

Russia Hints ISIS-Linked Militants Operating in US Controlled Zones in Syria

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Previous reports that the United States is protecting and harboring ISIS near its positions in al-Tanf have been given even more credence with the recent statements of the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov.

“We have plenty of reports about strange things happening in the Al-Tanf area,” [Sergei Lavrov said on Monday](#). “This area has no particular military value in terms of fighting terrorism. And in practical terms, we see a rise of presence in the region of militant groups, including those we believe to be connected with Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) in this or that way, including in the Rukban refugee camp.”

“This zone was created under manufactured justification with no military necessity,” he said. “If [the Americans] are arriving at the same conclusions, I expect this to translate into a practical implementation.”

Lavrov pointed out that, while he saw no indications that the U.S. was preparing to withdraw from Tanf, he would welcome their doing so.

Back on March 3, the Russian Defense Minister, Alexander Fomin, said that the United States was using its Special Forces operatives based in al-Tanf near the Iraqi border to create a “reserve for terrorists.”

[As al-Masdar News writes](#),

Despite repeated promises to fully withdraw from their garrison at Al-Tanf, US special forces remain embedded throughout a 55 kilometer by 55 kilometer area throughout the region with recent reports suggesting that an additional six hundred American operatives are to be moved there.

Syrian pro-government forces who attempt to enter the US security perimeter near Al-Tanf are subject to airstrikes by coalition warplanes.

The Russian Ministry of Defense [called out the US base as a “black hole” region](#) that terrorists were able to use as their own base. The RT report from October, 2017 states,

The 100km area around the US Al-Tanf base near the Syrian-Jordanian border has become a “black hole” which ISIS terrorists use to carry out attacks against

Syrian troops and civilians, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

The base, set up by the US in April 2017 near the border town of Al-Tanf, is becoming a problem for Syrian troops combatting Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) terrorists in Deir ez-Zor province, the statement says.

“Unlawful establishment by the US of this military base on Syria-Jordan border in April this year has been publicly justified by ‘the need to conduct operations against IS,’” the statement reads.

However, “there were no reports of a single American operation against Islamic State during the six months of its existence,” the Russian Defense Ministry said.

“Though the Pentagon repeatedly claimed that the base is used to train the so-called ‘New Syrian Army’ by the coalition instructors from the US, the UK and Norway,” it has become “a 100-kilometer black hole” on the Syria-Jordan border, the statement added.

The ministry also accused the US of not letting humanitarian convoys through the area to reach the Rukban refugee camp, which is located close to the base.

The camp is reportedly hosting around 60,000 women and children from Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor.

The refugees in Rukban serve as a “human shield” for the American base, the ministry’s spokesman, Major-General Igor Konashenkov, said.



[On August 8, 2016](#) the BBC published photographs and reported on yet another illegal incursion into Syria by Western NATO forces and yet another violation of Syrian national sovereignty by the U.K. This time, the photographs showed British Special Forces operating on the ground inside Syria in al-Tanf, near the Syrian-Iraq border, an area that is also near the Jordanian border.

The pictures themselves date back to June of this 2016 and appear to have been taken shortly after a battle at al-Tanf between the New Syrian Army and ISIS, both Western-backed terrorist organizations. The British soldiers were photographed allegedly setting up a perimeter in order to guard the NSA base from further incursion by ISIS.

[As the BBC reports,](#)

According to eyewitnesses, they were there in a defensive role. But they are carrying an arsenal of equipment including sniper rifles, heavy machine guns and anti-tank missiles.

If IS attacked again they would have been able to put up a considerable fight.

A New Syrian Army's spokesman refused to comment on the pictures of the special forces, but acknowledged their help.

He said: "We are receiving special forces training from our British and American partners. We're also getting weapons and equipment from the Pentagon as well as complete air support."

[Kareem Shaheen and Ewan McAskill of The Guardian](#) added more detail in their own report published on August 9, 2016. They wrote,

It is believed to be the first time British forces have been photographed operating inside [Syria](#), where they are engaged in relatively small numbers in wide-ranging roles that include surveillance, advisory and combat.

The images depict British special forces sitting on Thalab long-range patrol vehicles as they move around the perimeter of a rebel base close to the Syria-Iraq border.

The Thalab (Fox) vehicles are essentially modified, militarised and upgraded Toyota 4x4s used for long distance reconnaissance and surveillance missions, which were developed jointly in the middle of the last decade by a state-backed defence company in Jordan and the UK company Jankel.

The vehicle, which has mounted weaponry and is often used for border patrols, has been primarily used by Jordanian special forces.

Al-Tanf, where the vehicles were reportedly photographed, is a border crossing between Syria and Iraq that had been under Isis control, and is also not far from the Jordanian border. It is unclear how many Nato countries have deployed the modified trucks, though Belgium ordered a shipment of modified Fox vehicles earlier this year.

The images seem to show British forces securing the perimeter of the rebel base following an attack by Isis, according to the BBC. The soldiers can be seen carrying anti-tank missiles, sniper rifles and other heavy artillery.

The New Syrian Army is designated as a "moderate" terrorist organization and fights under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army, another Western-backed "moderate" operation that has committed innumerable horrific acts of violence and atrocities all throughout the Syrian crisis. It should be noted that the terrorist group that [beheaded a young child](#) on camera weeks ago, Nour al-Din al-Zenghi, was also considered a "moderate" organization and one that had [been "vetted" by the U.S. State Department](#) as worthy of receiving TOW missiles. [As Michael Uhler of SouthFront describes the NSA,](#)

Unlike the clear knowledge surrounding American-YPG relations of involvement, much less is known about US ties to the groups operating in the deserts of southern Syria. Two important groups operating in this area are the 'Forces of the Martyr Ahmad al-Abdo' (Arabic: قوات الشهيد احمد العبدہ) and the 'New Syrian Army' (NSyA) (Arabic: جيش سوريا الجديد). Although both of the aforementioned groups receive support from the US, the level of involvement differs. The partnership between America and the NSyA can be regarded as tighter than that of the YPG. Even though the NSyA could arguably be one of the smallest groups comprised under the so-called 'FSA', the level of training, coordination and equipment surpasses most other groups. Rumors have circulated indicating the possibility of Jordanian special forces within its contingent. (The NSyA has coordinated with the Iraqi government on multiple occasions surrounding the Syrian-Iraqi border). King Abdullah II of Jordan revealed earlier this year that Jordanian special forces were indeed participating with rebels in [this area](#).

