

Secret Pentagon Report Reveals US “Created” ISIS As A “Tool” To Overthrow Syria’s President Assad

Judicial Watch, shows that Western governments deliberately allied with al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups to topple Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad

Dr Nafeez Ahmed - [May 24, 2015 652 Comments](#)



From the first sudden, and quite dramatic, appearance of the fanatical Islamic group known as ISIS which was largely unheard of until a year ago, on the world’s stage and which promptly replaced the worn out and tired al Qaeda as the world’s terrorist bogeyman, we suggested that the “*straight to beheading YouTube clip*” purpose behind the [Saudi Arabia-funded Islamic State](#) was a simple one: use the Jihadists as the vehicle of choice to achieve a political goal: depose of Syria’s president Assad, who for years has stood in the way of a [critical Qatari natural gas pipeline](#), one which could dethrone Russia as Europe’s dominant – and belligerent – source of energy, reaching an interim climax with the unsuccessful Mediterranean Sea military build up of 2013, which nearly resulted in quasi-world war.

The narrative and the plotline were so transparent, even Russia saw right through them. [Recall from September of last year](#):

If the West bombs Islamic State militants in Syria without consulting Damascus, [LiveLeak reports](#) that the anti-ISIS alliance may use the occasion to launch airstrikes against President Bashar Assad’s forces, according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Clearly comprehending that [Obama’s new strategy against ISIS in Syria is all about pushing the Qatar pipeline through \(as was the impetus behind the 2013 intervention push\)](#), Russia is pushing back noting that the it is **using ISIS as a pretext for bombing Syrian government forces** and warning that “**such a development would lead to a huge escalation of conflict**

in the Middle East and North Africa.”

But it’s one thing to speculate; it’s something entirely different to have hard proof.

And while speculation was rife that just like the [CIA-funded al Qaeda](#) had been used as a facade by the US to achieve its own geopolitical and national interests over the past two decades, so ISIS was nothing more than al Qaeda 2.0, there was no actual evidence of just this.

That may all have changed now when a declassified secret US government document obtained by the public interest law firm, Judicial Watch, shows that Western governments **deliberately allied with al-Qaeda and other Islamist extremist groups to topple Syrian dictator Bashir al-Assad.**

According to investigative reporter Nafeez Ahmed in Medium, the “leaked document reveals that in coordination with the Gulf states and Turkey, the West intentionally sponsored violent Islamist groups to destabilize Assad, despite anticipating that doing so could lead to the emergence of an ‘Islamic State’ in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

According to the newly declassified US document, **the Pentagon foresaw the likely rise of the ‘Islamic State’ as a direct consequence of the strategy, but described this outcome as a strategic opportunity to “isolate the Syrian regime.”**

And not just that: [as we reported last week](#), now that ISIS is running around the middle east, cutting people’s heads off in 1080p quality and Hollywood-quality (perhaps literally) video, the US has a credible justification to sell billions worth of modern, sophisticated weapons in the region in order to “modernize” and “replenish” the weapons of such US allies as Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iraq.

But that the US military-industrial complex is a winner every time war breaks out anywhere in the world (usually with the assistance of the CIA) is clear to everyone by now. What wasn’t clear is just how the US predetermined the current course of events in the middle east.

Now, thanks to the following declassified report, we have a far better understanding of not only how current events in the middle east came to be, but what America’s puppermaster role leading up to it all, was.

*From Nafeez Ahmed: **Secret Pentagon report reveals West saw ISIS as strategic asset Anti-ISIS coalition knowingly sponsored violent extremists to ‘isolate’ Assad, rollback ‘Shia expansion’, originally [posted in Medium](#).***



Hypocrisy

The revelations contradict the official line of Western government on their policies in Syria, and raise disturbing questions about secret Western support for violent extremists abroad, while using the burgeoning threat of terror to justify excessive mass surveillance and crackdowns on civil liberties at home.

Among the batch of documents obtained by Judicial Watch through a federal lawsuit, released earlier this week, is a [US Defense Intelligence Agency \(DIA\) document](#) then classified as “secret,” dated 12th August 2012.

The DIA provides military intelligence in support of planners, policymakers and operations for the US Department of Defense and intelligence community.

