

How America Armed Terrorists in Syria

Source: [The American Conservative](#)

Article dated 22 June 2017 – reposted 4 August 2019

Three-term Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, a member of both the Armed Services and Foreign Affairs committees, has proposed legislation that would prohibit any U.S. assistance to terrorist organizations in Syria as well as to any organization working directly with them. Equally important, it would prohibit U.S. military sales and other forms of military cooperation with other countries that provide arms or financing to those terrorists and their collaborators.

Gabbard's "Stop Arming Terrorists Act" challenges for the first time in Congress a U.S. policy toward the conflict in the Syrian civil war that should have set off alarm bells long ago: in 2012-13 the Obama administration helped its Sunni allies Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar provide arms to Syrian and non-Syrian armed groups to force President Bashar al-Assad out of power. And in 2013 the administration began to provide arms to what the CIA judged to be "relatively moderate" anti-Assad groups—meaning they incorporated various degrees of Islamic extremism.

That policy, ostensibly aimed at helping replace the Assad regime with a more democratic alternative, has actually helped build up al Qaeda's Syrian franchise al Nusra Front into the dominant threat to Assad.

The supporters of this arms-supply policy believe it is necessary as pushback against Iranian influence in Syria. But that argument skirts the real issue raised by the policy's history. The Obama administration's Syria policy effectively sold out the U.S. interest that was supposed to be the

touchstone of the “Global War on Terrorism”—the eradication of al Qaeda and its terrorist affiliates. The United States has instead subordinated that U.S. interest in counter-terrorism to the interests of its Sunni allies. In doing so it has helped create a new terrorist threat in the heart of the Middle East.

The policy of arming military groups committed to overthrowing the government of President Bashar al-Assad began in September 2011, when President Barack Obama was pressed by his Sunni allies—Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar—to supply heavy weapons to a military opposition to Assad they were determined to establish. Turkey and the Gulf regimes wanted the United States to provide anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to the rebels, according to a former Obama Administration official involved in Middle East issues.

Obama refused to provide arms to the opposition, but he agreed to provide covert U.S. logistical help in carrying out a campaign of military assistance to arm opposition groups. CIA involvement in the arming of anti-Assad forces began with arranging for the shipment of weapons from the stocks of the Gaddafi regime that had been stored in Benghazi. CIA-controlled firms shipped the weapons from the military port of Benghazi to two small ports in Syria using former U.S. military personnel to manage the logistics, as investigative reporter Sy Hersh detailed in 2014. The funding for the program came mainly from the Saudis.

A declassified October 2012 Defense Intelligence Agency report revealed that the shipment in late August 2012 had included 500 sniper rifles, 100 RPG (rocket propelled grenade launchers) along with 300 RPG rounds and 400 howitzers. Each arms shipment encompassed as many as ten shipping containers, it reported, each of which held about 48,000 pounds of cargo. That suggests a total payload of up to 250 tons of weapons per shipment. Even if the CIA had organized only one shipment per month, the arms shipments would have totaled 2,750 tons of

arms bound ultimately for Syria from October 2011 through August 2012. More likely it was a multiple of that figure.

The CIA's covert arms shipments from Libya came to an abrupt halt in September 2012 when Libyan militants attacked and burned the embassy annex in Benghazi that had been used to support the operation. By then, however, a much larger channel for arming anti-government forces was opening up. The CIA put the Saudis in touch with a senior Croatian official who had offered to sell large quantities of arms left over from the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. And the CIA helped them shop for weapons from arms dealers and governments in several other former Soviet bloc countries.

Flush with weapons acquired from both the CIA Libya program and from the Croatians, the Saudis and Qataris dramatically increased the number of flights by military cargo planes to Turkey in December 2012 and continued that intensive pace for the next two and a half months. The New York Times reported a total 160 such flights through mid-March 2013. The most common cargo plane in use in the Gulf, the Ilyushin IL-76, can carry roughly 50 tons of cargo on a flight, which would indicate that as much as 8,000 tons of weapons poured across the Turkish border into Syria just in late 2012 and in 2013.

One U.S. official called the new level of arms deliveries to Syrian rebels a "cataract of weaponry." And a year-long investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project revealed that the Saudis were intent on building up a powerful conventional army in Syria. The "end-use certificate" for weapons purchased from an arms company in Belgrade, Serbia, in May 2013 includes 500 Soviet-designed PG-7VR rocket launchers that can penetrate even heavily-armored tanks, along with two million rounds; 50 Konkurs anti-tank missile launchers and 500 missiles, 50 anti-aircraft guns mounted on armored vehicles, 10,000 fragmentation rounds for OG-7 rocket launchers capable of piercing heavy body armor; four truck-mounted BM-21 GRAD

multiple rocket launchers, each of which fires 40 rockets at a time with a range of 12 to 19 miles, along with 20,000 GRAD rockets.

