

U.S., Turkey Sign Deal to Openly Arm ISIS-Linked Syrian Rebels

NATO countries to support rebels, many of whom have pledged allegiance to ISIS

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Global Research, February 20, 2015

[Infowars](#) 19 February 2015

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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The U.S. and Turkey have signed an agreement to openly train and arm Syrian rebels, the majority of whom have ties to ISIS.

The deal was signed Thursday by U.S. ambassador John Bass and a senior Turkish official, [according to the Associated Press](#), and the support could begin as early as next month.

But [moderate rebel groups in Syria which are independent of ISIS are practically extinct](#) and the main belligerents in the ongoing Syrian Civil War are ISIS affiliates and the Syrian government.

“Armed groups qualified as ‘moderate’ are closely coordinating their activities with terrorist groups,” Alexey Borodavkin, the Russian Federation ambassador to the U.N., said to a Human Rights Council, adding that Syria is facing a “huge army of trained, armed terrorists.”

A “moderate” rebel commander [confirmed Borodavkin’s statement back in Sept.](#)

“We are collaborating with the Islamic State and the Nusra Front by attacking the Syrian Army’s gatherings in... Qalamoun [in Syria],” Bassel Idriss, the commander of a Free Syrian Army rebel brigade, told the Lebanese [Daily Star](#).

Idriss also mentioned the FSA’s dwindling power as many of his U.S.-backed fighters continue to “pledge allegiance” to ISIS.

“ISIS wanted to enhance its presence in the Western Qalamoun area,” Idriss said. “After the fall of Yabroud and the FSA’s retreat into the hills, many units pledged allegiance to ISIS.”

Another rebel, Abu Khaled, also said [they were willing to collaborate with ISIS and its affiliates](#).

“Fighters feel proud to join al-Nusra [an ISIS affiliate] because that means power and influence,” Abu Ahmed, the commander of an FSA brigade near Aleppo, told [the Guardian](#).

He later told the Daily Star that al-Nusra “is the biggest power present right now in Qalamoun” and that the FSA would collaborate on any mission al-Nusra launches as long as

it “coincides with their values.”

Recently Turkey’s prime minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, was caught shipping arms to al-Qaeda and ISIS via Syria-bound trucks operated by the country’s intelligence agency, [according to Turkish military officials](#).

“The trucks were carrying weapons and supplies to the al-Qaeda terror organization,” a [report by the Gendarmerie General Command stated](#).

The centuries-old conflict between [Sunni and Shia Muslims](#) and the [trillions of dollars in potential oil and gas revenue in Syria](#) are both key factors motivating the Sunni [Turkish government](#) to support ISIS and its allies in a proxy war to overthrow the Shia Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, and the [U.S. State Dept. admitted last year it also wants to overthrow Assad](#).

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