



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 4, 2013

Obama-backed War Making Syria a Jihad Haven; Europe Threatened

With thousands of foreign jihadists flooding into Syria to wage a [Western-backed “holy war”](#) against the secular Bashir al-Assad regime, new research [suggests](#) the war-ravaged nation could be on its way to becoming a breeding ground for dangerous Islamic extremists that might rival even Iraq and Afghanistan. According to a [report](#) released this week, hundreds of European Muslims have also joined the [Obama administration-supported](#) Islamist “rebels” in Syria — presenting a significant potential terror threat to the West when the well-trained and battle-hardened militants return home.



Estimates compiled by the London-based International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) suggest the foreign-funded “regime change” operation in Syria has mobilized Muslims around the world to a “significant” extent. Relying on more than 450 Western and Arab media sources as well as “martyrdom notices” posted online, the ICSR found that up to 600 Europeans have gone to fight in the war. According to the report, more than 10 percent of the foreign fighters could be coming from Europe.

“As with previous conflicts, the picture is far from complete and will probably remain so for years to come,” noted the ICSR insight report on foreign “rebels” waging war in Syria authored by Aaron Zelin, also a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. “There is no ‘true census’ of foreign fighters, and publicly available sources are inevitably incomplete. As a result, the figures range considerably.”

According to the estimates compiled by ICSR, the country with the most Muslims traveling to Syria for the war effort is the United Kingdom, which produced up to 134 “rebels” to fight the Assad regime. Next in line was the Netherlands, with the figures showing that over 100 Islamic Dutch citizens may have joined the Western-backed “revolutionaries.” France, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and other nations all had significant numbers of citizens involved in the so-called “revolution” as well.

Among foreign jihadists aligned with al-Qaeda, the ICSR relied on so-called “martyrdom notices” posted online to calculate that at least three percent of those killed came from Europe. However, as the report notes, the total numbers could be higher because of unreported deaths or missed notices. Included on the list of European countries of origin for dead al-Qaeda-linked fighters were Albania, Britain, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Kosovo, Spain, and Sweden.

“It is important to be nuanced when discussing the foreign fighter phenomenon in Syria: not everyone who has joined the Syrian rebels is al-Qaeda, and only a small number may ever become involved in



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terrorism after returning to Europe,” the report argues. “That said, it would be wrong to conclude that individuals who have trained and fought in Syria pose no potential threat.”

The ICSR report claims that, in many cases at least, the European fighters in Syria do not fully adopt jihadist doctrines and ideologies until they are on the ground and fighting alongside radical Islamists. It also argues that most of the so-called “rebels” are actually Syrian. Both of those assertions, however, appear to contradict numerous reports from credible sources on the ground.

Doctors Without Borders co-founder Jacques Beres, for example, spent weeks in Syria treating wounded “rebel” fighters in the city of Aleppo. Upon his return, he told Reuters that [at least half of the “revolutionaries” he dealt with were foreigners](#), coming from places such as Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, and even Europe. He also explained that contrary to bogus narratives about fighting for “democracy” and “human rights,” the jihadists openly boasted that they would set up a theocracy in Syria based on sharia law that would form a part of a “global” Islamic caliphate.

Among the jihadists were many Europeans, and their motivations were clear. “Some of them were French and completely fanatical about the future,” Beres explained. “They are very cautious people, even to the doctor who treated them. They didn’t trust me, but for instance they told me that Mohammed Merah was an example to follow.” Merah, of course, was the Islamist accused of killing three French troops and [massacring innocent Jewish schoolchildren — ages three, six, and 11 — as well as a rabbi](#) in Toulouse last year.

Still, despite downplaying the foreign element and the threat posed by returning European jihadists, ICSR researcher Zelin did acknowledge that danger exists. “The extent to which the Syrian conflict has mobilized Muslims across the world is significant and may be compared to the conflicts in Iraq in the 2000s, Bosnia in the 1990s, and Afghanistan in the 1980s,” he said, citing conflicts that produced jihadist forces that are still wreaking havoc today. “Based on the sheer scale of recruitment that is currently taking place, European security services are well advised to monitor the situation closely and adopt an intelligence led, highly discriminate approach towards dealing with returning fighters.”