The end user document for another Saudi order from the same Serbian company listed 300 tanks, 2,000 RPG launchers, and 16,500 other rocket launchers, one million rounds for ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft guns, and 315 million cartridges for various other guns.

Those two purchases were only a fraction of the totality of the arms obtained by the Saudis over the next few years from eight Balkan nations. Investigators found that the Saudis made their biggest arms deals with former Soviet bloc states in 2015, and that the weapons included many that had just come off factory production lines. Nearly 40 percent of the arms the Saudis purchased from those countries, moreover, still had not been delivered by early 2017. So the Saudis had already contracted for enough weaponry to keep a large-scale conventional war in Syria going for several more years.

By far the most consequential single Saudi arms purchase was not from the Balkans, however, but from the United States. It was the December 2013 U.S. sale of 15,000 TOW anti-tank missiles to the Saudis at a cost of about \$1 billion—the result of Obama’s decision earlier that year to reverse his ban on lethal assistance to anti-Assad armed groups. The Saudis had agreed, moreover, that those anti-tank missiles would be doled out to Syrian groups only at U.S. discretion. The TOW missiles began to arrive in Syria in 2014 and soon had a major impact on the military balance.

This flood of weapons into Syria, along with the entry of 20,000 foreign fighters into the country—primarily through Turkey—largely defined the nature of the conflict. These armaments helped make al Qaeda’s Syrian franchise, al Nusra Front (now renamed Tahrir al-Sham or Levant Liberation Organization) and its close allies by far the most powerful

anti-Assad forces in Syria—and gave rise to the Islamic State.

By late 2012, it became clear to U.S. officials that the largest share of the arms that began flowing into Syria early in the year were going to the rapidly growing al Qaeda presence in the country. In October 2012, U.S. officials acknowledged off the record for the first time to the New York Times that “most” of the arms that had been shipped to armed opposition groups in Syria with U.S. logistical assistance during the previous year had gone to “hardline Islamic jihadists”— obviously meaning al Qaeda’s Syrian franchise, al Nusra.

Al Nusra Front and its allies became the main recipients of the weapons because the Saudis, Turks, and Qataris wanted the arms to go to the military units that were most successful in attacking government targets. And by the summer of 2012, al Nusra Front, buttressed by the thousands of foreign jihadists pouring into the country across the Turkish border, was already taking the lead in attacks on the Syrian government in coordination with “Free Syrian Army” brigades.

In November and December 2012, al Nusra Front began establishing formal “joint operations rooms” with those calling themselves “Free Syrian Army” on several battlefronts, as Charles Lister chronicles in his book *The Syrian Jihad*. One such commander favored by Washington was Col. Abdul Jabbar al-Oqaidi, a former Syrian army officer who headed something called the Aleppo Revolutionary Military Council. Ambassador Robert Ford, who continued to hold that position even after he had been withdrawn from Syria, publicly visited Oqaidi in May 2013 to express U.S. support for him and the FSA.

But Oqaidi and his troops were junior partners in a coalition in Aleppo in which al Nusra was by far the strongest element. That reality is clearly reflected in a video in which Oqaidi describes his good relations with officials of the “Islamic State” and is shown joining the main jihadist commander in the

Aleppo region celebrating the capture of the Syrian government's Menagh Air Base in September 2013.

By early 2013, in fact, the "Free Syrian Army," which had never actually been a military organization with any troops, had ceased to have any real significance in the Syria conflict. New anti-Assad armed groups had stopped using the name even as a "brand" to identify themselves, as a leading specialist on the conflict observed.

So, when weapons from Turkey arrived at the various battlefronts, it was understood by all the non-jihadist groups that they would be shared with al Nusra Front and its close allies. A report by McClatchy in early 2013, on a town in north central Syria, showed how the military arrangements between al Nusra and those brigades calling themselves "Free Syrian Army" governed the distribution of weapons. One of those units, the Victory Brigade, had participated in a "joint operations room" with al Qaeda's most important military ally, Ahrar al Sham, in a successful attack on a strategic town a few weeks earlier. A visiting reporter watched that brigade and Ahrar al Sham show off new sophisticated weapons that included Russian-made RPG27 shoulder-fired rocket-propelled anti-tank grenades and RG6 grenade launchers.

When asked if the Victory Brigade had shared its new weapons with Ahrar al Sham, the latter's spokesman responded, "Of course they share their weapons with us. We fight together."

Turkey and Qatar consciously chose al Qaeda and its closest ally, Ahrar al Sham, as the recipients of weapons systems. In late 2013 and early 2014, several truckloads of arms bound for the province of Hatay, just south of the Turkish border, were intercepted by Turkish police. They had Turkish intelligence personnel on board, according to later Turkish police court testimony. The province was controlled by Ahrar al Sham. In fact Turkey soon began to treat Ahrar al Sham as its primary client in Syria, according to Faysal Itani, a senior fellow at

the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East.

