



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on October 7, 2016

## UN Special Envoy Says Aleppo Could Be “Totally Destroyed” Within Months

Speaking in Geneva on October 6, UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura warned that rebel-held eastern Aleppo could undergo “total” destruction by the end of the year.

VOA News reported that during his remarks at a news conference, de Mistura and his special advisor, Jan Egeland, called on the rebel group al-Nusra to see the destruction and devastation their actions are causing the civilians of the country. “One thousand of you are deciding on the destiny of 275,000 civilians,” de Mistura said.



Jabhat al-Nusra is the former name of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, a powerful rebel jihadist group previously affiliated with al-Qaeda. The United States, Russia, Iran, and the UN have all designated the Jabhat Fatah al-Sham group as a terrorist organization. A report from the Australian affiliate of ABC News last July quoted a statement from U.S. intelligence chief James Clapper calling the group’s claim to have separated from al-Qaeda “a public relations move.”

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“Whether or not they are actually separating from al Qaeda, that remains to be seen,” Clapper said at the Aspen Security Forum in Colorado.

“The bottom line is, in a maximum of two months ... the city of eastern Aleppo at this rate may be totally destroyed,” de Mistura was quoted in a *Time* report as saying. He said he was willing to escort the roughly 900 remaining Jabhat Fateh al-Sham fighters from Aleppo, himself, if they decide to leave.

“If you did decide to leave in dignity, and with your weapons, to Idlib or anywhere you wanted to go, I personally am ready physically to accompany you,” he told the anti-government rebels.

However, de Mistura also criticized the Russians for what he said was excessive bombing of eastern Aleppo, charging that they were putting the civilians of the city at risk for a comparatively small number of rebel fighters.

“Thousands of Syrian civilians, not terrorists, will be killed and many of them wounded,” de Mistura continued. “This is what you, we, the world will be seeing when we will be trying to celebrate Christmas, or the end of the year, if this continues at this rate, unimpeded.”

While de Mistura did place blame on the al-Nusra rebels for inviting military retaliation by the Syrian government and Russian military, his warning seemed more directed at the Syrian military than the terrorist jihadists. He predicted: “Thousands of Syrian civilians, not terrorists, will be killed and many of them wounded.”

He also warned Syria and Russia that history would judge them if they used the presence of the jihadists in Aleppo as “an alibi perhaps for destroying a whole city.”



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*Time* reported that Aleppo has come under intense aerial bombardment since a cease-fire brokered by the United States and Russia collapsed last month.

Diplomatic efforts to revive the cease-fire have so far been unsuccessful. The United States has since suspended any military cooperation with Russia over Syria, observed *Time*.

CBS News reported that Russia appeared to be at least interested in de Mistura's proposal, and cited a report from Russia's TASS news agency that quoted presidential spokesman Mikhail Bogdanov as saying it was "high time" the UN envoy suggested a way to get the al-Nusra fighters to exit Aleppo.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is currently in France, said his staff was studying the proposal in detail.

The devastating battle over control of Aleppo might be seen as just one more of many such events in history. When opposing armies fight to gain control of a city, civilians invariably bear the brunt of the casualties and ill effects. To put this battle into context, however, it is important to understand who the opposing forces are, and — more importantly — how the rebel forces such as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (aka Jabhat al-Nusra) gained so much territory inside Syria.

The Syrian Civil War is considered by many to have grown out of the unrest of the 2011 Arab Spring and President Bashar al-Assad's use of force to put down militant protests against his government. However, the anti-Assad opposition consisted of many factions that formed a loose alliance joined to remove Assad from power. The alliance included what some have described as "Syrian Democratic Forces," but also jihadist groups such as the al-Nusra Front who often cooperate with the rebels, as well as what has grown to become the most notorious terrorist group in the Middle East — ISIS.

Syrian opposition groups seized control of the area surrounding Aleppo and parts of southern Syria.

From the earliest stages of the Syrian Civil War, the United States aided anti-Assad rebels whom it labeled as "moderate." An article in the *Washington Post* on September 11, 2013 indicated the CIA's support of the anti-Assad opposition was quite open:

The CIA has begun delivering weapons to rebels in Syria, ending months of delay in lethal aid that had been promised by the Obama administration, according to U.S. officials and Syrian figures. The shipments began streaming into the country over the past two weeks, along with separate deliveries by the State Department of vehicles and other gear — a flow of material that marks a major escalation of the U.S. role in Syria's civil war...

The CIA shipments are to flow through a network of clandestine bases in Turkey and Jordan that were expanded over the past year as the agency sought to help Middle Eastern allies, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, direct weapons *to moderate Syrian rebel forces*. [Emphasis added.]

The problem with that scenario is, as would become evident, and would be frankly admitted by Vice President Joe Biden in October 2014, there is no moderate rebel opposition in Syria.

These admissions were documented in the article by *The New American's* foreign correspondent, Alex Newman, in his article, "[Obama's "Anti-ISIS" Coalition Built ISIS, Biden Admits](#)." The article stated:

Speaking at Harvard, Obama's widely ridiculed vice president [admitted](#) what astute analysts have known all along: The Obama administration's "coalition" partners in the supposed battle against the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) [played a key role in building up the threat from the start](#).... Biden also 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



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to have been supporting against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.

In a question-and-answer session following a speech at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Biden admitted that there was no "moderate middle" among the anti-Assad rebels:

"The fact is, the ability to identify a moderate middle in Syria, um, was, uh — there was no moderate middle," Biden said, acknowledging that history was likely to record the facts. "What my constant cry was, that our biggest problem was our allies — our allies in the region were our largest problem." Specifically identifying the Islamist rulers of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, along with unspecified others such as Qatar, Biden noted that "they were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war."

While Biden admitted that the rebels were not moderate, he placed the blame for aiding the *non-moderate* (i.e., extremist) rebels on "our allies," naming specifically the Islamist rulers of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, while ignoring our own government's role in aiding rebels who were often allied with ISIS.

Evidently, Biden missed the *Washington Post* article the previous year that reported that our CIA shipments flowed "through a network of clandestine bases in Turkey and Jordan that were expanded over the past year as the agency sought to help Middle Eastern allies, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, direct weapons to moderate Syrian rebel forces."

There are currently very strained relations between the United States and Russia because Russia is aiding the Assad government in its fight against rebels such as the Jabhat Fatah al-Sham group, which our own government has designated as a terrorist organization, while our own government prefers to send aid to rebels who are "moderate" in name only.

This important fact was known to Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who stated on May 21, 2013, during a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as it was debating sending aid to the Syrian rebels: "This is an important moment. You will be funding, today, the allies of al-Qaeda."

UN special envoy de Mistura evidently thinks that the way to save Aleppo from destruction is to escort the al-Nusra terrorists out of the city with their weapons, to Idlib or anywhere they want to go. In the meantime, he expects the Assad government to stand down and simply let them go to a safe haven, from which they can launch further attacks against Syrian government positions and other cities. This proposal makes about as much sense as our government's support of the rebels in the first place.

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