

Please, Ambassador Ford. Name me a “Moderate” Syrian rebel

By [Global Research News](#)

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[mideast shuffle](#) 4 June 2014

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

US-designated Syrian terrorist group Jabhat al-Nusra with an American-made TOW Missile in its possession.

Global Research Editor’s Note:

Ambassador Robert S. Ford is no ordinary diplomat. He was U.S. representative in January 2004 to the Shiite city of Najaf in Iraq. Najaf was the stronghold of the Mahdi army.

A few months later he was appointed “Number Two Man” (Minister Counsellor for Political Affairs), at the US embassy in Baghdad at the outset of John Negroponte’s tenure as US Ambassador to Iraq (June 2004- April 2005).

Since his arrival in Damascus in late January 2011, Ambassador Robert S. Ford played a central role in laying the groundwork for the development of an armed insurgency directed against as the government of Bashar al Assad.

The reinstatement of a US ambassador in Damascus, but more specifically the choice of Robert S. Ford as US ambassador, bears a direct relationship to the onset of the protest movement in mid-March against the government of Bashar al Assad.

Robert S. Ford was the man for the job. As “Number Two” at the US embassy in Baghdad, he played a key role in implementing the Pentagon’s “Iraq Salvador Option”. The latter consisted in supporting Iraqi death squadrons and paramilitary forces modelled on the experience of Central America.

For a full background of Robert Ford, read [Who is US Ambassador to Syria Robert S. Ford? The Covert Role of the US Embassy in Supporting an Armed Insurrection](#) and

[“The Salvador Option For Syria”: US-NATO Sponsored Death Squads Integrate “Opposition Forces”](#)

Please, Ambassador Ford. Name me a “Moderate” Syrian rebel

by Sharmine Narwani

Mideast Shuffle

Below is an informative email exchange between Sharmine Narwani and a State Department

official regarding Robert Stephen Ford's statement. The moderate opposition remained unnamed.

June 4, 2014

[Please, Ambassador Ford. Name me a "moderate" Syrian rebel](#)

Former US Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford stated in a June 3 [PBS Newshour](#):

"We need - and we have long needed - to help moderates in the Syrian opposition with both weapons and other non-lethal assistance."

"Had we done that a couple of years ago, had we ramped it up, frankly the al Qaeda groups that have been winning adherents would have been unable to compete with the moderates who frankly we have much in common with," he continued.

(Transcript available [here](#))

That's great, Ambassador Ford. Now can you kindly put us out of our misery and name these Syrian "moderate" rebel groups? For any Syrian rebels to take the lead on the ground, they must be able to command a good 50,000 men...but I'll settle for the name of a moderate fighting force that can command 5,000.

Okay then - 500?

Please, Mr. Ambassador. I am now begging you to give me the name of these moderate Syrian rebels. Okay, maybe they've all been wiped out or marginalized now, but what about a year ago - when your boss Secretary of State John Kerry was champing at the bit to start arming the "moderates?"

Kerry, as you may recall, told us conclusively during a trip to Riyadh in March 2013 that:

"There is a very clear ability now in the Syrian opposition to make certain that what goes to the moderate, legitimate opposition is, in fact, getting to them, and the indication is that they are increasing their pressure as a result of that."

I was transfixed. Fascinated. The Americans had found moderate Syrian rebels (who actually participate in battle) and could now guarantee that weapons would get directly to them - and more importantly - stay with them.

I immediately pounded out an email to one of my media contacts at the US State Department (I will call him/her "Ben Spox" to preserve his/her identity), eager to find out the names of these Syrian moderates. Here's how that correspondence went:

From: Sharmine

Sent: Tuesday, March 05, 2013 7:51 AM

To: Ben Spox

Subject: Query

Ben,

Could you please give me the names of some of the “moderate” Syrian rebels that Sec of State Kerry is thinking of assisting? If that is confidential, could you just provide me with any names of “moderate” armed groups in Syria that you folks are aware of? Would be helpful if you could give me a sense of their size...and how you determine they are “moderate.”

He also says in this NYT piece (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/05/world/middleeast/syria-russia-iran-arms.html>) “There is a very clear ability now in the Syrian opposition to make certain that what goes to the moderate, legitimate opposition is, in fact, getting to them.”

