



How the US Ends Up Training al-Qaeda and ISIS Collaborators

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Abstract

In November 2015, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI) in the House Armed Services Committee led a bipartisan bill H.R. 4108 to stop the abuse of American taxpayer money in the CIA's illegal arming and funding of al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria. Unfortunately, it was blocked, but after the recent deaths of three special forces assigned to train jihadists in the covert Timber Sycamore program, perhaps it is time to revisit a similar new bill and stop the US government's illegal policy of arming and training terrorists to overthrow foreign governments.

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Analysis

In November 2015, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI)¹ in the House Armed Services Committee led bipartisan bill H.R. 4108 to stop the abuse of American taxpayer money in the CIA's illegal arming and funding of al-Qaeda affiliates in Syria.

Unfortunately, it was blocked, but after the recent deaths of three special forces assigned to train jihadists in Jordan, perhaps it is time to revisit a similar bill and stop this madness.

CIA's Timber Sycamore program to train jihadists

In November, three Green Berets from the 5th Special Forces Group, Matthew Lewellen, Kevin McEnroe, and James Moriarty were murdered² by an ISIS infiltrator³ at the Prince Faisal Airbase in Jordan. They were assigned the inter-agency mission in the CIA's Timber Sycamore covert operation to train and arm so called moderate Syrian rebels.

It is a tragedy that their deaths could have been prevented, as for years the Special Forces had been complaining the "moderate" rebels they were training were actually ISIS and Al Nusra infiltrators⁴. The vetting process was flawed, consisting of a check on an old data base and an interview, with many expressing support for terrorist groups such as Nusra and ISIS.

"I don't understand why people don't like al-Nusra" one rebel told the American soldiers, while a Green Beret associated with the training program in Turkey admitted "a good 95 percent⁵ of them were either working with terrorist organizations or were sympathetic to them." He added, "a good majority of them admitted that they had no issues with ISIS and that their issue was with the Kurds and the Syrian regime."

Indeed, the illegal CIA program has a regime change mandate to overthrow the Syrian government, and little to do with a counter-terrorism mandate to fight ISIS and Al Qaeda. In fact, a resilient ISIS and a more powerful Al Nusra are likely an organic outgrowth of this beneficial arming and training program. As described by a Green Beret, the trainers know "we are just training the next generation of jihadis," and that "the FSA [Free Syrian Army] is little more than a cover for the al-Qaeda affiliated al-Nusra" to continue procuring western weapons from CIA and Saudi intelligence services.

Little wonder there now exists tension between the CIA and Special Forces, wherein the soldiers view "CIA treats their Special Forces trainers as de facto expendable assets, using them to train known Jihadists, when it was only a matter of time before something went wrong."

As a soldier herself, it is also of little wonder Congresswoman Gabbard objects to this exploitation of American troops.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0ZlrKyai0I>

² Peter Baker, Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Investigates Deaths of 3 Soldiers in Jordan as Possible Terrorism", *New York Times*, November 16, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/world/middleeast/jordan-us-soldiers-killed.html?_r=2

³ Jack Murphy, "Three Green Berets Killed by ISIS infiltrator after CIA ignored warnings", *Sofrep*, November 16, 2016, <https://sofrep.com/67808/three-green-berets-killed-isis-infiltrator-cia-ignored-warnings/>

⁴ <http://newsmilitary.com/pages/84040668-three-green-berets-killed-by-isis-infiltrator-after-cia>

⁵ Jack Murphy, "US Special Forces sabotage White House policy gone disastrously wrong with covert ops in Syria", *Sofrep*, September 14, 2016, <https://sofrep.com/63764/us-special-forces-sabotage-white-house-policy-gone-disastrously-wrong-with-covert-ops-in-syria/>



Even Gulf monarchies consider US troops expendable mercenaries. In his January 7, 1991 *Wall Street Journal* article⁶ entitled “White slaves in the Persian Gulf,” historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. revealed that when asked about US-led military build-up to liberate Kuwait, a Saudi official replied ‘you think I want to send my teenage son to die for Kuwait? We have our white slaves from the US to do that.’ Now it seems the Saudis also want their “white slaves” to set up a no-fly zone in Syria to install their Salafist regime.

