

IS RUSSIA ELIMINATING AMERICA'S MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM PROBLEM

In this post, Moon of Alabama linked to this Jerusalem Post article, which says more plainly what a number of people admit obliquely: Qatar and Saudi Arabia are funding the Nusra Front.

The Nusra Front, the Syrian branch of al- Qaida, which controls 10-15 percent of non-contiguous parcels of Syrian real estate, is of special interest to the IDF. Together with some local militias Nusra is in charge of most of the 100-kilometer border with Israel on the Syria side of the Golan Heights. In recent years, Nusra slightly toned down its militant ideology due to the influence of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which provide it with financial support.

OK then.

Not only are our Gulf allies funding al Qaeda, but they are sufficiently close to them so as to get them to pretend to moderate their extremism. Which is another way of saying they're sufficiently close to get them to cooperate to help the Gulf nations snooker their allies.

Of course, the Israelis have an incentive to point to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, so as to avoid admitting they, too, are backing Nusra.

Still, this plain admission raises the same questions I raised back in August when the people inserting DOD-trained rebels into Syria were genuinely surprised that their expectation that Nusra would welcome those rebels, rather than kidnap them, was wrong.

I think it's quite likely that the US got affirmative HUMINT from one of our

partners in the region that Nusra Front would not attack. Both the Saudis and Israelis are real possibilities to have provided this intelligence, given that we rely on the Saudis for a lot of our intelligence on Sunni terrorist groups and the Israelis have been cozying up to the group. And I'm frankly agnostic whether that intelligence would have been offered cynically – again, as a ploy to suck the US further into Syria – or in good faith.

Likewise, I wonder whether we got disinformation from our allies – the material supporter of terrorists – about whether or not Nusra had confiscated a chunk of the weapons and pick-ups from the next batch of rebels we sent into Syria.

All that's stuff that was readily available. But here's a detail I did not know. CIA reportedly ended its support for its Syrian rebels earlier this year.

Be that as it may, and regardless of the Russian strategy, it also needs to be emphasized that even though the targeted rebels were not ISIS, they were not secularist “moderates” either. According to most news outlets however, the rebel positions hit by the Russians were part of the “Free Syrian Army”, the armed branch of the allegedly secular opposition. Interestingly, this statement is based on one single testimony made to Reuters by the leader of a group which has been provided with US weapons as part of a covert CIA programme that was ended earlier this year.

If the CIA had stopped outfitting rebels partnering with Qatari and Saudi backed al Qaeda groups, I can see how they'd want to hijack DOD backed rebels to get US arms (and, effectively,

bodies).

Which brings me back to this comment John Brennan made at the end of May, asked explicitly in the context of ISIS.

Dealing with some of these problems in the Middle East, whether you're talking about Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Libya, others, these are some of the most complex and complicated issues that I've seen in my 35 years, working on national security issues. So there are no easy solutions.

I think the president has tried to make sure that we're able to push the envelope when we can to protect this country. But we have to recognize that sometimes our engagement and direct involvement will stimulate and spur additional threats to our national security interests.

"Sometimes our engagement and direct involvement will stimulate and spur additional threats," said the CIA director overseeing a covert operation of supporting fighters that ended up having ties to al Qaeda that either had been or would shortly be discontinued.

We're making a lot of noise about Russia taking out those men the CIA had formerly trained. Is it just noise?

Apparently some Syrians on the ground are already questioning whether the US has sold them out.

The official added that the airstrikes were bolstering the popularity of Jabhat al-Nusra, with its combined message of American duplicity against Muslims and the prospect of fighting an old foe – many of al-Qaida's veterans once fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

While there are reasons to question the source

(really! how many al Qaeda members who fought Russia 20 years ago are left, much less on the ground in Syria?), it's a good question...

Update: The Daily Beast believes the CIA program is still active.

The rebels attacked by Russian forces on Wednesday and Thursday were in western Syria, alongside al Qaeda affiliates and far from any ISIS positions. That suggests the rebels were not there to fight the self-proclaimed Islamic State, as the Obama administration called the top priority. Instead, they were battling the Assad regime as part of a still-active CIA program for rebels which has run in tandem with the disastrous and now-defunct train and equip Pentagon program.