

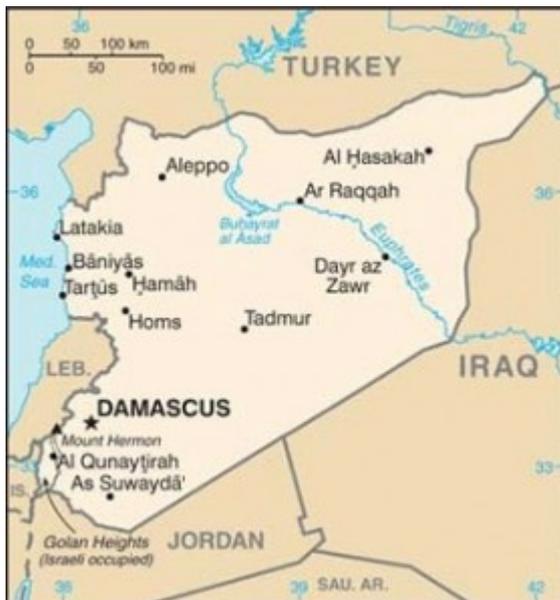
# NYT's New Propaganda on Syria

**Exclusive:** The New York Times' new conspiracy theory about Syria is that the Assad regime is in cahoots with the Islamic State, calling those two bitter foes only "nominal enemies" and using this new story to implicitly push for another U.S.-imposed "regime change," writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

As the New York Times continues its descent into becoming an outright neocon propaganda sheet, it offered its readers a front-page story on Wednesday alleging based on no evidence that the Syrian government is collaborating militarily with the Islamic State as the brutal terror group advances on the city of Aleppo.

Yet, while the Times played up those unverified allegations from regime opponents, the newspaper has either ignored or downplayed much more significant evidence that Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have been providing real assistance to Sunni jihadists who dominate the Syrian rebel movement, especially Al-Qaeda's Nusra Front.



For instance, in March 2015, a Wall Street Journal reporter confirmed that Israel was treating wounded Nusra fighters and then returning them to Syria to carry on their war aimed at overthrowing the secular regime of President Bashar al-Assad. Israel also has struck militarily at Lebanese Hezbollah troops and Iranian military advisers who have been helping Assad's regime battle against those Sunni extremists. [See Consortiumnews.com's "Syria's Nightmarish Scenario."]

Meanwhile, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have ramped up their weapons support for the so-called Army of Conquest in which the Nusra Front plays a key role. The Army of Conquest has made major military advances against Assad's beleaguered army over the past several weeks.

Assad's stretched-thin military also was routed by Islamic State militants who captured the strategic and historic city of Palmyra. So, a reasonable person could argue that the combined efforts of Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, et al were contributing to Sunni terrorist advances across Syria, both by Al-Qaeda's Nusra Front and Al-Qaeda's hyper-brutal spinoff, the Islamic State.

You could argue, too, that covert CIA arms shipments to the supposedly "moderate" rebels, many of whom have since joined the ranks of Nusra and the Islamic State, have aided the terrorist cause as well, even if inadvertently.

However, instead of addressing the Israeli-Saudi-Turkish-Qatari role in a significant way, the Times spins a conspiracy theory about the Assad government consciously aiding the Islamic State – also known as ISIS or ISIL – as its head-chopping militants seek to supplant other rebels who have dug in around the important city of Aleppo.

### **One-Sided Article**

The Times article by Anne Barnard states: "Syrian opposition leaders accused the Syrian government of essentially collaborating with the Islamic State, leaving the militants unmolested as they pressed a surprise offensive against other insurgent groups, even though the government and the Islamic State are nominal enemies, and instead striking the rival insurgents.

"Khaled Khoja, the president of the main Syrian exile opposition group, accused Mr. Assad of deploying his warplanes 'as an air force for ISIS.' Echoing those claims, the Twitter account of the long-closed United States Embassy in Syria made its strongest statement yet about Mr. Assad's tactics.

