

Russia Accuses Obama of Supporting Al Qaeda in Syria

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On May 4th, Russia's Sputnik news agency headlined:

["Lavrov: US Tried to Include Al-Nusra Front Positions in 'Silent' Period"](#), and reported that Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, speaking in Moscow about the lengthy negotiations between himself and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to agree on conditions for a Syrian ceasefire and peace talks to take place between Syria's government and Syria's rebels, said, "During the negotiations, our US partners actually tried to draw the borders of this 'zone of silence' to include a significant number of positions occupied by al-Nusra [Front]. We managed to exclude this as it is absolutely unacceptable."

Al Qaeda in Syria calls itself "Al Nusra."

The "zone of silence" or "silent period" (and there are other phrases for it) refers to [the areas in Syria that would be excluded from the ceasefire](#).

In other words: Lavrov was saying that whereas Russia's President Putin refuses to stop military action in Syria to kill Syria's Al Qaeda, America's President Obama has been continuing, ever since the U.S.-Russian negotiations for a ceasefire in Syria started in January of this year, to insist that Russia must stop bombing those jihadists. Russia's Foreign Minister was saying that Obama has been trying to protect Al Nusra.

Here is a chronological presentation of the reporting in the Western press, about U.S. President Obama's efforts on behalf of Syria's Al Qaeda (Al Nusra):

On 7 January 2016, Seymour Hersh [reported](#) in the *London Review of Books*,

Barack Obama's repeated insistence that Bashar al-Assad must leave office – and that there are 'moderate' rebel groups in Syria capable of defeating him – has in recent years provoked quiet dissent, and even overt opposition, among some of the most senior officers on the Pentagon's Joint Staff. Their criticism has focused on what they see as the administration's fixation on Assad's primary ally, Vladimir Putin. In their view, Obama is captive to Cold War thinking about Russia and China. ...

The military's resistance dates back to the summer of 2013, when a highly classified assessment, put together by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then led by General Martin Dempsey, forecast that the fall of the Assad regime would lead to chaos and, potentially, to Syria's takeover by jihadi extremists, much as was then happening in Libya. ...

Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, director of the DIA between 2012 and 2014, confirmed that his agency had sent a constant stream of classified warnings to the civilian leadership about the dire consequences of toppling Assad. The jihadists, he said, were in control of the opposition. ...

On 20 January 2016, the AP headlined [“Kerry, Lavrov try to settle differences over Syrian talks”](#), and reported,

Differences over which Syrian opposition groups should be labeled terrorists and barred from the negotiations and the ceasefire have led to concerns that the talks may have to be postponed. Russia and Iran, which back Assad, have immense differences with Saudi Arabia, other Arab states, the United States and Europe over which opposition groups should be considered terrorists and therefore excluded.

On 12 February 2016, the *New York Times* bannered, [“In Syria, Skepticism That Cease-Fire Will Stop Fighting”](#), and reported that,

With the proviso that the Nusra Front, Al Qaeda’s branch in Syria, can still be bombed, Russia puts the United States in a difficult position; the insurgent groups it [i.e., the U.S.] supports cooperate in some places with the well-armed, well-financed Nusra in what they [i.e., the U.S. government] say is a tactical alliance of necessity [with Nusra] against [Syrian] government forces. So Russia can argue that many of them [by which the NYT journalist refers to anti-Assad fighters] are, in effect, Nusra affiliates.

On 16 February 2016, independent journalist Gareth Porter headlined [“Obama’s ‘Moderate’ Syrian Deception”](#), and reported that,

Information from a wide range of sources, including some of those the United States has been explicitly supporting, makes it clear that every armed anti-Assad organization unit in those provinces is engaged in a military structure controlled by Nusra militants. All of these rebel groups fight alongside the Nusra Front and coordinate their military activities with it.

That reporter, unlike some others, assumes that Obama’s support of Syria’s Al Qaeda is due to Obama’s weakness in adhering to the desires of haters of Russia, both in the U.S. and among America’s allies abroad:

President Obama is under pressure from these domestic critics as well as from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other GCC allies to oppose any gains by the Russians and the Assad regime as a loss for the United States.

Mr. Porter presents no evidence backing up his assumption that President Obama is reluctant to adhere to this obsession against Russia. Seymour Hersh had reported, in his 7 January 2016 *LRB* report, facts that contradict Mr. Porter’s assumption:

General Dempsey and his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff kept their dissent out of bureaucratic channels, and survived in office. General Michael

Flynn did not. 'Flynn incurred the wrath of the White House by insisting on telling the truth about Syria,' said Patrick Lang, a retired army colonel who served for nearly a decade as the chief Middle East civilian intelligence officer for the DIA. 'He thought truth was the best thing and they shoved him out.'

In other words: Despite the opposition by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Obama was determined to help Nusra replace the Assad government. Despite what Mr. Porter assumed, Barack Obama was not a weak President, but instead a very determined President, a President who fired people in his Administration who advised him against continuing his attempt to replace al-Assad by al-Nusra. Russia insisted on bombing them, and reluctantly — and in fits and starts — U.S. President Obama accepted Russia's condition.



On 19 February 2016, the *Washington Post* bannered [“U.S., Russia hold Syria cease-fire talks as deadline passes without action”](#), and reported that,

“Russia was said to have rejected a U.S. proposal to leave Jabhat al-Nusra off-limits to bombing as part of a cease-fire.”

That report even included an indication that President Obama's current Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, who started his job on 17 February 2015, after the war against Syria was already well under way and Obama had replaced the people on his team who were opposed to it, is, if anything, even more obsessive against Russia than Obama himself is:

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter was said to have opposed the high-level contact with the Russians, at least initially.