A Qatari intelligence operative who had been involved in shipping arms to extremist groups in Libya was a key figure in directing the flow of arms from Turkey into Syria. An Arab intelligence source familiar with the discussions among the external suppliers near the Syrian border in Turkey during those years told the Washington Post's David Ignatius that when one of the participants warned that the outside powers were building up the jihadists while the non-Islamist groups were withering away, the Qatari operative responded, "I will send weapons to al Qaeda if it will help."

The Qataris did funnel arms to both al Nusra Front and Ahrar al Sham, according to a Middle Eastern diplomatic source. The Obama administration's National Security Council staff proposed in 2013 that the United States signal U.S. displeasure with Qatar over its arming of extremists in both Syria and Libya by withdrawing a squadron of fighter planes from the U.S. airbase at al-Udeid, Qatar. The Pentagon vetoed that mild form of pressure, however, to protect its access to its base in Qatar.

President Obama himself confronted Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan over his government's support for the jihadists at a private White House dinner in May 2013, as recounted by Hersh. "We know what you're doing with the radicals in Syria," he quotes Obama as saying to Erdogan.

The administration addressed Turkey's cooperation with the al Nusra publicly, however, only fleetingly in late 2014. Shortly after leaving Ankara, Francis Ricciardone, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey from 2011 through mid-2014, told The Daily Telegraph of London that Turkey had "worked with groups, frankly, for a period, including al Nusra."

The closest Washington came to a public reprimand of its

allies over the arming of terrorists in Syria was when Vice President Joe Biden criticized their role in October 2014. In impromptu remarks at Harvard University's Kennedy School, Biden complained that "our biggest problem is our allies." The forces they had supplied with arms, he said, were "al Nusra and al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world."

Biden quickly apologized for the remarks, explaining that he didn't mean that U.S. allies had deliberately helped the jihadists. But Ambassador Ford confirmed his complaint, telling BBC, "What Biden said about the allies aggravating the problem of extremism is true."

In June 2013 Obama approved the first direct U.S. lethal military aid to rebel brigades that had been vetted by the CIA. By spring 2014, the U.S.-made BGM-71E anti-tank missiles from the 15,000 transferred to the Saudis began to appear in the hands of selected anti-Assad groups. But the CIA imposed the condition that the group receiving them would not cooperate with the al Nusra Front or its allies.

That condition implied that Washington was supplying military groups that were strong enough to maintain their independence from al Nusra Front. But the groups on the CIA's list of vetted "relatively moderate" armed groups were all highly vulnerable to takeover by the al Qaeda affiliate. In November 2014, al Nusra Front troops struck the two strongest CIA-supported armed groups, Harakat Hazm and the Syrian Revolutionary Front on successive days and seized their heavy weapons, including both TOW anti-tank missiles and GRAD rockets.

In early March 2015, the Harakat Hazm Aleppo branch dissolved itself, and al Nusra Front promptly showed off photos of the TOW missiles and other equipment they had captured from it. And in March 2016, al Nusra Front troops attacked the headquarters of the 13th Division in northwestern Idlib

province and seized all of its TOW missiles. Later that month, al Nusra Front released a video of its troops using the TOW missiles it had captured.

But that wasn't the only way for al Nusra Front to benefit from the CIA's largesse. Along with its close ally Ahrar al Sham, the terrorist organization began planning for a campaign to take complete control of Idlib province in the winter of 2014-15. Abandoning any pretense of distance from al Qaeda, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar worked with al Nusra on the creation of a new military formation for Idlib called the "Army of Conquest," consisting of the al Qaeda affiliate and its closest allies. Saudi Arabia and Qatar provided more weapons for the campaign, while Turkey facilitated their passage. On March 28, just four days after launching the campaign, the Army of Conquest successfully gained control of Idlib City.

The non-jihadist armed groups getting advanced weapons from the CIA assistance were not part of the initial assault on Idlib City. After the capture of Idlib the U.S.-led operations room for Syria in southern Turkey signaled to the CIA-supported groups in Idlib that they could now participate in the campaign to consolidate control over the rest of the province. According to Lister, the British researcher on jihadists in Syria who maintains contacts with both jihadist and other armed groups, recipients of CIA weapons, such as the Fursan al haq brigade and Division 13, did join the Idlib campaign alongside al Nusra Front without any move by the CIA to cut them off.

As the Idlib offensive began, the CIA-supported groups were getting TOW missiles in larger numbers, and they now used them with great effectiveness against the Syrian army tanks. That was the beginning of a new phase of the war, in which U.S. policy was to support an alliance between "relatively moderate" groups and the al Nusra Front.

