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America's "Terrorist Academy" in Iraq Produced ISIS Leaders

The University of Al-Qaeda?

by MIKE WHITNEY

October 06, 2014

“Since 2003, Anglo-American power has secretly and openly coordinated direct and indirect support for Islamist terrorist groups linked to al-Qaeda across the Middle East and North Africa. This ill-conceived patchwork geostrategy is a legacy of the persistent influence of neoconservative ideology, motivated by longstanding but often contradictory ambitions to dominate regional oil resources, defend an expansionist Israel, and in pursuit of these, re-draw the map of the Middle East.” Nafeez Ahmed, “How the West Created the Islamic State“, CounterPunch

“The US created these terrorist organizations. America does not have the moral authority to lead a coalition against terrorism.” Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah

The Obama administration's determination to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is pushing the Middle East towards a regional war that could lead to a confrontation between the two nuclear-armed rivals, Russia and the United States.

Last week, Turkey joined the US-led coalition following a vote in parliament approving a measure to give the government the authority to launch military action against Isis in Syria. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made it clear that Turkish involvement would come at a price, and that price would be the removal of al Assad. According to Turkey's Hurriyet Daily News:

"Turkey will not allow coalition members to use its military bases or its territory in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) if the objective does not also include ousting the Bashar al-Assad regime, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hinted on Oct. 1...

"We are open and ready for any cooperation in the fight against terrorism. However, it should be understood by everybody that Turkey is not a country in pursuit of temporary solutions, nor will Turkey allow others to take advantage of it," Erdoğan said in his lengthy address to Parliament."

"Turkey cannot be content with the current situation and cannot be a by-stander and spectator in the face of such developments." ("Turkey will fight terror but not for temporary solutions: Erdoğan", Hurriyet)

Officials in the Obama administration applauded Turkey's decision to join the makeshift coalition. U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel hailed the vote as a "very positive development" while State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, "We welcome the Turkish Parliament's vote to authorize Turkish military action...We've had numerous high-level discussions with Turkish officials to discuss how to advance our cooperation in countering the threat posed by ISIL in Iraq and Syria."

In the last week, "Turkish tanks and other military units have taken position on the Syrian border." Did the Obama administration strike a deal with Turkey to spearhead an attack on Syria pushing south towards Damascus while a small army of so called "moderate" jihadis— who are presently on the Israeli border— move north towards the Capital? If that is the case, then the US would probably deploy some or all of its 15,000 troops currently stationed in Kuwait "including an entire armored brigade" to assist in the invasion or to provide backup if Turkish forces get bogged down. The timeline for such an invasion is uncertain, but it does appear that the decision to go to war has already been made.

Turkish involvement greatly increases the chances of a broader regional war. It's unlikely that Syria's allies, Russia and Iran, will remain on the sidelines while Turkish tanks stream across the country on their way to Damascus. And while the response from Tehran and Moscow may be measured at first, it is bound to escalate as the fighting intensifies and tempers flare. The struggle for Syria will be a long, hard slog that will probably produce no clear winner. If Damascus falls, the conflict will morph into a protracted guerilla war that could spill over borders engulfing both Lebanon and Jordan. Apparently, the Obama administration feels the potential rewards from such a reckless and homicidal gambit are worth the risks.

No-Fly Zone Fakery

The Obama administration has made little effort to conceal its real objectives in Syria. The fight against Isis is merely a pretext for regime change. The fact that Major General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Chuck Hagel are angling for a no-fly zone over Syria exposes the “war against Isis” as a fraud. Why does the US need a no-fly zone against a group of Sunni militants who have no air force? The idea is ridiculous. The obvious purpose of the no-fly zone is to put Assad on notice that the US is planning to take control of Syrian airspace on its way to toppling the regime. Clearly, Congress could have figured this out before rubber stamping Obama’s request for \$500 million dollars to arm and train “moderate” militants. Instead, they decided to add more fuel to the fire. If Congress seriously believes that Assad is a threat to US national security and “must go”, then they should have the courage to vote for sending US troops to Syria to do the heavy lifting. The idea of funding shadowy terrorist groups that pretend to be moderate rebels is lunacy in the extreme. It merely compounds the problem and increases the prospects of another Iraq-type bloodbath. Is it any wonder why Congress’s public approval rating is stuck in single digits?

TURKEY: A Major Player

According to many sources, Turkey has played a pivotal role in the present crisis, perhaps more than Saudi Arabia or Qatar. Consider the comments made by Vice President Joe Biden in an exchange with students at the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University last week. Biden was asked: “In retrospect do you believe the United States should have acted earlier in Syria, and if not why is now the right moment?” Here’s part of what he said:

“...my constant cry was that our biggest problem is our allies – our allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria. The Turks were great friends – and I have the greatest relationship with Erdogan, which I just spent a lot of time with – the Saudis, the Emiratis, etc. What were they doing? They were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad except that the people who were being supplied were Al Nusra and Al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world...”

