

John Kerry And Al-Qaeda Join Hands: “Very Different Track” Attack On Aleppo Fails

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Early May U.S. Secretary of State Kerry [set](#) a deadline for “voluntary” regime change in Syria:

[He] said “the target date for the transition is 1st of August” in Syria or else the Assad government and its allies “are asking for **a very different track.**” Hoping that “something happens in these next few months,” he said the political transition would not include President Assad because “as long as Assad is there, the opposition is not going to stop fighting.”

...

Kerry made those remarks after meeting with the UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and Russia’s foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. They agreed to establish a monitoring ceasefire center in Geneva, Switzerland, ...

By the time of that statement, al-Qaeda in Syria and U.S. supported insurgents had already [broken](#) the February ceasefire announced by Russia and attacked Syrian government positions in the rural area south of Aleppo city.

Negotiations since May between Russia and the U.S. over Syria have not led to any tangible results. In retrospect the U.S. tactic seems to have been willful delay. The U.S. made some [laughable offer](#) to Russia and Syria to effectively accept defeat in exchange for common attacks on al-Qaeda. This was rejected without much comments.

The current attack on the government held Aleppo by al-Qaeda in Syria (aka Jabhat al Nusra aka Fateh al Scam) was launched on August 1st. With up to 10,000 insurgents participating the attack was unprecedented in size. **August 1st is exactly the same date Kerry had set as starting date for “a very different track”.** This is likely not a random coincidence.

Despite the very large size of the “[Great Battle of Aleppo](#)” and its possibly decisive character for the war neither the New York Times nor the Washington Post has so far reported on it.

The U.S. had long prepared for an escalation and extension of the war on Syria. In December and January ships under U.S. control [transported](#) at least 3,000 tons of old weapons and ammunition from Bulgaria to Turkey and Jordan. These came atop of hundreds of tons of weapons [from Montenegro](#) transported via air to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. According to the renown *Janes Defense* military intelligence journal these [Bulgarian weapons ended up in Syria](#) where the Syrian army confiscated some of them from al-Qaeda and U.S. supported insurgents.

During the ceasefire and negotiations with Russia, the U.S. and its allies continued to arm and support their proxies in Syria even as those were intimately coordinating and integrating with al-Qaeda. The U.S. does not consider these groups to be terrorists, no matter with whom they associate or whatever they do. Even when such a group [beheads](#) a 12 year old, sick child in front of running cameras the U.S. State Department continues to support them and [opines](#) that **“one incident here and there would not necessarily make you a terrorist group.”**

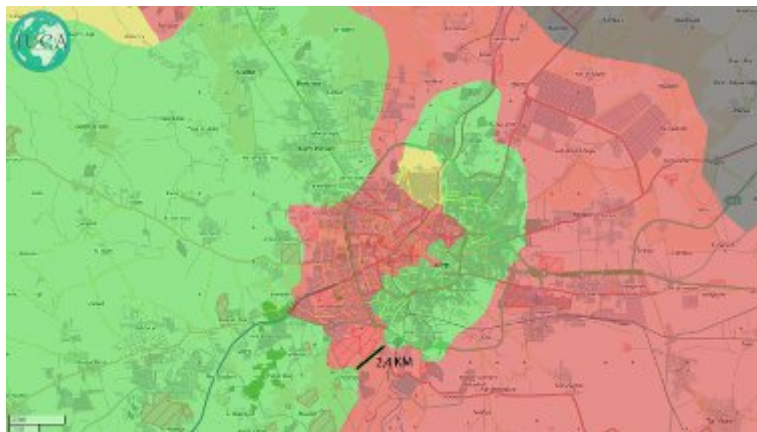
Good to know ...

The Russian Defense Ministry [warned](#) since April that large amounts of weapons and men were crossing from Turkey to Syria:

The Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist group (outlawed in Russia) in Syria is planning a major offensive with the aim to cut the road between Aleppo and Damascus, the chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the Russian General Staff, Sergey Rudskoy, has said.

