Is US Supporting Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and is it behind Chemical Weapons Incidents in Syria?

According to the Russian Reconciliation Center for Syria (officially known as the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides and Refugee Migration Monitoring in the Syrian Arab Republic), on 3 March, during a counter-attack by Syrian government forces against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (banned in Russia) in the eastern part of de-escalation zone in Idlib, irrefutable evidence emerged pointing to unsuccessful attempts to use chemical weapons.

It has been reported that a group of up to 15 terrorists tried to blow up “high-explosive ammunition with containers filled with toxic chemical substances” in Idlib in order to slow down the advance of Syrian forces in western parts of Saraqib. However, due to lack of sufficient experience in handling such chemicals (supplied by external players), the terrorists damaged one of the containers causing its contents to leak out. As a result, they were “severely poisoned by the chemicals” thus failing “to explode the munitions and carry out their provocation”.

At the beginning of February, the Russian Reconciliation Center for Syria raised the alarm about the fact that the White Helmets organization and its terrorist sidekicks were plotting to deploy chemical weapons. The Center had been informed about the plan by two residents of the de-escalation zone in Idlib. The operation and the militants were led by Khan Shaykhun-born Mahi al-Din al-Am (from the terrorist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, banned in Russia) who had already gained relevant experience by filming a staged “chemical attack”, which was reported to have occurred in Khan Shaykhun, in 2017. Fifteen members of the White Helmets arrived in the Maarat al-Artik settlement to carry out the attack as early as February. According to the reports received in February, approximately 200 of the militants’ relatives, including children, who had arrived in the de-escalation zone in Idlib and had earlier been transferred from southern governorates, were meant to be involved in the staged chemical attack.
It is worth focusing on certain facts that could more or less help us understand who is behind this failed attempt and who, in general, provides support to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham terrorists.

First of all, various media outlets have, on multiple occasions, published sufficient information to confirm a close link between the White Helmets and British and US intelligence agencies. Hence, it is not worth rehashing these reports.

At the beginning of March, literally on the eve of the failed attempt to stage the “chemical attack” by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic issued a statement regarding the presence of US administration officials in Idlib. It said that the arrival of US officials in Syria’s Idlib Governorate had been unsanctioned, and only served to confirm that the Trump administration viewed itself as being beyond international law and the Charter of the United Nations, committed to preserving sovereignty of its member states and ensuring non-interference in their domestic affairs. From the perspective of Damascus, such actions pointed to USA’s destructive intentions in Syria.

The fact that the US delegation arrived in Idlib at the beginning of March, at a time when the aforementioned terrorist group was preparing to stage a “chemical attack” in the region, could be viewed in different ways but there appear to be too many “coincidences”. All of these supposed “coincidences” clearly point to the fact that the US officials, who had arrived in Idlib so unexpectedly, were meant to act as witnesses to the planned “chemical attack”. And then, after accusing the Syrian government of “evil-doing”, they would have appealed to Washington and NATO members to intervene militarily in the conflict in Idlib, which is something that Ankara was urging the United States to do at the time.

There is another factor worth mentioning in this story. Recently, Turkey’s news portal OdaTV openly accused the United States of supporting Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (a terrorist organization banned in Russia) operating in Syria. It said the International Crisis Group (a think tank with supposed ties within the US government) implied that the jihadist militant Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group ought to be protected in Idlib. According to the news portal, the United States, with its vast experience in helping establish terrorist organizations and in using them for their own needs, wished to provide support to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in its own interests.

We would like to remind our readers that this terrorist group continues to operate in Idlib, in the region controlled by the Turkish Army.

Once we examine all the aforementioned information in its entirety, only one possible explanation comes to mind: “Is it not the United States, together with Great Britain and other allies, that has been supporting Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (a terrorist organization banned in Russia) in order to ensure that it continues to pose a terrorist threat in Syria and the region?”. And Washington, along with its partners, has been using “chemical attacks” and even “extras”, i.e. US administration officials purposefully sent to Idlib, to stage its provocations.

Neither Washington nor London has provided foreign media outlets with any information that would contradict this conclusion.

And based on the “highly likely” approach used by Great Britain lately, it is the United States, the UK and its allies who are the “puppeteers”, and, therefore, should be held responsible for the ongoing mayhem caused by terrorists in the north of Syria.

Vladimir Platov, Middle East expert, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.