Qatar and Terror Finance
Part II: Private Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria

David Andrew Weinberg | January 2017
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Introduction

Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani abdicated as the emir of Qatar in June of 2013, making his son Tamim the youngest ruler in the Arab world.1 Hamad’s reign was characterized by persistent negligence toward local U.S.-designated funders of al-Qaeda, but some American officials have expressed hope that Emir Tamim would turn over a new leaf in Qatar’s approach to tackling terror finance.2 Three years into Tamim’s new regime, however, its record is still conspicuously incomplete.

It is particularly vital to evaluate Qatar’s record on terror finance in light of the Nusra Front’s July 2016 decision to rebrand itself as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS), which purports to have “no relationship with any foreign party.”3 According to sources cited by Reuters, Qatar led an effort starting in 2015 to bolster the Syrian opposition by persuading Nusra to distance itself from al-Qaeda.4 Reuters reported that intelligence officials from Qatar and other Gulf states met several times with Nusra’s leader around this period to suggest that his group could receive money, arms, and supplies after stepping away from al-Qaeda.5 Yet the more JFS legitimates itself by integrating into the broader Syrian opposition, the greater the risk of a permanent al-Qaeda army on Europe’s doorstep.6

This report is Part Two of a three-part series on Qatar’s record dealing with terrorist finance and its practitioners. Part One outlined Doha’s dismal record at punishing funders of terror throughout Emir Hamad’s reign.7 This document evaluates the publicly available evidence on Qatar’s record since then, focusing primarily on individuals sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department in 2014 and 2015. All of these sanctions were imposed after Qatar agreed in September 2014, as part of a U.S.-led initiative called the Jeddah Communiqué, to bring terror financiers to justice.8 The cases should therefore be seen as a measuring stick for recent Qatari conduct.

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5. Ibid.
Based on these cases, there is no persuasive proof that Qatar has stopped letting certain terror financiers off the hook. Indeed, it is impossible to identify even a single specific instance of Qatar charging, convicting, and jailing a U.S.- or UN-designated individual. Officials at Qatar’s Embassy in Washington and its Government Communications Office in Doha declined to respond to repeated requests to identify any such example in time for a deadline for this report.

According to Washington, Qatar has finally pressed charges against some terror financiers, but those individuals have yet to be identified by name.9 Meanwhile, America’s top official for combating terror finance recently revealed that the funders of certain terrorist groups still enjoy legal impunity there.10 Nusra/JFS appears to be foremost among them.

**Qatar’s Record on Terror Finance**

The U.S. has long accused Qatar of turning a blind eye to terror finance. In March 2014, Treasury’s then-Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen called out Qatar and Kuwait “permissive jurisdictions” for Nusra and Islamic State (IS) finance, a label that has not been walked back.11 After Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL) called out Qatar-based funding of Hamas, Nusra, and IS, the State Department confirmed in its November 2014 response that Doha’s “disruption of terrorist financing … remains inconsistent.”12 In 2015, when the U.S. sanctioned an alleged Qatari Nusra financier, a U.S. official reportedly said that “there continues to be concerns about terrorist financing going on in Qatar.”13

Since 2014, some officials reportedly believe U.S. pressure has convinced Qatar to take “a more cooperative stance at the political level on terror finance matters.”14 In 2015, a senior administration official said cooperation was “improving.”15 And in April 2016, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said that President Obama “welcomed the Emir’s update on expanded Qatari counterterrorism efforts, especially in the area of countering terrorist financing,” when the two leaders met.16 However, two months later, the State Department revealed in

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Qatar has historically also been described by the U.S. as a site for the private financing of other terrorist groups besides Nusra. Al-Qaeda’s senior leadership is alleged by Washington to have received support from Qatar-based donors, as is al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, al-Qaeda operatives in Iran, and al-Qaeda in Iraq.

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its 2015 Country Reports on Terrorism that “entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional al-Qa’ida affiliates such as the Nusrah Front.”

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sanctions and has even directly financed the group. The U.S. has also reported the Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba having fundraised in Qatar.

**Legal Impunity**

On the anniversary of 9/11 in 2014, Doha signed on to the Jeddah Communiqué, agreeing not just to “countering [the] financing” of IS and “other violent extremists,” but also to “ending impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice.” Yet one month later, Treasury’s then-Under Secretary David Cohen revealed the existence of U.S.- and UN-designated terror financiers in Qatar who “have not been acted against under Qatari law.” Similarly, in May 2016, the Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee’s Subcommittee on National Security and International Trade and Finance Mark Kirk (R-IL) wrote that terror financiers under U.S. and UN sanctions “continue to enjoy such impunity in Qatar.”

In October 2016, Treasury’s Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing Daniel Glaser praised Qatar for some “criminal prosecutions of terrorist financiers.” Under Secretary Cohen’s successor at Treasury, Adam Szubin, elaborated later that month that the Qataris still have “a ways to go,” showing “a lack of political will” in some cases “to effectively enforce their combating terrorist financing laws against all threats regardless of their organization or affiliation.”

Although convicting Qatari nationals or residents for acts of terror finance could give rise to some domestic complaints, the Al Thani regime is certainly capable of doing so. As Part One of this report argued, it is the strongest regime relative to its society of any Gulf state, has a smaller territory and population to police than Connecticut, and the greatest GDP per capita in the world. To its credit, Qatar has expanded some of its legal and institutional capacities in this area, for example announcing plans to launch a training center to combat

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32. Adam Szubin, “The Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies Holds a Discussion on Combating Terrorist Financing,” October 20, 2016. (Transcript provided by CQ Transcripts, accessed via Nexis)

money laundering. But theoretical capacity can only do so much when political will is lacking. Indeed, Doha has had a law on the books criminalizing terror finance for over a decade but – at least under Tamim’s father – never seriously bothered to apply it. Results in this field can sometimes take time, but the outcome thus far is not indicative of responsible conduct.

Qatar’s Approach to Nusra/JFS

Nusra’s Special Treatment

Despite its relatively small population and military power, Qatar seeks to punch above its weight by expanding its brand and influence abroad. Yet for ideological or strategic reasons, Qatar has chosen to embrace not just its immediate neighbors and industrialized Western democracies, but also a range of violent or extreme Islamist actors. It strongly backs Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, hosts Iraqis accused by the U.S. of funding al-Qaeda, and owns al-Jazeera, which regularly praises Palestinian terrorists as “martyrs” and gives a receptive platform to terrorist leaders. In hopes of defeating Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Damascus, Doha has promoted jihadists accused of war crimes who intimately collaborate on the battlefield with al-Qaeda.