The new alliance was carried over to Aleppo, where jihadist groups close to Nusra Front formed a new command called Fateh Halab ("Aleppo Conquest") with nine armed groups in Aleppo province which were getting CIA assistance. The CIA-supported groups could claim that they weren't cooperating with al Nusra Front because the al Qaeda franchise was not officially on the list of participants in the command. But as the report on the new command clearly implied, this was merely a way of allowing the CIA to continue providing weapons to its clients, despite their de facto alliance with al Qaeda.

The significance of all this is clear: by helping its Sunni allies provide weapons to al Nusra Front and its allies and by funneling into the war zone sophisticated weapons that were bound to fall into al Nusra hands or strengthen their overall military position, U.S. policy has been largely responsible for having extended al Qaeda's power across a significant part of Syrian territory. The CIA and the Pentagon appear to be ready to tolerate such a betrayal of America's stated counter-terrorism mission. Unless either Congress or the White House confronts that betrayal explicitly, as Tulsi Gabbard's legislation would force them to do, U.S. policy will continue to be complicit in the consolidation of power by al Qaeda in Syria, even if the Islamic State is defeated there.

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SAA Killed 350 Nusra Front Terrorists in 3 Days in Hama Countryside

Source: [Syria News](#)

The SAA – Syrian Arab Army – eliminated 350 Nusra Front (HTS, Al-Qaeda Levant) terrorists and destroyed their vehicles in the southwestern part of the de-escalation zone in Idlib, Russian Ministry of Defense spokesperson stated.

In details, the Syrian Arab Army SAA repelled several waves of attacks by the Turkey-sponsored terrorist groups at the Kafr Nabudah and Howeiz axis in Hama countryside during the past 3 days. From 21st of May until yesterday only the SAA killed up to 350 terrorists and destroyed 5 of their tanks, an infantry 'combat vehicle', 27 pick up trucks mounted with heavy machine-guns, two suicide tasks armored vehicles, and 3 MLRs (Multiple rocket launchers), Russian Army Major General Victor Koptchichin, commander of the Hmeimim Base added.

The Russian general added that more than 800 new terrorists arrived to the southwest of de-escalation zone in Idlib, 7 tanks, 3 combat infantry transportation vehicles, 15 pick-up vehicles mounted with heavy machine-guns, and 2 to 4 suicide armored vehicles to be used to penetrate SAA's defense lines.

Syrian Arab Army managed to deliver a swift defeat to Turkey-sponsored Nusra Front and its affiliates and cleaned a number of towns and villages from their terror, notably the town of Qalaat Al Madiq and its citadel in the western Hama countryside, which was used by the terrorists as a launchpad to target Hmeimim military base with missiles, and the strategic city of Kafr Nabudah in the northwest of Hama countryside.

Since then, the terrorists, with direct help from NATO member state Turkey, tried to retake the cleaned towns from the SAA in vain and lost a large number of their troops and weapons in these counterattacks. Erdogan forces assistance to the terrorists was shockingly brazen in transporting the terrorists from the north of Syria and supplying them with more armored vehicles, weapons, munition, and intelligence.

The Turkish observation point in Shashabo Mountain, in particular, was supposed to be an observation point to dismantle the terrorist groups and disarm them from their heavy arms in the de-escalation zone, based on the Sochi and Astana agreements, instead, it has been the base for the Al-Qaeda affiliates attacking the Syrian Arab Army and the Russian-managed Hmeimim army base.

As much as the world should feel disgusted towards the Erdogan regime and its US and Israel controllers for their War Of Terror waged against Syria and using terrorist groups they're supposed to fight, as much and more the whole world should be grateful for the sacrifices and bravery of the Syrian Arab Army, the only force relentlessly fighting these non-human terrorists for more than 8 years and cleaning the planet from their filth.

Journalist taken hostage by Farouk Brigade 2013: 'Syrian government did not use

chemical weapons in Ghouta

Source: [21st Century Wire](#)

In its zealous pursuit to misinform western public opinion about Syria, MSM has canceled dozens of scheduled interviews with a war reporter after he has declared to Belgian RTL radio: "It wasn't the government of Bashar al-Assad that used Sarin gas or any other gas in Ghouta".

Pierre Piccinin da Prata, the Belgian war reporter and Editor-in-Chief of The Maghreb and Orient Courier, held hostage with Italian war reporter Domenico Quirico by Syrian 'rebels' for five months, eavesdropped a conversation through a closed door- between their jailers about the chemical weapon attack and saying that President al-Assad was not responsible for Ghouta Sarin gas attack.

"Syrian government had no interest in using the gas. Strategically, it was useless; and that could only ruin his image on the international level, with the risk of an American attack," the reporter told the Syria Times e-newspaper, calling on western media outlets that have been wrong about Syria, about what has really happened since 2011 to recognize their errors and restore truth for their readers and listeners.

Piccinin, who was sold by the commander of the Katiba of the so-called the 'Free Syria Army' he was with to the al-Farouk Brigade for a few hundred dollars, posed the following question: what is the point of being a war reporter if it is not to tell the truth?

