



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 20, 2017

Trump Ends CIA Aid to Anti-Assad Syrian Rebels Linked to ISIS

President Trump has ended the CIA's covert program to provide arms and supplies to Syrian rebel groups fighting the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad — which have included Al Nusra, al-Qaeda, and other extremist elements that created, armed, funded, and built up ISIS. The CIA's training and arming of jihadist anti-Assad rebels, which started under former President Obama, actually helped create ISIS.



Administration officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told the *Washington Post*, which broke this story, that Trump made the decision to end the covert program more than a month ago, after consulting with National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and CIA Director Mike Pompeo. The decision was made before Trump's July 7 meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 summit in Germany and was not part of U.S.-Russian negotiations on a ceasefire in southwestern Syria, the two officials said.

A Reuters report citing an administration official revealed his frank admission that our government was aware that the CIA aid had benefited ISIS:

A downside of the CIA program, one of the officials said, is that some armed and trained rebels defected to the Islamic State and other radical groups, and some members of the previous administration favored abandoning the program.

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However, U.S. aid to Syrian rebels groups will not end completely. The report continued:

Before assuming office in January, Trump suggested he could end support for Free Syrian Army groups and give priority to the fight against Islamic State.

A separate effort by the U.S. military effort to train, arm and support other Syrian rebel groups with air strikes and other actions will continue, the officials said.

It is refreshing to learn that the Trump administration has discontinued support for the Free Syrian Army, a move that has come years too late. As *The New American's* foreign correspondent, Alex Newman, wrote in his 2015 article, "[ISIS: The Best Terror Threat U.S. Tax Money Can Buy](#)":

Soon, though, the truth about the rebels began creeping out — this was a brutal Sunni-jihadist "revolution," with powerful backers aiming to impose a sharia-run dictatorship in Syria after Assad was gone. Even the supposedly "moderate" rebels backed openly by Western powers — operating under the banner of the "Free Syrian Army" — were exposed as Islamists perpetrating war crimes and cannibalism, exterminating Christians, advocating ethnic cleansing, cooperating with al-Qaeda, and more.

But what of the "moderate" anti-Assad rebels? The sad fact of life is that no such groups exists. This was revealed in several other articles in *The New American*, including one in October 2014, "Obama's



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[“Anti-ISIS” Coalition Built ISIS, Biden Admits.](#)” That report was based on comments made by then-Vice President Joe Biden at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. It noted that in his speech, “Biden stumbled upon another truth long accepted as fact among credible analysts: Despite all of Obama’s rhetoric, there is no such thing as a ‘moderate’ force in Syria that the White House claims to have been supporting against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.”

While answering a question from a student, Biden said: “The fact is, the ability to identify a moderate middle in Syria, um, was, uh — there was no moderate middle.” He added, “What my constant cry was, that our biggest problem was our allies — our allies in the region were our largest problem.”

Biden went on to explain what our allies then did: “They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad; except that the people who were being supplied were Al Nusra and Al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.”

“Now you think I’m exaggerating — take a look,” Biden continued. “Where did all of this go? So now what’s happening? All of a sudden everybody’s awakened because this outfit called [ISIS], which was Al Qaeda in Iraq, which when they were essentially thrown out of Iraq, found open space in territory in eastern Syria, work with Al Nusra who we declared a terrorist group early on, and we could not convince our colleagues to stop supplying them.”

Conveniently, noted Newman: “[Biden] did not mention the role of the CIA and the State Department in the process, of course, but that has been well documented by countless sources.”

The administration officials told the *Post* that phasing out the covert program was a way to improve relations with Russia and President Vladimir Putin, who strongly opposed the effort. Russia has backed Assad in his attempt to remain in power during the long civil war against the rebels.

While the ending of the CIA program will be viewed by noninterventionists as encouraging, they will also question the continuation of aid to the “other Syrian rebel groups” mentioned by the administration officials cited earlier. Our government’s track record in distinguishing between forces fighting ISIS and those helping ISIS has been abysmal. Such failures only highlight the folly of intervening in foreign areas where our own interests are not at stake.

Photo of Free Syrian Army fighters: AP Images

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