In recent years Qatar has conspicuously decided not to follow the lead of its neighbors, which released public lists of banned terrorist groups. This makes it

“According to a journalist covering the Gulf, ‘in Doha, Nusra just isn’t seen as a terrorist organization, but rather as an authentically Syrian local resistance organization.’”


39. @Davidaweinberg, “Search: martyr OR martyred OR martyrdom OR martyrs,” Twitter. (http://goo.gl/4ROJW2)


more difficult to ascertain which groups are legally forbidden by Qatari authorities to support. Such uncertainty has also been exacerbated by Emir Tamim’s own rhetoric. In his first international interview as ruler, he answered a question about terror finance by declaring that in America “they look at some movements as terrorist movements. In our part of the region, we don’t.”

According to a journalist covering the Gulf, “in Doha, Nusra just isn’t seen as a terrorist organization, but rather as an authentically Syrian local resistance organization.”

As a result, the Nusra Front/JFS seems to have enjoyed special treatment under Qatari policy. According to The Wall Street Journal, Nusra commanders “began visiting Doha in 2012 for meetings with senior Qatari military officials and financiers.” In 2013, The New York Times reported that President Obama chided Emir Hamad over sophisticated weapons Qatar shipped into Syria that purportedly made their way to groups like the Nusra Front. In 2014, columnist David Ignatius reported that Qatar “funded aid to organizations known as the Islamic Front, support that later made its way to al-Qaeda extremists,” and a Western diplomat in Doha reportedly alleged that “there are eight to 12 key figures in Qatar raising millions of pounds for the jihadis” in Syria, most of whom were funding Nusra.

Qatar’s government insists that it does not fuel terrorist groups “through the backdoor” by making ransom payments, but Reuters reports that “Western diplomatic sources in Doha say otherwise.”

In numerous instances since 2013, Qatar has been accused in press reports of paying or facilitating a


43. Communication attributed by agreement with a journalist covering the Gulf, September 2016.


ransom in cases where Nusra was thought to be the recipient of the funds. 52

In 2013, a Lebanese security official told McClatchy that Qatar paid a ransom for nine Lebanese pilgrims and two Turkish pilots, and a columnist for the Turkish daily Hürriyat wrote that Qatar reportedly paid it to the Nusra Front. 53 The Wall Street Journal reported that “according to a Lebanese official,” Qatar “paid a $16 million ransom” in March 2014 for 13 Syrian nuns and three others held by Nusra. 54 The Daily Beast reported that “sources close to the recipient of the funds.” 52

Some observers point out that the U.S. has sanctioned only a single Qatari national on explicit charges of funding Nusra, 57 which would seem to imply that Doha’s problems regarding the group are minor. But while this figure is technically accurate, it also dramatically underestimates the number of individuals who were based in Qatar and accused of funding the group. As this report explains, some Qatari citizens were designated by Washington on other charges but separately accused in press reports of also funding Nusra. Still other individuals designated for funding the group held Qatari residency but not nationality. And while it is beyond the scope of this report, additional Qatars who are not designated have

Qatar’s Nusra Financier Problem

been accused of aiding fundraisers now sanctioned on charges of funding Nusra.\textsuperscript{58}

Since the Nusra Front supposedly divorced al-Qaeda in July 2016, observers have feared that Qatar or other Mideast regimes may seek to give its successor organization, JFS, direct or indirect state support.\textsuperscript{59}

However, doing so would warrant putting Qatar on Washington’s State Sponsors of Terrorism list, a rarely invoked designation that mandates strict sanctions. Thus, Qatar may try instead to bolster the new Nusra by turning a blind eye while Qatar-based non-state actors step up funding to the group. According to a journalist covering the Gulf, one of the “primary motivations for de-linking Nusra from al-Qaeda” seems to be “to shield financiers from potential sanction.”\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{60} Communication attributed by agreement with a journalist covering the Gulf, September 2016.

The renamed terrorist organization is a growing threat to American security. In June, an advisor to President Obama described Nusra as al-Qaeda’s “largest formal affiliate in history,” and U.S. intelligence officials reportedly estimate JFS’s size at over 10,000.\textsuperscript{61} The State Department still considers the rebranded group a Foreign Terrorist Organization and concludes that it “remains al-Qa’ida’s affiliate in Syria.”\textsuperscript{62} U.S. officials have continued to warn of its members plotting terrorist attacks against the American homeland and say that it is turning Syria into a haven for core al-Qaeda operatives fleeing South Asia.\textsuperscript{63} The growing JFS threat is what finally convinced Obama in November 2016 to


devote more assets and efforts to targeting the group’s leadership with drone strikes. And Treasury’s top official for combating terror finance warns that JFS’s semantic exercise “will not change our approach to combating the group’s financial and logistical support networks” in places like the Gulf.

This report documents the cases of six men linked to Qatari territory and accused of funding al-Qaeda in Syria. Five are under counterterrorism sanctions by both the U.S and UN. The sixth is now deceased. While only one is a Qatari national who has been explicitly designated by Washington on charges of funding the Nusra Front, this report gathers pre-existing allegations that all six provided substantial support to the group.

Officials at Qatar’s Embassy in Washington and its Government Communications Office in Doha declined to answer by a deadline for this report whether any of these six men were arrested or charged (in person or in absentia) by Qatari authorities, despite repeated requests for comment in this regard. If Qatar has indeed declined to press charges against these individuals it would be a particularly dismal sign of its government’s lack of interest in punishing terror finance. The burden should now be on Doha to prove otherwise.

The ‘Abd al-Salam Brothers

In September 2014, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on two Jordanian nationals with Qatari ID cards named Ashraf Muhammad Yusuf ‘Uthman ‘Abd al-Salam and ‘Abd al-Malik Muhammad Yusuf ‘Uthman ‘Abd al-Salam (also known as ‘Umar al-Qatari). Both are accused by the U.S. Treasury of funding the Nusra Front as well as core al-Qaeda. The two men are actually brothers, which was confirmed for the first time by a U.S. intelligence official for this report. And as this report explains further below, their family appears linked to other acts of terror finance, as well.

