

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, July 10, 2012 8:14 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Free Syrian Army - an analyst's view

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This is worth a read.

From: Jones, Beth E
Sent: Tuesday, July 10, 2012 03:20 PM
To: Burns, William J; Sullivan, Jacob J; Sherman, Wendy R
Cc: Zeya, Uzra S; Sawyer, Julie L; Lakhdhir, Kamala S; Ford, Robert S; Hof, Frederic C; Dibble, Elizabeth L
Subject: Free Syrian Army - an analyst's view

Robert Ford comments that the analyst, Joe Holiday, cited below is quite, quite good. He has highlighted the key passages. This is the kind of thing that gives any hope of eventual political/diplomatic breakthrough. One problem that Robert points out is that the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and thus we'll get the [REDACTED]

Note that the analyst is being flown to Tampa tomorrow to brief General Mattis and SOCOM's Admiral McRaven. B1

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With many thanks to the Syria team's Matt Irwin for these notes.

I ran into Joe Holliday, the brilliant, young, open-source researcher at the Institute for the Study of War who makes his living monitoring the FSA, last night after work. A few quick highlights from our conversation:

- More and more FSA members are showing up in photos and videos with body armor.
- Joe is beginning to observe operational-level coordination between large (100+ fighters) FSA units with independent chains of command, sometimes across multiple governorates (usually Idlib and Aleppo provinces).
- Regime forces in Idlib city and parts north are almost completely cut off and must be resupplied by helicopter.
- The FSA's bread and butter operation is to ambush regime convoys and armored columns moving through small towns that lack easy bypasses (e.g. Ariha, Saraqib, Ma'arat al-Numan, Afrin, Azaz), thus preventing the movement of reinforcements and supplies; the regime's typical response is to withdraw its forces, shell the town for a few days and then try again.
- FSA IEDs are getting larger and more effective; the FSA is consistently knocking out main battle tanks, including T-72s.
- Individual FSA units are displaying impressive media savvy, with some units posting orders of battle and political manifestos on their Facebook pages.
- At some point within the last month, Joe became convinced that, while the military scales are a long way from being balanced, the FSA is going to "win" even without international intervention, i.e. it will inflict enough losses to pry significant amounts of territory away from the regime and ultimately force it to capitulate politically.
- Joe is being flown to CENTCOM HQ in Tampa tomorrow to brief CENTCOM's General Mattis and SOCOM's Admiral McRaven.

- Joe's second report can be found here:
http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Syrias_MaturingInsurgency_21June2012.pdf

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