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Kerry: US Not Seeking Regime Change in Syria

By Jason Ditz
December 15, 2015

During his visit to Moscow, Secretary of State John Kerry talked at length with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and came out of those talks with a shocking declaration that “the United States and its partners are not seeking regime change in Syria.”

The declaration is not only bizarre, in that many of America’s “partners” in Syria are rebel factions formed explicitly to oust the government, but because Kerry himself, as well as other high-ranking US officials, have been openly demanding unconditional regime change for several years now.

Kerry went into his Moscow visit saying Assad’s future would be a topic of discussion with Russian officials, which itself raised eyebrows since US officials have long insisted Assad has no future. Kerry doubled down on this, however, insisting that the US and Russia see Syria’s future fundamentally the same way.

Russian officials have been much more forthcoming about their specific view of Syria’s future than the US previously has, offering proposals for a settlement between Assad and secular rebels leading to the drafting of a new constitution and free elections. The US had previously been seen objecting to that plan on the grounds that it didn’t rule out Assad and other key government officials participating in future elections, with Russia has long maintained they don’t want to dictate who is allowed to run.

The US has previously had officials hint that their stance on Syria could change, but this is the first time such a high-profile official has openly renounced regime change. That it was Kerry is particularly noteworthy since Kerry led the failed 2013 effort to get Congress to approve of a US invasion to impose regime change there, repeatedly likening Assad to Hitler during the effort