

# WHY IS OBAMA CHANGING THE DATE AND SIZE OF FIRST CIA DEATH SQUADS TO ENTER SYRIA?

There is a very interesting point thrown in as a small tidbit in Monday's New York Times story on Barack Obama securing the support of John McCain for a military strike on Syria:

Officials said that in the same conversation, which included Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican, Mr. Obama indicated that a covert effort by the United States to arm and train Syrian rebels was beginning to yield results: the first 50-man cell of fighters, who have been trained by the C.I.A., was beginning to sneak into Syria.

Taken at face value, this version of the story would have us believe that the first group of 50 trained by the CIA was presumably still in the process of "sneaking" into Syria on Monday. But the timeline of US training for these fighters is much more complex than that. Some foul-mouthed blogger noted back in May that this training program had already been underway for some time and the LA Times caught up with her in June, disclosing that the program began at least as far back as November 2012 on US bases in Jordan and Turkey.

The LA Times article details that the training is carried out by both special operations troops and CIA personnel. That would put this program squarely within the US tradition of training and releasing death squads that seem to be as adept at killing innocent civilians as they are at killing military targets. We have seen details of their operation in Iraq and Afghanistan under

David Petraeus' vaunted COIN program. There is no information in the LA Times article regarding the death squads entering Syria at that time. Reading between the lines of the article suggests that the squads were in a holding pattern at that point, awaiting better weapons from the US.

In direct contradiction to Obama's Monday statement to McCain and Graham on the timing of the entry of the first US-trained death squads into Syria, we have this report from the Jerusalem Post that quotes a story first reported in Le Figaro:

The first group of 300 handpicked Free Syrian Army soldiers crossed the border on August 17 into the Deraa region, and a second group was deployed on August 19, the paper reported.

The paper quoted a researcher at the French Institute for Strategic Analysis as saying the trained rebels group was passing through Ghouta, on their way to Damascus.

Okay, now this gets interesting. Obama claimed only the first group of 50 were entering, while Le Figaro claimed there were two groups, with the first one being 300 and the second one not specified by size. Further, note the dates and location: they entered on August 17 and 19 and they passed through Ghouta. The large number of deaths from a suspected chemical warfare agent occurred on August 21 in Ghouta. In fact, the second paragraph of the Jerusalem Post article notes:

Le Figaro reported that this is the reason behind the Assad regime's alleged chemical weapons attack in Damascus on Wednesday morning, as UN inspectors were allowed into the country to investigate allegations of WMD use.

Were these first groups of CIA-trained death

squad members the target of the attack? Or could it be even worse than that? Vladimir Putin had some very interesting things to say in a wide-ranging interview today, but this bit stands out in relation to the death squad story:

“If it is determined that these rebels used weapons of mass destruction, what will the United States do with the rebels?” Mr. Putin asked. “What will the sponsors of the rebels do? Stop the supply of arms? Will they start fighting against the rebels?”

Whether they were the targets of an attack by Assad’s forces or whether they were the agents carrying out a false flag attack, US-trained death squads could well be at the center of the disputed use of chemical weapons. That would seem to be both a strong incentive and a huge tell for Obama to change both the date and the size of the entry of the first of these agents trained by the US. After all, even while reporting Obama’s leak to McCain and Graham on Monday, the New York Times noted that the training program is covert.

Except that it’s not just the US training them. Going back to the Jerusalem Post article:

The rebels were trained for several months in a training camp on the Jordanian-Syrian border by CIA operatives, as well as Jordanian and Israeli commandos, the paper said.

Oh my. That’s quite the international faculty for this training program. What new wonders await us as more graduates of the program pour into Syria?