

Washington Supports ISIS and Al Qaeda: Russia Finds - Shaming The U.S. Government Into Action Can Work...

By [Moon of Alabama](#)

Global Research, October 04, 2016

[Moon of Alabama](#) 3 October 2016

Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation, Terrorism](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Russia has now managed twice to shame the U.S. into action against Jihadis by publicly demonstrating that the U.S. is not really committed to its promises.

During 2014 and 2015 the U.S. did very little to attack the Islamic State. U.S. strikes hit irrelevant targets [like](#) an “ISIS excavator” or some lone truck. Meanwhile ISIS was making millions per day from pumping oil out of the Syrian desert and selling it to Turkish contacts. Hundreds of Turkish tanker trucks assembled near the oil wells in south-east Syria waiting to load. No airstrike would hit them.

The Russians saw this and were appalled. The loudmouth U.S. spoke about its big coalition and attacking ISIS but did essentially nothing. The Russian President Putin then decided to shame the U.S. and Obama personally. On November 15 2015 at the G20 meeting in Turkey he walked around the table and [showed](#) satellite pictures to his international colleagues. Hundreds of trucks waiting in the Syrian desert for loading without fear that anyone would harm them:

“I’ve demonstrated the pictures from space to our colleagues, which clearly show the true size of the illegal trade of oil and petroleum products market. Car convoys stretching for dozens of kilometers, going beyond the horizon when seen from a height of four-five thousand meters,” Putin told reporters after the G20 summit.

The very next day on November 16 U.S. airplanes, for the first time, [hit truck assemblies](#) near ISIS oil wells in south-east Syria:

In the first wave of U.S. airstrikes since the Paris attacks, A-10 Thunderbolt ground attack aircraft and AC-130 gunships raked a convoy of more than 100 ISIS oil tanker trucks in Syria in a stepped-up effort to cut off a main source of terror funding, the Pentagon said Monday.

Putin had successfully shamed Obama into attacking ISIS’s oil revenue.

Something similar happened Friday and today. First the Russian Foreign Minister [accused](#) the U.S. of complicity with al-Qaeda:

The Russian foreign minister said Russia has “more and more reasons to believe that from the very beginning the plan was to spare Al-Nusra and to keep it just in case for Plan B or stage two, when it would be time to change the regime.”

At the daily State Department press briefing on Friday, State spokesman Toner [was grilled](#) by multiple reporters over Lavrov’s accusations and the lack of U.S. attacks on al-Qaeda in Syria (aka Jabhat al-Nusra aka Jabhat Fateh al-Sham):

QUESTION: In that interview with the BBC, Foreign Secretary – Foreign Minister Lavrov said what the Russians have been saying for a number of days now, which is that accusing the United States of having failed to disentangle the Nusra from the opposition that you support.MR TONER: Yeah. [...]

Once we felt that we were at that point, to the best of an agreed-upon ability to reach that point, then we would say, okay, we’re ready to move on to the next phase. At that point, as I said, then it’s – the moderate opposition who are integrated with al-Nusra would have had a choice to make.

QUESTION: So in other words, are they making a fair point here —

MR TONER: So —

QUESTION: — the Russians? That they say you failed to do the disentangling?

MR TONER: No, because there wasn’t enough time. ...

QUESTION: What – just a final question: And again, with the regards to the Russian suspicions, you haven’t really gone after Nusra that much. Have you been holding back on going after Nusra because they were mixed with the opposition? I mean, all we hear about is the strikes on ISIS.

MR TONER: Yeah, so —

QUESTION: We don’t hear about strikes on Nusra.

MR TONER: So —

(For your amusement read the longer transcript excerpt below this post or read the [full one](#) at the State Department website.)

State spoks Mark Toner admits that no U.S. strike had hit Nusra since March this year. His excuses are paltry and in the end he punts to the Pentagon. He really got his balls squeezed.

But that pressure, initiated by the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, created results. The U.S. was shamed into action and today killed some Nusra number 2: [Pentagon: US targets ‘core al-Qaida’ member in Syria strike](#).

Al-Qaeda [confirmed](#) the strike:

LBCI News English Verified account @LBCI_News_ENJabhat Fateh al-Sham, former Nusra Front, says Egyptian al-Qaeda cleric Abu al-Faraj al-Masri killed in

#US led coalition strike in #Idlib

10:17 AM - 3 Oct 2016

This is the very first strike on al-Qaeda in Syria, a UN designated terrorist organization which the U.S. vowed to fight, since March 2016. It comes a weekend after Lavrov accused the U.S. of not striking Nusra and a grilling at the State Department briefing.

The Russian shaming has again worked.

But it is not yet clear if this U.S. reaction to the shaming is serious, if more strikes will follow.

