

Terrorist Groups in Syria

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Nov 20, 2013

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Andrew J. Tabler is the Martin J. Gross Senior Fellow in the Linda and Tony Rubin Program on Arab Politics at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on Syria and U.S. policy in the Levant.



Articles & Testimony

Washington Institute senior fellow Andrew Tabler addressed the House Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, outlining steps the United States can take to help the Syrian opposition maintain its national character and contain the influence of extremist groups. The following is an excerpt from his prepared remarks; [download the PDF to read more](#), or [watch video of the full hearing](#) (<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-terrorist-groups-syria>).

Reports are growing of a sharp increase in the number of extremist groups operating in rebel-dominated areas of Syria. This has raised eyebrows in Washington, where policymakers continue to grapple with the question of how to support the opposition without inadvertently helping jihadists expand their destabilizing impact across the Middle East. These concerns are growing among Syria's neighbors as well.

During a recent visit to Syrian border regions from southern Turkey, I spoke with armed and civilian opposition leaders about the extent to which extremist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) have penetrated their ranks. I also asked them what kinds of measures the opposition should take to prevent these groups from gaining a permanent foothold or exploiting the current crisis over the regime's use of chemical weapons (e.g., by disrupting international efforts to destroy those weapons). As enumerated below, their answers indicate that mainstream rebels have a number of options for reining in extremism while bolstering the overall effort to force Bashar al-Assad's departure. And many of these options offer good opportunities for U.S. engagement... ❖

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

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