

Why the ‘Sultan of Chaos’ is Freaking Out. “Saudi Prince Turki, Former Mentor of bin Laden on PR Offensive”

By [Pepe Escobar](#)

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Picture sleepless nights at ‘Sultan’ Erdogan’s palace in Ankara. Imagine him livid when he learns the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), backed by Russian air power, started a preemptive Battle of Aleppo – through the Bayirbucak region – cutting off Ankara’s top weaponizing corridor and Jihadi highway.

Who controls this corridor will control the final outcome of the war in Syria.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, the remote-controlled Syrian opposition, a.k.a. High Negotiations Committee, graphically demonstrated they never wanted to meet with the Damascus delegation in the first place – “proximity” talks or otherwise, even after Washington and Moscow roughly agreed on a two-year transition plan leading to a theoretically secular, nonsectarian Syria.



Residents inspect damage after airstrikes by pro-Syrian government forces in Anadan city, about 10 kilometers away from the towns of Nubul and Zahraa, Northern Aleppo countryside, Syria February 3, 2016. © Abdalrhman Ismail / Reuters

The Saudi front wanted no less than Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam and all Jabhat al-Nusra, a.k.a. al-Qaeda in Syria, collaborators at the table in Geneva. So the Geneva charade, quicker than one can say “Road to Aleppo!” was exposed for what it is.

And forget about NATO

Notorious Saudi intel mastermind Prince Turki, a former mentor of one Osama bin Laden, has been to Paris on a PR offensive; all he could muster was an avalanche of non-denial denials – and [blaming](#) the whole Syria tragedy on Bashar al-Assad.

The bulk of the Syrian ‘opposition’ used to be armchair warriors co-opted by the CIA for years, as well as CIA Muslim Brotherhood patsies/vassals. Many of these characters preferred the joys of Paris to a hard slog on Syrian ground. Now the ‘opposition’ is basically warlords answering to the House of Saud even for bottles of water – regardless of the suit-and-tie former Ba’ath Party ministers handpicked to be the face of the opposition for the gullible Western corporate media.

Meanwhile, the '4+1' – Russia, Syria, Iran, Iraq, plus Hezbollah – is now winning decisive facts on the ground. The break down; there won't be regime change in Damascus. Yet no one broke the news to the Turks and Saudis.

'Sultan' Erdogan is wallowing in a sea of desperation. He continues to divert the gravely serious issues at stake to his own war against the PYD – the umbrella organization of the Syrian Kurds – and the YPG (People's Protection Units, their military wing). Erdogan and Prime Minister Davutoglu wanted the PYD not only banned from Geneva but they want it smashed on the ground, as they see the PYD/YPG as "terrorists" allied to the PKK.



U.N. mediator for Syria Staffan de Mistura gestures during a news conference on the Syrian peace talks outside President Wilson hotel in Geneva, Switzerland February 3, 2016. © Denis Balibouse / Reuters

Yet what is 'Sultan' Erdogan going to do? Defy the recently arrived 4G++ Sukhoi Su-35S fighters – which are scaring the hell out of every NATO Dr. Strangelove? The Turkish Air Force putting its bases on "orange alert" may scare the odd vagrant dog at best. The same applies to NATO Secretary-General, figurehead Jens Stoltenberg, pleading to Russia "to act responsibly and fully respect NATO airspace."

Moscow is going after the Turkmen with a vengeance and at the same time providing air support to the PYD west of the Euphrates. That hits the 'Sultan' in his heart of hearts; after all Erdogan has threatened multiple times that a PYD/YPG advance west of the Euphrates is the ultimate red line.

An already scared NATO won't support the folly of an Erdogan war against Russia – as much as US and UK neocons may crave it; as NATO decisions must be unanimous, the last thing EU powers Germany and France want is yet another Southwest Asia war. NATO may deploy the odd Patriot missiles in southern Anatolia and the odd AWACs to support the Turkish Air Force. But that's it.

Pick your favorite regime change

ISIS/ISIL/Daesh, meanwhile, continues to profit from its own Jihadi highway across a 98 kilometer stretch of Turkish/Syrian border, especially in Jarablus and Al Rai across from Gaziantep and Kilis in Turkey.

Taking a cue from Israel, Ankara is building a [wall](#) – 3.6 meters high, 2.5 meters wide – covering the stretch between Elbeyli and Kilis, essentially for propaganda purposes. Because the Jihadi Highway, for all practical purposes, remains open – even as Turkish Armed Forces may apprehend the odd trespasser (always released). We're talking about a monster smuggler/soldier [scam](#); as much as \$300 change hands for each night crossing and a noncommissioned Turkish officer may earn as much as \$2,500 to look the other way for a few minutes.

The real question is why Gaziantep is not under a curfew imposed from Ankara, with thousands of Turkish Special Forces actually fighting a "war on terra" on the spot. That's because Ankara and provincial authorities couldn't give a damn; the real priority is Erdogan's war on the Kurds.

This brings us to the only leverage the 'Sultan' may enjoy at the moment. From Brussels to

Berlin, sound minds are terrified that the EU is now actually hostage to Erdogan's Kurd "priority", while Ankara is doing next to nothing to fight massive migrant smuggling.

When Davutoglu went to Berlin recently not only did he make no promises; he re-stressed Erdogan's vow to "annihilate" the Syrian Kurds.

And that explains German Chancellor Angela Merkel's own desperation. How could the alleged most powerful politician in Europe falls for such a [crude](#) extortion racket? The 'Sultan' wants a lot of cash, a lot of concessions, and even a further shot at entering the EU. Otherwise, he won't turn off the tap on the grim refugee flood.

No wonder the regime change rumor mill is frantic. In Ankara? No; in Berlin.

Pepe Escobar is an independent geopolitical analyst. He writes for RT, Sputnik and TomDispatch, and is a frequent contributor to websites and radio and TV shows ranging from the US to East Asia. He is the former roving correspondent for Asia Times Online. Born in Brazil, he's been a foreign correspondent since 1985, and has lived in London, Paris, Milan, Los Angeles, Washington, Bangkok and Hong Kong. Even before 9/11 he specialized in covering the arc from the Middle East to Central and East Asia, with an emphasis on Big Power geopolitics and energy wars. He is the author of "Globalistan" (2007), "Red Zone Blues" (2007), "Obama does Globalistan" (2009) and "Empire of Chaos" (2014), all published by Nimble Books. His latest book is "2030", also by Nimble Books, out in December 2015.

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