

# Downed Russian Warplane Illustrates Enduring Danger of US-Backed Terrorism

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*A Russian ground-attack aircraft – a Sukhoi-25 – was shot down using an anti-aircraft missile over the northern Syrian province of Idlib by Al Qaeda affiliates. The pilot was reportedly killed by militants according to the Russian Ministry of Defense.*

The BBC in its article, “Russian jet shot down in Syria’s Idlib province,” would report:

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham – formerly linked to al-Qaeda – said it had shot down the plane.

In a statement released on social media, the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group claimed it had shot down the plane using a shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile.

The BBC and other Western media organizations have worked ceaselessly to aid groups like “Hayat Tahrir al-Sham” in their efforts to re-brand themselves and obfuscate public awareness over their status as terrorist organizations, thus making it easier for either the US and its European allies to aid and arm such groups, or for Western allies in the Middle East to aid and arm them.

That “Tahrir al-Sham” possesses anti-aircraft missiles indicates they are the recipients of state-sponsored arms deliveries. The fact that they murdered the downed pilot – a war crime – reaffirms their status as a terrorist organization.

Al Qaeda affiliates possessing anti-aircraft weapon systems should come as no surprise. The US had literally handed hundreds of anti-aircraft missiles to militants in Afghanistan during the 1980’s which included Arab volunteers assisted by Al Qaeda. With these missiles, militants likewise downed Russia warplanes and helicopters.

## **Arming Al Qaeda in Syria was ‘Plan A’ Before the Arab Spring “Sprung”**

The Washington Post in its article, “[Russia strikes back as Syrian rebels take credit for shooting down fighter jet, killing pilot](#),” regarding allegations that the United States was responsible for Al Qaeda possessing anti-aircraft weapons used to down Russian aircraft would report:

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said any allegation that the

United States has provided MANPAD missiles in Syria was untrue, and she denied that U.S. equipment was used in shooting down the Russian plane.

“The United States has never provided MANPAD missiles to any group in Syria, and we are deeply concerned that such weapons are being used,” she said.

Yet an examination of the Syrian conflict’s true inception reveals just how dubious this denial by the US State Department really is.

The Syrian conflict was conceived years before the first protesters took to the streets during the 2011 so-called “Arab Spring.”

US policymakers had been preparing since as early as 2007 to wage proxy war on Syria and Iran. To do so they built upon a history of collaboration with Saudi Arabia and other notorious state-sponsors of terrorism – which includes the joint US-Saudi-Pakistani support provided to militants including Al Qaeda in the mountains of Afghanistan during the 1980s to expel Soviet forces. This support included shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles.

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist **Seymour Hersh** in his 2007 article, “[The Redirection: Is the Administration’s new policy benefitting our enemies in the war on terrorism?](#)” provided a prophetic warning of the dangerous expansion of this state-sponsored terrorism. Hersh warned (emphasis added):

To undermine Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, the Bush Administration has decided, in effect, to reconfigure its priorities in the Middle East. In Lebanon, the Administration has cooperated with Saudi Arabia’s government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shiite organization that is backed by Iran. **The U.S. has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.**

Hersh revealed that even then the US was using its Saudi allies to launder money and material support to opposition fronts:

Some of the core tactics of the redirection are not public, however. The clandestine operations have been kept secret, in some cases, by leaving the execution or the funding to the Saudis, or by finding other ways to work around the normal congressional appropriations process, current and former officials close to the Administration said.

In addition to the US State Department organizing political agitators that would flood the streets of nations like Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt, and Yemen at the onset of the “Arab Spring,” the US government and its regional allies began staging weapons and training and mobilizing militants, aimed at preparing armed groups to quickly leverage street mobs to expand and exploit the engineered conflicts.