In other words: when Obama replaced Chuck Hagel by Ashton Carter, he was replacing someone whom he held to be insufficiently anti-Russian, by a person, Carter, who is so extremely hostile toward Russians, as to have since been restrained by Obama from pursuing this hostility as forcefully as he wishes to. The only Cabinet member mentioned there as having persuaded Obama not to follow Carter's more aggressive stance against Russia was Obama's second-term Secretary of State, John Kerry.

On 20 February 2016, Reuters headlined “Syrian opposition says temporary truce possible, but deal seems far off”, and, under the sub-head “Nusra Front in Spotlight,” reported that,

A source close to peace talks earlier told Reuters Syria's opposition had agreed to the idea of a two- to three-week truce.

The truce would be renewable and supported by all parties except Islamic State, the source said.

It would be conditional on the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front no longer being attacked by Syrian government forces and their allies.

Of course, “Syria’s opposition” there included the United States; and so the U.S. President was, at that time, still insisting upon rejecting the Russian President’s demand that Nusra be included in the “zone of silence,” the locations where the war would continue uninterrupted during the otherwise-ceasefire.

That report went on:

The spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, said on Saturday: “Russia is sticking to its consistent policy of rendering assistance and aid to the armed forces of Syria in their offensive actions against terrorists and against terrorist organisations.”

The source close to peace talks described the opposition’s insistence on the Nusra Front no longer being targeted as “the elephant in the room”.

Obama, like King Saud, Emir Thani, Tayyip Erdogan, and the other enemies of Russia, still stood firm that Nusra not be destroyed.

Therefore, the issue of whether Putin would be allowed to continue bombing Nusra was a heavy topic of disagreement between Obama’s pro-al-Qaeda-in-Syria alliance, versus Putin’s anti-al-Qaeda-in-Syria alliance.

Seymour Hersh’s 7 January 2016 LRB article concluded:

Obama now has a more compliant Pentagon. There will be no more indirect challenges from the military leadership to his policy of disdain for Assad and support for Erdoğan. Dempsey and his associates remain mystified by Obama’s continued public defence of Erdoğan, given the American intelligence community’s strong case against him - and the evidence that Obama, in private, accepts that case.

Even though Obama accepts the case that Turkey’s leader, Erdoğan, is a dangerous man to be allied with, Obama moves forward with what is perhaps the most rabidly hostile toward Russia U.S. Administration ever. And this is after the USSR, and its NATO-mirror organization, the Warsaw Pact, were terminated by Russia in 1991, and after Al Qaeda perpetrated not only 9/11 but many other terrorist attacks, not only in the U.S., but in many of America’s allied countries — not to mention in Russia itself.

Furthermore, Seymour Hersh, in his 4 April 2014 article in LRB, [“The Red Line and the Rat Line”](#), said that,

The full extent of US co-operation with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar in assisting the rebel opposition in Syria has yet to come to light. The Obama administration has never publicly admitted to its role in creating what the CIA calls a ‘rat line’, a back channel highway [of weapons from Gaddafi’s stockpiles

in Libya] into Syria. The rat line, authorised in early 2012, was used to funnel weapons and ammunition from Libya via southern Turkey and across the Syrian border to the opposition. Many of those in Syria who ultimately received the weapons were jihadists, some of them affiliated with al-Qaida.

And, even prior to that, on 7 October 2013, Christof Lehmann at his site nsrc.me, headlined "[Top US and Saudi Officials responsible for Chemical Weapons in Syria](#)", and opened by summarizing:

Evidence leads directly to the White House, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey, CIA Director John Brennan, Saudi Intelligence Chief Prince Bandar, and Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry.

He said that, regarding the 21 August 2013 sarin gas attack, which Obama claims crossed his "red line" to launch an invasion of Syria to overthrow Assad, and which Hersh and others report to have been based actually on Obama's and his allies' "Rat Line" of weapons from Libya into Syria, the initial decision was made by the Saudi agent in Syria, Zahran Alloush:

The final decision, made by Zahran Alloush may in fact have been predetermined together with his U.S. - Saudi liaison officers.

Launching a chemical weapons attack would allow the USA, UK and France, to call for military strikes against Syria and to turn the tide.

[Zahran Alloush was killed by a Russian missile on Christmas Day 2015, and his nephew and close associate Mohammed Alloush was chosen by King Salman al-Saud](#) (actually by his son Prince Salman al-Saud) to lead the Syrian opposition in the peace talks on the Syrian war. Zahran Alloush, [like the Saud family](#), favored extermination of Shiites (including Assad), and so does Mohammed Alloush, which (besides the Alloushes' support of foreign jihad generally) is perhaps the main reason why the Saudis had selected him to lead the U.S.-Saudi-Qatari-Turkish side in these peace negotiations against Syria. However, the Alloushes also greatly admire Osama bin Laden, who founded Al Qaeda; and, so, in total, there can be little if any doubt that what Lavrov was reported on May 4th to have said about Obama's support for Syria's Al Qaeda makes sense, even though Obama himself had arranged for bin Laden to be killed.

It seems that, at least after Obama's success at killing off many of Al Qaeda's leaders, he is determined to support Al Qaeda's original jihad, which had been against the Soviet Union, and which continues now against Russia and its ally Assad. Obama therefore protects, and helps to arm, Al Qaeda in Syria, so as to eliminate, if possible, yet another ally of Russia (after Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, and Viktor Yanukovich): this time Bashar al-Assad.

Whereas the U.S. and its allies will not likely affirm what Lavrov said, the facts do — even some that have been reported in the Western press — not *only* in *non-Western* media.

Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).

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