...
“According to the information we have, about 8,000 Jabhat al-Nusra militants have concentrated to the southwest of Aleppo; up to 1,500 militants have gathered to the north of the city,” Rudskoi said.

A Jabhat al-Nusra spokesperson claimed that the attack on Aleppo [was planned](#) for “several month”. The U.S.-Saudi weapon supplies at the beginning of the year and the Russian observed deployment of forces in April were likely in preparation of the current attack on Aleppo. Kerry’s **“very different track”** remark fits right into these. But the large “very different track” attack failed.



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The attack started on Sunday and by Monday the 2nd the insurgents (green areas) managed to break Syrian government (red) defenses at the south-western border of Aleppo city. The plan was to break through roughly along the black line. Several vehicle based suicide attacks breached the Syrian front line. The insurgents captured the large, unfinished apartment project 1070 and several hilltop positions.

On Tuesday phase 2 launched when they attempted to take the Artillery Academy base a few hundred meters further east. But after intense Syrian and Russian air strikes and nightly counterattacks nearly all positions fell back into Syrian government hands. Despite the failure of their main thrust, al-Qaeda and its allies launched [a third phase attack](#) towards

Ramouseh district a few hundred meters further north. A tactical mistake as the attackers failed to build a decisive Schwerpunkt. A tunnel deployed bomb destroyed parts of the Syrian army positions in Ramouseh but the defense line held. The attack was repelled. Additional break-out attacks by the 2-3,000 fighters inside the besieged al-Qaeda controlled areas in east-Aleppo city failed too. Al-Qaeda never managed to brake the siege of the eastern areas and to thereby cut off the government held, densely occupied western areas from their supply route south towards Damascus.

Local fighting still continues on the front lines but the government positions seem secured and the attacking force is slowly grind down.

Al-Qaeda and allies had to deliver their attack from rural Idleb and Aleppo over open terrain towards the western Aleppo city borders. Here is where the Russian airforce and long range artillery concentrated their fire. As usual in such situations more attackers were killed on the approaches to the front line and in forward supply areas than on the front line itself. A Russian cruise missile even [destroyed](#) (vid) an arms supply storage used by Jaish al-Islam, the al-Qaeda controlled insurgency alliance, in Bab al Hawa, Idleb, at the Turkish border. Several arms convoys on their way towards Aleppo were destroyed in other airstrikes.

Both sides currently [accuse](#) each other of minor gas attacks against each other civilians. The insurgents started these as they always do when they lose ground. This time the Syrian and Russian side immediately responded with their own claims. It is now he-said she-said - who can decide? These attacks or reports seem to be more diversions than serious incidents.

After the defeat of the third phase of their attack al-Qaeda and its allies [broke off](#) their original plan of an attack in six phases and pulled back. In Russian military doctrine such a situation demands a counterattack with a wide ranging, strategic pursuit of the retreating enemy. We may now see a lightning fast operation in which reserve troops held by the Syrian government proceed westwards and northwards from Aleppo under intense air cover.

There are [no current plans](#) on the government side to capture the insurgent areas in east-Aleppo which are under government siege. These can wait and their condition deteriorate before any costly move against them follows.

Reports of additional Russian attack planes arriving for the next phase of the conflict have not yet been confirmed.

All together Kerry's "very different track" failed to achieve the desired aim. The government held Aleppo city was not cut off from the rest of the government held areas south of it. The attacking force, the largest insurgent concentration in this war, suffers up to 1,000 casualties and a large amount of its equipment was destroyed. A pursuit might shatter its remnants.

In another Syrian trouble spot Kurdish YPG fighters besiege and slowly conquer the Islamic State held city of Manbij in the east. They are supported by U.S. special forces and intense coalition air attacks. The city of Manbij is now mostly destroyed. The once 100,000 inhabitants are in dire straits. Up to 200 civilians fleeing the city [were killed](#) in U.S. air attacks. But as the operation is U.S. led no "western" humanitarian organization has lamented their fate.

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