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## Fighting Terrorism by Arming Terrorists

By W. James Antle III

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The Obama administration appears to be moving toward arming rebels in Syria, though the White House has only publicly confirmed <sup>[1]</sup> an increase in the “scope and scale” of its military support.

By one estimate <sup>[2]</sup>, seven of nine key rebel combatant groups are Islamist. “As the civil war has dragged on, the rebels have become more Islamist and extreme,” the *Economist* reports. Thus the administration’s decision to arm only the non-Islamist rebels may soon resemble O.J. Simpson’s search for the “real killers.”

Arms shipments approved by the Obama administration have already ended up in the hands of jihadists in Libya. “The weapons and money from Qatar strengthened militant groups in Libya,” reported <sup>[3]</sup> the *New York Times*, “allowing them to become a destabilizing force since the fall of the Qaddafi government.”

Operation Fast and Furious meets American foreign policy.

In his apparent Syria about-face, the president has been egged on by the Clintons. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had already proposed arming the Syrian rebels, only to see cooler heads prevail. Her husband, former President Bill Clinton, has also clamored for greater U.S. involvement.

Upon reports that President Obama was reconsidering his position, Bill Clinton patted his successor on the head. “It looks to me like this thing is trending in the right direction,” he told MSNBC. He urged Obama to ignore opinion polls showing massive public opposition to any Syria intervention beyond humanitarian assistance.

“What the American people are saying when they tell you not to do these things, they’re not telling you not to do these things,” Clinton said <sup>[4]</sup>, according to *Politico*. “They hire you to win ... to look around the corner and see down the road.”

The Clintons’ foreign-policy views are aligned with those of Republican senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham. Hawks of a feather flocked together in support of the bipartisan Mendendez-Corker bill, which contains a provision for arming Syrian rebels and easily passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The only Republican to vote against the bill rebuked his colleagues. “This is an important moment,” Rand Paul said <sup>[5]</sup>. “You will be funding, today, the allies of al-Qaeda. It’s an irony you cannot overcome.”

Yet the Senate Foreign Relations Committee may be the only place where Paul stands alone among Republicans on this issue. “We have entire Christian villages slaughtered, women and children, by the Syrian rebels,” Laura Ingraham said on Fox News. “The idea that were going to send arms to these people who are slaughtering Christians, and have one goal, which is to establish an Islamic caliphate throughout the Middle East—and, if they get their way, throughout Africa as well—is ludicrous.”

The *Washington Examiner*’s Philip Klein argues <sup>[6]</sup>, “It’s hard to believe that the same administration that brought us Benghazi would have such perfect information about which rebel groups in a bloody war-torn country are completely free of Islamist links, let alone have the logistical ability to ensure the weapons don’t end up in the hands of bad actors.”

A Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found <sup>[7]</sup> that only 11 percent of Republicans favored arming Syrian rebels while just 15 percent backed U.S. military involvement. Republicans and independents were more likely than Democrats to want to take no action at all. A Gallup poll <sup>[8]</sup> found that Democrats, Republicans, and independents were all opposed to the United States entering Syria’s civil war by majorities greater than 60 percent.

For years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, conservatives who spoke out against U.S. wars in the Middle East were smeared as apologists for Islamic terror. But the evidence is mounting that these wars and “kinetic military actions” have done much to unleash the very forces they were launched to combat, leaving militant Islamists on the march from Iraq to Mali.

Foreign aid dollars are being spent where Americans are reviled. U.S. troops are dying in countries that don’t seem to be trending <sup>[9]</sup> toward liberal democracy.

Syria may be the clearest case yet of how an intervention against an indisputably brutal dictator could cut against American national interests. Even with promises of no boots on the ground, it may be the Clinton-McCain contingent's toughest sell.

Perhaps they have already closed the deal with Obama. But the perpetual hawks are losing the American people, left, right, and center.