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## Syrian Rebel Army: 15,000 Strong Force to Fight Assad Regime

By Jason Ditz

November 4, 2011

Syria has had a large number of defectors from their military for months now, but an effort to organize a large number of these defectors into a rebel army seems to have picked up considerable strength, and formal backing from the Turkish government.



The force, the “Syrian Free Army,” is led by Col. Riad al-Assad, [who claims to have 15,000 troops at his command](#), and is hoping for a Libya-style bombing campaign against Syria that it can use to its own ends.

“We are the future army of the new Syria,” Col. Assad insists. [And Turkey seems keen on that, with the Turkish government providing the commander a security detail](#) and providing access to him through their own foreign ministry.

The 15,000 number seems largely in keeping with reports that between 10,000 and 20,000 troops have defected, but it is unclear if most of them really are operating under the command of Col. Assad, or if this is simply a claim that their force is more formidable than it really is in an effort to court international support.