Ashraf

According to the Treasury Department, Ashraf ‘Abd al-Salam “provided financial, material, and technological support” for the Nusra Front, as well as al-Qaeda and its Iraqi affiliate. The U.S. government asserts that he started working for al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in 2005 and worked to transfer funds and recruits to Nusra in 2012. According to the UN, which also designated Ashraf as a terror financier,


68. Ibid.

69. Communication attributed by agreement with a U.S intelligence official, July 2016.


71. Ibid.
he moved to Syria as a fighter in early 2014 and remained there as of that December.\textsuperscript{72}

The U.S. also stated that in 2012 Ashraf “worked to facilitate the transfer of hundreds of thousands of dollars from U.S.- and UN-designated Qatar-based Khalifa Muhammad Turki al-Subaiy intended for al-Qaida in Pakistan.”\textsuperscript{73} According to the UN, Subaiy sent funding to al-Qaeda leaders in Pakistan that year in collusion with “Iran based facilitators,” which suggests that Ashraf may also have sent funds via al-Qaeda’s pivotal Iran-based financial cell.

Referencing Subaiy in relation to Ashraf also reflects negatively on Doha because Subaiy was freed from state custody there after a short detention in 2008.\textsuperscript{74} After Subaiy’s release, Doha assured Washington he would be “under control,” subject to surveillance, and with his bank accounts monitored, but it seems those restrictions were either lifted or ineffectual.\textsuperscript{75}

While there is no indication that Ashraf was ever detained while in Qatar, he was previously detained by security forces in both Jordan and Bahrain, according to bulletins by Alkarama, a detainee rights NGO that was cofounded by another Qatari-based individual now under U.S. and UN counterterrorism sanctions.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{\textit{Abd al-Malik}}

Ashraf’s brother ‘Abd al-Malik reportedly became a funding, logistics, and recruitment operative for the Nusra Front and al-Qaeda after losing several fingers fighting U.S. forces in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{77} Like his brother, the U.S. asserted that ‘Abd al-Malik transferred tens of thousands of euros from Khalifa al-Subaiy “to support al-Qaida and its senior leaders.”\textsuperscript{78}

‘Abd al-Malik was arrested in Lebanon in 2012, allegedly after helping al-Qaeda provide 200,000 Qatari riyals (more than $50,000) and 180,000 euros to contacts in Antakya, Turkey for transfer into Syria, along with weapons, ammunition, night-vision goggles, and communications equipment.\textsuperscript{79} Although these claims were made by an unreliable Lebanese pro-Assad daily, \textit{al-Akhbar}, the U.S.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} “Qatar Beginning to Cooperate More Actively with USG on Counterterrorism Issues; Ready to Sign MOU on Judicial Assistance,” \textit{WikiLeaks}, March 19, 2009. (https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09DOHA198_a.html)
\item \textsuperscript{76} “الأردن: السيد أشرف عبد السلام ضحية اعتقال سري وعمليات تعذيب” (Jordan: Mr. Ashraf Abdel-Salam is a Victim of Secret Detention, and Acts of Torture), \textit{Alkarama}, July 27, 2010. (https://www.alkarama.org/ar/articles/alardn-alsyd-ashrf-bd-alslam-dhyt-atqal-sry-wmlyat-dhyb);
\item \textsuperscript{77} "صقر يتوسّط لإطلاق "الذئب" (Saqr Intervenes to Release “the Wolf”), \textit{al-Akhbar} (Lebanon), January 17, 2014. (http://www.alkhbar.com/node/175702);
\end{itemize}
Treasury Department similarly concluded that ‘Abd al-Malik “gave thousands of dollars and material support to a Syria-based al-Qaeda associate intended for ANF [al-Nusra Front]” in early 2012. According to both al-Akhbar and the pan-Arab paper Al-Hayat, ‘Abd al-Malik stayed frequently in Iran but was turned back on one of his visits, forcing him to divert to Lebanon. Treasury says he was then arrested in Beirut in May 2012 "as he attempted to depart for Qatar ... carrying thousands of dollars intended for al-Qaida.”

In addition, that same Lebanese article charged that ‘Abd al-Malik transferred funds for al-Qaeda via Iran, including 50,000 euros in November and December 2011, plus 11,000 more in March 2012. But echoing that view is the fact that the U.S. Treasury similarly concluded that he “delivered thousands of dollars to U.S.- and UN-designated al-Qaida facilitator Muhsin al-Fadhli in Iran.” The latter oversaw a logistical network out of Iran that U.S. officials described as “the core pipeline through which al-Qa’ida moves money, facilitators and operatives from across the Middle East to South Asia.”

Later, al-Fadhli also led al-Qaeda’s Khorasan Group from Syria, which planned terrorist attacks against the West, before he was killed in a U.S. airstrike.

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According to Treasury, he had worked with Qatari national Ibrahim al-Bakr and coconspirators in Lebanon “to procure and transport weapons and other equipment to Syria with the assistance of a Syria-based al-Qaida associate.”

“Al-Hayat reported that the amount on ‘Abd al-Malik’s person en route to Qatar was $20,000, and that he was arrested by Lebanon’s intelligence service on a tip from its British and American counterparts.”
amount on ‘Abd al-Malik’s person en route to Qatar was $20,000, and that he was arrested by Lebanon’s intelligence service on a tip from its British and American counterparts.89

Serving time in Lebanese jail starting in 2012 may not have put him out of commission, however. Even in state custody, security officials allegedly characterized ‘Abd al-Malik as one of Nusra’s core leaders in Lebanon who help organize the Front’s work inside the country, construct Lebanese al-Qaeda cells, and incite attacks.90 When the U.S. sanctioned him in 2014, it confirmed that ‘Abd al-Malik continued to serve as a “communications conduit” between Nusra and Lebanese detainees after his capture.91 He was also described as one of the most dangerous inmates at Roumieh Prison, where authorities admitted to exercising full control over only the facility’s exterior.92

In June 2014, ‘Abd al-Malik reportedly was convicted by a Lebanese military court on charges of financing terrorist groups, belonging to an armed terrorist group, seeking to topple the state, and sending weapons into Syria for rebel fighters.93 Two weeks later, a bomb struck a hotel in Beirut, and a captured plotter reportedly said the terrorist operation was “in retaliation for the arrest of Abdul-Malik Abdul-Salam.”94 Also, a Lebanese MP reportedly claimed that the Nusra Front had sought ‘Abd al-Malik’s release in a swap for kidnapped Lebanese pilgrims,95 whom Nusra later freed in a deal without him that was negotiated by Qatar.96 While these allegations came from questionable pro-Hezbollah outlets, the

