

# Left of Boom by ex-CIA operative Accuses Obama of Nixing Assad Overthrow



A new book out today, [Left of Boom](#) authored by ex-CIA agent Doug Laux presents evidence of the Obama Administration rejecting proposed covert operations to recruit and train opposition to oust the Assad regime. This was under a proposed plan in 2012 backed by then CIA Director, Gen. David Petraeus, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Democrat Presidential front runner, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Laux's contentions appeared to have the support of anonymous CIA colleagues. If the President had signed a Presidential finding for the proposed covert operations, it might have spared the embarrassment of both Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and CENTCOM commander General Lloyd Austin's when they [testified](#) before the US Senate Armed Services Committee last fall that we had spent \$500 million and trained less than 4 to 5 members of what passed for the Free Syrian opposition. Moreover, what cadres were trained both joined or turned over weapons and equipment to Jihadist and Al Qaeda opposition assuring that ISIS and Al Nusra Front would seize the vacuum.

The Administration has subsequently relied heavily on PYD-YPG Kurdish led Syrian Democratic Forces backed by air support and US Special Ops. teams to push back ISIS in Northeastern Syria. The loss of the earlier opportunity portrayed in Laux's book may have provided the incentive for Russian President Putin's actions to enter the fray in the Syrian civil war, protecting his interest in the eastern Mediterranean bases, backing Assad and temporarily supporting Iranian IRGC and proxy Hezbollah forces pushing back Turkish and Saudi-backed opposition forces. Allegedly, Putin's recent

'withdrawal' from Syria may have been reflective of concerns about continuing the Iranian and Hezbollah alliance, something that Shoshana Bryen and Dan Diker whom we [interviewed](#) in the February 2016 *NER* has suggested.. The recent seizure of Palmyra by Assad forces openly backed by Russian close air support and tankers would indicate that Putin hasn't left the field, but rather realigned his support. That is also evident in Russian air support backing for the Syrian Kurdish PYD-YPG led SDF seizing strategic positions West of the Euphrates River triggering cross border shelling by Erdogan's Turkish military of Kurdish positions.

Thus, by Obama not seizing the possible opportunity in 2012 to isolate and possibly remove Assad with a secular Free Syrian Army force, the thesis laid out by Laux in *Left of Boom* is that gave rise to ISIS and al Nusra among contending jihadist fighting groups to seize the vacuum and create the self-declared Caliphate of the Islamic State, a magnet for global recruitment of foreign fighters. Returning Western Foreign fighters trained in the Islamic State who comprised the operative network in France and the Benelux countries who perpetrated the Jihadist spectacles of the Paris Massacres in November 2015 and the Brussels Airport and Metro suicide bombings in March 2016 killing and injuring hundreds of innocent victims.

Laux, who authored *Left of Boom*, published today was interviewed by *NBC* this past weekend, "[Obama Nixed CIA Plan That Could Have Stopped ISIS: Officials.](#)" [Watch](#) the *NBC* news interview with Laux:

Note these excerpts:

The CIA in 2012 proposed a detailed covert action plan designed to remove Syrian President Bashar Assad from power, but President Obama declined to approve it, current and former U.S. officials tell *NBC News*.

It's long been known that then-CIA Director David Petraeus recommended a program to secretly arm and train moderate Syrian rebels in 2012 to pressure Assad. But [a book to be published Tuesday](#) by a former CIA operative goes further, revealing that senior CIA officials were pushing a multi-tiered plan to engineer the dictator's ouster. Former American officials involved in the discussions confirmed that to *NBC News*.

Laux, an Indiana native who joined the CIA in 2005 at age 23, says he wrote an "ops plan" that included all the elements he believed were necessary to remove Assad. He was not allowed to describe the plan, but he writes that his program "had gained traction" in Washington. His boss, the head of the Syria task force, regularly briefed members of the Congressional intelligence committees on what Laux was seeing, hearing and suggesting.

[Click Here to Read a Profile of Doug Laux](#)

A former senior intelligence official said Laux's ideas—many of them shared by other members of the CIA's Syrian task force—were heavily represented in the plan that was ultimately presented to Obama.

But the president, who must approve all covert action, never gave the green light. The White House and the CIA declined to comment.

The White House and CIA leaders "had made it clear from the beginning that the goal of our task force was to find ways to remove President Assad from office," Laux complained. "We had come up with 50 good options to facilitate that. My ops plan laid them out in black and white. But political leadership...hadn't given us the go-ahead to implement a single one."

Laux's account was heavily censored by the CIA, which reviews every book by a former officer and removes

classified information. The agency would not let Laux describe his Syria prescriptions in detail. Still, some observers have found it surprising that the agency allowed a former officer to write that the CIA was planning the overthrow of a foreign government.

Petraeus and others who supported the plan believe it could have prevented the rise of ISIS, Assad's use of chemical weapons, the European refugee crisis and the tens of thousands of civilian deaths that have happened since, the former officials say. [President Obama](#) and many other analysts strongly disagree.

Elements under discussion at the time included not only bolstering Syrian rebels, but pressuring and paying senior members of Assad's regime to push him out, the former officials said. The idea was that the Syrian civil war could then have been peacefully resolved—a huge uncertainty.

Laux ultimately resigned in frustration – over that and other issues – after it became clear the Obama administration would not move forward.

Sometime later, Obama authorized a more modest CIA plan to arm and train Syrian rebels than the one Petraeus had recommended, but that effort has not been decisive on the battlefield. The moderate Free Syrian Army collapsed, and many Syrians opposed to Assad were drawn into the orbit of extremist groups, including al Qaeda and ISIS. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf countries began arming different rebel groups and pursuing their own agendas.

[...]

Looking back, Laux now says he doesn't believe his or any

other covert plan could have stopped the rise of ISIS or ended Syria's bloody civil war. "There were no moderates," he says.

But Petraeus believes it might have, as does Robert Ford, the former U.S. ambassador to Syria, and Leon Panetta, the former defense secretary, former senior U.S officials told NBC News.

While the plan had risks, the situation in Syria "couldn't be worse" than it is now, another former senior official involved said.

We will have the opportunity to broach Laux's revelations during the question and answer period for former US Ambassador to Syria Ford's appearance at the Pensacola, Florida Tiger Bay Club on Friday, April 15, 2016.