### **The US Transformed Al Qaeda from a Terrorist Organization into a Standing Army**

By 2013, headlines in newspapers like the New York Times in its article, “[Arms Airlift to Syria](#)

[Rebels Expands, With Aid From C.I.A.,](#)” exposed the full-scale proxy war – warned of by journalists like Hersh – the US was now waging on the Syrian state. The NYT would report (emphasis added):

With help from the C.I.A., Arab governments and Turkey have sharply increased their military aid to Syria’s opposition fighters in recent months, expanding a secret airlift of arms and equipment for the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, according to air traffic data, interviews with officials in several countries and the accounts of rebel commanders.

The airlift, which began on a small scale in early 2012 and continued intermittently through last fall, expanded into a steady and much heavier flow late last year, the data shows. **It has grown to include more than 160 military cargo flights by Jordanian, Saudi and Qatari military-style cargo planes landing at Esenboga Airport near Ankara, and, to a lesser degree, at other Turkish and Jordanian airports.**

While the NYT and other Western media organizations attempted to claim US involvement in the weapon deliveries sought to prevent Arab donors from sending weapons like anti-aircraft missiles – the US used the CIA to covertly facilitate the weapon deliveries *precisely* because Washington’s Arab allies could send weapons the US openly could not, to groups the US could not afford to be seen directly supporting.

In other words, the CIA aided Arab allies in arming terrorists with a wide array of weapons, including anti-aircraft missiles, specifically because the US could not directly do so itself.

And while the US attempts to revise recent history, claiming that Al Qaeda and its affiliates have only just now come to prominence after “moderate rebels” were eliminated from the battlefield over the course of the now seven year conflict, in 2012 Western media already admitted the prominent role Al Qaeda’s “Al Nusra Front” played in leading the opposition.

The 2012 NYT article, [“Syrian Rebels Tied to Al Qaeda Play Key Role in War,”](#) admitted (emphasis added):

The lone Syrian rebel group with an explicit stamp of approval from Al Qaeda has become one of the uprising’s most effective fighting forces, posing a stark challenge to the United States and other countries that want to support the rebels but not Islamic extremists.

**Money flows to the group, the Nusra Front, from like-minded donors abroad.** Its fighters, a small minority of the rebels, have the boldness and skill to storm fortified positions and lead other battalions to capture military bases and oil fields. As their successes mount, they gather more weapons and attract more fighters.

Those “like-minded donors abroad” include the very Arab allies the CIA aided in delivering weapons to militants in Syria – namely Al Qaeda and its affiliates.

It is neither without precedent nor plausibility then that the US is the prime suspect in arming – either directly or indirectly – the terrorists who recently downed a Russian warplane admittedly operating in and attacking territory held by Al Qaeda in Syria.

The US has already in recent history admittedly armed militants with anti-aircraft missiles to down Russia aircraft in Afghanistan in the 1980s. It was a point of US policy since 2007 to not only aid and arm Al Qaeda and its affiliates in Washington's proxy war with Iran and its Syrian allies, but to do so through intermediaries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Jordan, and Israel - as revealed by Hersh in his 2007 New Yorker article.

And it is demonstrated daily on the battlefields of Syria, despite claims that the billions the US has invested in "moderate rebels," no such "moderates" exist. Claims that they were "displaced" by Al Qaeda begs the question - if the US invested billions in "moderate rebels," who invested billions more in Al Qaeda giving them the operational edge to displace the "moderate rebels" from the battlefield? The answer is simple - there were never any "moderate rebels."

The US - as it did in Afghanistan - simply armed whatever militants were willing to fight - including, and now especially Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Al Qaeda's possession of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, as well as armored vehicles and even tanks illustrates how the US in its supposed "War on Terror" managed to transform a decentralized terrorist organization into a standing army now possessing entire cities and even provinces only Damascus and its Russian and Iranian allies appear interested in fighting and eliminating.

US-backed terrorism has recently claimed a Russian pilot, amid a war that has cost tens of thousands their lives over the course of several years and threatened the stability of an entire region. But long after the war ends, whenever it ends, this threat as a result of America's state-sponsorship of terrorism will endure for many more years to come, manifesting itself not only on battlefields but also in cities and towns, targeting soldiers and civilians alike - not just in Syria but around the planet.

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Featured image is from the author.



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**Michel Chossudovsky**

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