89. “After Miqati’s Promises to March 8 on Appointments and His Coverage of Detentions, and Refraining from Responding to the campaign Against the President. Suleiman’s Centrist Stance and Refraining from Addressing the Interior),” al-Hayat (UK), March 27, 2012. (http://daharchives.alhayat.com/issue-archive/Hayat%20INT/2012/5/27/)


What al-Qaeda was unable to achieve through kidnapings or attacks, it may have achieved by strategic patience. According to Alkarama, 'Abd al-Malik was released by Lebanon and deported to Jordan in early 2016, where he was held for several more months before being freed.\footnote{Alkarama, “Jordan: University Student Released after 4 Months of Disappearance,” October 20, 2016. (http://en.alkarama.org/2250-jordan-abdulmalik-abdelsalam-disappeared-from-amman-international-airport-since-27-february-2016)} Amman reportedly confiscated his passport, but this is less reassuring given that members of his immediate family have an alleged record of traveling to Saudi Arabia and Qatar on forged passports.\footnote{Ibid.; "شهادة القائد أبو جهاد الشيشاني/ مقطع أبو عبد العزيز القطري (Testimony of the leader Abu Jihad al-Shishani/ Segment of Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari),” Palestine Youth Forums (Palestinian Territories), March 26, 2014, archived January 3, 2015. (https://web.archive.org/web/20150103193120/http://www.shabab.ps/vb/archive/index.php/t-145507.html)}

\textbf{Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari}


“Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari was also the late father of the ‘Abd al-Salam brothers, a fact confirmed by a U.S. intelligence official for this report... ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Abd al-Salam reportedly admitted to transferring $4 million from a Jordanian bank account to his father.”
What has not been previously reported is that Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari was also the late father of the ‘Abd al-Salam brothers, a fact confirmed by a U.S. intelligence official for this report.104 This relationship is particularly striking given that ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Abd al-Salam reportedly admitted to transferring $4 million from a Jordanian bank account to his father before being captured.105

Aiding Jihad in Iraq and Beyond

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari began his career working for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, where “he was close to Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Sheikh Abdullah Azzam.”106 Then, after a brief stint in Chechnya, the Observatory states that he helped Abu Musab al-Zarqawi found al-Qaeda in Iraq’s predecessor, Jama’at al-Tawhid wa la-Jihād.108 Al-Qatari had one brother who was reportedly killed fighting U.S. forces as a senior al-Qaeda commander in Nineveh in 2013, and another brother who was detained by U.S. forces for roughly four years.109 Al-Qatari reportedly served as a senior official for AQI, including after it formally changed its name in 2006 to the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), both under Zarqawi and Zarqawi’s successors.110

Hisham al-Hashimi, an expert on IS who consults for Iraq’s government,111 asserts that al-Qatari handled AQI’s private correspondence with al-Qaeda’s core leadership in South Asia and went on to serve as ISI’s finance minister out of Syria, going by the name

104. Communication attributed by agreement with a U.S intelligence official, July 2016.
105. Ibid.
106. Masar Media, "جريمة مقتل القائد أبو عبد العزيز القطري - جبهة ثوار سوريا من الداخل (Episode 2)," YouTube, March 5, 2015, 1:46. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5GdmMJ1lGw)
108. Ibid.
110. Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror, (Simon & Schuster, 2016), page 117.
Muhammad Yusuf al-Falastini. Another expert on the group, Hassan Hassan, disputes that Muhammad Yusuf al-Falastini served as finance minister, but agrees that Falastini served the Islamic State and was the same man as al-Qatari. According to articles published by the Saudi-owned news site al-Arabiya and by al-Sakina (a counterterrorism initiative launched by the Saudi state), a Palestinian named Muhammad Yusuf served as the senior IS official in Syria overseeing the work of ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Qaduli around 2012, who did soon become IS’s finance minister.

Several sources report that al-Qatari also lived in Qatar, for which he earned his nickname. Testifying in Lebanon, his son ‘Abd al-Malik claimed to work in Qatar with his father who owned a Porsche business there. Masar Media, a propaganda outlet considered close to Jund al-Aqsa, states that al-Qatari moved from Iraq “to work from Qatar in supporting the mujahideen materially and logistically.” Another sympathetic biography of al-Qatari on Facebook says that “after he participated in and supported fighting against the American occupation [of Iraq], he traveled to Qatar, and was supporting the jihad in Iraq.” A third biography states that his nickname “came from his pride in the Muslims in Qatar and after he was able to visit it with his son with forged passports.”

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113. Correspondence attributed by agreement with expert on ISIS Hassan Hassan, August 17, 2016.


118. Masar Media, "جريمة مقتل القائد أبو عبدالعزيز القطري - جبهة ثوار سوريا من الداخل (الحلقة 2) (Crime of Murdering the Leader Abu Abdulaziz Al-Qatari – Jabhat Thuwwar Suriyya From the Inside (Episode 2)),” YouTube, March 5, 2015, 2:19. (https://youtu.be/n5GdmJMj1Gi?t=2m19s)
Helping Lead Nusra

Al-Qatari and the founder of the Nusra Front, Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, reportedly first went to Syria to form al-Qaeda sleeper cells on orders from Islamic State chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. According to Masar Media, al-Qatari also briefly joined Ahrar al-Sham there in 2011, which would have made him one of several al-Qaeda leaders in Ahrar's echelons, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri's then-representative to the Levant.


122. Masar Media, “جريمة مقتل القائد أبو عبد العزيز القطري - جبهة ثوار سوريا من الداخل (الحلقة 2)” (Crime of Murdering the Leader Abu Abdulaziz Al-Qatari – Jabhat Thuwarwari Suriyya From the Inside (Episode 2)), YouTube, March 5, 2015, 2:31-2:46. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5GdmJMj1GI&feature=youtu.be&t=2m31s);

123. Al-Qabas (Kuwait), June 20, 2015. (http://www.zawya.com/ar/story/ZAWYA20150620043147/);


al-Qatari, and the Syrian opposition paper *Enab Baladi* identified him as a son of Abu Abdulaziz. It also credited Abu Ahmed with helping Jund al-Aqsa attract new recruits and independent militias.

A 2015 statement attributed to IS described Abu Ahmed as being under the sway of Qatar and stated that Abu Ahmed al-Qatari ‘possesses direct links with Qatari and Kuwaiti businessmen.’

