

# KUHNER: How Obama arms al Qaeda

By Jeffrey T. Kuhner - - *Friday, September 20, 2013*

## **ANALYSIS/OPINION:**

President Obama has crossed a moral red line. Recently, he did the unthinkable: He announced that the U.S. government would directly arm terrorist groups in Syria.

Mr. Obama said that he would waive a federal law designed to prevent weapons from being sent to designated-terrorist organizations. In particular, the president cited a provision in the Arms Export Control Act that enables him to provide assistance to outlawed groups, provided it is "essential to the national security interests of the United States." Mr. Obama's actions may be legal, but they are reckless, dangerous and will haunt America for years to come.

The administration's goal is to provide military assistance to the Syrian opposition rebels, who are determined to overthrow strongman Bashar Assad. Syria's bloody civil war has cost more than 100,000 lives and plunged the Arab nation into a sectarian bloodbath. Contrary to media spin, however, the anti-Assad rebels are not "moderates." They are not seeking to forge an Arab Switzerland — a tolerant, multiethnic democracy.

Rather, the ranks of the insurgents are filled with jihadists, many of whom have ties to al Qaeda. The main faction, the al-Nusra Front, has publicly pledged its loyalty to al Qaeda. Thousands of foreign fighters from numerous countries — Libya, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan — have poured into Syria. Their aim is to create a radical Sunni Islamist state. Jihadist rebels have committed countless atrocities. Churches and Christian shrines have been destroyed. Priests have been slain. Entire Alawite (minority Shiites) and Christian villages have been burned to the ground. In short, the al Qaeda-linked rebels are engaged in wholesale religious cleansing. Their slogan is simple — and sadistic: "The Alawites to the wall, the Christians to Beirut."

Mr. Obama and his allies in Congress insist that U.S. weapons will only go to "vetted" opposition groups. This is a red herring. The so-called non-Islamists — the Free Syrian Army — are not "moderate" by any Western standard. The Free Syrian Army calls for Shariah law to be imposed on Syria. They do not want a genuine secular state. Instead, Christians and Alawites would be reduced to minority status, essentially second-class citizens, while the majority Sunnis would dominate a post-Assad Syria. The Free Syrian Army wants to subordinate Alawites and Christians; the jihadists seek to eradicate them. There are no good rebels. The United States has no business interfering in Syria's internal affairs. No national interest — none — is at stake.

Mr. Obama's decision, however, to arm the rebels has created a dangerous security threat to America — and the Middle East. The reason is simple: U.S. weapons will inevitably fall into the hands of jihadist groups. In the chaos of war, with countless Islamic insurgents having infiltrated every Syrian rebel group — including the Free Syrian Army — American advisers cannot prevent U.S. arms from going to al Qaeda. Even supporters of Mr. Obama's policy admit this.

"Our intelligence agencies, I think, have a very good handle on who to support and who not to support," said Sen. Bob Corker, Tennessee Republican. "And there's going to be mistakes. We understand some people are going to get arms that should not be getting arms. But we still should be doing everything we can to support the free Syrian opposition."

Hence, the U.S. government is willing to risk arming our mortal enemies — the very same terrorist group responsible for the heinous Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the murderous assault on Benghazi, Libya — in order to defeat Mr. Assad. This is not only grossly irresponsible, it borders on lunacy. We are empowering al Qaeda jihadists with our own weapons, which will almost certainly be used against U.S. targets and citizens in the future.

Mr. Assad is a brutal tyrant. Russia, Iran and Hezbollah back his odious regime. Yet, the Syrian dictator has not attacked or threatened to strike America. He poses no threat to our vital security. He has now even agreed to dismantle his chemical-weapons arsenal. We have no dog in Syria's fight.

Mr. Obama's decision is another example of destructive, self-defeating American imperial hubris, especially in the Muslim world. In the 1980s, we sent weapons to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan. This gave birth to a new threat: Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. In the 1990s, we bombed Serbia to detach its cradle province, Kosovo. The result has been a mafia-Islamic state in the Balkans. Our invasion and occupation of Iraq has led to disaster, turning Mesopotamia into a giant safe haven for countless jihadists. The lesson is obvious: The United States should stay away from foreign entanglements. George Washington presciently warned us of the perils of empire.

Mr. Obama has now done something unprecedented. He has put America on the same side as al Qaeda. He has violated his constitutional oath to defend the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic. In Syria, we are now allied with them. There is a word for that — betrayal. America will rue the day.

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