

# Obama taking credit for actions by Putin and Assad in Syria

While critics of the Obama administration continue their complaints about the Commander in Chief focusing his animosity on Americans who disagree with his foreign policy – or his lack of a cogent foreign policy – many Americans are realizing that Barack Obama and his minions are actually taking credit for much of the grunt work – and success – of the Russian-Iranian coalition in Syria, according to reports from an Israeli public-interest think tank.

For example, while Obama and his family enjoyed their Hawaiian Christmas holiday vacation, the American news media – echoing the Obama administration's talking points – boasted that the Iraqi Army had managed to recapture most of the city of Ramadi, capital of the Al-Anbar province, which had been taken over by radical Islamists from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) back in May 2015. The way the media covered the Ramadi story one would think there were U.S. boots on the ground in Iraq "kicking butt and taking names," according to former military intelligence operative and police task force member Jonathon Piedmont.

"Of course, there were no boots on the ground, and if the attempt to take back Ramadi failed, the politicians in Washington, D.C., especially the progressives in government would have blamed the Iraqi soldiers and police officials for not being professional or tough enough or worthy of U.S. support," Piedmont said.

The think tank, Meir Amit Information Center, reports that the city was finally retaken after weeks of the American-backed army being stuck in a quagmire and a number of failed attempts

to take it over. On December 28, 2015, the Iraqi Army managed, after around seven days of fighting, to take over the government buildings in the strategically and symbolically important Ramadi.

Meir Amit quotes a spokesman for the Iraqi administration as saying, "There still remain weak pockets of resistance in vast parts of the city, but it will soon be completely cleansed. According to the Iraqi government, after the complete takeover of the city of Ramadi, the Iraqi Army will shift its efforts to retaking the [equally significant] city of Mosul."

However, while the Iraqi forces were the only boots on the ground in Ramadi and the Obama administration refrained from using air power in Ramadi for fear of "collateral damage," Russian fighter planes continued their assaults in Syria cities and town controlled by ISIS, mainly in the areas of Homs, Idlib, Latakia, Aleppo, Deir al-Zor, and Damascus. President Vladimir Putin did not seem to have a problem with the killing of so-called innocent Muslims who were being used – or allowed themselves to be used – to provide cover for the jihadists, who have often shown a propensity for murdering Muslim civilians if it suits their purposes.

The Israeli-based Meir Amit also quoted the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman as saying, "[During] the past week (Dec. 24-30, 2015), the Russian Air Force conducted more than 300 sorties, during which it carried out more than 1,000 airstrikes in Syrian territory alone.

The Russians claimed that the airstrikes targeted a training camp in Idlib that was staffed with instructors from neighboring nations who were living there, destroyed an Ahrar al-Sham command "outpost in Aleppo, hit trucks in Homs that were carrying weapons to ISIS, and destroyed three oil rigs, two oil tankers and a large number of trucks near Deir al-Zor."

Since initiating military counterterrorism operations, the Russian military forces have carried out 5,240 sorties, including 145 long-range sorties – a far cry from the few conducted by the United States. The achievements mentioned by Russia's Minister of Defense included the liberation of the Kuweyres military airbase in northern Syria and the expansion of the surrounding areas that are controlled by the Syrian Army. He also mentioned an additional achievement, the disruption of ISIS's oil exports.

On Christmas Day, according to Reuters, more “than 2,000 oil tankers have been destroyed and many infrastructure sites have been damaged. However, he believes that despite the airstrikes, oil smuggling by ISIS has not stopped and is now being carried out in small convoys at night, mainly near the Iraqi border.”

The US-led coalition seems to imitate the struggle against the Islamic State terrorist organization, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Syromolotov told TASS News Agency on Thursday.

“It will suffice to say that US pilots that have flown in the sky over Syria and Iraq for a whole year ‘have not noticed’ convoys of fuel tanker trucks with smuggled oil that feeds the terrorists’ forces,” the Russian diplomat said. “Generally, an impression is being created that the US-led coalition is hostage to its politicized approach and is rather imitating the struggle against the IS,” said Syromolotov.

Amnesty International (AI) published a damning report about the Syrian airstrikes carried out by the Russians in Homs, Idlib and Aleppo between September and November 2015.

The AI report addresses six specific and separate incidents in which it claims that at least 200 civilians were killed and thousands more civilians were injured. The report includes evidence allegedly proving that the Russian authorities were trying to conceal incidents in which they hit civilians, in a

mosque and in a field hospital, and fired indiscriminately at populated areas. According to the report, “[T]he Russian airstrikes in Syria are liable to be regarded as war crimes.”

The report also notes that there is proof that Russia used unguided cluster bombs attacks in civilian areas (Amnesty International website, December 23, 2015).

According to Viktor Bondarev, commander of the Russian Air and Space Forces, there were no cases in which Russian pilots hit civilian targets such as hospitals, mosques or schools. He claims that these accusations are groundless, indicate a lack of credibility of the report and stem from a lack of evidence in the hands of its authors (TASS News Agency, December 27, 2015).

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