Besides Ashraf and ‘Abd al-Malik, Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari had two other sons, named Abdulaziz and ‘Abd al-Rahman. It is therefore likely that Abu Ahmed’s true name is either Abdulaziz or Ashraf, since both men were last reported to be alive and still in Syria. Their brother ‘Abd al-Malik was in Lebanese custody for much longer.

**The article characterized Jund al-Aqsa as being under the sway of Qatar and stated that Abu Ahmed al-Qatari ‘possesses direct links with Qatari and Kuwaiti businessmen.’**


129. Akil Housain, "انتهاء الحرب على "جند الأقصى" لصالح فتح الشام (War on Jund al-Aqsa Ends in Favor of Fatah al-Sham)," *al-Modon* (Lebanon), October 14, 2016. (http://www.almodon.com/arabworld/2016/10/14/انتهاء-الحرب-على-"جند-الأقصى"-لصالح-فتح-الشام)


131. Obada Koujan, "انتهاء الحرب على "جند الأقصى" لصالح فتح الشام (War on Jund al-Aqsa Ends in Favor of Fatah al-Sham)," *Enab Baladi* (Syria), October 9, 2016. (https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/107927)

132. Akil Housain, "انتهاء الحرب على "جند الأقصى" لصالح فتح الشام (War on Jund al-Aqsa Ends in Favor of Fatah al-Sham)," *al-Modon* (Lebanon), October 14, 2016. (http://www.almodon.com/arabworld/2016/10/14/انتهاء-الحرب-على-"جند-الأقصى"-لصالح-فتح-الشام)

133. Akil Housain, "انتهاء الحرب على "جند الأقصى" لصالح فتح الشام (War on Jund al-Aqsa Ends in Favor of Fatah al-Sham)," *al-Modon* (Lebanon), October 14, 2016. (http://www.almodon.com/arabworld/2016/10/14/انتهاء-الحرب-على-"جند-الأقصى"-لصالح-فتح-الشام)

134. "The article characterized Jund al-Aqsa as being under the sway of Qatar and stated that Abu Ahmed al-Qatari ‘possesses direct links with Qatari and Kuwaiti businessmen.’"
of this period as noted above, while ‘Abd al-Rahman was reportedly killed several years ago fighting for the Nusra Front.138 In 2012, Abdulaziz apparently was briefly detained in Bahrain before joining Nusra in Syria.139 He reportedly has also gone by the nickname Aziz al-Qatari and called from Syria for “cleansing the Gulf of the rafidhi abomination,” a derogatory term for Shiite Muslims.140 By 2014, he reportedly had become a senior terrorist operative in the Syria-Lebanon border region, traveling to and from Yemen.141 He may also have been the brother of ‘Abd al-Malik thought to be responsible for dispatching a team of suicide bombers into Lebanon that summer.142


Al-Qaeda’s Appendage

From its earliest days as a distinct entity in 2013, Jund al-Aqsa stayed close to al-Nusra despite their differences. Al-Qatari has been called a “close confidante” of Jolani who “almost certainly saved Jabhat al-Nusra from internal collapse,” possibly even forming Jund al-Aqsa on Jolani’s orders to attract sympathetic foreign fighters and protect Nusra’s northern flank against IS.144


FDD Senior Fellow and Senior Editor of FDD’s Long War Journal Thomas Joscelyn reported in 2015 that Jund al-Aqsa was “an al Qaeda front group.” He wrote that this was “based on the biographies of its leadership, the group’s propaganda, and its close working relationship” with Nusra. Virtually all of its major military operations were coordinated with Nusra, and it joined several hardline Islamist coalitions that included Nusra. Although Jund al-Aqsa left Nusra and Ahrar’s Army of Conquest coalition in October 2015, Joscelyn noted that it did so in part to avoid fighting IS, not as a gesture of moderation. In announcing its departure, Jund al-Aqsa emphasized that its “first stance” was “with the Sheikh of Mujahideen today, His Eminence master Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, may Allah protect him.”

In addition to al-Qatari, at least two other senior al-Qaeda operatives went on to serve in Syria as leaders of Jund al-Aqsa. Adel al-Harbi once served as the number two in charge of al-Qaeda’s financial conduit in Iran, landing him a $5 million U.S. bounty. He went on to become an official in al-Qaeda’s Khorasan Group as well as a military leader in Jund al-Aqsa before his death in 2015. Another Qaeda veteran killed while leading Jund al-Aqsa forces in 2015, Said Arif, had been sanctioned by the U.S. and UN for...

Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari brandishing a sword and lecturing fighters in front of Jund al-Aqsa’s flag.

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Qatar and Terror Finance - Part II: Private Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria

links to an al-Qaeda plot to destroy the Eiffel Tower and use chemical weapons in France.  

After its founder's death, Jund al-Aqsa partnered closely with Nusra in 2014, 2015, and 2016 to crush three of the most important U.S.-backed Syrian militias: the Syria Revolutionaries Front, the Hazm Movement, and Division 13. Jund al-Aqsa reportedly also continued to
draw inspiration from a Kuwaiti preacher named Hamid bin Hamad al-Ali, who was sanctioned in 2014 by the U.S. and UN for purportedly funding Nusra and calling himself an “al-Qaeda commando.” Jund al-Aqsa also reportedly continued receiving support from private Gulf

donors who appreciated its cooperation with Nusra while refusing to take up arms against the Islamic State.  

“JFS will now reap the benefits of the Jund’s additional financial contacts in the Gulf.”

Since then, some in Jund al-Aqsa’s ranks gravitated more closely toward IS than to Nusra. But this faction provoked a handful of internecine clashes with the much larger Ahrar al-Sham this fall. These ill-fated clashes forced Jund al-Aqsa back into Nusra’s camp yet again, compelling its leadership to pledge allegiance to Nusra’s successor organization, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. The next day, JFS chief Abu Muhammed al-Jolani signed a separate accord with Ahrar al-Sham to end the fighting, a document that may have sealed Jund al-Aqsa’s fate. In it, he decreed that Jund al-Aqsa’s pledge of allegiance entailed its “dissolution” and “complete incorporation” into JFS, thus “preventing its independent reconstitution” under any form. It seems likely that JFS will now reap the benefits of the Jund’s additional financial contacts in the Gulf, since Jund al-Aqsa’s pledge of allegiance has reportedly been affirmed by most of its leaders, including Abu Ahmed al-Qatari.