Following is the full text of the interview:

ST: Why and how were you taken hostage by the Farouk Brigade as you had been a fierce supporter of the so-called 'Syrian Arab Army'?

Piccinin: I was kidnapped by al-Farouk Islamists in April 2013, in al-Qouseir, in the governorate of Homs.

I was doing an 'embedded' report at the time, with the 'rebels' of the Free Syrian Army (FSA – when they still existed, before disappearing when the rebellion was completely Islamized).

At that time already (April 2013), the 'non-Islamist' rebels realized that they had lost the game. Many were returning home or fleeing to Lebanon or Turkey. Some joined the different Islamist groups. Jabhet al-Nusra, especially (al-Qaeda in Syria). But some groups of the FSA continued to occupy the land they still controlled. But they no longer fought the Syrian army: they behaved like bandits; they ransacked the population, under the pretext of taking money for the war effort. And some FSA chiefs started to kidnap people, to enrich themselves personally. That's what happened to me: the commander of the katiba of the FSA I was with sold me at al-Farouk for a few hundred dollars.

ST: What is the lesson you have learned from the five months in captivity?

Piccinin: As a war reporter and specialist of Syria, and Islamist circles, this experience (although it was very painful nervously and physically) taught me a lot about the evolution of the conflict and also about the realities and internal functioning of these Islamist groups. On their behavior, their convictions, their vision of the world...

I have not been locked up for five months. I was moved very regularly as the conflict evolved. At this time, the fighting followed one another: the front lines moved a lot. In particular, I experienced the siege and the fall of al-Qouseir. The city was taken over by the Syrian government in early June 2013.

So I was able to observe what was happening, constantly moved

between Damascus and Aleppo. And I was not attached, nor blinded. I could even talk to the fighters who held me, regularly and also to the people I met. I was very guarded, sometimes locked up, but very often free to communicate, with the Islamists and with the people who gravitated around them. I took my meals with them. We often slept in the same room. I was even present when they prayed or during their military meetings.

I hoped that someone (among the people I meet) would react and help me to free myself. But the Islamists terrorized the population. People were very afraid of Ammar al-Buqai, the al-Farouk chief, who held me. And nobody dared to defend me. One day (it was in Yabroud, near the Lebanese border), a man told me: "They (the Islamists) are a real problem for us. It's dangerous to contradict them. They are very dangerous. We must pretend to obey them."

It was a very hard and painful human experience (for my family, my parents in particular, they are old). But, professionally, I dare to say that it was a great enrichment.

On the human side, moral, I also learned a lot. I have seen what level of cruelty, violence, malice and cynicism the human being can reach...

ST: You have stated that it is not the Syrian government that used Sarin gas or any other gas in Ghouta. Have you tried to give your testimony to international investigation committee about the use of chemical weapons in Syria? And Why?

Piccinin : At the end of this period of detention (it was at the end of August 2013), the jihadists who held me spoke only about this: the events of Ghouta.

And, at that moment, I was transferred to a large building (it was in Bab al-Hawa, near the Turkish border). This building served as a common headquarters for al-Farouk and the Free Syrian Army. It was in this place that we caught a

conversation that allowed us to know that, most likely, the gases were used in Ghouta by an Islamist group, to provoke a reaction from the United States of America (I say "we", because I was kidnapped with an Italian journalist, who sometimes accompanied me to Syria, and we were detained together).

Obama had promised that he would attack Syria if the government used gas. And it was a time when the rebels were losing the war. Everywhere! So... I guess if the rebels did that, it was to try to drag the United States into the conflict, hoping to reverse the military situation.

The Syrian government had no interest in using the gas. Strategically, it was useless; and that could only ruin his image on the international level, with the risk of an American attack.

My testimony was published by some media and I developed this question in several conferences.

But, no ... Never the UN institutions have asked me to testify.

It must also be said that very few European media have published this testimony...

To tell you the truth, when I came back to Europe, I was contacted by dozens of media outlets, who wanted to interview me, and a lot of Belgian and French media of course. But when I gave the first interviews on Belgian radio in the morning, the day of my come back ... I obviously talked about this issue of gas in Ghouta ... Just after, the phone immediately began to ring: the media that had programmed my intervention in their broadcasts (radio and television) called me to tell me that the interview was no longer possible ... For various absurd pretexts ... The interviews were cancelled! Indeed, all Western media had accused the government of Bashar al-Assad of using the gas and had claimed that he was guilty. And a reporter who has been on the ground for five months was coming to testify

to the contrary ... That did not suit them ...

Even my Italian colleague has preferred to keep quiet ... I never asked him directly why, because I would not like to embarrass him ... But I'm sure it was his editor-in-chief who told him not to talk about that ...

Anyway. I should have shut up too. It is certain that my professional career has suffered a lot because of this revelation.

