



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 25, 2013

Rand Paul: Senate Is Arming Al-Qaeda and Rushing to War in Syria

“This is an important moment. You will be funding, today, the allies of al Qaeda.”

That was the declaration Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.; pictured) made on May 21 during a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Paul’s comments were directed at his colleagues, nearly all of whom voted to send arms to Syrian rebels.



Senators Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) co-sponsored the bill that authorizes “critical support to the Syrian opposition through provision of military assistance, training, and additional humanitarian support.”

The bill sailed through the committee, passing with bipartisan support by a vote of 15-3.

Senator Paul offered two amendments to the bill — officially styled the [Syria Transition Support Act](#) — one that would have forbidden the transfer of weapons to the rebel forces fighting to oust the government of current Syrian president Bashar al-Asad, and another that would have prevented the use of U.S. military armed forces in Syria.

Both of Paul’s amendments were rejected by the committee.

Apart from supplying lethal and non-lethal weaponry to Syrian opposition forces, the Menendez-Corker bill contains several other regime-toppling provisions, all of which are [boastfully reported by Mendendez on his website](#). They include:

- “Creation of a \$250 million transition fund each year through FY2015 drawn from funds otherwise appropriated for regional transition support”;
- “Sanctions on arms and oil sales to Assad: Targeting any person that the President of the United States determines has knowingly participated in or facilitated a transaction related to the sale or transfer of military equipment, arms, petroleum, or petroleum products to the Assad regime.”; and
- “Amendment to the Syria Accountability Act: To allow for sanctions removal once a transitional government is in place and certain terrorism and WMD criteria have been met.”

Neither Paul’s warnings nor his amendments were enough to counteract the powerful politicians pushing to arm the Syrian rebels. A cadre of lawmakers from seemingly distinct bands of the political spectrum lined up behind the move to add Syria to the list of Middle Eastern countries with U.S.-approved ruling parties. As in the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, these dictators-in-waiting will walk a path to power paved with American money and likely covered in the blood of American soldiers.

Rubio, described by many as [a Tea Party favorite](#), chastised Senator Paul, refuting his allegation that a vote for arming the Syrian rebels was tantamount to giving guns to al-Qaeda.



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"I don't think any member of this committee would vote for anything we thought was going to arm al Qaeda," said Rubio.

Mendendez piled on, saying, "Al Qaeda, unfortunately, is well-armed. That is the present reality in Syria."

Senator Corker tried striking a less hostile tone, arguing that arming rebels vetted by Congress — as called for in his bill — would prevent U.S. weaponry from being funneled into more radical segments of the coalition of anti-Assad armed forces.

Seeing through Corker's false dilemma, Paul responded, saying, "It's impossible to know who our friends are." He later said that the vote was nothing more than a "rush to war."

In an exclusive interview with *The New American*, Senator Paul pointed out the irony in the fact that the original Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) enacted after September 11, 2001 called for finding and destroying al-Qaeda, while the legislation passed on May 21 by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would arm known associates of that very organization.

"These people [Syrian rebels] will say they love America knowing that that's how to get weapons. They lie to us and then shoot us in the back," Paul explained.

Another bit of irony apparently lost on 15 members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is the fact that the United States has walked this road before. In the 1980s, Congress voted to arm militant Islamic forces under the pretext that the enemy of our enemy was our friend. Then, within 20 years, the very beneficiaries of U.S. military largesse in Afghanistan seized control of that country and reportedly sheltered and trained the men who carried out the attacks of September 11.

One wonders how (or if) the Senate fails to appreciate the destruction that will surely come from once again sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind that comes from arming those who would do us harm. Some senators, however, seemed determined to deploy troops in every corner of the planet, regardless of the fact these young men and women could be killed by militants armed with weapons supplied by their very own government.

Never one to miss a chance to take his turn banging on the war drum, Senator John McCain mocked an amendment offered by Senator Tom Udall (D-N.M.) that would have placed more stringent controls on the type of weapon shipped to Syrian rebels.

"The senator from New Mexico wants to use shotguns against SCUD missiles," McCain said.

Rand Paul has been banging another drum, however. During the hearings on the attack on the American mission in Benghazi, Libya, Paul brought up the possibility that the Obama administration was covering up the existence of a gun running pipeline running throughout the Middle East.

Paul, in fact, tried to get answers to these questions from then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during the [Senate's investigation of the Benghazi raid](#) that left four people dead, including U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. Addressing Secretary Clinton, Paul asked directly, "Is the U. S. involved with any procuring of weapons, transfer of weapons, buying, selling, anyhow transferring weapons to Turkey out of Libya?"

Clinton demurred, claiming that she'd never heard about that allegation.

Undaunted, Paul continued, "It's been in news reports that ships have been leaving from Libya and that may have weapons, and what I'd like to know is the annex that was close by, were they involved with



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procuring, buying, selling, obtaining weapons, and were any of these weapons being transferred to other countries, any countries, Turkey included?"

Always the savvy politician, Clinton responded, "Well, Senator, you'll have to direct that question to the agency that ran the annex. I will see what information is available."

"You're saying you don't know?" asked Paul.

"I do not know," Clinton said. "I don't have any information on that."

Americans have a right to know, however, who's receiving millions in tax dollars taken from them.

A [Reuters article from last August](#), which detailed a secret order signed by President Obama providing support to Syrian rebel forces opposing the regime of Bashar al-Assad, noted, "Recent news reports from the region have suggested that the influence and numbers of Islamist militants, some of them connected to al Qaeda or its affiliates, have been growing among Assad's opponents."

Later, *The New American* [covered the same story](#), writing that "Western governments, brutal Sunni-Arab dictatorships, an assortment of terror groups including al-Qaeda, and other powerful interests have all been backing the uprising since long before violence even broke out last year."

In a story covering the violence of the Syrian uprising, [the BBC added credibility to the accusations](#):

The al-Qaeda-styled group in Syria is Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham (the Front for the Protection of the Syrian People).

Like other al-Qaeda affiliated groups, al-Nusra's statements and videos are usually issued by its own media group, al-Manara al-Baida (the White Minaret) in Syria.

Al-Nusra has claimed responsibility for several attacks against the Syrian army, security and shabiha (state-sponsored thugs) since it announced its formation early this year.

Finally, under a headline reading "[Al-Qaida turns tide for rebels in battle for eastern Syria](#)," *The Guardian* (U.K.) reported:

They try to hide their presence. "Some people are worried about carrying the [black] flags," said Abu Khuder. "They fear America will come and fight us. So we fight in secret. Why give Bashar and the west a pretext?" But their existence is common knowledge in Mohassen. Even passers-by joke with the men about car bombs and IEDs [improvised explosive devices].

According to Abu Khuder, his men are working closely with the military council that commands the Free Syrian Army brigades in the region. "We meet almost every day," he said. "We have clear instructions from our [al-Qaida] leadership that if the FSA need our help we should give it. We help them with IEDs and car bombs. Our main talent is in the bombing operations." Abu Khuder's men had a lot of experience in bomb-making from Iraq and elsewhere, he added.

Regardless of Rand Paul's efforts to keep the U.S. from running headlong into an armed conflict in Syria and his accurate depiction of the duplicity of those Syrian opposition forces waiting for the shipment of weapons from the United States, the Senate is speedily moving toward awarding al-Qaeda with crates of technologically advanced U.S. weaponry.

The Menendez-Corker bill will now move to Senate floor for debate by the entire body. A member of the staff of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) told *The New American* that he was unsure when the bill would be put on the calendar.



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Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images

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