So far, media reporting has focused on the evidence that the Obama administration knew of arms supplies from a Libyan terrorist stronghold to rebels in Syria.

Some outlets have reported the US intelligence community’s internal prediction of the rise of ISIS. **Yet none have accurately acknowledged the disturbing details exposing how the West knowingly fostered a sectarian, al-Qaeda-driven rebellion in Syria.**

Charles Shoebridge, a former British Army and Metropolitan Police counter-terrorism intelligence officer, said:

“Given the political leanings of the organisation that obtained these documents, it’s

unsurprising that the main emphasis given to them thus far has been an attempt to embarrass Hilary Clinton regarding what was known about the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi in 2012. However, the documents also contain far less publicized revelations that raise vitally important questions of the West’s governments and media in their support of Syria’s rebellion.”

The West’s Islamists

The newly declassified DIA [document](#) from 2012 confirms that the main component of the anti-Assad rebel forces by this time comprised Islamist insurgents affiliated to groups that would lead to the emergence of ISIS. Despite this, these groups were to continue receiving support from Western militaries and their regional allies.

Noting that **“the Salafist [sic], the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI [al-Qaeda in Iraq] are the major forces driving the insurgency in Syria,”** the document states that **“the West, Gulf countries, and Turkey support the opposition,”** while **Russia, China and Iran “support the [Assad] regime.”**

The 7-page DIA document states that al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the precursor to the ‘Islamic State in Iraq,’ (ISI) which became the ‘Islamic State in Iraq and Syria,’ “supported the Syrian opposition from the beginning, both ideologically and through the media.”

The formerly secret Pentagon report notes that the “rise of the insurgency in Syria” has increasingly taken a “sectarian direction,” attracting diverse support from Sunni “religious and tribal powers” across the region.

In a section titled ‘The Future Assumptions of the Crisis,’ **the DIA report predicts that while Assad’s regime will survive, retaining control over Syrian territory, the crisis will continue to escalate “into proxy war.”**

The document also recommends the creation of “safe havens under international sheltering, similar to what transpired in Libya when Benghazi was chosen as the command centre for the temporary government.”

In Libya, anti-Gaddafi rebels, most of whom were al-Qaeda affiliated militias, were [protected](#) by NATO ‘safe havens’ (aka ‘no fly zones’).

‘Supporting powers want’ ISIS entity

In a strikingly prescient prediction, the Pentagon document explicitly **forecasts the probable declaration of “an Islamic State through its union with other terrorist organizations in Iraq and Syria.”**

Nevertheless, “Western countries, the Gulf states and Turkey are supporting these efforts” by Syrian “opposition forces” fighting to “control the eastern areas (Hasaka and Der Zor), adjacent to Western Iraqi provinces (Mosul and Anbar)”:

“... there is the possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist Principality in eastern Syria (Hasaka and Der Zor), and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran).”

The secret Pentagon document thus provides extraordinary confirmation that the US-led coalition

currently fighting ISIS, had three years ago welcomed the emergence of an extremist "Salafist Principality" in the region as a way to undermine Assad, and block off the strategic expansion of Iran. Crucially, Iraq is labeled as an integral part of this "Shia expansion."

The establishment of such a "Salafist Principality" in eastern Syria, the DIA document asserts, is "exactly" what the "supporting powers to the [Syrian] opposition want." Earlier on, the document repeatedly describes those "supporting powers" as "the West, Gulf countries, and Turkey."

Further on, the document reveals that Pentagon analysts were acutely aware of the dire risks of this strategy, yet ploughed ahead anyway.

The establishment of such a "Salafist Principality" in eastern Syria, it says, would create "the ideal atmosphere for AQI to return to its old pockets in Mosul and Ramadi." Last summer, ISIS conquered Mosul in Iraq, and just this month has also taken control of Ramadi.

Such a quasi-state entity will provide:

"... a renewed momentum under the presumption of unifying the jihad among Sunni Iraq and Syria, and the rest of the Sunnis in the Arab world against what it considers one enemy. ISI could also declare an Islamic State through its union with other terrorist organizations in Iraq and Syria, which will create grave danger in regards to unifying Iraq and the protection of territory."

