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How the US is enabling Syria

By Pepe Escobar

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If any extra evidence was needed to shatter the myth of a "revolution" struggling for a future "democratic" Syria, the big news of the week cleared any remaining doubts.

Eleven, 13 or 14 "rebel" brigades (depending on the source) have ditched the "moderate", US-propped Syrian National Council (SNC) and the not-exactly Free Syrian Army (FSA). The leaders of the bunch are the demented jihadis of Jabhat al-Nusra - but it includes other nasties such as the Tawhid brigades and the Tajammu Fastaqim Kama Ummirat in Aleppo, some of them until recently part of the collapsing FSA.

The jihadis practically ordered the myriad "moderates" to submit, "unify in a clear Islamic frame", and pledge allegiance to a future Syria with Sharia law as "the sole source of legislation".

One Ayman al-Zawahiri must be having a ball in his comfortable, drone-proof hideout somewhere in the Waziristans. Not only because his call for a multinational jihad - a la Afghanistan in the 1980s - is working; but also because the US-run SNC has been exposed for the toothless rodent that it really is.

And facts on the ground keep corroborating it. The al-Qaeda-propped Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant took over a town near the Bab al-Salam border crossing with Turkey that was held by the FSA because the FSA was accused of fighting for "democracy" and close ties with the West. Wrong; the FSA wants those ties but under a Muslim Brotherhood-controlled regime. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - of which Jabhat al-Nusra is the main Syrian component - wants a Talibanized Syria.

The hardcore jihadi gangs in Syria may number as much as 10,000 fighters; but they do account for arguably 90% of the heavy fighting, because they are the only ones with battleground experience (including Iraqis who fought the Americans and Chechens who fought the Russians).

In parallel, and not by accident, ever since Prince Bandar bin Sultan, aka Bandar Bush, was put in charge by Saudi King Abdullah to run the Syria jihad, taking no prisoners, the "moderate" Qatar-aligned Muslim Brotherhood SNC has been progressively sidelined.

Off with those peaceniks' heads

Yet as far as train wrecks go, nothing equals the Obama administration's excuse for a "strategy", which theoretically boils down to weaponizing and extensively training the weakest link - selected FSA gangs infiltrated with CIA assets - and "vetting" weapons falling into the hands of jihadis. As if the CIA had reliable local intel on the myriad jihadi Gulf-based funding and logistical sources.

The SNC, the FSA and the exile so-called "Supreme Military Command" led by the grandiloquent General Salim Idriss are now no more than a joke. This whole thing happened while SNC leader al-Jerba was at the UN General Assembly in New York - where he met with Secretary of State John "Assad is like Hitler" Kerry. Kerry did not talk about weapons but about more "aid" and future negotiations at the perennially postponed Geneva II conference. Al-Jerba was furious. And to top it off, some of his FSA gangs openly embraced al-Qaeda.

Why? Follow the money. This is how it works, in a nutshell. At least half of the FSA "brigades" are mercenaries - they are financed from abroad. They fight where their masters - who weaponize and pay them - tell them to fight. The "Supreme Command" controls, at best, something like 20% of the brigades. And these people don't even live in Syria; they are based on the Turkish or Jordanian side of the border.

The mercenary jihadis, on the other hand, are on the ground full-time. They are the real fighting force, receive their salaries on time, and their families are well taken care of.

So for all practical purposes it's now a war between the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and a bunch of jihadis. Of course this will NOT be explained by supine corporate media to Western public opinion.

Now imagine these beheading, liver-devouring Sharia groupies willing to go to the Geneva II conference to negotiate a ceasefire with the Syrian government and a possible peace deal with the NATO-House of Saud axis. Obviously it's not going to happen - as Bandar Bush himself telegraphed Russian President Vladimir Putin in person in Moscow.

Worse, from Washington's point of view, there's no way to justify why no meaningful negotiations can take place. Even puzzled infidels with half a brain across the Beltway will be able to make a connection between hordes of Syrian "rebels" embracing al-Qaeda immediately after al-Shabaab's attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi.

It goes without saying that Baghdad is freaking out with these developments. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is ramping up car bombing and suicide bombing in Iraq itself - because the "apostate" Shi'ite-led al-Maliki government is as much a target as the secular Bashar al-Assad. It's hard to believe that only five months ago I was writing about the advent of [the Islamic Emirate of Syriastan](#). Now it's clear how "invisible" al-Zawahiri and wily Bandar Bush have appropriated Washington's "strategy" to really get what they want.