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America's Syrian Jihad

by Daniel McAdams
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Anyone really paying attention to US policy in the Middle East these past several months must be wondering whether Washington has gone insane. US foreign policy under the triple threat of Susan Rice, Samantha Power, and Hillary Clinton has gone to openly supporting what the German intelligence services (echoed in several prominent and panicked mainstream German media sources) have found to be predominantly al-Qaeda-backed terrorist attacks inside Syria. Americans can be forgiven for scratching their heads at the reality that the United States government is actively supporting in Syria what it has spent the last eleven years fighting just a few thousand miles away in Afghanistan.

As RT so poignantly puts it: ‘America’s Syrian friends and Afghan foes are same people’

When Syria's Christian defense minister was murdered last week by a suicide bomber using signature al-Qaeda techniques, the United States pointedly refused to condemn it as an act of terrorism. Can you imagine how the US would react if the US defense secretary and Obama's national security adviser were blown up by a radical Islamic suicide bomber? Would we not characterize it as terrorism?

On RT, which has been one of the sole voices of objective journalism and in-depth reporting, author and journalist Afshin Rattansi today makes this critical observation:

"As for the blowback for the United States, last time they went around arming these jihadists, sending in special forces and so forth, we got September 11th, 2001...As for the United States and NATO nations, one does not want to sectarianize it the way the international media do, but you never see on corporate stations anything about the Christians. The suicide bomb who killed the Syrian defense minister — that guy was a Christian. **I have a figure here that 50,000 Christians are fleeing from Homs because of American and European-backed Islamism in Syria.**" (emphasis added)

Is the US inviting another 9/11-style attack? Even the conspiracy theorists must have a hard time getting their heads around this mind-boggler.

Here is how the Vatican sees the US-backed Free Syrian Army's assault on Homs, Houla, Damascus, and now Aleppo:

"The Vatican has received reports deemed credible that Sunni rebels financed by Qatar were attacking churches and ordering Christians to leave their homes.

"The reports, which stemmed from leading Catholic clerics, said the most threatened were Christians in rebel-held areas of Syria.

"The picture for us is utter desolation,' Bishop Philip Tournyol Clos, a Greek Catholic cleric, said.

"The bishop, who holds the title of archimandrite, said a leading church in Syria, Mar Elian, has been destroyed. He said another church, Our Lady of Peace, was occupied by the rebels...

"The Vatican determined that some of the Sunni attackers were aligned with the Free Syrian Army, based in Turkey. An FSA commander, identified as Abdul Salam Harba, was said to have ordered Christians out of central Syria."

Islamic jihadists backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar and, as we now know, supported by the US from a secret base in Turkey, have laid siege to the largest Syrian city, Aleppo, forcing the population to flee in terror. US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta preposterously claimed today that the Syrian army's attempts to liberate Aleppo from the Saudi-backed Salafi extremists was "the nail in Assad's coffin."

On Friday, the US Treasury granted an exception to sanctions to allow the extremely spooky Syrian Support Group, led of course by an American lobbyist, Brian Sayers, to provide logistical and financial support to the armed Syrian rebels. The no-doubt well-compensated American war lobbyist Sayers — wait for it — "previously worked for six years in NATO operations in Brussels." A great humanitarian, no doubt. Said Sayers: "The OFAC decision is huge. It gets us the leeway to support the Free Syrian Army in broad terms." Here is the public-private partnership of regime change operations writ large!

It is to be a backdoor war, as there is simply no popular support in Syria for overthrowing the regime. As British Channel 4 journalist Alex Thomson — no Assad partisan to be sure — put it in this very informative piece:

"[f]or sure this is not Egypt — there are no Tahrir Squares or vast protests against the regime.

"There is no discernible sign in any of the big cities — Homs, Aleppo and Damascus for example, that the people even wish to rise up against the regime.

"The state is firmly in control- there are secret and overt police and army on pretty much every major street and junction in these cities.

"The police state is alive and well. Most people appear either to support the regime still or they are hedging their bets and don't want to confront men with AK47s as yet.

"The safe bet is that regime support remains considerable across many urban areas."

Sadly under US schizophrenic foreign policy "democracy is what we say it is," so because those three million residents of Aleppo who turned out to the streets in support of Assad are not favored by the US, they do not count as legitimate democratic voices. It reminds one of how the Soviets tried to claim that the fixed elections in Eastern Europe after World War II were in fact the birth of the "people's democracies." After all, only the reactionaries would be against progress and they should not be allowed to count!

Anti-interventionists should not call on the US government to support Assad or his regime. But they damn well should fight against the years-long US program to use extremist Islamists to overthrow the Syrian government. We did that in Afghanistan to overthrow the Soviet-backed puppet government once upon a time and we hopefully know enough history to remember what that got us...