



## US Plan “C” in Syria: Make “Al Qaeda Central” the New Capital

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*In reality, since even before Syria's conflict began unfolding in 2011, the United States had been planning for the nation's division and destruction through the use of militant proxies allied to Al Qaeda since as early as 2007. Like Libya, Syria was meant to be swiftly overwhelmed by covert terrorism and military operations backed by the West and its regional allies, as well as a torrent of psychological, economic, and even cyber warfare.*

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh in a now prophetic 2007 article titled, "[The Redirection: Is the Administration's new policy benefitting our enemies in the war on terrorism?](#)," would reveal (emphasis added):

**To undermine Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, the Bush Administration has decided, in effect, to reconfigure its priorities in the Middle East.** In Lebanon, the Administration has coöperated with Saudi Arabia's government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shiite organization that is backed by Iran. **The U.S. has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.**

However, with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi's stubborn defense against NATO-backed militants and direct NATO airstrikes in 2011, time was bought for the Syrian state to move past the initial shock and awe of American designs and strike an operational pace that has since allowed it to weather, even overcome the worst of this proxy conquest.



And since then, US policymakers have searched for “alternatives” to achieve their goals in Syria, without overtly revealing the fact that since even *before* “day 1,” the US has banked its entire strategy on the use of Al Qaeda and other designated terrorist organizations for the overthrow of the Syrian government and the division of the Syrian state.

Indeed, US Institute for Peace (USIP) vice president of Applied Research on Conflict Steven Heydemann in the New York Times would write in an article titled, “[You Don’t Need a No-Fly Zone to Pressure Russia in Syria](#),” that: This includes the current US-designed, Turkish-led incursion into northern Syria to create what US policymakers have been calling a “buffer zone” since at least as early as 2012, as well as a plan to designate the northern Syrian city of Idlib the new, “internationally recognized” capital of Syria.

The most effective diplomatic means for the United States to regain leverage in Syria is for Washington to lead an international effort to undermine the Assad government’s claims and recognize a different government as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

The best candidate for recognition is the little-known Syrian Interim Government, or S.I.G. Unlike many other opposition groups, which are based in Turkey, the S.I.G. is based inside Syria, with offices in Idlib and scattered throughout opposition-held territory.

The problem with Heydemann’s proposal is the same problem that has plagued the entirety of US policy toward Syria, the essential but unobtainable requirement of covering up the opposition’s obvious ties to Al Qaeda.

### **Idlib is Al Qaeda Central**

It is in Idlib that the US itself admits it has been regularly targeting senior leaders of Al Qaeda. The most recent was revealed on November 2, with the US State Department’s own propaganda channel, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in an article titled, “[Pentagon Says It Killed Senior Al-Qaeda Leader](#),” admitting:

A U.S. drone strike in Syria killed a senior Al-Qaeda leader who once had ties to Osama bin Laden, the Pentagon said on November 2.

The October 17 strike near Idlib killed Haydar Kirkan, who “was intent on plotting and carrying out attacks against the West,” Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said.

And early last month, the US would admit that yet another terrorist leader was targeted and allegedly killed – also in Idlib, Syria. The Business Insider in an article titled, “[Egyptian al Qaeda leader killed by US drone strike in Idlib, Syria](#),” would reveal:

Syria’s militant Jabhat Fateh al Sham, formerly the Nusra Front, said on Monday that Egyptian cleric Abu al Faraj al Masri, a prominent member of the militant group, had been killed in a strike by the U.S.-led coalition.

In addition to the Pentagon finding Idlib to be a seemingly “target rich environment” for Al Qaeda leaders, the Western media itself has – over the years – admitted that Idlib is perhaps second only to Al Raqqa in terms of serving as a nexus for Al Qaeda and its affiliates.

The Wall Street Journal in a 2015 article titled, “[Assad Loses Final Idlib Stronghold to Al Qaeda-led Insurgents](#),” would report:

After a two-year siege, al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria and other insurgents on Wednesday captured the one remaining Syrian army air base in Idlib, a development that activists said effectively expelled the last of President Bashar al-Assad’s military from the northwestern province.

The Wall Street Journal article also admits the similarities between Idlib and the self-proclaimed “Islamic State” (ISIS) controlled city of Al Raqqa, claiming:

This makes Idlib the second of Syria’s 14 provinces to slip completely from Syrian army control. Earlier this year, militant groups captured the provincial capital, also called Idlib, as well as other towns and villages.

The province of Raqqa fell to Islamic State extremists last year, after IS militants captured its provincial capital, also called Raqqa, in January 2014. Islamic State group has since declared the city as the seat of its caliphate, which spans a third of both Syria and Iraq.

USIP’s Steven Heydemann in his NYT op-ed is essentially calling on the West to recognize a city in a region completely overrun by Al Qaeda as the new “capital” of Syria and recognize an obscure, irrelevant puppet as Syria’s legitimate leader despite not only his impotent “Syrian Interim Government” holding no control over any section of Syria, including Idlib itself, but the reality that even Al Qaeda and ISIS combined still control only a fraction of Syria’s population.

### **US to Make Al Qaeda Capital in Syria, Syria’s Capital?**

Over 60% of the Syrian population lives in government controlled territory, with this number rising monthly as security operations to restore order across the country continue to garner success, particularly in Aleppo. This includes control over most of Syria’s largest cities, including Damascus itself, most of Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, Hama, Tartus, and Daraa.

Heydemann's plan - like all US "plans" before it - at face value and amid its more intricate details contradict the US' own rationale for becoming involved in Syria in the first place. Handing a nation over to an unpopular, illegitimate minority in no shape, form, or way constitutes "democracy" - even the strained definitions used by the West to describe it. With Heydemann's "Syrian Interim Government" existing in the very center of Al Qaeda's operations in Syria, no plan to date has so transparently attempted to protect and preserve designated terrorist organizations operating in Syria. Idlib, on the other hand, doesn't rank even among Syria's top ten most populated cities - making plans to designate it a de facto capital all the more transparently absurd.

Considering the second part of Heydemann's plan includes a revised version of a US-initiated no-fly zone, US assets would literally be used in Syria to protect Al Qaeda's de facto capital in Idlib from Syrian or Russian attacks.

To foil America's "Plan C" in Syria - which in reality is simply a revised version of its original plan all along - media platforms operating beyond the influence of Western special interests much educate the public regarding the true nature of Idlib, who really runs it, and what the implications are of arbitrarily designating it and the terrorists that are occupying it the "legitimate government of Syria."

By doing this, not only will the US continue to struggle to sell its floundering policies to the public, it will further reveal the truth about US intentions in Syria, stretching back to 2007 when journalists even then attempted to raise the alarm over the West's use of Al Qaeda a proxy force to divide and destroy nations the world over.

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