154. Jund al-Aqsa reportedly also continued to 

155. Tam Hussein, “Why Did Jund al-Aqsa Join Nusra Front in Taking Out ‘Moderate’ Rebels in Idlib?” The Huffington Post, June 11, 2014. (http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/tam-hussein/nusra-front_b_6112790.html); Asad Hana, “قائد في حزام لـ "كلنا... شركاء": الجولاني طلب إنهاء حزم … وصواريخ التاو بأمان (Leader in Hazm to Kuluna Shuraka’: Jolani Requested the End of Hazm and the TOW Missiles are Safe),” All4Syria, March 8, 2015. (http://www.all4syria.info/Archive/198344); “Al Qaeda to Solve Disagreement Between Ahrar al-Sham and Jund al-Aqsa,” All4Syria, October 11, 2016. (http://all4syria.info/Archive/352711)  
Ibrahim ‘Isa al-Bakr

When the U.S. sanctioned the ‘Abd al-Salam brothers, it also designated a Qatari national named Ibrahim ‘Isa al-Bakr, alternatively known as Abu Khalil. The U.S. accused him of collecting funds for al-Qaeda and the Taliban, “serving as a link between Gulf-based al-Qaida financiers and Afghanistan.”161 His case was allegedly mishandled by Qatar numerous times.

“The U.S. seemed to hint that Bakr also provided material support to the Nusra Front.”

The Nusra Angle

Although it did not say so explicitly in its Treasury designation, the U.S. seemed to hint that Bakr also provided material support to the Nusra Front, stating that he worked in 2012 with purported Nusra financier ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Abd al-Salam and associates in Lebanon “to procure and transport weapons and other equipment to Syria” with the help of an al-Qaeda associate based in Syria.162 This interpretation is supported by court coverage in the Lebanese press. According to the pro-Western Lebanese paper al-Mustaqbal, ‘Abd al-Malik acknowledged receiving $50,000 from Bakr for delivery to al-Qaeda’s “Daoud the Iranian” – an apparent reference to Muhsin al-Fadhli – though he later recanted saying so.163 ‘Abd al-Malik also reportedly admitted to entering Lebanon from Syria and receiving from Bakr roughly 15,000 euros, 5,000 Qatari riyals, and Syrian, American, and Malaysian currency for fighters and their families, though he later denied these remarks, too.164

Similarly, before Bakr was sanctioned, the pro-Western Lebanese newspaper al-Joumhouriya accused him of ties to ‘Abd al-Malik and Shadi al-Mawlawi. The latter was convicted in Lebanon of terror finance and membership in Nusra.165 The paper reported that a Qatari national alternately referred to as Ibrahim, al-Bakr, and Abu Khalil met the two other men on April 27, 2012 in Beirut.166 It said Mawlawi admitted receiving money from the Qatari national to buy and send weapons into Syria, and that Bakr and ‘Abd al-Malik tasked him with recruiting others and moving funds and ammunition into Syria.167

Legal Impunity

The Treasury Department’s description of Bakr’s case is loaded with implicit criticism of Qatari policies. It states that he was jailed there in the early 2000s while fundraising for terrorists but was “subsequently released

162. Ibid.

164. Ibid.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
from prison after he promised not to conduct terrorist activity in Qatar.” Yet by early 2006, the U.S. says he played a “key role” in a plot to attack U.S. bases and troops in Qatar. Documents attributed to Alkarama say Bakr was in Qatari custody without being charged as of April 2004, and detained again by Qatar in 2006 before being freed without trial later that year.

Despite this, the U.S. reports that he was somehow able to travel to Pakistani Waziristan in 2012, a decade after the UN says he couriered tens of thousands of dollars from a Gulf-based al-Qaeda operative to “a Pakistan based facilitator.” It is unclear whether Bakr has returned to Qatar since 2012, but there is also no visible proof that Doha has pressed charges against him, even in absentia.

To put Bakr’s legal impunity in perspective, it is worth noting that Saudi Arabia detained another Qatari at about the same time who was similarly accused of playing a key role in a plot to attack U.S. targets in Qatar. Whereas Qatar evidently set Bakr free for a second time, Riyadh sentenced the other Qatari to thirty years in jail after convicting him on charges such as money laundering.

**Ka’bi and Kawari**

The Treasury Department imposed counterterrorism sanctions in August 2015 on two Qatari nationals, Sād bin Sād al-Ka’bi and ‘Abd al-Latif bin ‘Abdallah al-Kawari. It called the two men “major facilitators of the al-Nusrah Front and al-Qaida,” but specific ties to Nusra were only laid out by the U.S. against Ka’bi, not Kawari. Even if Kawari was not designated for funding Nusra, it seems that U.S. officials do believe he provided financial facilitation for the group: A senior administration official told the press that Kawari and Ka’bi were both involved with a fundraising network in Qatar called Madad Aḥl al-Sham (MAS). While MAS provided in-kind humanitarian aid, the U.S. official reportedly asserted that MAS also used social

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169. Ibid.


media to raise “significant” funds for Nusra. The official also alleged that Kawari focused even more on fundraising from Qatari donors for core al-Qaeda leaders in South Asia. 

**Media Warnings about MAS**

In December 2013, Joby Warrick of *The Washington Post* reported that a Qatari campaign called “Madid [sic] Ahl al-Sham” had been “cited by Jabhat al-Nusra in August as one of the preferred conduits for donations intended for the group.” According to Warrick, “Jabhat al-Nusra’s endorsement of the Qatari charity, announced in a pair of Twitter postings, was promptly reposted by the charity on its own Twitter page.” Yet neither al-Qaeda’s reported praise for the campaign that summer nor the *Post*’s allegation in December prompted Qatar to take timely action, even though the newspaper repeated it in a second story days later that was republished inside the GCC by the Dubai-based *Gulf News*.

Over half a year later, CNN anchor Erin Burnett traveled to Qatar to investigate, contacting Ka’bi by phone through a translator. Ka’bi denied her observation that his WhatsApp profile called for donations equivalent to $1,500 to arm, feed, and treat fighters in Syria. Burnett also asked him why his Twitter account showed an image of planes hitting the World Trade Center on 9/11, which he purportedly dismissed as insignificant because those images are widely available online.

