

Video: Foreign Powers to Increase Support to Al Qaeda Militants in Syria

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Global Research, April 21, 2017

[South Front](#) 20 April 2017

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

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) continued its operations in the city of Daraa. HTS forces are attacking the remaining Syrian Army points in the northern part of Al-Manshiyeh and the nearby areas. On April 19th, HTS claimed that it had managed to destroy a tank and a heavy rocket launcher belonging to the Syrian army in the al-Sajna district north of Al-Manshiyeh. HTS also used an explosive house to target the remaining Syrian Army positions in Al-Manshiyeh.

The US Special Operations Forces reportedly carried out an air landing in three sites in the ISIS-held area in eastern Syria last Monday night. US forces landed in the area of the Maizala Dam, the desert town of Granig, and the surrounding area of the T2 in Al-Tanf in the Al-Mayadin desert, according to local sources.

On April 19th, ISIS announced in Deir Ezzor mosques that US troops had evacuate spies who used to work in the area. If true, this would be the fourth time during this month alone in which the US has evacuated spies from the ISIS-held areas.

Pro-militant sources have announced that so-called opposition forces have created a new militant group, the Eastern Shield Army (or the Al-Sharqiyah Shield Army) in order to capture Qamishly, Haskhah, Deir Ezzor, and Raqqah. The Al-Sharqiyah Shield Army will fight the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and ISIS. The group also released a video showing a few poorly armed fighters during what appeared to be a military training exercise.

Meanwhile, another militant alliance is being set up in order to consolidate military control in the province of Idlib, in northern Latakia and in western Aleppo, Al Jazeera English reported, citing its own sources in the Free Syrian Army. The newly formed militant alliance will allegedly be funded by the so-called "Friends of Syria", in other words, the United States, the EU, Turkey, and Gulf monarchies. It is stated in the report that the newly formed alliance will fight the Syrian government and will not fight Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda). Indeed, nobody is surprised with this decision. So-called moderate opposition groups backed up by the Friends of Syria are well known friends of al-Qaeda. It's interesting to note that it is also stated in the Al Jazeera report that in January of 2016 the CIA pressured some militant groups in order to force them to ignore the Astana talks backed up by Moscow, Tehran, and Ankara.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), predominantly consisting of members of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), has created a "civilian council" to rule the Syrian

city of Raqqa after its expected liberation from ISIS terrorists. The announcement took place after a meeting in the SDF-held town of Ain Issa located north of Raqqa.

These developments clearly show that foreign sponsors of various factions involved in the war are increasing their activity in Syria ahead of the expected division of spheres of influence after the collapse of ISIS.

Now, the key question is what areas will the sides really control after the fall of ISIS. An important competition will take place for gas and oil fields in the countryside of Palmyra and Deir Ezzor.

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