"'Reports indicate that the regime is making airstrikes in support of #ISIL's advance on #Aleppo, aiding extremists against Syrian population,' the embassy said in a series of Twitter posts. In another post, it added that government warplanes were 'not only avoiding #ISIL lines, but actively seeking to bolster their position.'"

Barnard added that "Neither American officials nor Syrian insurgents have provided proof of such direct coordination, though it has long been alleged by the insurgents. The State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf told reporters Tuesday that United States officials were looking into the claims but had no independent confirmation."

Yet, despite the lack of evidence, the Times by hyping these unconfirmed suspicions on its front page while burying or ignoring more substantive information about Israel-Saudi-Turkey-Qatar assistance to Sunni terror groups is continuing its long campaign to induce President Barack Obama to intervene militarily in Syria to destroy Assad's army and achieve "regime change."

Further demonstrating the Times' bias, there is no indication that the Times thought to ask the Syrian government for its comment on the allegations, though Barnard had the help of five other Times reporters on the article. That reflects what is becoming a typical lack of professional standards at the Times and other mainstream publications on such topics.

While getting the other side of the story is now apparently unnecessary maybe even proof that you're an "Assad apologist" it has become an article of faith in neocon-dominated Official Washington that if Obama had only engineered "regime change" in Syria earlier that everything would be going swimmingly. Ignored is the reality that Sunni militants, including Al-Qaeda affiliates, were always part of the anti-Assad uprising. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Holes in the Neocons' Syria Story.](#)"]

## **Bloody Chaos**

Almost surely, a U.S. military intervention along the lines of the "regime change" air war that the U.S. and its allies waged against Muammar Gaddafi in Libya would have resulted in either the same sort of bloody chaos that has engulfed Libya or an outright victory by Al-Qaeda or its spinoff, the Islamic State.

President Obama confided as much to New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman in 2014, saying the idea of arming Syria's "moderate" opposition as an effective counterweight to Assad's army was "always a fantasy." But it is a beloved fantasy in Official Washington.

In late August 2013, the neocons and their "liberal interventionist" sidekicks thought they were on the verge of getting their long-wished-for Syrian "regime change" after a mysterious sarin gas attack outside Damascus, which the Obama administration, the New York Times and virtually the entire mainstream media immediately pinned on Assad.

But there was countervailing evidence that the lethal sarin attack was a provocation carried out by rebel extremists with the goal of goading Obama into a major military strike to devastate Assad's military and clear their path to victory. Aware of those intelligence doubts, Obama pulled back at the last minute and worked with Russian President Vladimir Putin on a compromise in which

Assad surrendered his chemical weapons arsenal (while still denying a role in the sarin attack).

Later, additional evidence pointed to the rebels having carried out a “false-flag” attack, but Official Washington has refused to budge from its initial rush to judgment and the Inside-the-Beltway in-crowd still faults Obama for failing to enforce his “red line” against Assad for supposedly using chemical weapons. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Collapsing Syria-Sarin Case.”](#)]

With its deeply biased coverage of Syria, the New York Times has been a key factor in promoting propaganda about the crisis. And, with its latest front-page salvo, it clearly is back in the business of egging Obama into a U.S. military intervention to destroy Assad’s military so the insignificant “moderates” could somehow prevail.

In its coverage of Syria and regarding the pay-back-to-Putin crisis in Ukraine the Times has performed as shamefully as it did in pushing the U.S. invasion of Iraq with its bogus stories about Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction, including the infamous “aluminum tube” story in 2002 that had Americans fearing imaginary “mushroom clouds.”

And, in its front-page article on Wednesday by linking Assad with the Islamic State the Times is reprising the bogus contention popular before the Iraq War that Hussein and Al-Qaeda were somehow allied, an assertion that also turned out to be a lie.

Yet, rather than having learned lessons from the Iraq War catastrophe, the Times keeps plunging deeper into the grim fantasyland of neocon propaganda.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).**

---