But, honestly, I ask myself the question: what is the point of being a war reporter if it is not to tell the truth?

ST: Have you visited Syria after your release? Would you like to visit Ghouta after its liberation from terrorist groups?

Piccinin: I have been to Syria many times since 2013. For example, I covered the battle of Raqqa, against the Islamic State ...

But mainly with the Kurdish rebels. Never again with the Free Syrian Army (it does not exist anymore besides... apart some groups, manipulated by Erdogan's Turkey, in the north of Aleppo). And not with the Syrian regular army.

Of course, I would very much appreciate being allowed to go back to Syria, with the government's agreement to see Damascus again ... and Aleppo.

I had an ambitious project... To ask President Al-Assad for a series of long interviews, for a book.

ST: As you have been in Syria during the war, why President Bashar al-Assad is standing strong after 8 years of terror war on the country?

Piccinin: Already in July 2011 (including in the Belgian newspaper La Libre Belgique), I analyzed the situation in Syria and announced that the Baathist government would remain

at the head of the country...

I explained the reasons, complex, for which the president Assad was strong enough to break the 'rebels'.

Of course, we must mention the complexity of the conflict that President al -Assad had to face. I mean: the complexity of alliances and actors. Syria had to count on faithful and solid allies: Hezbollah party, Iran and, of course, Russia.

But, more than all that, certainly, it is the cohesion of the Syrian army which allowed the victory and the incredible sacrifices of the Syrian soldiers. It is a fact. The Western media have never talked about those boys who gave their lives to defeat the Islamists.

I met them in Syria. They were citizens, young men doing their military service. No monsters, as the media in the West have presented.

More, President Al-Assad had the support of communities, ethnic and faith-based minorities, who have always been protected in Syria and have been able to live in peace in the country (this is not the case in other Arab countries); moreover, President Al-Assad also had a lot of support of the Sunni majority, and particularly in the middle class, who appreciated his policy of economic development and openness.

But, above all, it is obvious that the majority of Syrians have been scared by Islamist fanatics: Syria is a secular country, where the level of education is high, and where there is also a form of social security which ensures the inhabitants of rather good living conditions (in comparison with other countries of the Middle East).

When it became clear that the "revolution" had turned into a fanatic, jihadist, Islamist insurgency, only the regular army could protect the people from the creation of an "Islamic state". And the vast majority of Syrians supported the

government and the army in their efforts to save the country.

ST: Would you like to add anything?

Piccinin: Only one word, for Western media...

It is time for all those who were wrong about Syria, about what has really happened since 2011 ... All those who have not understood anything about this conflict ... Time to let themselves question... To recognize their errors and restore truth for their readers and listeners.

Unfortunately, the Western press is not as free as it claims ... And I doubt that such a questioning will ever take place.

Especially when I read the analyzes produced today: Western journalists have not remembered anything, learned nothing from the mistakes they made.

The consequence is that Western public opinion is very badly informed (or even "misinformed") about Syria. And on this issue, citizens, especially in Europe, have the impression of "knowing", but it is a "virtual" knowledge, and they live in a "virtual" reality, far removed from the truth.

Interviewed by: Basma Qaddour

[Trump Forces and ISIS Attack SAA Outposts in Al-Bukamal](#)

Source: [SyriaNews](#)

Trump Forces along with ISIS (ISIL, Daesh, al-Qaeda in Iraq

and the Levant) terrorist groups carried out a coordinated attack against an SAA outpost in Al Bukamal area, southeast of Deir Ezzor.

The 'ISIS Airforce' aka 'Illegal International Coalition to Support ISIS' bombed an artillery post of the Syrian Arab Army in the Sukkariyeh area, west of Al bukamal.

US-led coalition attack was at 11:30 pm yesterday Saturday evening, and caused the injuring of two SAA soldiers and the destroying of the artillery cannon.

Simultaneously, herds of ISIS terrorists carried out an attack against Syrian Arab Army posts positioned in the area from the Baghouz axis, where the Trump Forces Murdered 5 children and 3 women end of last month, east of the Euphrates adjacent to the borders with Iraq.

The SAA units operating in the area have repelled US-sponsored ISIS attacks and killed and injured most of the ISIS attackers.

This US-led illegal coalition attack against a Syrian Arab Army unit is usually accustomed with attacks by ISIS terrorists or to secure their retreating terrorists from battlefronts with the SAA troops.

A previous similar attack by the US-led Coalition on SAA units in Al-Bukamal area was merely 8 months ago, in similar tactics and purposes by the illegal Coalition.

When the US-led illegal Coalition cannot attack SAA or any of its allies posts inside Syria and protecting the Syria people, the Coalition murders the Syrian people directly. A long list of such crimes against humanity committed in the past few months in the province of Deir Ezzor alone of such nature.

