

U.S. House of Representatives Approves Training and Arming of 'Moderate' Militants in Syria



Washington, September 18 (RHC)-- The U.S. House of Representatives has approved U.S. President Barack Obama's strategy to train and arm 'moderate' militants in Syria to tackle the threat of the ISIL terrorist organization.

Despite the concerns, the Republican-controlled House voted 273 to 156 in favor of the so-called train-and-equip plan on Wednesday. The 'yes' votes included 159 Republicans and 114 Democrats, while 85 Democrats and 71 Republicans voted against the legislation. The Senate takes up the measure on Thursday.

The Pentagon plans to train and arm 5,000 militants in Syria as part of the Obama administration's long-term strategy to confront ISIL. Obama has requested Congress to grant him political cover to launch a military assault in Syria against ISIL, despite the fact that the White House believes he has the constitutional authority to start an air campaign in Syria, as he has done in Iraq.

"It's the best choice of worse options," said Rep. Jim Moran, a Democrat. "It's because there are no better alternatives and I don't think it's responsible to do nothing."

Earlier in the day, Obama told an audience of American troops that he will not start another ground war in Iraq, but repeated his vow to destroy ISIL terrorists. "The American forces that have been deployed to Iraq do not and will not have a combat mission," he said. "I will not commit you and the rest of our armed forces to fighting another ground war in Iraq."

The United States has deployed some 1,600 troops to Iraq to bolster security for American diplomats and provide advice to Iraqi government forces fighting the militants. The U.S. calls them "military advisors," but according to U.S. defense officials, the troops are comprised of Marines and special operations forces from the U.S. Central Command region.

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