



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 10, 2013

Obama Lobbies Reluctant Congress to Support Arming Syrian Rebels

Despite the White House's mistaken impression that Obama can arm jihadist Syrian rebels without permission from Congress, media reports indicate that the administration is lobbying lawmakers for a green light after key congressional committees rebuked the president's deeply unpopular plan to send military aid to opposition forces in Syria. While members of Congress on both sides of the aisle fret about the potential for U.S. weapons to end up in the hands of al Qaeda and other terrorist groups currently fighting the Assad regime, the administration appears determined to go forward with its scheme.



Without any semblance of congressional approval, the Obama administration [vowed](#) last month to intensify its support and start overtly shipping military assistance to rebel forces — a coalition of mostly Sunni jihadists and designated terror groups backed by Western governments, Arab dictators, and the [global establishment](#). U.S. officials claimed — [implausibly](#), according to analysts and investigators — that the Syrian regime had deployed chemical weapons, which Obama had previously called a “red line.”

As *The New American* reported in late June, Republican and Democrat lawmakers are [seeking to restrain Obama](#), citing the U.S. Constitution and national security concerns about arming dubious rebel groups with well-documented links to al-Qaeda. [Bi-partisan legislation](#) has already been introduced in Congress aimed at stopping the administration from arming Syrian rebels. So far, however, the president has largely [ignored lawmakers anyway](#), especially when it comes to foreign policy and unconstitutional wars.

According to a July 8 Reuters [report](#) citing “five U.S. national security sources,” Congress might finally be putting its foot down. Both the Senate and House intelligence committees have apparently “expressed reservations behind closed doors,” the news agency reported, saying Obama's controversial plot to deepen U.S. government involvement with weapons shipments to the opposition had been “delayed” by congressional reluctance. Now, top administration officials such as Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State John Kerry, and CIA boss John Brennan are reportedly lobbying hard to sway lawmakers.

Still, Obama does not seem to believe that he needs Congress to sign off on his scheming. “Technically, the administration does not need specific congressional approval either through public legislation or some kind of legislative sanction process to move ahead with the weapons plan,” Reuters claimed, citing “sources” rather than the source of Obama's authority — the U.S. Constitution. “The president already has legal authority to order such shipments, several sources said.”



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Despite falsely claiming that congressional approval is not required to deepen U.S. government involvement in the bloody Syrian war, the administration is trying to at least create the impression that lawmakers are being kept in the loop. “As noted at the time we announced the expansion of our assistance to the [rebel] Supreme Military Council, we will continue to consult closely with Congress on these matters,” claimed a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council on Monday.

The next day, discredited White House spokesperson Jay Carney echoed those remarks. “We have consistently stepped up on our assistance to the Syrian opposition, and we are engaged with Congress in discussions about that policy and why we believe it’s the correct policy,” he was quoted as saying in media reports. No mention was made of the fact that Obama has already [deployed U.S. troops and trainers](#) all along Syria’s borders without congressional authorization. “We were not bluffing,” Carney continued. “The president was very serious, as I think he made clear.”

Congress, though, does not appear to be playing along. Intelligence Committee “insiders” cited by *The Hill* said the panels had [voted to block](#) Obama’s lawless plan by placing “severe restrictions” on funding. Because the committees are dealing with “classified information,” few details are known publicly about the vote or the measures adopted by lawmakers. However, *The Hill* reported that the restrictions should be enough to stop the planned arms shipments — at least for now.

“Whatever we do, we have to make sure we do it right,” ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.) was quoted as saying Tuesday without elaborating on the funding restrictions. “If we are going to arm, we have to make sure we have control of what arms are out there and how people are trained to use those arms so they don’t fall into the hands of our enemy al-Qaeda.” Of course, one of the most prominent and effective rebel factions fighting Assad, the al Nusra front, [announced a merger with al-Qaeda in April](#).

Meanwhile, multiple senators also publicly expressed skepticism about Obama’s plan to arm jihadists in Syria, *The Hill* reported. Intelligence Committee member Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), for example, said, “It’s not clear to me that the administration has a workable policy.” Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and an “ex-officio member” of the Intelligence panel, said lawmakers did not even have a “clear picture” of the administration’s decision.

Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) even accused the administration of trying to get the scheme to arm rebels approved in secret by going to the Intelligence Committee. “They should come and talk about this openly,” he was quoted as saying about the self-styled “most transparent” administration. “It puts the Intelligence Committee in a very awkward place. All of a sudden, they own it.”

According to news reports citing officials, no U.S. weapons have reached the Syrian rebels yet. However, as *The New American* and publications around the world have documented for months, the Obama administration and the CIA have played a key role in [funneling weapons provided by Sunni despots to jihadist forces](#) on the ground in Syria. American troops have also been [training the rebel fighters](#). Of course, as officials documents released by WikiLeaks revealed, U.S. taxpayers have been financing the Syrian opposition since long before open warfare broke out, too.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which is at the center of the Islamist rebellion against Assad’s secular regime, has been loudly complaining about being “abandoned and disappointed” because Obama has not been even more supportive. However, at least one Syrian rebel commander, who gained international notoriety after eating a dead soldier’s body organs on video, threatened to unleash a wave



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of even more horrifying atrocities if Obama did not immediately comply with his demands. “If we don’t get help, a no-fly zone, heavy weapons, we will do worse [than I did],” cannibal commander Abu Sakkar [told](#) BBC. “You’ve seen nothing yet.”

Aside from cannibalism, the jihadist rebels have also been criticized for a wide array of other reasons. Among the most serious: [well-documented links to terrorist organizations](#), seeking to [impose Sharia law](#) in a nation with a significant non-Muslim population, [using chemical weapons](#), [massacring civilians](#), [firing on protesters](#), ethnic cleansing of minorities like [Christians](#) and Shia Muslims, threatening to attack the West, [beheading a Catholic priest](#), and more. The list of atrocities perpetrated by rebels continues to grow every day.

Of course, the Assad dictatorship, [a former ally of the U.S. government](#), has been responsible for more than its fair share of atrocities as well — horrors stretching back decades, in fact. It now has the support of the Russian government and the Iranian regime, along with the Lebanese Hezbollah militia. However, despite the existing despot’s long track record of abuses and brutality, few analysts expect Syria to improve under the leadership of establishment-backed Islamist rebels, so it is not clear why Obama and his neoconservative allies are so determined to support the “revolution.” More than a few experts say Iran is the real target.

Already, an estimated 100,000 people have died in the fighting in Syria, with another million or more having fled the country. News reports indicate that the regime is still holding strong, though at this point, that is impossible to determine with certainty. As foreign powers continue feeding the fire by pouring weapons and money into Syria, however, innocent civilians — especially Christians — will keep paying the price.

Photo of President Barack Obama: AP Images

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