ICSR Director Peter Neumann also [told](#) the U.K. *Telegraph* that the fighters returning to Europe from Syria are “well trained and more dangerous.” However, he added, not all of them are fighting with al-Qaeda-linked groups “obsessed with attacking America or other Western targets.” Despite his assertions, though, numerous rebels have gone on the record — even in [establishment media outlets in the United States](#) and Europe — promising to [target Israel](#) and [America](#) after they finish with Assad.

Meanwhile, governments and analysts throughout the West are increasingly warning that the threat of Islamic terror is growing — especially in Europe. In an April 4 [report on the “acute” jihadist threat to European countries](#), Stratfor, a U.S.-based private intelligence-gathering outfit, cited numerous examples of terrorist attacks including an alleged plot foiled by Belgian authorities late last month. The report also warned that the danger was real and expanding.

“There are no accurate counts of European Muslims currently fighting or training abroad, but there are at least several hundred, and there have been thousands over the past decades,” noted Scott Stewart, vice president of analysis for Stratfor. “If anything, based on the tempo of attacks, plots and arrests, the threat is growing more acute. A timeline of attacks and thwarted plots in Europe shows that the pace of jihadist activity on the Continent is increasing.”

Separately, authorities in Germany [foiled an assassination attempt](#) by radical Muslims against an anti-Islamist political leader on March 13. That same day, the federal German Interior Ministry announced



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that it had banned three hardcore Salafist Muslim groups for advocating the violent overthrow of the government to be replaced by an Islamist theocracy and sharia law. Officials also noted that there has been a great deal of travel among some Islamists between Germany and various Middle Eastern nations.

“Egypt has been a turning point where they go, and some of them try to go to Mali to fight jihad there, or they go to Syria, as well as to Somalia and Yemen,” [noted](#) German Interior Ministry press office chief Jens Teschke, saying there was currently no law that prevented jihadists from travelling abroad to fight “holy” wars. “We are aware of the danger and we try to keep track of those people, we are on alert and we try to prevent them from re-entering the country.”

Of course, as has been documented extensively, the Obama administration, [the Western establishment](#), various Sunni Arab dictators, and certain European powers have been deeply involved in fomenting the Syrian “revolution” for years. In fact, the U.S. government has been secretly and lawlessly funding opposition groups in Syria as far back as the Bush administration, according to official documents released by WikiLeaks. Since then, Obama has been [arming, training, and funding](#) the “revolutionaries” in a desperate bid to overthrow Assad — ironically, a [former U.S. government ally in the terror war](#).

It would hardly be the first time that the U.S. government has funded, armed, and trained Islamic extremists with disastrous “blowback” consequences. Most recently, Obama [helped self-styled al-Qaeda leaders](#) overthrow and execute the late secular Libyan despot Moammar Gadhafi. The U.S. ambassador to Libya was [eventually killed in the wake of the unconstitutional war](#). Vast swaths of Libya today are under the control of fanatical Islamist militias, while the Western-backed “government” in Tripoli tries to enforce sharia law throughout the country.

Before that, of course, the U.S. government played a key role in creating, funding, arming, training, and empowering Islamist fanatics in Afghanistan — [including Osama bin Laden and his mujahedin](#), elements of which would later go on to become “al Qaeda” and attack American troops and facilities worldwide. With [confirmed reports](#) that Obama is arming, funding, and training the Syrian “rebels” without congressional approval — not to mention [surrounding the nation with U.S. troops](#) stationed in [Jordan](#) and [Turkey](#) — analysts say deadly blowback is virtually inevitable. If the jihadists somehow acquire [Assad’s chemical weapons](#), the results could be worse than disastrous.

Photo of rebel fighters in Syria: AP Images

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