed and politically naïve American public. The scarecrow diversion of the 'failed' "moderate rebel" training program has served its domestic purpose, since it's engendered such anger on both sides of the partisan divide that Democrats and Republicans have gone through the playacting of 'uniting' to support its 'stepped-up' successor, which in reality is neither a 'stepped-up' program nor a 'successor'. The only difference between then and now is that what was previously done in the darkness is openly being admitted to in the light.

The End Of The Charade

The US had initially planned to keep the 'failed' "moderate rebel" program running indefinitely, as it provided a perfect cover for directly supporting terrorism in the Mideast and 'justifying' the huge expenses involved with maintaining a private army of jihadists. Plus, it's the perfect scarecrow for absorbing all sorts of domestic criticism related to the US' Mideast policies, as there's near-unanimous hate for the program among the American people and it makes for a self-effacing distraction from the bigger problems that Washington has cooked.

This charade was brought to an abrupt halt after Russia's anti-terrorist intervention forced the US' hand into the open, since Washington suddenly became desperate as it watched Moscow mop up its proxies in the course of a week. From the American standpoint, there was no foreseeable way that it could continue to retain any influence whatsoever over Syria (no matter how rapidly fading) if its depleting forces were still supplied via covert channels, so it publicly pulled the plug on its made-to-fail 'covert' "moderate rebel" project in order to replace it with its 'tweaked' overt counterpart.

Therefore, out of strategic desperation, the US has shifted gears by confirming to Americans what the rest of the world already knew as an open secret - the US has always had a direct role in supporting all manner of anti-government forces in Syria. But, in accordance with domestic political and media imperatives, because this 'revelation' was announced with a

dash of readily believable self-effacing criticism and misleadingly appeared to be a lot better than its 'predecessor', the easily manipulated American public has been tricked into cheerily welcoming something that it never would have accepted over four years ago, and that's official acknowledgement that the US is playing a direct and guiding role in managing the War on Syria.

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