

Biden's Admission: US Allies Armed ISIS

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Speaking to students at Harvard's John F. Kennedy Forum Thursday, US Vice President Joseph Biden committed what the US media characterizes as a "gaffe." In other words, he told an embarrassing truth about US government policy, one that is usually obfuscated in the remarks of government officials and the commentaries of media pundits.

Asked about US policy in Syria, Biden touched on the dirty secret of the current US-led war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. ISIS (or ISIL as the Obama administration terms it) is essentially the creation of the United States and its allies who fomented civil war in Syria against the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Referring to Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Biden said,

"They were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad—except that the people who were being supplied were al Nusra and al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world."

"Now you think I'm exaggerating," he continued, to emphasize his point. "Take a look! Where did all of this go?" Biden claimed that the US opposed arming these al Qaeda-linked groups, which included ISIS, adding, "We could not convince our colleagues to stop supplying them."

According to Biden's narrative, only in the summer of 2014 did these countries realize that ISIS was a threat to them as well as to Assad, and shifted, joining in the US campaign of air strikes against ISIS targets in Syria. He gave as an example the position of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, suggesting that he had admitted the error of a permissive policy towards the extremists: "President Erdogan told me, he is an old friend, said you were right, we let too many people through, now we are trying to seal the border."

It is testament to the degeneracy of the American political system that the circumstances behind ISIS's rise, alluded to in Biden's remarks, have not been the subject of any investigation. There have been no calls in Congress for hearings to examine the origins of an organization whose actions have been seized on to proclaim a new war in the Middle East.

As for the media, it merely serves as a government mouthpiece. Significantly, no US media source reported or commented on these portions of Biden's remarks at Harvard. But once

the comments were publicized, first by the Russian-based RT network, then throughout the Middle East, Biden hastened to mend fences with the offended client states.

The US embassy in Ankara released a statement that Biden had called Erdogan personally to “clarify recent comments made at Harvard University.” According to the embassy, “The Vice President apologized for any implication that Turkey or other Allies and partners in the region had intentionally supplied or facilitated the growth of ISIL or other violent extremists in Syria.”

Whatever the level of “intentionality” involved, ISIS was the recipient of the US-supported arms aid to the Syrian rebels, routed by the CIA through Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey and other Mideast client states. The State Department and CIA were well aware that the Syrian rebels included many Islamic militants, including those linked to al-Qaeda, because it had previously employed many of these fighters in the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011.

Originally established as Al Qaeda in Iraq during the eight years of warfare that followed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the group only took the name ISIS in April 2013, long after it had built up significant strength in Syria as part of the US-backed rebel forces fighting the Assad regime.

In other words, as Biden admits, ISIS was created by the methods pursued by the US government and its allied reactionary regimes, both the Islamist government of Erdogan in Turkey and the Gulf monarchies like Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Another confirmation of this relationship came in the form of a *Washington Post* report Sunday on the supposedly contradictory role of the sheikdom of Qatar, another of the Persian Gulf despotisms that is a client state of American imperialism. Qatar hosts the huge Al-Udeid Air Base, headquarters for US air operations in the region and the directing center of the air war in Syria and Iraq.

Only 20 miles from the base is the Grand Mosque in the Qatari capital, Doha, which “has served as a key outpost for al-Qaeda-linked rebels fighting the Syrian regime,” the *Post* noted, including the al-Nusra Front, the official al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, which was formerly part of ISIS until a split last year.

Despite the presentation in the *Post*, there is nothing surprising in Qatar hosting the US Air Force and raising money for al-Qaeda militants in Syria. As long as ISIS gathered strength in Syria, as part of the US-backed “rebels” opposed to Assad, it was encouraged in its ambitions. It was only when ISIS moved its forces back across the border from Syria into Iraq—and in particular threatened oil-rich regions in northern Iraq—did the Obama administration move against it.

The contradictions in US policy persist. Even as it seeks to forestall ISIS’s advance, the US is arming and promoting “moderate” forces within Syria that are openly allied with al-Nusra and other Islamic fundamentalist groups. The main target of American imperialism remains the Syrian government, which is also the reason why Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and other countries that fostered ISIS and are hostile to the Assad regime are now supporting the operation.

The “war against ISIS,” America’s erstwhile ally against the Assad regime, is only the latest

episode in the intervention of US imperialism in the Middle East, whose goal is not freedom, or democracy, or the struggle against “terrorism,” but the domination of the oil-rich region and the preparation of new and even bloodier wars against Iran and against the main targets of Washington: Russia and China.

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