So now what’s happening? All of a sudden everybody’s awakened because this outfit called ISIL which was Al Qaeda in Iraq, which when they were essentially thrown out of Iraq, found open space in territory in eastern Syria, work with Al Nusra who we declared a terrorist group early on and we could not convince our colleagues to stop supplying them. So what happened? Now all of a sudden – I don’t want to be too facetious – but they had seen the Lord. Now we have – the President’s been able to put together a coalition of our Sunni neighbors, because America can’t once again go into a Muslim nation and be seen as the aggressor – it has to be led by Sunnis to go and attack a Sunni organization.”

Biden apologized for his remarks on Sunday, but he basically let the cat out of the bag. Actually, what he said wasn’t new at all, but it did lend credibility to what many of the critics have been saying since the very beginning, that Washington’s allies in the region have been arming and funding this terrorist Frankenstein from the onset without seriously weighing the risks involved. Here’s more background on Turkey’s role in the current troubles from author Nafeez Ahmed:

“With their command and control centre based in Istanbul, Turkey, military supplies from Saudi Arabia and Qatar in particular were transported by Turkish intelligence to the border for rebel acquisition. CIA operatives along with Israeli and Jordanian commandos were also training FSA rebels on the Jordanian-Syrian border with anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. In addition, other reports show that British and French military were also involved in these secret training programmes. It appears that the same FSA rebels receiving this elite training went straight into ISIS – last month one ISIS commander, Abu Yusaf, said, “Many of the FSA people who the west has trained are actually joining us.” (“How the West Created the Islamic State“, Nafeez Ahmed, CounterPunch

Notice how the author points out the involvement of “CIA operatives”. While Biden’s comments were an obvious attempt to absolve the administration from blame, it’s clear US Intel agencies knew what was going on and were at least tangentially involved. Here’s more from the same article:

“Classified assessments of the military assistance supplied by US allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar obtained by the New York Times showed that “most of the arms shipped at the behest of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to supply Syrian rebel groups... are going to hardline Islamic jihadists, and not the more secular opposition groups that the West wants to bolster.”

Once again, classified documents prove that the US officialdom knew what was going on and simply looked the other way. All the while, the hardcore takfiri troublemakers were loading up on weapons and munitions preparing for their own crusade. Here’s a clip that Congress should have read before approving \$500 million more for this fiasco:

” ... Mother Jones found that the US government has “little oversight over whether US supplies are falling prey to corruption – or into the hands of extremists,” and relies “on too much good faith.” The US government keeps track of rebels receiving assistance purely through “handwritten receipts provided by rebel commanders in the field,” and the judgment of its allies. Countries supporting the rebels – the very same which have empowered al-Qaeda affiliated Islamists – “are doing audits of the delivery of lethal and nonlethal supplies.”...

the government’s vetting procedures to block Islamist extremists from receiving US weapons have never worked.” (“How the West Created the Islamic State”, Nafeez Ahmed, CounterPunch)

These few excerpts should help to connect the dots in what is really a very hard-to-grasp situation presently unfolding in Syria. Yes, the US is ultimately responsible for Isis because it knew what was going on and played a significant part in arming and training jihadi recruits. And, no, Isis does not take its orders directly from Washington (or Langley) although its actions have conveniently coincided with US strategic goals in the region. (Many readers will undoubtedly disagree with my views on this.) Here’s one last clip on Turkey from an article in the Telegraph. The story ran a full year ago in October 2013:

“Hundreds of al-Qaeda recruits are being kept in safe houses in southern Turkey, before being smuggled over the border to wage “jihad” in Syria, The Daily Telegraph has learned.

The network of hideouts is enabling a steady flow of foreign fighters – including Britons – to join the country’s civil war, according to some of the volunteers involved.

These foreign jihadists have now largely eclipsed the “moderate” wing of the rebel Free Syrian Army, which is supported by the West. Al-Qaeda’s ability to use Turkish territory will raise questions about the role the Nato member is playing in Syria’s civil war.

