

IHS JANE'S CLAIMS ABOUT SYRIAN REBELS MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN US INTELL COMMUNITY'S

This report – second-hand from Jane's – has shocked a lot of commentators.

Opposition forces battling Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria now number around 100,000 fighters, but after more than two years of fighting they are fragmented into as many as 1,000 bands.

The new study by IHS Jane's, a defence consultancy, estimates there are around 10,000 jihadists – who would include foreign fighters – fighting for powerful factions linked to al-Qaeda..

Another 30,000 to 35,000 are hardline Islamists who share much of the outlook of the jihadists, but are focused purely on the Syrian war rather than a wider international struggle.

There are also at least a further 30,000 moderates belonging to groups that have an Islamic character, meaning only a small minority of the rebels are linked to secular or purely nationalist groups.

It shouldn't.

After all, House Homeland Security Committee Chair Mike McCaul has directly challenged John Kerry's claims that only 15 to 25% of the rebels are extremists. McCaul says intelligence he has seen says 50% are "bad actors." He actually suggested either Kerry's claims were wrong (he got them from Elizabeth O'Bagy, who subsequently got fired for lying about having a PhD) or the intelligence he had received previous was.

In other words, our intelligence community has told a key National Security Chair that half the rebels are extremists. It should not be a surprise that Jane's agrees.