And as American taxpayers are hurting during hard economic times, no wonder many of them voted for an outsider like Donald Trump to come in and stop the waste, abuse and the Washington establishment’s poor stewardship of American blood and treasure.

Now, With ISIS, al Qaeda, and Salafi jihadists pivoting to Asia⁷, *quo vadis* for US policy on Syria and the Middle East?

Jihadists pivot to Asia

The new US administration should begin by stopping the program of arming jihadists for regime change, and work with non-Wahhabi Mideast states such as Egypt and Jordan and Asian states for a truly concerted international counter-terrorism effort.

The US has already lost quite a bit of credibility and moral legitimacy with its regime-change disasters in Iraq, Libya and Syria; a history of aligning with Saudi Arabia to support jihadists in Afghanistan and the Mideast; and helping to export Wahhabism that the late prime minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew blames for bringing terrorism to Asia.

Not only Singapore is put off by this US/Saudi Wahhabi nexus, but traditional US ally Philippines is now also distancing itself from US policy that “imported terrorism”⁸ into the Mideast.

Saleena Saleem from Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore likewise warned that the spread of Wahhabism is injecting sectarianism⁹ among Southeast Asian Muslims who had hitherto coexisted peacefully, threatening their pluralistic societies and exacerbating societal polarization. This is especially the case in Malaysia and Indonesia where ISIS and Al Qaeda have taken a stronghold.

Central Asia¹⁰ is also infested, especially Uzbekistan that has several thousand jihadists in Syria who will return home to roost one day. Their large presence in Aleppo has earned them the nickname “Aleppo Uzbeks”¹¹ and recently a video¹² surfaced of them vowing to continue their jihad rather than evacuate.

As Professor Brahma Chellaney from New Delhi’s Center for Policy Research exhorted, the root cause of terrorism is the venomous ideology of Wahhabism¹³. In order to regain credibility and demonstrate that US is

⁶ <http://www.antiwar.com/mcconnell/mc012202.html>

⁷ Christina Lin, “Sleeping with the Enemy: Opposition Grows to CIA-Backed AL-Qaeda Proxies in Syria”, *ISPSW/CSS ETH Zurich*, February 16, 2016, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/195973>

⁸ Joyce Ilas, “Duterte slams U.S. anew, says it ‘imported terrorism’” *CNN Philippines*, July 9, 2016, <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/07/09/Duterte-United-States-imported-terrorism.html>

⁹ Saleena Saleem, “Saudi Arabia’s Shaken Pillars: Impact on Southeast Asian Muslims—Analysis”, *RSIS/Eurasia Review*, June 2, 2016, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/02062016-saudi-arabias-shaken-pillars-impact-on-southeast-asian-muslims-analysis/>

¹⁰ Uran Botobekov, “Is Central Asia Ready to Face ISIS”, *The Diplomat*, July 8, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/07/is-central-asia-ready-to-face-isis/>

¹¹ Christina Lin, “Asian rebels in Aleppo, Western blindspot”, *ISPSW/CSS ETH Zurich*, February 2016, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/196033b>

¹² <https://twitter.com/Dalatrm/status/806116148358119424>



serious about counter-terrorism, rather than using radical Islam as a weapon for geopolitical games that destroy countries and the lives of millions of people, Washington should redeem itself by dismantling the Saudi, Qatari and other Wahhabi religious-industrial complexes exporting jihadis.

And support the Stop Arming Terrorists Act (SATA)¹⁴, a new bipartisan bill introduced on December 8¹⁵ by Congresswoman Gabbard. It is time to stop the madness. It is time for America to stop arming terrorists.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author. This article was first published by *Asia Times* on December 10, 2016.

About the Author of this Issue

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¹³ Brahma Chellaney, "Attacking the Ideology Behind terror", *Washington Times*, June 15, 2016,

<https://chellaney.net/2016/06/15/attacking-the-ideology-behind-terror/>

¹⁴ Jason Ditz, Bipartisan Bill Would Forbid US Funding ISIS, al-Qaeda Affiliates, *Antiwar*, December 8, 2016,

<http://news.antiwar.com/2016/12/08/bipartisan-bill-would-forbid-us-funding-isis-al-qaeda-affiliates/print/>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/TulsiPress/status/807004782892384256>