Turkey has backed the rebels from the beginning – and its government has been assumed to share the West’s concerns about al-Qaeda. But experts say there are growing fears over whether the Turkish authorities may have lost control of the movement of new al-Qaeda recruits – or may even be turning a blind eye.” (“Al-Qaeda recruits entering Syria from Turkey safehouses“, Telegraph)

Get the picture? This is a major region-shaping operation that the Turks, the Saudis, the Qataris, the Americans etc are in on. Sure, maybe some of the jihadis went off the reservation and started doing their own thing, but even that’s not certain. After all, Isis has already achieved many of Washington’s implicit objectives: Dump Nuri al Maliki and replace him with a US stooge who will amend the Status of Forces Agreement. (SOFA), allow Sunni militants and Kurds to create their own de facto mini-states within Iraq (thus, eliminating the threat of a strong, unified Iraq that will challenge Israeli hegemony), and create a tangible threat to regional security (Isis) thereby justifying US meddling and occupation for the foreseeable future. So far, arming terrorists has been a winning strategy for Obama and Co. Unfortunately for the president, we are still in the early rounds of the emerging crisis. Things could backfire quite badly, and probably will.

(NOTE: According to Iran’s Press TV: “The ISIL terrorists have purportedly opened a consulate in Ankara, Turkey and use it to issue visas for those who want to join the fight against the Syrian and Iraqi governments....The militants are said to be operating freely inside the country without much problem.” I have my doubts about this report which is why I have put parentheses around it, but it is interesting all the same.)

CAMP BUCCA: University of Al-Qaeda

So where do the Sunni extremists in Isis come from?

There are varying theories on this, the least likely of which is that they responded to promotional videos and propaganda on social media. The whole “Isis advertising campaign” nonsense strikes me as a clever disinformation ploy to conceal what’s really going on, which is, that the various western Intel agencies have been recruiting these jokers from other (former) hotspots like Afghanistan, Libya, Chechnya, Kosovo, Somalia and prisons in Iraq. Isis not a spontaneous amalgam of Caliphate-aspiring revolutionaries who spend their off-hours trolling the Internet, but a collection of ex Baathists and religious zealots who have been painstakingly gathered to perform the task at hand, which is to lob off heads, spread mayhem, and create the pretext for US-proxy war. Check out this illuminating article on Alakhbar English titled “The mysterious link between the US military prison Camp Bucca and ISIS leaders”. It helps explain what’s really been going on behind the scenes:

“We have to ask why the majority of the leaders of the Islamic State (IS), formerly the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), had all been incarcerated in the same prison at Camp Bucca, which was run by the US occupation forces near Omm Qasr in southeastern Iraq..... First of all, most IS leaders had passed through the former U.S. detention facility at Camp Bucca in Iraq. So who were the most prominent of these detainees?

The leader of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, tops the list. He was detained from 2004 until mid-2006. After he was released, he formed the Army of Sunnis, which later merged with the so-called Mujahideen Shura Council...

Another prominent IS leader today is Abu Ayman al-Iraqi, who was a former officer in the Iraqi army under Saddam Hussein. This man also “graduated” from Camp Bucca, and currently serves as a member on IS’ military council.

Another member of the military council who was in Bucca is Adnan Ismail Najm. ... He was detained on January 2005 in Bucca, and was also a former officer in Saddam’s army. He was the head of a shura council in IS, before he was killed by the Iraqi army near Mosul on June 4, 2014.

Camp Bucca was also home to Haji Samir, aka Haji Bakr, whose real name is Samir Abed Hamad al-Obeidi al-Dulaimi. He was a colonel in the army of the former Iraqi regime. He was detained in Bucca, and after his release, he joined al-Qaeda. He was the top man in ISIS in Syria...

According to the testimonies of US officers who worked in the prison, the administration of Camp Bucca had taken measures including the segregation of prisoners on the basis of their ideology. This, according to experts, made it possible to recruit people directly and indirectly.

Former detainees had said in documented television interviews that Bucca...was akin to an “al-Qaeda school,” where senior extremist gave lessons on explosives and suicide attacks to younger prisoners. A former prisoner named Adel Jassem Mohammed said that one of the extremists remained in the prison for two weeks only, but even so was able to recruit 25 out of 34 inmates who were there. Mohammed also said that U.S. military officials did nothing to stop the extremists from mentoring the other detainees...

No doubt, we will one day discover that many more leaders in the group had been detained in Bucca as well, which seems to have been more of a “terrorist academy” than a prison.” (“The mysterious link between the US military prison Camp Bucca and ISIS leaders“, Alakhbar English)

US foreign policy is tailored to meet US strategic objectives, which in this case are regime change, installing a US puppet in Damascus, erasing the existing borders, establishing forward-operating bases across the country, opening up vital pipeline corridors between Qatar and the Mediterranean so the western energy giants can rake in bigger profits off gas sales to the EU market, and reducing Syria to a condition of “permanent colonial dependency.” (Chomsky)

Would the United States oversee what-amounts-to a “terrorist academy” if they thought their jihadi graduates would act in a way that served US interests?

Indeed, they would. In fact, they’d probably pat themselves on the back for coming up with such a clever idea.