



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 15, 2013

U.S. to Assad: Negotiate or We Will Further Support the Rebels

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (shown) continues to [pledge](#) support to the Syrian rebels even as they continue to engage in questionable behavior. On Tuesday, Kerry issued a warning to the Syrian government that a lack of negotiations on the part of Assad's regime will result in the United States providing the rebels with further help.



Appearing in Stockholm, Sweden, Kerry addressed speculations that Assad officials will refuse to attend an upcoming international conference wherein negotiations are expected to take place regarding a peaceful transition in Syria.

"If he decides not to come to the table it will be another one of President Assad's gross miscalculations. Now I don't believe that that is the case at this moment," Kerry told reporters. "If President Assad decides to miscalculate again about that, as he has miscalculated about his own country's future over the course of the last years, it is clear the opposition will be receiving additional support, there will be additional efforts made and unfortunately the violence will not end."

Kerry was not specific about the type of additional support he was pledging, though experience indicates it will involve money and further training.

Last month, the Obama administration pledged to provide \$123 million in aid, which may include armored vehicles, body armor, and other defensive military supplies.

Secretary Kerry announced the pledge in a written statement and urged other foreign backers to make similar pledges.

Kerry also indicated that the U.S. would work with the Syrian opposition to determine how the money is spent, and added that Washington would also provide \$25 million in additional food aid.

"Today, it's safe to say that we are really at a critical moment," Kerry said last month. "The stakes in Syria couldn't be more clear: Chemical weapons, the slaughter of people by ballistic missiles and other weapons of huge destruction. The potential of a whole country, a beautiful country with great people, being torn apart and perhaps breaking up into enclaves (with the) potential of sectarian violence which this region knows there is too much of."

"That is something we're going to continue to work to bring to an end," he told reporters.

Thus far, the United States has committed to providing \$510 million in humanitarian assistance to Syria.

Likewise, reports indicate that the United States has been training and arming Syrian fighters. According to the Associated Press, the training of the rebels has been taking place since late last year,



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but the forces being trained are not members of the leading rebel group, the Free Syrian Army. Likewise, the CIA has been helping to facilitate the distribution of weapons to Syrian rebels for over a year.

Officials who spoke on conditions of anonymity indicate that the training of Syrian rebels is being run by American intelligence, as well as British and French.

Yahoo News [reports](#):

The training in Jordan, however, suggests the U.S. help is aimed somewhat at enhancing the rebels' capacity in southern Syria... Despite months of U.S. and international support to build a cohesive political movement, Syria's fractured opposition is still struggling to rally Syrians behind a common post-Assad vision. And the opposition coalition appears as much hampered by its political infighting as its military deficiencies against an Assad regime arsenal of tanks, fighter jets and Scud missiles.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Monday the United States has "provided some logistical nonlethal support that has also come in handy for the Syrian rebels who are, again, fighting a regime that is not hesitating to use the military might of that regime against its own people.

Meanwhile, as the American foreign policy continues to side with the rebels, there are indications that the rebels are as [barbaric](#) as the Assad regime.

Earlier this week, an unnamed Syrian rebel was captured on video carving the heart out of an enemy that he killed and taking a bite out of it. Antiwar.com [reports](#), "It turns out to be far from being one of those 'caught on tape' moments that was immediately regretted. The rebel, identified now as commander Khaled al-Hamad, is not only unapologetic about the incident but loudly defends it as a 'legitimate' action."

["I swear to God we will eat your hearts](#), Alawite soldiers of Bashar the dog," he declared, adding that "hopefully we will slaughter all of them." Hamad then went on to reference other videos of himself cutting up corpses of slain militia members.

Months ago, the rebel fighters launched a chemical weapons attack in Syria's Aleppo Province which targeted the Syrian military. That source also asserts that the military believes the rocket to have been fired from somewhere near Al-Bab, a district near Aleppo controlled by Jabhat al-Nusra, a jihadist group linked to al-Qaeda. An anonymous source told the *Telegraph* that the military believes the rocket to have been fired from a district under the control of Jabhat al-Nusra, a jihadist group linked to al-Qaeda.

Last October, the rebel forces were responsible for four suicide bombings in Aleppo that killed approximately 40 civilians and wounded many more. The *Daily Mail* explained that the square targeted by the suicide bombings was in a government-controlled district in western Aleppo. According to the *Mail*, "Rebels have resorted to bomb attacks in areas still controlled by President Assad." Jabhat al-Nusra, a group linked to al-Qaeda, has taken credit for the bombings.

Additionally, the rebels were also responsible for the massacre of over 90 people in [Houla](#) last year. Immediately following that event, the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany blamed al-Assad for the killings and expelled Syria's ambassadors from their countries in protest. Later reports, however, pointed to evidence that the massacre was in fact carried out by anti-al-Assad rebel forces.

Still, the United States has maintained its loyalty to the rebel forces.

Kerry remains confident that the Assad regime will participate in the upcoming negotiations, and indicates that Assad's government has already provided the names of potential negotiators, signaling its



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intent to participate. "I keep hearing some people suggest somehow that the process is moving away, not closer," Kerry said. "I just don't agree with that. Enormous plans are being laid."

Kerry asserts that the negotiations are intended to protect the Syrian people. "If Assad decides not to come, the world will see how empty his rhetoric is as well as his intent," Kerry said.

Photo of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry: AP Images



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