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US Officials: Al-Qaeda's Loss in Aleppo Is Also America's Loss

By Jason Ditz
December 5, 2016

The increasingly public re-branding of America's war in Syria as a proxy war against Russia has suited a lot of officials, particularly in the Pentagon, who see a new Cold War as a ticket to a bigger budget. With Russia's fighting focusing on al-Qaeda's Nusra Front, this Russo-centric view has seen the administration realigning US interests more directly with al-Qaeda.

Embarrassing as America's realignment toward al-Qaeda is, officials see the defeat of the al-Qaeda-dominated rebels in Aleppo as an even bigger blow, presenting the loss of Aleppo as Russia's victory and America's loss, in addition to being al-Qaeda's loss.

This "loss" is being presented by current officials as potentially hindering President-elect Donald Trump's policy choices going forward, though since Trump was not in favor of backing al-Qaeda, or backing Syrian rebels in general, it probably makes his go-to plan of moving toward fighting ISIS even simpler to sell to the public.

In the meantime, officials committed to the current policy warn that al-Qaeda is likely to rebound from a direct defeat in Aleppo than America is going to, seeing the continued sectarian violence in the country as giving Nusra ample new fighters to recruit to keep the civil war going, even if it's not in Aleppo.

The US by contrast has spent most of the year harping on about the need to “save” Aleppo’s “moderate” rebels, by which they mean al-Qaeda, and will have to basically start over in presenting the Islamists as a “moderate” force for change in some other battle.