

AFTER US ADVENTURE IN DEATH SQUAD TRAINING FOR SYRIA, BRENNAN NOW COMPLAINS ABOUT AL QAEDA TRAINING THERE

Trying to prove once again that no level of hypocrisy is ever high enough for the US security theater industrial complex, today's New York Times gives space for John Brennan to lament the use of Syria as a training ground for al Qaeda terrorists. Never mind that the US touted its efforts at developing death squads to send into Syria last fall, we must be outraged against this latest development:

Dozens of seasoned militant fighters, including some midlevel planners, have traveled to Syria from Pakistan in recent months in what American intelligence and counterterrorism officials fear is an effort to lay the foundation for future strikes against Europe and the United States.

"We are concerned about the use of Syrian territory by the Al Qaeda organization to recruit individuals and develop the capability to be able not just to carry out attacks inside of Syria, but also to use Syria as a launching pad," John O. Brennan, the C.I.A. director, told a House panel recently.

But wait a minute. Didn't we spend all that time and money droning the shit out of the terrorists in Pakistan? Oh, yeah:

The extremists who concern Mr. Brennan are part of a group of Qaeda operatives

in Pakistan that has been severely depleted in recent years by a decade of American drone strikes. But the fighters still bring a wide range of skills to the battlefield, such as bomb-building, small-arms tactics, logistics, religious indoctrination and planning, though they are not believed to have experience in launching attacks in the West.

That is just classic Brennan security theater. We are supposed to get our panties in a wad about a group that he spent years to render “severely depleted” and now they suddenly are going to move to Syria, where they will magically develop the ability to attack the West even though they “are not believed to have experience in launching attacks in the West”.

Okay, then. Recall that just back in September, the US was thumping its chest over its own efforts in training death squads for Syria. Except that Obama then had to doctor the record a bit on the timing and size of the first death squad we sent in when it coincided too closely with the chemical weapons attack in August. Oh, and we had to tell people that the guy eating his opponent’s heart really was from one of the moderate groups we were training.

The bottom line is that the US can use the region to train any group of terrorists it wants to use in service of its own goals, but nobody else is allowed to do exactly what we are doing.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire. Reuters reports on a just released but not published report from the UN. And, of course, the US is wasting no time in spinning the findings of the report:

A U.N. report on how Syria’s neediest civilians are often not accessible to humanitarian relief workers makes it clear that the government of President Bashar al-Assad shoulders most of the blame, a U.S. official said on Tuesday.

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"What the report shows is that the magnitude and frequency of violence committed by the Assad regime far outstrips that of the armed groups in Syria," a U.S. official told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

"The Syrian government's massive and indiscriminate use of violence is the single most important factor driving the humanitarian crisis," the official said. "The report is very clear on this and in pointing to the government's failure to implement the resolution's provisions."

Information released to date doesn't make either side look very good:

Ban's first report to the council on the implementation of the February 22 resolution said 175,000 people remain besieged by government forces and 45,000 people trapped by opposition groups. No new ceasefires were brokered to gain access to these areas and there were breaches of existing ceasefires.

Some 9.3 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance, Ban said, while another 2.6 million have fled the three-year civil war, sparked in March 2011 by a revolt against Assad.

So the US wants the world to condemn Assad for besieging 175,000 people but to overlook the atrocities of the rebels because they besiege "only" 45,000 people. Hooray for the good guys...

On the somewhat brighter side, McClatchy reports that some aid may be arriving this week:

Twelve aid trucks crossed from Turkey into Syria on Tuesday through the Nusaybin/Qamishli border crossing in eastern Syria, bringing up the end of a 78-truck humanitarian convoy that marks

the first such cross-border aid mission from Turkey approved by the Syrian government.

The convoy began moving across the border last Friday and carried enough supplies – food, blankets, mattresses, hygiene kits, medicines and medical supplies for 268,000 people. It was organized by an alphabet soup of U.N. agencies: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Program (WFP), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Elizabeth Byrs, WFP's spokesperson, said that agency provided rations sufficient for to serve an estimated 50,000 persons one month. Tarik Jasarevic, of WHO, said its contribution included medical supplies to cover the needs of 60,000 people and 1,000 surgical interventions. Another 335,000 displaced Syrians have received medical supplies through a series of airlifts from Damascus.

With over 9 million people needing assistance, this large shipment will not be nearly enough, but it is better than no aid getting through at all. If only Brennan would put as much effort into assisting besieged people as he does to security theater, the US could indeed make progress in the battle for hearts and minds.