Can you give me any idea of how this can be ascertained when weapons provided to Libyans are now flooding Mali and Syria?

Thanks.

Kind regards,
Sharmine

From: Ben Spox

To: Sharmine

3/5/13

On background attributable to “A State Department spokesman”:

· Our goal is to see a Syrian-led transition that enjoys widespread support and legitimacy within Syria and defends the rights and interests of all Syrians regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or gender. The opposition has articulated a common vision and transition plan for Syria that offers a credible alternative to the Asad regime’s tyranny. We support this vision.

· As we work to accelerate a political transition, we are providing more non-lethal support to the opposition, including communications gear and training, support for transition planning, media support and training, and a variety of programs to support civil society and capacity building to ensure that the opposition can continue its cause and that the needs of civilians on the ground are met.

· I would also draw your attention to our newest fact sheet, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/03/205623.htm>

From: Sharmine

Sent: Tuesday, March 05, 2013 8:16 AM

To: Ben Spox

Subject: Re: Query

Ben,

Thanks for this, but I’m asking for specific names of “moderate” rebel groups on the ground in Syria. Or are you counting on those outside the country to funnel this assistance entirely? Either way, I am sure you folks have specified the recipients.

So, if you please, kindly provide me with names of individuals or group recipients inside

Syrian territory who are “moderates.”

Thanks.

Best,
Sharmine

From: Ben Spox
To: Sharmine
3/5/13

I encourage you to look over the public remarks made by Secretary in Rome and Riyadh.

From: Sharmine
Sent: Tuesday, March 05, 2013 8:29 AM
To: Ben Spox
Subject: Re: Query

Ben,

I did look at his public comments in those two places - some are even in the NYT article link I sent you:

“There is no guarantee that one weapon or another might not at some point in time fall into the wrong hands,” Mr. Kerry said in a joint news conference in Riyadh with the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal. “But I will tell you this: There is a very clear ability now in the Syrian opposition to make certain that what goes to the moderate, legitimate opposition is, in fact, getting to them, and the indication is that they are increasing their pressure as a result of that.”

I want to know if you folks can actually name any moderate groups inside Syria that Secretary Kerry is referencing above? We have heard reports for months that there are no rebel groups worth their salt that are not Islamist and militant in nature...so what are these “moderate” rebel groups the secretary is referencing?

You folks are very specifically setting a scene that suggests there are “moderate” rebels inside Syria who will be receiving tens of millions of dollars of US taxpayer funds. You are going to great lengths to assure people that none of this will be diverted to jihadist or militant groups who may then turn their weapons on Americans or their allies.

So, then, who are these groups? Specifically.

Best,
Sharmine

From: Ben Spox
To: Sharmine
3/5/13

Sharmine - The public comments are where we are right now. I do not have additional information to provide at this time.

From: Sharmine
Sent: Tuesday, March 05, 2013 08:56 AM
To: Ben Spox
Subject: Re: Query

Ben, forget the context of US assistance going to these “moderate” groups for one second. At this point – and, truthfully, as a result of your responses to me – I am now just genuinely curious to know if anyone at the State Department can even name a “moderate” rebel group inside Syria.

Can you kindly direct me to someone there who could possibly help me out on this? It would be a tremendous help in allaying my growing concern that Secretary Kerry himself cannot name a single Syrian “moderate” rebel group.

I apologize for my tone – but seriously, does he think he can just say things like this with no oversight or questions? My query is a simple one and is based entirely on the secretary’s claim that he now has a “very clear ability” to bypass the bad guys.’ I’m not even yet asking how he knows he can do that. I’m just asking for the name of one single ‘good guy.’

Could you please refer me to somebody else for this information?

Cheers.

From: Ben Spox
To: Sharmine
3/5/13

Sharmine, thank you for your inquiry. You may use my responses below to inform your reporting. Attribution in background to “a State Department Spokesman.”

-Ben

Suffice it to say, I have remained painfully frustrated for over a year now in my continuing quest to get US officials to name these moderate Syrian rebels. I wait in hope that one US journalist in the State Department press pool decides to join this quest.

In the meantime, please, Ambassador Ford. Be a gentleman and name them.

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