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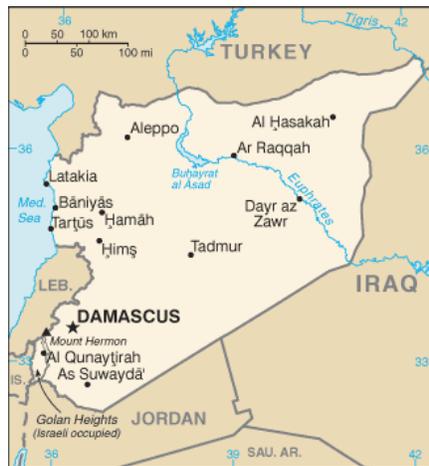
<http://news.antiwar.com/2012/12/12/us-providing-training-to-syrian-rebels-in-jordan/print/>

US Providing Training to Syrian Rebels in Jordan

By John Glaser

December 12, 2012

The US has been providing training to Syrian rebel fighters on the use of sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons in neighboring Jordan, as news of the US's formal recognition of the Syrian Opposition Coalition.



Even as President Obama announced the US's formal recognition of the hand-picked group of Syrian exiles, he still says he will not directly arm any of the rebel groups.

But sources have told NPR that "Jordanian authorities, along with their US and British counterparts, have organized training for Syrian rebels on sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons."

Back in October, *The New York Times* reported that the Obama administration, secretly and without the consent of Congress, sent more than 150 US forces to Jordan, in part to “be positioned” as a contingent force “should the turmoil in Syria expand into a wider conflict.”

Although they would not confirm whether the US directly or indirectly armed Syrian rebels, sources told NPR that “uniformed US military officials regularly meet with Syrian defectors to discuss military planning.”

But the US is apparently using defense contractors in the training programs as well.

“One Syrian rebel fighter,” NPR reports, “said he attended a training course in Jordan and that the training was not led by uniformed Western soldiers, but rather by men in plainclothes who spoke several different dialects of Arabic,” suggesting “the trainers may have been private contractors, who are sometimes used by the US for training and assembly of sophisticated weaponry.”

This would appear to connect with a CNN report this week citing “a senior US official and several senior diplomats,” that the US and some of its European allies “are using defense contractors to train Syrian rebels on how to secure chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria.”

Both reports could not confirm whether or not the US has in fact, as President Obama claims, refrained so far from directly arming the rebels. Nevertheless, the amount of covert training and coordination by the United States for the Syrian rebels in their fight against the Assad regime seems more significant than anyone has acknowledged.