This comes in addition to previous war crimes committed by the US-led coalition in Raqqa city which was 'completely

obliterated, and not 'liberated from ISIS' as they claimed from ISIS.

The Syrian Arab Army and its allies were on the verge of cleaning the entire province of Deir Ezzor during their swift advance in the region in late 2017, before the US and its cronies in the illegal coalition jumped to the rescue of ISIS and drew a line to prevent the SAA from chasing ISIS, with the Russian approval, one of the fatal Russian miscalculations in the Syrian Crisis.

[UN Presentation Reveals US, UK-backed White Helmets as 'Organ Traders, Terrorists & Looters'](#)

Source: [21st Century Wire](#)

As the conflict in Syria gradually draws down, more revelations are surfacing regarding the US and UK-backed pseudo NGO commonly known as the White Helmets.

The following UN presentation details many of the groups exploits, including staged rescues which were tailor-made for the group's various propaganda films disseminated across western mainstream media. Testimonies included 21WIRE reporter Vanessa Beeley, along with witness statements taken from former White Helmet members who admit to carrying out various frauds and crimes perpetrated since the group's inception in 2013, as well as admissions of their direct links to Jabat al-Nusra (al Qaeda in Syria) and other known terrorist groups.

Far from being the “tailors, bakers, teachers and other ordinary Syrians” which they regularly portray themselves, the White Helmets have instead been exposed as frauds, thieves, kidnappers and organ traffickers.

RT International reports...

The ‘White Helmets’ are not a rescue group but an extension of jihadist militants, and should be designated a terrorist organization, Russia’s envoy to the UN argued at the presentation of evidence into the group’s wrongdoing.

Praised in the West as humanitarian rescue volunteers, in reality the ‘White Helmets’ work with Islamist militants in Syria, harvest organs from the victims they pretend to be “rescuing,” stage false chemical weapons and other attacks for cameras, and loot the bodies and homes of Syrians killed and injured in the war, according to Maxim Grigoriev, director of the Russia-based Foundation for the Study of Democracy.

Watch the full presentation with multiple researchers sharing findings into activities of the ‘White Helmets’ in Syria at UN headquarters in New York City: [Presentation at UN on WH](#)

Grigoriev presented the results of the Foundation’s research into White Helmets at the UN headquarters in New York on Thursday. Russia’s envoy to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, said the evidence shows the group is dangerous.

“The White Helmets deserve to be on the United Nations’ designated terrorist list,” Nebenzia said.

Rather than volunteers, almost all the members of White Helmets were paid staff, Grigoriev explained. There is also “undeniable evidence” that the group has been taking written orders from Jaysh al-Islam, an Islamist militant group most notorious for its occupation of Douma.

It was in this suburb of Damascus that the White Helmets

staged the “chemical attack” that served as the pretext for French, UK and US missile strikes against the Syrian government in April this year.

“Falsification of chemical attacks was an essential part of the White Helmets’ activities,” Grigoriev testified, adding that the group also regularly engaged in “making fake news and organizing staged rescues.”

He cited a particular example of a place called Jisr al-Haj in Aleppo, where the militants had set trash on fire, brought bodies from the local morgue, and had the White Helmets film a staged rescue. Grigoriev cited a testimony by a member of the White Helmets, who also said that everyone involved received an extra \$50 for the effort.

Many local residents interviewed for the research spoke about people “rescued” by the White Helmets ending up dead, with their internal organs missing. One of the witnesses interviewed was a former member of Ahrar al-Sham, who testified that his commander Shadi Kadik, also known as Abu Adel Al-Halabi (of Aleppo), acknowledged the organ harvesting. The total number of cases involving organ theft is “at least several hundred” in Aleppo alone, Grigoriev testified.

Instead of rescuing civilians and children, the White Helmets looted homes damaged in the fighting and bodies of the dead, while forcing the children out of schools and kindergartens to set up offices there.

“At a rough estimate, out of 26 centers operating in Eastern Ghouta, ten were located in schools and one in a kindergarten,” Grigoriev cited from the testimony of a Syrian journalist in the area.

In Eastern Ghouta alone, between 100 and 150 members of White Helmets were also members of terrorist and militant groups. They engaged in building trenches, tunnels and fortifications for the militants, openly boasting about their membership on

social media, but denying it whenever they were interviewed by Western reporters.

“Facebook accounts of members of the White Helmets are full of propagandist materials of terrorist groups, including [Islamic State] and al-Qaeda, praising Osama bin Laden and other individuals listed by the UN as terrorists,” Grigoriev said, adding that the so-called rescuers also posted “hundreds of photos with weapons in their hands.”

The Foundation is a member of the Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network established in 2013 by the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. Its report is based on interviews with over 100 eyewitnesses, including 40 members of the White Helmets, 50 local residents and 15 former terrorist and militant fighters. More than 500 local residents were also surveyed in Aleppo and Deraa.

