



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 28, 2016

CIA Weapons Destined for Syrian Anti-Assad Rebels Sold on Black Market

Weapons that the CIA and Saudi Arabia shipped into Jordan for the so-called moderate Syrian rebels fighting against the regime of Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad were stolen by Jordanian intelligence operatives and sold to arms merchants on the black market, said U.S. and Jordanian officials.



News of the weapons theft was reported for the first time on June 26 after a joint investigation by the *New York Times* and the Qatar-based Al Jazeera news network.

According to the report, the large shipments of weapons purchased by the CIA and other intelligence agencies in the Balkans and other parts of Eastern Europe included Kalashnikov assault rifles, mortars, and rocket-propelled grenades. Following the delivery of the weapons to Jordan, the CIA used Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate (GID) officers to transport the weapons to the Syrian rebels; however, many of them disappeared in transit.

Jordanian officials told the *Times* and Al Jazeera that the theft was apparently conducted by GID officers with direct access to the shipments, who “regularly siphoned truckloads” of the weapons while still delivering some of them to designated drop-off locations. The rogue GID officers sold the stolen weapons at several large arms bazaars in Jordan located in Ma’an, in the southern part of the country; in Sahab, outside Amman; and in the Jordan Valley.

After arms dealers began telling their customers that they had large stocks of U.S.- and Saudi-provided weapons, Jordanian intelligence operatives began monitoring the arms market. Honest operatives not involved in the weapons thefts then began sending reports to GID headquarters noting the growing numbers of weapons on the market and the claims of the arms dealers about their origins.

The report also linked the stolen weapons to a fatal shooting by a fired Jordanian police officer at the Jordan International Police Training Center near Amman, the country’s capital, last November. In that incident, the shooter killed five people, including two American contractors, before being killed by Jordanian security forces. The training facility was set up after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq to help rebuild Iraq’s postwar security forces and to train Palestinian Authority police officers.

The *Times*/Al Jazeera report noted that the training program for which the stolen arms were bound, under the code name Timber Sycamore, is run by the CIA and several Arab intelligence services. In 2013, the operation began to directly arm the anti-Assad rebels. The United States and Saudi Arabia are the biggest contributors to Timber Sycamore, with the Saudis contributing both weapons and large sums of money, and with CIA paramilitary operatives taking the lead in training the rebels to use Kalashnikovs, mortars, antitank guided missiles, and other weapons.

Aside from the fact that the theft of these weapons represents a major embarrassment for the CIA, it is



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a stark reminder of the insanity of our nation's ongoing interventionist foreign policy. First and foremost of the many questions that every American should ask about that foreign policy is: Why is the United States aiding a rebel insurgency against the legitimate (if brutally authoritarian) government of a sovereign nation? In a region where ISIS is universally recognized as the most dangerous terrorist threat not only to the areas it occupies but even beyond them, it might be supposed that destroying ISIS — not Assad — would be the objective of every nation. Yet, as was noted in [an article in *The New American*](#) last August:

Everybody has heard of the group of barbarians styling themselves the Islamic State, or ISIS, or, ISIL, or whatever they're calling themselves this week. These savages are still butchering their way through huge segments of Iraq and Syria with U.S. weapons. What fewer people know about is that this terrorist group is largely the Frankenstein creation of the Obama administration's so-called "anti-ISIS" coalition.

The article quoted a part of Vice President Biden's 2014 speech at Harvard during which he admitted that there was no "moderate middle" among the anti-Assad rebels in Syria, adding that the insurgency was so focused on removing Assad that it was uninterested in stopping ISIS. However, Biden limited his criticism to the aid that our "allies" in the region were supplying to rebels that included terrorist groups and did not mention the aid our own CIA was giving to them. Biden said, in part:

What my constant cry was that our biggest problem was our allies.... What were they doing? They were so determined to take down Assad and have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands, of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight. Except that the people who were being supplied were al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.

Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) speaking on CBS's *This Morning* back in 2014, spoke out against a measure proposed in Congress to aid the Syrian rebels:

It's a mistake to arm them. Most of the arms we've given to the so-called moderate rebels have wound up in the hands of ISIS, because ISIS simply takes it from them, or it's given to them, or we mistakenly actually give it to some of the radicals.

It would seem that the flow of U.S. arms to ISIS was of such magnitude that the recent revelation of CIA weapons being sold on the black market in Jordan is minor in comparison.

A report in *The Hill* on September 15, 2014 cited Paul's assertion that rebel fighters in Syria are focused on overthrowing Syrian President Assad, rather than fighting ISIS and noted that some rebel units had recently agreed to a truce with ISIS.

"I would say one insightful piece of news from the last week is, some of the moderate rebels, so-called moderate rebels have now signed a cease-fire with ISIS," Paul said. "So, really their enemy is really Assad. They don't really care what ISIS does."

As *The New American* has documented as far back as the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, our interventionist foreign policy in the Middle East has only served to destabilize the region and set the stage for the birth of ISIS, and its spread across large areas of both Iraq and Syria. ISIS has gone from relative obscurity to becoming the world's best-known terrorist organization in just two years.

The invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power in 2003 created a power vacuum as the authoritarian but stable government headed by Saddam was filled by an assortment of radicalized



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factions and an ineffective, weak central government in Baghdad unable to maintain order. With the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011, things only worsened, and ISIS began its quest to capture much of Iraq and begin its reign of terror. George W. Bush, who authorized the invasion as president, all but admitted this during an interview with CBS Television's *Face the Nation* in November 2014 — though he still would not admit that the invasion, itself, had been a mistake.

“I think it was the right decision [to go into Iraq],” Bush told CBS News' Bob Schieffer. “My regret is that ... a violent group of people have risen up again.... This is 'Al Qaeda plus' ... they need to be defeated. And I hope we do.... I hope the strategy works.”

That “violent group of people,” of course, is ISIS.

If Bush's action created fertile ground for ISIS in Iraq, his successor, Barack Obama did the same in Syria.

The New American has published multiple articles providing details of how the foreign policy of the Obama administration has contributed to the growth of ISIS and its success in gaining control over much of Syria, including the one we quoted from above.

Sometimes our government has used troops to bring about regime change in the Middle East, and other times it has used the CIA to accomplish this end covertly. Whatever the methodology, however, our intervention in the region has always made things less stable and has fueled the rise of terrorism and Islamic extremism.

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