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177. Ibid.
178. Ibid.
181. Ibid., 3:01-3:51.
182. Ibid., 3:24-3:36.
183. Blurring added. Ibid., minute 2:53; @suotalfajer, “حملة 알له الشام في #قطر حماه القائمون عليها شباب قطريين (The #Madad_Ahl_Al-Sham Campaign in #Qatar is being protected by those who are carrying in out, Qatari Youths Whose Hands are Pure, We Honor Them and God Honors Them),” *Twitter*, August 13, 2013, accessed December 23, 2015. (https://twitter.com/suotalfajer/status/36739021833228288)
Qatar’s Halfhearted Response

The State Department indicated in its 2014 Country Reports on Terrorism that “Qatari authorities shut down ... the Madad Ahl al-Sham online fundraising campaign,” which was “suspected of sending funds to violent extremist elements in Syria.” In February 2015, The Wall Street Journal similarly reported that U.S. and Qatari officials said Doha had “shut a social-media website the US believed was used in raising money for al-Qaeda-linked militants in Syria.” Qatar’s ambassador to France later confirmed that his government shut down MAS in 2014 because it was used to finance “extremist factions in Syria.”

Although Doha ultimately took action in this case, it waited nearly a year to shut MAS down after the campaign’s reported praise from the Nusra Front in 2013. Two years after that first date, the U.S. sanctioned Ka’bi and Kawari while noting that Qatar had not arrested either individual. And Qatar still did not impose a travel ban or asset freeze on the men until it was legally obligated to do so when the UN also put sanctions on them. Those local restrictions were not revealed until the State Department reported them in June 2016, nearly three years after the first worrisome signs about the group. However, the State Department’s report did not address whether Ka’bi and Kawari have since been detained. Nor is there any visible evidence they have been charged by Qatar, even though the UN has called both of them “Qatar-based.”

Ka’bi and Kawari’s Roles

When it sanctioned the men in 2015, the U.S. Treasury Department declared that Ka’bi gave support to the Nusra Front since 2012. It also asserted that he set up donation campaigns in Qatar in response to a fundraising request from an al-Qaeda associate for weapons and food. Further, it alleged that he was involved in facilitating a ransom payment for al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch. A senior administration official reportedly “refused to answer” whether Qatar’s government itself helped finance any such ransoms.


Ka’bi’s alleged accomplice, ‘Abd al-Latif al-Kawari, was called an al-Qaeda security official by the U.S. and was accused of facilitating travel for a courier to bring the group tens of thousands of dollars in 2012. It asserted that Kawari had worked with Ibrahim Bakr and al-Qaeda’s Hassan Ghul about a decade earlier to fund al-Qaeda in Pakistan, and that Kawari arranged a “fraudulent passport” for Ghul to visit Qatar with them.194 Ghul was no low-level operative; he later became Osama bin Laden’s Iraq envoy and eventually gave up information that helped the U.S. take out bin Laden.195 An individual with Kawari’s first, middle, and last name shows up on a purported list of Qatari prisoners held without charges in 2004.196 The U.S. says he received a new Qatari passport in 2007.197

Ka’bi played a pivotal role in MAS according to several news reports.198 Also, his name and phone number appear to be included on every flyer attributed to the campaign, typically as the first name listed.199 Social media posts and some flyers called him MAS’s “supervisor.”200

Supporters and coordinators of MAS also described ‘Abd al-Latif al-Kawari as a point of contact for the campaign as far back as 2013, listing local phone numbers for him and indicating that he was helping Ka’bi supervise it.201 Given Kawai’s alleged record as a longstanding al-Qaeda official and reported past detention without

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199. Social media posts and some flyers called him MAS’s “supervisor.”200
charges in Qatar, local authorities should have been on high alert when the postings in 2013 indicated that he was helping to run the campaign.

**Broader Failures of Oversight**

Madad Ahl al-Sham was at one point arguably the most visible fundraising group dedicated to Syrian relief in Qatar. A spokesperson told the press that MAS involved over 50 Qatari youths gathering supplies and donations for Syria.\(^{202}\) The campaign apparently stated that efforts supervised by Ka’bi raised over $1.4 million.\(^{203}\) CNN’s Burnett reported that the Centre was “supervised by the Qatari government’s Ministry of Culture,” whose minister she said declined CNN’s interview request.\(^{205}\) A 2013 article on the ministry’s website highlighted in-kind aid sent to Syria by the Volunteer Centre, which stated that aid collection efforts there were carried out “with participation of the volunteers from ‘Madad Ahl al-Sham.’”\(^{206}\)

Madad Ahl al-Sham also received public endorsements from well-known extremists, including long before the network was shut down. Promoters included former Guantanamo detainees,\(^{207}\) the U.S.- and UN-sanctioned Qatari national Khalifa al-Subaiy,\(^{208}\) and the Syria-based government’s Ministry of Culture, whose minister she said declined CNN’s interview request.\(^{205}\) A 2013 article on the ministry’s website highlighted in-kind aid sent to Syria by the Volunteer Centre, which stated that aid collection efforts there were carried out “with participation of the volunteers from ‘Madad Ahl al-Sham.’”\(^{206}\)

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jihadist cleric Abdullah al-Muhaysini. For some time, Muhaysini publicly fundraised for Syrian jihadists using phone numbers and currencies from Gulf states, including Qatar, and he recently praised a donor from Qatar for helping pay for rockets in Aleppo. He was sanctioned by the U.S. in November 2016 on charges of raising millions of dollars for Nusra, serving as an accepted member of its “inner leadership circle,” and recruiting child soldiers.

Ka’bi and the MAS campaign were visited in Qatar and praised on camera by Wagdy Ghoneim, who left the U.S. in 2005 under suspicion of terrorist fundraising, which he denied. According to Washington, Ka’bi received funding to support Nusra from the Kuwaiti cleric Hamid Hamad al-Ali, who reportedly visited Qatar in June 2013 to endorse MAS and is now under U.S. and UN sanctions. While Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser revealed in October 2016 that Qatar has finally pressed charges against some unnamed terror financiers, there appears to be zero indication that Ka’bi or Kawari are among those charged.

