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## The CIA, Qatar, and the Creation of Syria's Jabhat al Nusra

By Phil Greaves  
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*A recent interview given by: an 'anonymous' Qatari security official, has shed further light on CIA-led covert arms shipments to militants fighting in Syria. In this Reuters article, the security official and several 'anonymous' rebel Commanders confirm that Qatar has "tightened coordination of arms flows [plural] to Syria," under alleged concern of weapons ending up in the hands of Al Qaeda linked Islamic extremist militants; the very militants as noted previously, that have continually formed the spearhead of the insurgency against the Syrian Government:*

“Rebel fighters in Syria say that in recent months the system for distributing arms has become more centralized, with arms being delivered through opposition National Coalition’s General Command, led by Selim Idriss, a general who defected to the opposition and is a **favorite of Washington**.”(my emphasis)

What has been long confirmed by ‘official sources’ in the mainstream press, is that these arms shipments commenced in at least “early 2012”. We can be sure, as with the majority of the official timeline, that leeway has been given in these statements: its highly likely smaller arms shipments/smuggling into Syria started much earlier. Statements from eyewitnesses in Libya confirm that arms shipments from the port of Libyan Islamic Fighting Group stronghold Misrata, commenced rapidly after the fall of Gaddafi. Sibel Edmonds also reported in November 2011, long before any corporate media revealed, that the CIA, along with its Turkish and NATO counterparts had been working from the “nerve centre” at the joint US-Turkish air-base in Incerlik, Turkey, since April/May of 2011, coordinating ‘rebel’ elements and ‘activist’s’. Edmonds posits the likely theory that this was one of the initial staging grounds used by the CIA

and its regional partners, to smuggle weapons, fighters and materiel into Syria as the insurgency took hold.

Enough of this background information, ‘official sources’ and timeline discrepancies gives the impression that the ‘news’ media is not releasing information when it receives it, and is holding back crucial pieces of the timeline, to fit into the desired narrative of “Assad forces killing peaceful protesters”.

What we learn from the Reuters report is that until Qatar (acting directly under CIA auspices) chose to “tighten” the coordination of their arms supplies into Syria, there was no coherent or structured way of the arms being distributed once they reached the Syrian border:

“The Qataris are now [May 2013] going through the Coalition for aid and humanitarian issues and for military issues they are going through the military command,” a commander in northern Syria interviewed from Beirut said.

This raises the immediate question: who were Qatar (under CIA auspices) distributing the arms thousands of tonnes of arms to before April 2013? The report goes on to state:

“Before the Coalition was formed they were going through **liaison offices and other military and civil formations**. That was at the beginning. Now it is different – it is all going through the Coalition and the military command.”

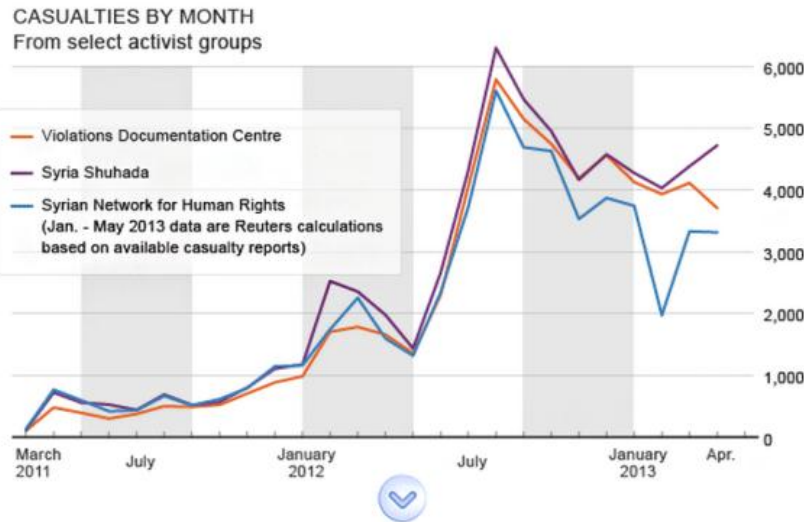
“**There’s a lot of consultation with the CIA**, and they help Qatar with buying and moving the weapons into Syria, but just as consultants,” he said. The CIA declined to comment. (my emphasis)

At least a pinch of salt needs to be taken with this piece of misinformation. What exactly are “liaison offices, military and civil formations?” The ‘opposition’ has never had anything resembling a military formation. Regardless, this raises several important questions and draws several distinctions into the timeline of the Syrian conflict.

We have long known, the main supplier of arms to ‘rebels’ was and still is Qatar, acting directly under the CIA’s “consultation”. We also know that these arms shipments became a considerable amount in “early 2012” and continued to rise in both quantity and frequency. A New York Times investigation confirmed this to be the case, reporting that eighty-five military cargo planes flew from Qatar to Turkey carrying arms bound for Syria between January 2012 and March 2013. (the maximum load of an average military cargo plane is around 50-60 tonnes.) What other synonymous distinctions in the conflict do we know about, that commenced and progressed from “early 2012”?

The clearest and most glaring dynamic that occurred along this timeframe, and also continued to rise and greatly increase, is both the death toll, and displacement within Syria. As covered extensively before, the monthly death toll in Syria almost doubled in “early 2012”, and continued to rapidly increase. All available resources and ‘activist’ or opposition groups death toll figures roughly confirm this, as can be seen in this graph compiled by Reuters:

The opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that least 82,000 people have been killed after two years of civil war in Syria. The number of casualties documented by opposition activist groups vary.