Abu al-Faraj al-Masri was a high commander who has been on various target list for a long time. But he was not near any U.S. proxy force fighting together with Nusra. One expert is somewhat [skeptical](#):

Elijah J. Magnier @EjmAlraiEx-Nusra (JFS) account announce the death of Egyptian Ahmad Salama Mabrouk, aka Abu Faraj al Masri, 2d in command of JFS & #AQ core leader [pic](#)

9:50 AM - 3 Oct 2016

...
Mabrouk was killed by a drone in Darkouch, #Idlib, #Syria, the HQ and gathering of #AQ/#Nusra/#JFS & Jihadists.

...
#JFS officially announce the death of Abu al-Faraj al-Masri, #AQ leader. Group still calming "we have nothing to do with Qaidat al-Jihad".

...
This is the same group that the #USA is not willing to ask its proxies in #Syria to keep a distance from (#AQ).

While the shaming worked in that it provoked the U.S. into action it had long promised but always delayed other issues between the U.S. and Russia on Syria are not going well.

Russia [announced](#) the end of military-military discussions with the U.S. about delineating zones for a longer ceasefire in Syria:

Exchange of information between Russian and US military has stopped of late despite Moscow's commitment, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said on Monday.

The U.S. [responded](#) in kind:

The United States is suspending its participation in bilateral channels with Russia that were established to sustain the Cessation of Hostilities.

...
The U.S. will also withdraw personnel that had been dispatched in anticipation of the possible establishment of the Joint Implementation Center. To ensure the safety of our respective military personnel and enable the fight against Daesh, the United States will continue to utilize the channel of communications established with Russia to de-conflict counterterrorism operations in Syria.

The U.S. blames Russia for destroying the ceasefire by “hitting civilians”. [Meanwhile](#):

Syria Today @todayinsyria Airstrikes by the US-led coalition reportedly killed 40 civilians in Marea, N.#Aleppo

10:30 AM - 3 Oct 2016

This ending of cooperation MAY be some crossing the Rubicon moment. The gloves are now off.

Russia has managed twice to shame the U.S. into action it had promised but not fulfilled. This will work only rarely and only when it comes at high levels (Putin, Lavrov) and with obvious evidence.

But its fun when it works and it proves that Russia, in both cases, has been right. The U.S. does not attack Jihadis but uses them for its own purpose. We will now likely see even more of this. It will continue until the U.S. is again shamed and embarrassed into following its public commitments to attack the terrorist instead of cooperating with them.

-End

Relevant excerpts of the [Sep 29 State Department press briefing](#) regarding U.S. attacks on Nusrah:

QUESTION: In that interview with the BBC, Foreign Secretary - Foreign Minister Lavrov said what the Russians have been saying for a number of days now, which is that accusing the United States of having failed to disentangle the Nusrah from the opposition that you support.MR TONER: Yeah. ...

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...

[Second, different question-answer exchange]

...
MR TONER: [...] In answer to your first question, which was, again, about?

QUESTION: We keep hearing about —

MR TONER: Yeah.

QUESTION: — striking ISIS, but never —

MR TONER: Oh.

QUESTION: — about striking Nusrah.

MR TONER: We did carry out strikes initially, back in 2014-2015, against Nusrah. But absolutely, you're correct in that, as they became intermingled and as they became intermingled in civilian areas, we've always sought to limit the possibility of civilian casualties in any of our airstrikes. ...

...
QUESTION: Could I just ask a follow-up?

MR TONER: Of course. I'll get to you.

QUESTION: You hit Nusrah - I believe you described it as al-Qaida - maybe in March —

MR TONER: Affiliate, yeah.

QUESTION: — or something or - it was earlier this year.

MR TONER: Yep.

QUESTION: Since then, there hasn't been any specific action against Nusrah, is that right? Military action.

MR TONER: No, but I'd have to double check.

QUESTION: Okay.

...
QUESTION: Why aren't you attacking Nusrah anyhow if it's in U.S. interest?

MR TONER: That's what I was saying, is - but I - and I'm sorry if I wasn't clear —

QUESTION: No, no. I understand what you're saying, but how would that change by cooperating with Russia? You still wouldn't attack civilian populations, buildings —

MR TONER: No, but I - but what we, again - and I'm - I would really encourage you to talk to someone at the Pentagon who can give you a much more detailed tactical view of this. ...

...
QUESTION: If you had actionable intelligence against Nusrah senior leaders, as you describe them, would you —

MR TONER: Would we —

QUESTION: — be able to target them today or not? Because Aleppo and Idlib and a lot of these areas —

MR TONER: Yeah.

QUESTION: — are out of your - are they in the confliction zone?

MR TONER: I would - I don't want to - so I would encourage you to talk to somebody —

QUESTION: Okay.

MR TONER: — from the Department of Defense, whether we would be able to - through our de-confliction mechanism be able to target them.

QUESTION: Okay.

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