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## How Russia is Smashing the Turkish Game in Syria

By *Pepe Escobar*  
December 3, 2015



So why did Washington take virtually forever to not really acknowledge ISIS/ISIL/Daesh is selling stolen Syrian oil that will eventually find its way to Turkey?

Because the priority all along was to allow the CIA – in the shadows – to run a “rat line” weaponizing a gaggle of invisible “moderate rebels”.

As much as Daesh – at least up to now – the Barzani mob in Iraqi Kurdistan was never under Washington’s watch. The oil operation the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) runs to Turkey is virtually illegal; stolen state-owned oil as far as Baghdad is concerned.

Daesh stolen oil can’t flow through Damascus-controlled territory. Can’t flow through Shi’ite-dominated Iraq. Can’t go east to Iran. It’s Turkey or nothing. Turkey is the easternmost arm of

NATO. The US and NATO “support” Turkey. So a case can be made that the US and NATO ultimately support Daesh.

What’s certain is that illegal Daesh oil and illegal KRG oil fit the same pattern; energy interests by the usual suspects playing a very long game.

What these interests are focused on is to control every possible oil asset in Iraqi Kurdistan and then in “liberated” Syria. It’s crucial to know that Tony “Deepwater Horizon” Hayward is running Ug Genel, whose top priority is to control oil fields that were first stolen from Baghdad, and will eventually be stolen from Iraqi Kurds.

And then, there’s the Turkmen powder keg.

The key reason why Washington always solemnly ignored Ankara’s array of shady deals in Syria, through its fifth column Turkmen jihadis, is because a key CIA “rat line” runs exactly through the region known as Turkmen Mountain.

These Turkmen supplied by Ankara’s “humanitarian” convoys got American TOW-2As for their role in preserving prime weaponizing/ smuggling routes. Their advisers, predictably, are Xe/Academi types, formerly Blackwater. Russia happened to identify the whole scam and started bombing the Turkmen. Thus the downing of the Su-24.

### **The Turkmen fifth column**

Now the CIA is on a mission from God – frantically trying to prevent the rat line from being definitely smashed by the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) on the ground and Russia in the air.

The same desperation applies to the Aleppo-Azez-Killis route, which is also essential for Turkey for all kinds of smuggling.

The advanced arm of the “4+1” alliance – Russia, Syria, Iran, Iraq, plus Hezbollah – is taking no prisoners trying to re-conquer these two key corridors.

And that explains Ankara’s desperation – with a little help from His Masters’ Voice – to come up with an entirely new rat line/corridor through Afrin, currently under Syrian Kurd control, before Damascus forces and Russia air power get there.

Once again it’s important to remember that a gaggle of Turkmen outfits are Ankara’s fifth column in northern Syria.

Most Turkmen live in Kurdish territories. And here’s the ultimate complicating factor; the majority happens to live in the Jarablus region, currently controlled by ISIS/ISIL/Daesh. It’s exactly this area that is cutting the geographic connection between the two Kurdish cantons, Kobani and Afrin.

So imagine a continuous Syrian Kurd control/autonomy/corridor all across the Turkish-Syrian border. For Ankara this is the ultimate nightmare. Ankara's strategy is to move its Turkmen pawns, with added "moderate rebels", all across the Jarablus region. The pretext: wipe Daesh off the map. The real reason: prevent the two Kurdish cantons – Afrin and Kobani – from merging.

And once again Ankara will be directly pitted against Moscow.

The Russian strategy rests on very good relations with Syrian Kurds. Moscow not only supports the Syrian Kurd canton merger, but qualifies it as an important step on the way to a new Syria rid of takfiris. Russia will even officially recognize the PYD (Democratic Union Party) and allow them a representative office in Russia.

Ankara regards the PYD and its paramilitary arm, the YPG (People's Protection Units) as branches of the PKK. It gets curiously curious when we know that both Moscow and Washington are cooperating with the YPG against ISIS/ISIL/Daesh.

The predictable All-Out Ankara Freak Out came in the form of Sultan Erdogan declaring the Euphrates a "red line" for the YPG. If they try to move westward to fight Daesh, sending them out of the Jarablus area, the Turkish Army will strike.

It's absolutely key for Turkey to control this area between Jarablus and Afrin because here is the site of the would-be "safe zone", actually a no-fly zone, which Ankara dreams of implementing using the 3 billion euros just extorted from the EU to house refugees but also control northern Syria. Turkmen would be in charge of the area – as well as the Azez-Aleppo line, assuming the SAA does not clear it for good.

### **The case for UEBA**

So Ankara is looking at two very unpleasant Turkmen-filled scenarios to say the least.

Turkmen instrumentalized by Ankara to become gatekeepers against the Kurdish YPG; that means a nasty sectarian divide, orchestrated by Turkey, whose greatest loser is the unity of the Syrian nation.

Meanwhile, the SAA and Russian air power are on the verge of total control of Turkmen Mountain.

This will allow the "4+1" to go much deeper fighting against the so-called Army of Conquest and its twin-headed reptile, Jabhat al-Nusra (a.k.a. al-Qaeda in Syria) and Ahrar al-Sham, the whole lot "supported" and weaponized by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The "4+1" inexorable advance comes with extra benefits; the end of all rat lines in the region, and no more possible threats to Russia's air base in Hmeimim.

Make no mistake that Moscow will inflict as much pain on Sultan Erdogan as possible.

As Turkish newspaper Radikal quoted him, Prof. Abbas Vali of Bogazici University confirmed, “The PYD was pleased about Russia’s intervention in Syria. An alliance between the PYD and Russia is inevitable. Russia’s bombardment of the radical Islamist groups on the ground will have a huge impact on the PYD operations.”

So no matter which way we look, Turkey and Russia are on a serious collision course in Syria. Moscow will support Syrian Kurds no holds barred as they push to link the three major Kurdish cantons in northern Syria into a unified Rojava.

As for Washington’s “strategy”, it now boils down to the CIA need of a new rat line. That could imply sitting on the – weaponized – sidelines watching Turkmen and Kurds slug it out, thus creating an opening for the Turkish Army to intervene, and the Russian Air Force to prevent it, with all hell guaranteed to break loose.

The fact remains that Sultan Erdogan badly needs a new CIA-secured rat line to weaponize not only his fifth column Turkmen but also Chechens, Uzbeks and Uyghurs. And Bilal Erdogan, a.k.a. Erdogan Mini Me, desperately needs new oil smuggling routes and a couple of new tankers; Russia is watching their every move. The latest news from Russia’s Defense Ministry has struck like a volcanic eruption; the Erdogan family mob was branded as “criminals”, with Moscow presenting only an appetizer of the all the evidence it has in store.

So we have the Afghan heroin rat line. The Libyan oil racket (now over). The Ukraine fascist rat line. The Libya to Syria weapon rat line. The stolen Syrian oil trade. The northern Syrian rat lines. Let’s call them UEBA: Unregulated Exceptionalist Business Activities. What’s not to like? There’s no business like war business.