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## Washington's New Islamic Front: Expanded U.S. Support to Al Qaeda Rebels in Syria

By Prof Michel Chossudovsky

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*From the outset, the Western military alliance has (covertly) supported the terrorists with a view to destabilizing Syria as a nation state.*

*Lest we forget, Al Qaeda is a creation of the CIA.*

*The US, NATO, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have channeled most of their support to the Al Qaeda brigades, which are also integrated by Western Special Forces.*

*British and French Special Forces have been actively training opposition rebels from a base in Turkey.*

*Israel has provided a safe have to Al Qaeda affiliated rebels in the occupied Golan Heights.*

*Western special forces have been training the rebels in the use of chemical weapons in Jordan.*

*NATO and the Turkish High command have been involved in the development of a jihad involving the recruitment of thousands of “freedom fighters”, reminiscent of the enlistment of the Mujahideen to wage the CIA’s jihad (holy war) in the heyday of the Soviet-Afghan war:*

Also discussed in Brussels and Ankara, our sources report, is **a campaign to enlist thousands of Muslim volunteers in Middle East countries and the Muslim world to fight alongside the Syrian rebels. The Turkish army would house these volunteers, train them and secure their passage into Syria.** (Debkafile, August 31, 2011). Debka, August 2011 emphasis added)

*This is a war of aggression. It is not a civil war.*

## **The New Islamic Front**

The Al Qaeda fighters integrated by mercenaries, trained in Saudi Arabia and Qatar constitute the mainstay of so-called opposition forces, which have been involved in countless atrocities and terrorist acts directed against the civilian population from the outset in March 2011.

The existence of “more moderate opposition brigades” supported by the West is a myth. They exist in name, they do not constitute a meaningful military force. They are not the object of significant support by their Western handlers, who prefer to channel their aid to the Al Qaeda affiliated brigades.

The FSA and its Supreme Military Command essentially serve as a front organization. The SMC under the helm of General Salim Idriss has largely been used to channel support to the terrorists.

In recent developments, fighting has broke out between the Al Qaeda affiliated rebels **covertly supported by the West** and the more moderate FSA brigades, **officially supported by the West.**

Having “expressed their concern”, US officials have announced the holding of talks with the rebel commanders of the **New Islamic Front** (created in November).

The objective, however, is not to mediate between opposing factions. What is contemplated are new procedures for channeling support to the Al Qaeda affiliated terrorists, through the newly created Islamic Front umbrella organization.

The New Islamic Front regroups six or seven major rebel entities, including the former **Syrian Islamic Front** ( الجبهة الإسلامية السورية *al-Jabhah al-Islāmiyya as-Sūriyyah*) which constituted a Salafist umbrella organisation. The Salafist Ahrar al-Sham was the lead entity of the (defunct) SIF. The latter has been disbanded and integrated (under a new label) into the New Islamic Front, which is working hand in glove with Washington.

**The expected contacts between Washington and the radical fighters reflect the extent to which the [New] Islamic Front alliance has eclipsed the more moderate Free Syrian Army brigades — which Western and Arab powers tried in vain to build into a force able to topple President Bashar Al Assad. The talks could also decide the future direction of the Islamic Front, which is engaged in a standoff with yet more radical Sunni Muslim fighters from the Al Qaeda-linked Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).**

A rebel fighter with the Islamic Front said he expected the talks in Turkey to discuss whether the United States would help arm the front and assign to it responsibility for maintaining order in the rebel-held areas of northern Syria.

The Islamic Front rebel told reporters that rivalry with the ISIL had already led to a spate of hostage-taking between the two sides, and that the Front's decision to talk to the Americans had further escalated tension. Although he described the two Islamist forces as ideologically close, he said ISIL appeared set on confrontation, perhaps encouraged by some of their backers in Saudi Arabia. (Gulf Today, December 13, 2013)

Former US Ambassador to Syria Robert Stephen Ford has been involved in negotiations with the Islamic Front. Ford had established contact with New Islamic Front leaders in November.

The involvement of Ambassador Ford should come as no surprise. He was one of the main architects of the death squad brigades sent into Syria, starting in March 2011. He has, no doubt, been in permanent liaison with Al Qaeda rebel commanders from the outset of the insurgency.

Robert S. Ford had previously worked at the US embassy in Baghdad (2004-2005) under the helm of Ambassador John D. Negroponte. He played a key role in implementing the Pentagon's "Iraq Salvador Option". The latter consisted in supporting Iraqi death squadrons and paramilitary forces modeled on the experience of Central America. With regard to Syria, the US State Department has been collaborating with several US intelligence agencies and the Pentagon is overseeing US support to rebel forces in Syria.

A Syria policy committee was created in 2012. It involved the participation of Ambassador Robert Stephen Ford, former CIA director David Petraeus, Jeffrey Feltman, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and Derek Chollet, Principal Deputy Director of Clinton's Policy Planning Staff at the State Department.

Under Jeffrey Feltman's supervision, the actual recruitment of terrorist mercenaries, however, is carried out in Qatar and Saudi Arabia in liaison with senior intelligence officials from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya and NATO. The former Saudi ambassador to the US, Prince Bandar, who remains a key member of Saudi intelligence, is said to be working with the Feltman group in Doha. (Michel Chossudovsky, "The Salvador Option For Syria": US-NATO Sponsored Death Squads Integrate "Opposition Forces", Global Research, 28 May 2012)

### **Expanded US Support to Al Qaeda Affiliated Rebels in Syria**

What the US and its allies are establishing are new effective "direct channels" for increasing their support to their Al Qaeda foot soldiers, essentially using the new Islamic Front as a "Go Between". This procedure is contemplated following the apparent demise of the Supreme Military Command of the FSA.

Until recently US and allied support to Al Qaeda was channeled to the rebels through an indirect route, namely through Supreme military Command (SMC) commander General Salim Idriss.

General Idriss is reported to have fled Syria for Doha, “as a result of the Islamic Front taking over his headquarters.” The takeover of SMC headquarters has, according to reports

“prompted the United States and Britain to announce [December 11] that they were suspending non-lethal aid to northern Syria, due to fears of equipment ending up in the wrong hands.”

This again is a smokescreen: the New Islamic Front which attacked the SMC headquarters is working in close liaison with its Western handlers including Ambassador Robert Stephen Ford.

Washington intends to use the Islamic Front to channel its support to the more radical Al Qaeda factions including Al Nusrah which, according to reports, has established ties to the New Islamic Front.

The Obama Administration has committed itself to “an expanded Syrian insurgency that includes the recently-formed Islamic Front”:

**The Front has been pressing for inclusion in the SMC**, and wants to be represented at the Geneva talks, according to rebel commanders. ... Ex-Ambassador Ford is traveling to London on Friday to meet other international backers of the opposition, and then to Turkey for discussions with the Syrian National Coalition. He may also meet there with the Islamic Front, said the senior official. (EA World View, December 13, 2013

The propaganda ploy is to portray the new Islamic Front as “moderate”. With the FSA Supreme Military Command in disarray, Washington’s objective is to provide a semblance of legitimacy to the insurrection largely integrated by the Western military alliance’s Al Qaeda foot soldiers.

The creation of a pro-US Islamic Front serves that purpose, namely to channel money and weapons **directly** to the rebels via the new Islamic Front umbrella organization.