A number of Western countries, such as the UK and Canada, have proudly announced they would be accepting White Helmets as refugees, after several hundred members of the group were evacuated from a jihadist-held enclave in southern Syria ahead of the advancing government troops.

The government in Damascus considers the White Helmets to be in the same category as illegal militias and terrorists.

Trump Tweets on Withdrawal from Syria & Mass Hysteria

Ensues

By Miri Wood

Source: [Syria News](#)

Trump – the Real Donald – tweeted that the US has defeated ISIS in Syria. This was the “only reason for being there” since taking office. The tweet was posted at 0629 EST. Twelve hours later, it has elicited 25,000 comments, 18 million search engine results (mostly yellow journalistic reporting), and mass hysteria.

Twelve hours later, and Sarah Sanders’ White House Press Briefing is still not available online. A few journals and wire services have interviewed a few anonymous “official sources,” and the story line is that “all [illegal] State Department personnel in Syria will be evacuated from the country within 24 hours” and [illegal] US ground troops will leave in 30 or 60 or 100 days – upon the completion of a mysterious “final operation against ISIS.”

This is considered worthy of being called “Immediately” in headlines.

This breaking news comes within days of neocon John Bolton and Pentagon Dr. Strangelove sources stating that the US will [illegally] occupy the Syrian Arab Republic for forever.

The condemnation of this vague possibility is inversely proportional to the wild, war criminal support showered upon Trump, when he bombed Syrian soldiers at the request of al-Qaeda in the S.A.R. Deep state media were so star-stricken that nobody noticed that the US president bombed Syria based on “fake news CNN,” and specifically on CNN’s interview with a British illegal whose medical license was revoked in his homeland, because of his terrorist activities.

MSM reporting continues to ignore the fact that the US has

been illegally in Syria, that the US has breached international law.

US strikes in Syria may be lawful if Syria consents to the use of force in their territory. If Syria does not consent, the strikes would violate international law, unless the US demonstrates that the strikes were taken in self-defense.

Sarah Knuckey, international lawyer and Professor at Columbia Law School

Snickering over Trump taking credit for the 'defeat of ISIS' is similar to the snickering over his sulfuric speech before the UNGA, in September. Ignored were his threats of perpetual war to all countries not amenable to becoming US satellites; instead, media guffawed over his bringing fudged, domestic employment stats to the United Nations. Intentionally omitted is that ISIS was created by the US (as was its parent, al Qaeda) and that the US has been protecting ISIS in Syria since the Obama administration 'accidentally' slaughtered 83 soldiers in September 2016.

Of course, no member of deep state would dare let slip that ISIS is almost gone, eradicated by the Syrian Arab Army & allies, despite the most heinous international conspiracy in history.

The massive pile-on against Trump's open-ended plan to leave Syria exudes the stench that another nefarious atrocity against the SAR might be around the corner. Has-beens of the Hollywood 5th column are tweeting as though they were Joseph McCarthy. Scant moments after the Trump tweet, a neo-colonialist from NBC was on the air, live, chirping about the terrific time he had while illegally in Syria with American invaders...as this were the most normal and legitimate thing in the world.

Hours later, a fraud liberal from the fraud liberal New Yorker, whined that a US official had just her permission "to

meet up with American troops in Syria sometime in the spring.”

Ha'aretz, whose antipathy toward Trump dates back to when he was PEOTUS, outdid itself withchutzpah and amnesia. Somehow, Israel's leading news source forgets that Israel has bragged about giving state of the art trauma care to ISIS terrorists on the occupied Golan Heights, and also in Israeli hospitals.

“Ha'aretz also forgets that Israel was al-Qaeda's first air force against Syria:

“Way back in May 2013, when al Qaeda only used 'FSA,' Israel coordinated a massive bombing with the FSA terrorists so they could video the atrocity with their state of the art photographic equipment.”

Third generation gusano and US Senator Marco Rubio has also forgotten that Israel tends to the ISIS wounded, crying that a withdrawal of illicit US troops “will have grave consequences for the US and Israel...”.

Representative Adam Kinzinger announced, “I'm speechless,” and then proceeded to prove himself a liar, giving interviews throughout the day. Kinzinger has spent more of his time as a congressman supporting al Qaeda in Syria, than supporting his constituents in Illinois.

Regarding the floods of crocodile tears by the imperialist politicians and journalists over the faux, potential betrayal of the “Kurds,” let it not be forgotten that the SDF was created by Obama as a foreign mercenary militia, with armed, separatist, terrorist, traitorous Ziokurd peons being used for marketing foreign wetworkersto Westerners who love rooting for 'the little guy' in every country not their own.

At 1510, the Real Donald Trump uploaded a video to Twitter. He offered no timetable, no details, no mention of removing NATO operatives from the al-Tabqa Dam that they have occupied and held hostage since 11 February 2013. He merely repeated that the [illicit and illegal] “troops are coming home.”