One other critical factor is directly synonymous with both the arms flow increase, (under CIA/Qatari auspices) and the huge rise in death toll. That being: the success, proliferation and bolstering of Jabhat al Nusra and similar Salafi/Jihaddi militant groups. Jabhat al Nusra, or, as they are now known: the Islamic State of Iraq and Al Sham, (ISIS) were active in Syria under their 'parent' group the Islamic State of Iraq's (Al Qaeda in Iraq – AQI) auspices for years prior to the Syrian uprising. Indeed, ever since the formation of AQI itself the eastern regions of Syria, (bordering the west of Iraq and the Anbar province) have been a hotbed for Al Qaeda activity since its inception following the US invasion in 2003.

It is beyond doubt that Jabhat al Nusra and other Salafi/Jihaddi groups working alongside them have been the driving force of the armed insurgency. Throughout the majority of the armed conflict, it has been Jabhat al Nusra that has led insurgent attacks on key Syrian military installations; air-defense bases; coastal and major highway routes in attempts to block SAA supply lines; the vast majority of suicide attacks in civilian areas; and assassinations on key Government security officials. These extremist groups have become the best equipped, most organised, consistently well-funded and importantly, the most successful on the ground. While the US and its Gulf allies claim to have only armed, trained and supported 'vetted' and 'moderate' rebels, the reality inside Syria bears absolutely no resemblance to these claims.

We are now left with some theoretical options, first: the CIA will claim, as the US administration has been claiming, that they only 'coordinated' arms to, and supported moderate groups; how they found their way to extremists is beyond the CIA remit. Thus passing sole culpability to Qatar or the smugglers in Turkey that transported the arms into Syria. Again, the Qatari intelligence service can also claim plausible deniability, passing the buck to smugglers and rebels controlling the flow on the Turkish border. Do the ramifications of this policy, even if it were true, absolve the sheer recklessness of it and the evident destruction and bolstering of extremists it has permitted?

Another probable outcome, or denial of association with these groups will be that the Syrian Arab Army and the Syrian Government, because of the alleged majority Alawite leadership,

made a conscious decision to instill sectarianism into the conflict in order to quell the protest movement. When one takes a close look at the Syrian Government's overtures toward the peaceful protest movement, and concessions the Assad government made during the early stages of protests, it is again, hard to see any reality to confirm it was Assad's intention to divide Syria and start a full-scale sectarian war. Indeed, many concessions were made, including; mass political prisoner releases; a new constitution promising political plurality and maximum presidential terms; the dismissal of several regional governors and the complete dismissal of the Syrian Cabinet. These concessions do not bear the hallmark of a leader looking to marginalize his country's largest demographic. In which the Sunni population was, and still is heavily represented in both the Government and the army.

What is most probable, is that the CIA, along with its Qatari partners, knew full well of the ideologues they were arming and bolstering and chose to pursue this policy; simply because it was the most effective at weakening the Syrian Army and dividing the peaceful, multi-ethnic fabric of Syrian society. As stated above, it is Jabhat al Nusra leading the fight in Syria, it is they that have taken out Syria's air defense bases, on many an occasion. What threat anti-aircraft missiles and defense radar's pose to small, lightly armed insurgent groups is hard to fathom, suggesting these groups were acting on outside orders, or state supplied intelligence provided to them with the desired outcome of weakening Syria's strategic defense capabilities.

For those that study the US government's unrelenting attempts of subversion and destabilization, this tactic of fomenting and supporting Islamic extremists militants will come as no surprise. It is not just Jabhat al Nusra's (AQI) tactical capability and battle experience that has pushed them into the leadership role, without money and weapons, and indeed psychological appeal to win recruits, experience means nothing.

These groups, supposedly of "Al Qaeda" origin, an ideology in itself, more than a coherent functioning group capable of international war; form the sectarian "shock troops" the US and their allies long ago agreed upon to foment and support in their attempts to block the "resistance" within the "Shiite crescent," and have quite literally, grown beyond all means of control. Qatar (under CIA "consultation") has tacitly encouraged, sponsored and armed the very same groups that are prominent now: those of an extremist Salafi/Jihaddi ideology that espouse sectarian hatred against Shia and minority groups to promote division and social chaos. This supposedly happened directly under the CIA's nose, with their tacit "consultation" and they failed to notice this extremist dynamic developing and rapidly expanding? Another possible added bonus for the US and its allies was recently pointed out by Lebanese political commentator Dr. Asad Abu Khalil who noted:

by listing Nusrah Front as a terrorist organization, the US government has basically licensed all other Syrian armed groups to engage in all sorts of war crimes. So all an armed group has to do to get away with war crimes, is merely to fly the flag of Nusrah. That is all what it takes. So an armed group belonging to the Free Syrian Army umbrella, for example, can engage in a war crime, and then the next day issue a condemnation. It is an unlimited license for war crimes.

A fully fledged and totally malleable proxy fighting force, promoting subversion, sectarian division, and outright chaos to gain the desired US objective of the destruction of the Syrian state, ergo: removing a key ally of Iran, and the resistance to western hegemony in the Middle East. When the extremism and brutality become too exposed to allow overt western support, the

US designate them “terrorists”, and within a change of clothes, they become the falsehood that is the “FSA”.