

# If the Sinai crash was terrorism, its timing was perfect for the West

By Dan Glazebrook

Source: [RT](#)

A sketch by the late lamented US comedian Bill Hicks involved a US general at a press conference. “‘Iraq has incredible weapons. Incredible,’ the general said. ‘How do you know that?’ he was asked. “Oh, well, uh – we looked at the receipt.’”

In the aftermath of the Russian airplane crash in Egypt last week, Britain in particular has been quick to claim that the crash was the result of a “terrorist bomb,” presumably planted by Islamic State (previously ISIS/ISIL). So what is it that makes Cameron so sure that the terrorist group created by his Syria policy has the necessary training, equipment and wherewithal to carry out that attack? Did he look at the receipt?

What is clear is that if the plane was brought down by a bomb, and that bomb was planted by ISIS, it marks a major development for the group.

According to Raffaello Pantucci, of the Royal United Services Institute, an attack of this kind by ISIS would “*herald an unseen level of sophistication in their bomb-making, as well as the ability to smuggle a device on board.*”

But as well as a new technical feat, such an attack would represent an alarming change in tactics. The Times argued: “*If the plane crash did turn out to be the work of an Islamic State affiliate in Sinai, it would mark a significant departure for the jihadist group, which had yet to launch a*

*large-scale attack against civilians.”*

So, if the plane was indeed brought down by an ISIS-in-Sinai bomb, either the group have suddenly been blessed with some amazing new technology, or they have suddenly decided to change tactics to mass killings of civilians. If the latter, isn't it a little odd that, after more than a year of Western airstrikes apparently targeting them, ISIS have failed to launch such an attack against Western civilians – yet are able to respond within weeks to a campaign of Russian airstrikes which, according to the West, are not even aimed at them?

Either way, the crash couldn't have been timed more perfectly from the point of view of Western geopolitics. After four years of setbacks, the West's Syrian “regime change” (that euphemism for wholesale state destruction) operation now faces the prospect of imminent total defeat courtesy of Russia's intervention. And options for how to salvage that operation are very limited indeed.

Full scale occupation is a non-starter; following Iraq and Afghanistan, both the US and British armies are now officially incapable of mounting such ventures. The Libya option – supporting death squads on the ground with NATO air cover – has always come up against Russian opposition, but has now been effectively rendered impossible. And relying on anti-government death squads alone is simply very unlikely to succeed, however many TOWs and manpads are feverishly thrown into the fire; after all, there are only so many terrorists and mercenaries who can be shipped in, and, as Mike Whitney put it, the world may have already reached “peak terrorist.”

Forcing Russia out – and turning US and British airpower openly and decisively against the Syrian state – has thus become a key objective for Western planners. But how to do it? What would turn Russians against the intervention? The Times wrote: “So far the war in Syria has been quite popular...[but] if it turns out that the war prompts terrorists to wreak

vengeance on ordinary Russians by secreting explosives on planes, that gung-ho attitude could change." Or at least, that is presumably what the Times hopes.

And downing the plane on Egyptian soil just before Sisi's first state visit to Britain?

Egypt is at a historical crossroads. Having moved from the socialist camp into the West's "orbit" during the Sadat era in the 1970s, Egypt's leadership has become ever less willing to be dictated to by Washington and London: a process that began in the latter part of Mubarak's rule, and has continued under Sisi. Along with Russia, Egypt has played a leading "spoiler role," as Sukant Chandan puts it, in the West's regime change operation in Syria – and has not been forgiven for it.

In addition, Mubarak's government had been dragging its feet on the privatization and "structural adjustment" demanded by the IMF: and tourism was and is a major source of income helping to reduce the country's dependence on the international bankers. But since last Saturday, all that is now in the balance; as the Financial Times commented, suspicions that the crash was caused by a bomb "are likely to prove disastrous to the country's struggling tourism industry."

Britain's foreign secretary, Philip Hammond agreed. "Of course, this will have a huge negative impact on Egypt," he announced matter-of-factly, following Britain's decision to stop British flights to Egypt – seemingly without an ounce of regret. The likely massive loss of tourist income will force the Egyptians to go back to the IMF, who will, of course, demand their pound of flesh in the form of mass privatizations and "austerity."

But it is not only Egypt's economic dependency on the West that will be deepened by the crash – Britain, in particular, appears to be using the crash as leverage to re-insinuate

itself into Egypt's military and security apparatus. Firstly, British officials have been taking every opportunity to humiliate Egypt, trying to convince the world that Egypt is perilously unstable, and that only by outsourcing security to the West can it be safe again. When Sisi arrived in the country this week, noted the Times, "Britain openly contradicted the Egyptian leader and suggested that he was not in full control of the Sinai peninsula," whilst an Egyptian official "commented that the dispatch of six officials to check the security arrangements at Sharm el-Sheikh airport was 'like treating us as children.'"

Finally, of course, the British government has not missed the opportunity to use the tragedy to push for deeper British involvement in Syria. Michael Fallon, Britain's Defence Secretary, has been spending the last two days explaining how the case for bombing Syria would be strengthened if it were proven the plane was brought down by ISIS. Quite how more deeply insinuating one of the death squads' leading state backers into Syria would somehow reduce the power of the death squads is, of course, not explained; such is the nature of imperialism.

In a world, then, where Western power is in steep decline, terrorism is fast becoming one of the last few viable options for extending its hegemony and undermining the rising power of the global South. If this attack does turn out to have been conducted by ISIS, how kind it will have been of them to take it upon themselves to act as the vanguard of Western imperial interests. And how obliging of the hundreds of Western agents in the organization not to do anything to stop them.

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in the 1970s and 80s to the Middle East and Africa today.