# GOOGLE'S SOFTWARE PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION CALLED INTO QUESTION

## Clinton email reveals: Google sought overthrow of Syria's Assad

By [Rudy Takala](#) ([@RudyTakala](#))

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Google in 2012 sought to help insurgents overthrow Syrian President Bashar Assad, according to State Department emails receiving fresh scrutiny this week.

Messages between former secretary of state Hillary Clinton's team and one of the company's executives detailed the plan for Google to get involved in the region.

"Please keep close hold, but my team is planning to launch a tool ... that will publicly track and map the defections in Syria and which parts of the government they are coming from," Jared Cohen, the head of what was then the company's "Google Ideas" division, wrote in a July 2012 email to several top Clinton officials.



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By Rudy Takala

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March 17, 2016 | 3:47 pm

"Our logic behind this is that while many people are tracking the atrocities, nobody is visually representing and mapping the defections, which we believe are important in encouraging more to defect and giving confidence to the opposition," Cohen said, adding that the plan was for Google to surreptitiously give the tool to Middle Eastern media.

Hillary Emails: Google tried to boost Assad defections https://t.co/lyma4eJp9a More: https://t.co/ZUfh7WDAT5 pic.twitter.com/nvNG0lFJWt— WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) March 19, 2016

"Given how hard it is to get information into Syria right now, we are partnering with Al-Jazeera who will take primary ownership over the tool we have built, track the data, verify it, and broadcast it back into Syria," he said.

"Please keep this very close hold and let me know if there is anything [else] you think we need to account for or think about before we launch. We believe this can have an important impact," Cohen concluded.

The message was addressed to deputy secretary of state Bill Burns; Alec Ross, a senior Clinton advisor; and Clinton's deputy chief of staff, Jake Sullivan. Sullivan subsequently forwarded Cohen's proposal to Clinton, describing it as "a pretty cool idea."

Cohen worked as a low-level staffer at the State Department until 2010, when he was hired to lead Google Ideas, but was tied to the use of social media to incite social uprisings even before he left the department. He once reportedly asked Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey to hold off of conducting system maintenance that officials believed could have impeded a brief 2009 uprising in Iran.

The unusual involvement by Google in foreign affairs highlights the difficulty of involvement in the internal politics of foriegn states. While Cohen seemed to consider his company's effort as helpful to American interests, the effort to overthrow Assad helped spur the rise of the Islamic State, which eventually filled a vaccuum resulting from Assad's loss of control over of Syria.



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# Emails: Clinton tried to get a secure BlackBerry

By Rudy Takala

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The exchange on Syria was highlighted by Wikileaks on Saturday. Earlier in the week, the secret-leaking website posted more than 30,000 emails that Clinton sent or received during her tenure leading the State Department.

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