The 2012 DIA document is an Intelligence Information Report (IIR), not a "finally evaluated intelligence" assessment, but its contents are vetted before distribution. The report was circulated throughout the US intelligence community, including to the State Department, Central Command, the Department of Homeland Security, the CIA, FBI, among other agencies.

In response to my questions about the strategy, **the British government simply denied the Pentagon report's startling revelations of deliberate Western sponsorship of violent extremists in Syria.** A British Foreign Office spokesperson said:

"AQ and ISIL are proscribed terrorist organisations. The UK opposes all forms of terrorism. AQ, ISIL, and their affiliates pose a direct threat to the UK's national security. We are part of a military and political coalition to defeat ISIL in Iraq and Syria, and are working with international partners to counter the threat from AQ and other terrorist groups in that region. In Syria we have always supported those moderate opposition groups who oppose the tyranny of Assad and the brutality of the extremists."

The DIA did not respond to request for comment.

Strategic asset for regime-change

Security analyst Shoebriidge, however, who has tracked Western support for Islamist terrorists in Syria since the beginning of the war, pointed out that the secret Pentagon intelligence report exposes fatal contradictions at the heart of official pronouncements:

"Throughout the early years of the Syria crisis, the US and UK governments, and almost universally the West's mainstream media, promoted Syria's rebels as moderate, liberal, secular, democratic, and therefore deserving of the West's support. Given that these documents wholly undermine this assessment, it's significant that the West's media has now, despite their immense significance, almost entirely ignored them."

According to Brad Hoff, a former US Marine who served during the early years of the Iraq War and as a 9/11 first responder at the Marine Corps Headquarters in Battalion Quantico from 2000 to 2004, the just released Pentagon report for the first time provides stunning affirmation that:

“US intelligence predicted the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS), but instead of clearly delineating the group as an enemy, the report envisions the terror group as a US strategic asset.”

Hoff, who is managing editor of [*Levant Report*](#) — “an online publication run by Texas-based educators who have direct experience of the Middle East”— “points out that the DIA document **“matter-of-factly” states that the rise of such an extremist Salafist political entity in the region offers a “tool for regime change in Syria.”**

The DIA intelligence report shows, he said, that the rise of ISIS only became possible in the context of the Syrian insurgency?— “there is no mention of US troop withdrawal from Iraq as a catalyst for Islamic State’s rise, which is the contention of innumerable politicians and pundits.” The report demonstrates that:

“The establishment of a ‘Salafist Principality’ in Eastern Syria is ‘exactly’ what the external powers supporting the opposition want (identified as ‘the West, Gulf Countries, and Turkey’) in order to weaken the Assad government.”

The rise of a Salafist quasi-state entity that might expand into Iraq, and fracture that country, was therefore clearly foreseen by US intelligence as likely?— “but nevertheless strategically useful?— “blowback from the West’s commitment to “isolating Syria.”

Complicity

Critics of the US-led strategy in the region have repeatedly raised questions about the role of coalition allies in intentionally providing extensive support to Islamist terrorist groups in the drive to destabilize the Assad regime in Syria.

The conventional wisdom is that the US government did not retain sufficient oversight on the funding to anti-Assad rebel groups, which was supposed to be monitored and vetted to ensure that only ‘moderate’ groups were supported.

However, the newly declassified Pentagon report proves unambiguously that years before ISIS launched its concerted offensive against Iraq, the US intelligence community was fully aware that Islamist militants constituted the core of Syria’s sectarian insurgency.

Despite that, the Pentagon continued to support the Islamist insurgency, even while anticipating the probability that doing so would establish an extremist Salafi stronghold in Syria and Iraq.

As Shoebridge told me, “The documents show that not only did the US government at the latest by August 2012 know the true extremist nature and likely outcome of Syria’s rebellion”?— “namely, the emergence of ISIS?— “but that this was considered an advantage for US foreign policy. This also suggests a decision to spend years in an effort to deliberately mislead the West’s public, via a compliant media, into believing that Syria’s rebellion was overwhelmingly ‘moderate.’”

[Annie Machon](#), a former MI5 intelligence officer who [blew the whistle](#) in the 1990s on MI6 funding of al-Qaeda to assassinate Libya’s former leader Colonel Gaddafi, similarly said of the revelations:

“This is no surprise to me. Within individual countries there are always multiple intelligence

agencies with competing agendas.”