209. @mheisny, “من الحملات المباركة .. في الشام حملة مدد من أهلنا في قطر .. نتابعها ونشجعها نفع الله بها (One of the Blessed Campaigns.. in Sham Aid from Our Kinsfolk in Qatar. Follow it and Spread it God Will Do Good Through it @Saadsaadalkabi),” Twitter, November 3, 2013, accessed August 7, 2015. (http://www.defenddemocracy.org/screenshot-from-twitter.com-accessed-august-7-2015)


211. @ThomasJoscelyn, “25. Muhaysini thanks businessmen (in Syria, Qatar, Kuwait, elsewhere) for providing the 100 “Elephant Rockets” fired during his video.,” Twitter, October 28, 2016. (https://twitter.com/thomasjoscelyn/status/792107748448210949)


Screenshot from YouTube video uploaded in June 2013 that appears to show, from left to right: Sa’ad bin Sa’d al-Ka’bi, Wagdy Ghoneim, and two other individuals.
Conclusion

For too long, Qatar’s record at tackling terror finance has been defined by inexcusable negligence. In the six cases documented here, Qatar’s visible enforcement record was glaringly absent, undermining international security by appearing to let acts of terror finance go unpunished. While Qatar has finally now charged several unnamed terror financiers, it does not appear to have convicted any of them yet. And there is no proof Qatar has even pressed charges, in person or in absentia, against any of the five designated individuals with purported Nusra ties who were profiled in this report and are still believed to be alive: Ashraf ‘Abd al-Salam, ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Abd al-Salam, Ibrahim al-Bakr, Sa’d al-Ka’bi, and ‘Abd al-Latif al-Kawari.

Such concerns are further bolstered by the result of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed for the purposes of this report. Although the U.S. government has received thousands of Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) requests since 2012, a Justice Department official indicated in response to FDD’s FOIA query that Qatar filed only one Mutual Legal Assistance request since 2012 through December 2016, and the one request did not pertain to terrorism or terrorist financing. Such requests are the primary means by which foreign states formally request U.S. government evidence for prosecutions. They serve as an important metric in deciphering whether Qatar has undertaken serious efforts to prosecute citizens or residents subjected to U.S. counterterrorism sanctions since Emir Tamim came to power.

“Qatar filed only one Mutual Legal Assistance request since 2012 through December 2016, and the one request did not pertain to terrorism or terrorist financing.”

Qatar evidently remains a permissive jurisdiction for certain kinds of terror finance and for at least some of its practitioners, as Treasury’s then-Under Secretary Cohen exposed in 2014 and his acting successor, Adam Szubin, and the State Department confirmed in 2016. Rather than comprehensively addressing this challenge, Qatar has gotten by with half measures and handled the fallout like a public relations nuisance, paying spin doctors and lobbyists to press its interests in Washington. The tiny emirate increased its 2015 spending on U.S. foreign agents to $3.34 million, a tenfold increase compared to 2013.


seems on the verge of being rewarded, with the last administration advancing up to $21 billion in stalled Qatari jet sales and related support, reportedly “without preconditions.”

"President-elect Trump has called out the Gulf states for ‘not carrying their weight,’ and he promised on the campaign trail to ‘decimate Al Qaeda.’ But achieving this goal will be impossible without choking off the flow of funding to al-Qaeda’s most powerful branch." [222]

As Szubin recently noted, the Treasury Department has been “devoting a lot of attention” to addressing terror finance issues in Qatar. [223] Yet some other American officials unfortunately downplay Qatar’s negligence on terror finance, overlooking the issue or hoping to entice Doha to take more meaningful steps sometime in the future. However, if Doha’s record was really so laudable, then U.S. officials could be a great deal more specific about Qatari achievements, identifying and tallying up specific prosecutions and convictions as more visible proof of success.

Fifteen years after 9/11, it is not too much for Washington to ask its Gulf partners to take visible legal action against a range of U.S.- and UN-designated terror financiers and to effectively block the flow of funding from their territory to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Rather, such conduct seems more like the minimum of what constitutes a genuine American ally.

President-elect Trump has called out the Gulf states for “not carrying their weight,” and he promised on the campaign trail to “decimate Al Qaeda.” [224] But achieving this goal will be impossible without choking off the flow of funding to al-Qaeda’s most powerful branch. The new administration should bring to an end the unsustainable dynamic in which Qatar is identified as a permissive jurisdiction for terror finance without tangible consequences. Instead, the White House should encourage legislation empowering the president to impose relevant penalties for terror finance negligence, such as the bipartisan STORM Act of 2016 (Stop Terrorist Operational Resources and Money). [225] The U.S. could further boost its leverage by shifting some personnel and equipment out of Qatar and building up an alternative Combined Air and Space Operations Center elsewhere, at least until Doha establishes a more persuasive track record of implementing these reforms. The U.S. should also step up the pace of designations against Qatar-based terrorist facilitators and be prepared to publicly push for the extradition of key individuals if Qatari authorities fail to take appropriate action.

We now have an opportunity to change a longstanding and troubling dynamic with an irresponsible U.S. ally. If Doha will not act, it is up to the U.S. to change Qatar’s calculus on terror finance.

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About the Foundation for Defense of Democracies

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies is a non-profit, non-partisan policy institute dedicated exclusively to promoting pluralism, defending democratic values, and fighting the ideologies that drive terrorism. Founded shortly after the attacks of 9/11, FDD combines policy research, democracy and counterterrorism education, strategic communications, and investigative journalism in support of its mission.

FDD focuses its efforts where opinions are formed and decisions are made, providing cutting-edge research, investigative journalism and public education - transforming ideas into action and policy.

FDD holds events throughout the year, including the Leading Thinkers series, briefings on Capitol Hill, expert roundtables for public officials, diplomats and military officers, book releases, and panel discussions and debates within the policy community.

About FDD’s Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies’ (FDD) Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance (CSIF) expands upon FDD’s success as a leading think tank on the use of financial and economic measures in national security. The Center’s purpose is to provide policy and subject matter expertise in areas of illicit finance, financial power, and economic pressure to the global policy community.

CSIF seeks to illuminate the critical intersection between the full range of illicit finance and national security, including money laundering, terrorist financing, sanctions evasion, proliferation financing, cyber crime and economic espionage, and corruption and kleptocracy. This includes understanding how America can best use and preserve its financial and economic power to promote its interests and the integrity of the financial system. The Center also examines how America’s adversaries may be leveraging economic tools and power.

CSIF focuses on global illicit finance, including the financing of terrorism, weapons and nuclear proliferation, corruption, and environmental crime. It has a particular emphasis on Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Turkey, Russia, and other autocratic states as well as drug cartels and terrorist groups including Hamas, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State.

For more information, please visit www.defenddemocracy.org.