The sudden appearance of the NSyA occurred on November 15th, 2015. The NSyA launched its first operation on al-Tanf, which resulted in an attack on ammunition storehouses as well as on a [bomb factory](#). Not much more information other than this [video](#) has been released about this raid. Bolstered by Jordan and America, the degree of cooperation can be seen in the group's operational security (OPSEC). Quite different from the groups which fall under the umbrella of the FSA, the NSyA appears to be very professional and keen on keeping any sort of identification to a minimum.

It is thus noteworthy that a group working so close with UK Special Forces and, perhaps, Jordanian Special Forces would also be the group that is so keen on keeping the identities of its fighters secret. While this may simply be a result of better training by Western Special Forces (despite relatively poor battlefield performance), many might be caused to wonder whether or not the Special Forces troops themselves make up the ranks of the group, making privacy a necessity not present with other terrorist groups across the country.

It is also worth noting that the photographs were taken in June, the same general time frame as when the United States and Russian jets [nearly clashed in the skies above al-Tanf](#).

"The mid-air confrontation occurred between F/A-18 fighters scrambled by the Pentagon and several SU-34s, Moscow's most advanced bombers," [Ted Thornhill wrote for the Daily Mail](#). "The Russian jets had struck a 200-strong garrison of Syrian rebels fighting the Islamic State in At-Tanf, near the Jordanian border."

The Russian military did not deny the bombing raid but it did deny that it targeted Western-backed terrorists (i.e. terrorists publicly claimed by the United States), making the argument that the United States did not make the positions of its proxy terrorists known to the Russian Air Force. Russian Major General Igor Konashenkov, Spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry, claimed the air strike was more than 300 kilometers (186 miles) away from the areas the U.S. had designated as being "controlled by legitimate opposition forces."

It was not made clear which terrorist organization was being bombed specifically but, given the time frame and location, it is reasonable to wonder whether or not the NSA was the actual target of the Russian bombers and the reason the bombing mission provoked such a strong response from the U.S.

AL RUKBAN REFUGEE CAMP – Some 80,000 people are trapped in a scrub land of hopelessness in a forgotten corner of the Middle East.

Huddling in the wind, walled in by desert sandbanks, they have been driven there by war. Abandoned by governments, they are preyed on by the very ISIS gunmen and suicide bombers they fled their homelands to escape.

NBC News was given unique access to the area where Rukban straddles a rocky, arid no man's land along the border linking Syria and Jordan – an important American ally, and a key member of the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS.

Screenshot from NBC News

There is also the question of the Rukban refugee camp which rests on the Jordanian-Syrian border, housing up to 80,000 internally displaced people. The camp is located not far from the US base in Tanf and the US has [long hampered](#) any UN and other humanitarian aid organizations' aid deliveries from being made to the camp. It has also long been known that thousands of people in Rukban are "militants." In fact, the [ISIS presence in Rukban](#) is so great that Jordan will not even use helicopters to deliver aid out of fear of being shot down by ISIS forces inhabiting it.

So what is the US hiding? Why not assist the UN in bringing aid to the people who are suffering?

Some speculate that the Rukban camp is both a "human shield" for America's Tanf base. Others, however, suggest that the camp is a jihadist farm, where American forces can select and house terrorists to be trained at the US base and subsequently be let loose against the Syrian government or be used as an excuse to extend the American occupation further.

But are those terrorists ISIS proper or the New Syrian Army? The truth is that it doesn't really matter. Names of terrorist groups are more important to the terrorists themselves and for Western propagandist purposes than to anyone or for anything else. Names like ISIS are used primarily for political reasons and can be changed at will. What was ISIS yesterday may very well be New Syrian Army today. If you're a Syrian civilian, however, they look exactly alike in every facet.

Regardless, what is known for certain is that both the United States and the U.K. have egregiously violated Syrian national sovereignty and are working alongside terrorists for the purpose of destroying the secular government of Bashar al-Assad. For this claim, no speculation is necessary.

Lavrov's statement, while tempered, shows that the Russians are becoming increasingly aware or, at least, increasingly willing to speak out about American collusion and direction of terrorist organizations in a public forum.

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Brandon Turbeville writes for Activist Post - [article archive here](#) - He is the author of seven books, [Codex Alimentarius — The End of Health Freedom](#), [7 Real Conspiracies](#), [Five Sense Solutions](#) and [Dispatches From a Dissident, volume 1](#) and [volume 2](#), [The Road to Damascus: The Anglo-American Assault on Syria](#), [The Difference it Makes: 36 Reasons Why Hillary Clinton Should Never Be President](#), and [Resisting The Empire: The Plan To Destroy Syria And How The Future Of The World Depends On The Outcome](#). Turbeville has published over 1000 articles on a wide variety of subjects including health, economics, government corruption, and civil liberties. Brandon Turbeville's radio show Truth on The Tracks can be found every Monday night 9 pm EST at [UCYTV](#). His website is [BrandonTurbeville.com](#) He is available for radio and TV interviews. Please contact activistpost (at) [gmail.com](#).

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