She explained that MI6’s Libya operation in 1996, which resulted in the deaths of innocent people, “happened at precisely the time when MI5 was setting up a new section to investigate al-Qaeda.”

This strategy was repeated on a grand scale in the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, said Machon, where the CIA and MI6 were:

“... supporting the very same Libyan groups, resulting in a failed state, mass murder, displacement and anarchy. So the idea that elements of the American military-security complex have enabled the development of ISIS after their failed attempt to get NATO to once again ‘intervene’ is part of an established pattern. And they remain indifferent to the sheer scale of human suffering that is unleashed as a result of such game-playing.”

Divide and rule

Several US government officials have conceded that their closest allies in the anti-ISIS coalition were funding violent extremist Islamist groups that became integral to ISIS.

US Vice President Joe Biden, for instance, **admitted** last year that **Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Turkey had funneled hundreds of millions of dollars to Islamist rebels in Syria that metamorphosed into ISIS.**

But he did not admit what this internal Pentagon document demonstrates?— **?that the entire covert strategy was sanctioned and supervised by the US, Britain, France, Israel and other Western powers.**

The strategy appears to fit a policy scenario identified by a recent US Army-commissioned RAND Corp [report](#).

The report, published four years before the DIA document, called for the US “to capitalise on the Shia-Sunni conflict by taking the side of the conservative Sunni regimes in a decisive fashion and working with them against all Shiite empowerment movements in the Muslim world.”

The US would need to contain “Iranian power and influence” in the Gulf by “shoring up the traditional Sunni regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan.” Simultaneously, the US must maintain “a strong strategic relationship with the Iraqi Shiite government” despite its Iran alliance.

The RAND report [confirmed](#) that the “divide and rule” strategy was already being deployed “to create divisions in the jihadist camp. Today in Iraq such a strategy is being used at the tactical level.”

The report observed that the US was forming “temporary alliances” with al-Qaeda affiliated “nationalist insurgent groups” that have fought the US for four years in the form of “weapons and cash.” Although these nationalists “have cooperated with al-Qaeda against US forces,” they are now being supported to exploit “the common threat that al-Qaeda now poses to both parties.”

The 2012 DIA document, however, further shows that while sponsoring purportedly former al-Qaeda insurgents in Iraq to counter al-Qaeda, **Western governments were simultaneously arming al-Qaeda insurgents in Syria.**

The revelation from an internal US intelligence document that the very US-led coalition supposedly fighting ‘Islamic State’ today, knowingly created ISIS in the first place, raises troubling questions

about recent government efforts to justify the expansion of state anti-terror powers.

In the wake of the rise of ISIS, intrusive new measures to combat extremism including mass surveillance, the Orwellian ‘prevent duty’ and even plans to enable government censorship of broadcasters, are being pursued on both sides of the Atlantic, much of which disproportionately targets activists, journalists and ethnic minorities, especially Muslims.

Yet the new Pentagon report reveals that, contrary to Western government claims, the primary cause of the threat comes from their own deeply misguided policies of secretly sponsoring Islamist terrorism for dubious geopolitical purposes.

Dr [Nafeez Ahmed](#) is an investigative journalist, bestselling author and international security scholar. A former Guardian writer, he writes the ‘System Shift’ column for VICE’s Motherboard, and is also a columnist for Middle East Eye. He is the winner of a 2015 Project Censored Award, known as the ‘Alternative Pulitzer Prize’, for Outstanding Investigative Journalism for his Guardian work, and was selected in the Evening Standard’s ‘Power 1,000’ most globally influential Londoners.

Nafeez has also written for The Independent, Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Scotsman, Foreign Policy, The Atlantic, Quartz, Prospect, New Statesman, Le Monde diplomatique, New Internationalist, Counterpunch, Truthout, among others. He is the author of [A User’s Guide to the Crisis of Civilization: And How to Save It](#) (2010), and the scifi thriller novel [ZERO POINT](#), among other books. His work on the root causes and covert operations linked to international terrorism officially contributed to the 9/11 Commission and the 7/7 Coroner’s Inquest.