

US rescue of ISIS in Raqqa exposed

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An investigative report by the BBC titled “Raqqa’s dirty secret” has confirmed earlier charges by Iran, Russia and the Syrian government that the Pentagon has colluded with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the evacuation of ISIS fighters from cities and towns under US military siege.

The BBC story, based on interviews with some of those who organized the evacuation along with truck drivers who were brought in to transport the fighters and others who observed it, describes a four-mile-long convoy that included “50 trucks, 13 buses and more than 100 of the Islamic State group’s own vehicles. IS fighters, their faces covered, sat defiantly on top of some of the vehicles.”

In total, the convoy, which set out on October 12, transported some 4,000 people—ISIS fighters and their families—along with tons of arms, ammunition and explosives. The US military and its proxy ground force, the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, assured that reporters and cameramen were kept out of Raqqa to prevent images of the long column of trucks, with armed ISIS fighters on top of them from being broadcast around the world.

The story has been largely ignored by the US media. It flies in the face of repeated statements by leading US officials vowing to “annihilate” ISIS to the last man in Iraq and Syria and debunks the greatest “fake news” story of the 21st century—the so-called US war on terror.

In the face of the evidence uncovered by the BBC, the Pentagon has been forced to acknowledge that the evacuation took place, while insisting that it was merely an innocent bystander.

“We didn’t want anyone to leave,” Col. Ryan Dillon, spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve, told the news agency.

“But this goes to the heart of our strategy, ‘by, with and through’ local leaders on the ground. It comes

down to Syrians – they are the ones fighting and dying, they get to make the decisions regarding operations,” he said.

This is patent nonsense.

The siege of Raqqa was organized by the US military and carried out by means of a merciless campaign of airstrikes and artillery bombardments conducted by US forces that left thousands of civilians dead and wounded and most of the city in rubble. The so-called SDF militia operates under US direction with American special operations troops embedded in its ranks.

The decision to transport armed ISIS fighters to safety elsewhere in Syria was made at the top levels of the US military and intelligence apparatus and for definite strategic reasons.

In terms of immediate objectives, Washington was eager to wind up the siege of Raqqa in order to mount a speedy offensive aimed at beating the Syrian army for control of strategically vital oil and gas fields in Syria’s eastern Deir Ezzor province. The SDF has since captured two of the largest oil fields, Al-Tanak and al-Umar.

More broadly, however, Washington has an important stake in seeing ISIS live to fight another day. The continued existence of the Islamist militia provides a pretext for the permanent occupation of Syria and Iraq in the name of fighting terrorism.

The US defense secretary Gen. James “Mad Dog” Mattis, gave direct expression to these objectives in a Pentagon briefing Monday, declaring that the US military would remain in Syria combatting ISIS “as long as they want to fight.”

He went on to indicate that the US intended to continue its illegal military occupation of the country until there is a political settlement ending the war that the CIA itself orchestrated to effect regime change in Syria over five years ago.

“We’re not just going to walk away right now before

the Geneva process has traction,” he said, referring to the long-stalled talks between the government of President Bashar al-Assad and the so-called rebels backed by the CIA, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf oil sheikhdoms.

ISIS itself emerged as a major force in the region thanks to the US war for regime change, fattening off of the billions of dollars’ worth of arms and aid funneled into Syria by the CIA and Washington’s regional allies. It continued to enjoy this support until it turned eastward into Iraq, routing the US-trained Iraqi security forces in Mosul and across much of Iraq in 2014.

In the wake of the supposed defeat of ISIS and retaking of its “capital” of Raqqa, these same forces can again be rebranded as anti-Assad “rebels” and utilized in the furtherance of US imperialism’s continuing objectives of securing regime change in Syria, preparing for military confrontation with Iran and Russia and asserting US hegemony in the Middle East by means of armed force.



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