

ON DAY SENATE APPROVED \$500 MILLION FOR WAR IN SYRIA, UN ANNOUNCED \$352 MILLION FUNDING SHORTFALL FOR FEEDING SYRIAN REFUGEES

A recent theme of mine has been that most of the time, the only response the US can come up with for a crisis anywhere in the world is to ask "Which group should we arm?" Despite ample evidence that this inane desire to train and equip various groups around the world always comes back to bite us in the ass, the US is intent, once again, on training and arming "moderate" rebels in Syria. Never mind that it has been shown, repeatedly, that the so-called "moderates" in Syria are anything but, as they have demonstrated by eating an opponent's heart and carrying out multiple beheadings.

The one time the US avoided this approach and instead relied on diplomacy was a huge success. Syria's declared chemical weapons have been removed from the country and destroyed despite the difficulty of this process taking place while the civil war raged. Choosing to ignore that clear success, the US is determined to make the situation in Syria infinitely worse by pouring this renewed effort into training and arming rebels. It is very easy to predict that this effort will result in radicalizing a whole new generation of fighters determined to attack the US precisely because of how it is getting involved in the Syrian civil war.

The flip side to the question of "Which group should we arm?" should be "What can we do to make the lives of the citizens of this region

better?" In Syria and the surrounding countries affected by the masses of citizens who have fled the war, that answer is very clear. These refugees need food. They need shelter. They need basic medical care. Their students need schools, as estimates now say close to three million Syrian children are not in school.

Sadly, last Thursday, on the very day that the US Senate went along with the vote the previous day in the House to make \$500 million available for this doomed effort to train and arm rebels, the United Nations' World Food Programme announced that due to funding shortfalls, food allocations for Syrian refugees will be cut drastically in October and November and may not be available at all in December:

"We have reached a critical point in our humanitarian response in Syria and in neighbouring countries and unless we manage to secure significant funding in the next few days, I am afraid we will have no choice but to scale back our operation," said Muhannad Hadi, WFP's Regional Emergency Coordinator for the Syrian crisis.

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In Syria from October, WFP will continue to provide food to more than 4 million people, but the food parcel will be smaller, providing less than 60 percent of the nutritional value recommended in emergencies in October and cutting even more in November. For December, WFP has no funding available for programmes in Syria.

The group faces similarly catastrophic shortfalls in the countries surrounding Syria where citizens have fled the violence.

The total funding shortfall is staggering:

WFP requires US\$352 million for its operations as a whole until the end of

the year, including US\$95 million for its work inside Syria and US\$257 million to support refugees in neighbouring countries.

So the US is throwing away more money than is needed to feed Syrian refugees through the end of the year on a plan that will increase violence and likely lead to the deaths of many of these same refugees from starvation, exposure to harsh winter conditions and “collateral damage” from poorly targeted missiles.

Consider the current plight of Syrian families. Their country is ripped apart by fighting that has raged for years. The bulk of the citizens have merely tried to avoid the violence, but it has rained down on them from all sides of a war that has countless groups taking part. Now, on the very day that the largest relief agency in the world announces that it will have to cut back on its already inadequate assistance, the US moves forward with a plan to waste more money than the World Food Programme needs in a way that will make their lives measurably worse.

The question is not whether starving Syrian refugees will be radicalized when poorly targeted US missiles kill innocent family members, as that is guaranteed. The only question is just how many of these newly radicalized enemies this latest clusterfuck of a plan will generate.