

‘US Arming Syrian Al Qaeda Militants Could Escalate into Direct Conflict with Russia’

By [RT](#)

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President Obama’s waiver of restrictions on military aid to militant groups in Syria may bolster jihadist forces and ultimately lead to a direct confrontation between the US and Russia, security analyst and former Pentagon official Michael Maloof told RT.

RT: How might Obama’s waiving of current restrictions on assistance to forces in Syria affect the situation there? Can we possibly see it better or is it likely to decline?

Michael Maloof: I think it’s going to greatly decline, it’s going to escalate the conflict and it means that the rebels, whom we cannot identify, are going to be getting some very sophisticated weapons. Potentially , I should say, man-portable air defense systems, which can knock down Russian and Syrian aircraft. And the fact too, that we have stocks already in Europe, that can easily be transferred with this waiver. Under the waiver, it’s supposed to be a fifteen-day notification to Congress, but Congress, as of tonight, Washington time is going to be out of session until January. So these arms can go within hours.

And given the sophisticated armament that could be sent to these rebels, again people we cannot identify, this really represents an escalation particularly since these rebels are out to topple the government of Bashar Assad. And it would also put the United States into a situation of waging a proxy war, ultimately, against the Russians and Syrians.

RT: How is this decision essential to the US about national security?

MM: It could put us in direct jeopardy, and result in a direct confrontation with the Russians. And it could have some dire consequences. The Russians are going to know where these weapons have come from and certainly the Syrians will too. This is going to be a very serious development. Obama just said ‘I’m washing my hands of this, I’m out of here anyway.’ And this could really upset everything in that region at this point.

RT: US-made weapons have been known to end up in the hands of terrorists. Can we expect anything different in this case?

MM: Well, it’s going to be the arming of the same people, but it could include much more sophisticated weapons than they’ve received. Up until now we don’t assess that they’ve had, the rebels had portable MANPADs or air defense systems, shoulder fired rockets, in effect Stingers, that can knock down aircraft. And that’s basically what they’ve been begging for quite some time.

And this is going to rejuvenate the rebels considerably, I think. Those rebels, who were planning to leave Aleppo are probably going to stay put, with the hope of getting these more sophisticated weapons. And of course those weapons will be passed along to other jihadist Salafist groups including [Islamic State (IS formerly ISIS/ISIL)].

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