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Suddenly Khorasan: New US Enemy Came Out of Nowhere

By Jason Ditz

September 23, 2014

It was no surprise when the Obama Administration began attacking ISIS targets in Syria last night. What was surprising was that the US also attacked a group known as Khorasan, then hyped what a huge, “imminent” threat they supposedly are.

Bizarrely, the history of the Khorasan faction is virtually non-existent, and officials weren’t even mentioning the group until last week. Estimated at 50 fighters, the group is suddenly a huge pretext for military intervention, even though today’s attack reportedly killed 30 of them.

Rep. Peter King (R – NY) claimed to be familiar with the group, saying the administration had been telling members of Congress about Khorasan for “several months,” and that even the name of the group was supposed to be “top secret.”

Others claimed the group had, apart from its name, been known to exist for over a year now. That something al-Qaeda linked was known to exist in Aleppo was hardly news, but was it really what is being presented as Khorasan now?

It seems unlikely. The group’s putative leader Muhsin al-Fadhli was being claimed by the State Department to be the leader of “al-Qaeda in Iran” as recently as May, which doesn’t exactly point to him being active in some super dangerous group in Syria for a solid year.

Indeed, the whole al-Qaeda in Iran conceit from the US has been extremely dubious and primarily thrown out there when things in Afghanistan (or before that Iraq) weren't going well and they needed a scapegoat. The Khorasan name seems better fitted to this putative faction, since Khorasan is a region of eastern Iran.

The Khorasan plots appear to be lifted straight out of 2009-2010, accusing the new group of scientifically dubious bomb plots involving explosive clothing that were lifted straight out of the allegations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) back then, when the US was looking for a pretext to launch a drone war there. The other allegations seem to be a rehash of 2013 claims about al-Qaeda inventing a magic liquid that can turn clothes into undetectable bombs, a scare story that was created, and died almost immediately over lack of evidence.