Syria & Iraq: June 2015

Copyright 2015 by Ronald B. Standler
No copyright claimed for quotations.
No copyright claimed for works of the U.S. Government.

Table of Contents

Foreword

I have posted an annotated list of my previous 19 essays on Syria. That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.

When I was a full-time student in universities during 1967-77, I learned not to write documents full of facts, without also explaining the significance of those facts and drawing conclusions from those facts. So, I include my opinions in this essay, to show the reader omissions, inconsistencies, propaganda, and other defects in the conventional wisdom or in journalists' reports. In science and engineering, we keep our opinions separate from facts, and in that spirit I label most of my opinions and my comments.

Copyright law allows an author to make brief quotations for purposes of scholarship, news reporting, or comment, but *not* to copy an entire article. (17 U.S.C. §107) That is why I do not quote most of an article by a news agency or newspaper. However, there is no copyright on works of the U.S. Government (17 U.S.C. §105), so an author is free to copy as much of a Government's work as the author wishes.

I am aware of "link rot" — the failure of links owing to a webmaster who either (1) moved old webpages to a new location, or (2) deleted old webpages. Such actions by webmasters frustrate users of the Internet, who depend on stable links. In writing this essay, I often cite multiple news sources, in the hope that at least one of those links will still function in the future. Link rot is a problem created by webmasters, and the solution to this problem lies with those webmasters.

I use Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) for events in Europe and Syria. Eastern Daylight Savings Time in Boston is -4 hours from GMT. Beginning 8 March, the USA was on Daylight Savings Time.   Beirut summer time is +3 hours from GMT.   Baghdad is +3 hours from GMT.

Every day, I checked the websites of The Daily Star in Lebanon, All Iraq News, Rudaw in Kurdish Iraq,   the U.S. Central Command, and the Associated Press for news to summarize in this essay. When I found significant news, I attempted to find and cite the original source.

Terse Summary of Syria
Fighters

It is helpful to understanding the Syrian civil war to divide the opposition fighters into three groups of people:

1. The so-called "rebels" are moderates, many of whom are part of the Free Syrian Army. In 2011, these moderates wanted to continue a secular government in Syria, but without Assad.
2. The "jihadists" want to impose an Islamic government (i.e., Sharia law) on Syria. The Islamic Front is the largest group of jihadists.
3. And two Al-Qaeda affiliated groups fighting in Syria:
    a. the Nusra Front, which wants to establish an Islamic emirate in Syria.
    b. the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) — also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On 3 Feb 2014, Al-Qaeda repudiated ISIL, but ISIL remains Al-Qaeda inspired. ISIL's goal since June 2014 is to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

On 29 June 2014, ISIL changed its name to "Islamic State", when it declared a caliphate. I continue to use the old name, ISIL, for consistency with my previous essays. Moreover, using the term "Islamic State" appears to give legitimacy to their so-called "State", which is only a few tens of thousands of terrorists. On 3 Dec 2014, John Kerry followed the lead of the French Foreign Minister in calling ISIL "Daesh".

The USA and Western Europe would prefer that the rebels win, although military aid to the rebels has been withheld because of fears that donated weapons and munitions would eventually be acquired by either the jihadists or Al-Qaeda. The rebels are frequently described by two words: "fragmented" and "disorganized". Beginning in September 2013, the rebels are also frequently characterized as "disillusioned". Since October 2013, many smaller rebel groups have been leaving the Free Syrian Army and joining the jihadists.

While I use the words rebels, jihadists, and Al-Qaeda to indicate three different opposition groups, journalists routinely use the word "rebels" to refer to the entire opposition, or any part of the opposition. Thus, there is different word usage between my text and quotations from journalists. Worse, journalists commonly refer to the opposition as "rebels", "militants", or "extremists", without mentioning the name of the group. With the exception of the Free Syrian Army, *all* of the insurgents in Syria are some kind of radical Islamic extremist, so labels like "extremist" lack precision.

It is critically important to understand that the jihadists, Nusra, and ISIL want to overthrow the existing secular government of Assad and establish a new government based on their interpretation of Islam. These jihadists, Nusra, and ISIL are *not* part of a pro-democracy revolt in Syria.

Government

The Arab nations, Western Europe, and the USA recognize the Syrian National Coalition, an exile group in Turkey, as the *only* legitimate government of Syria. However, there are hundreds of rebel or jihadist groups operating in Syria, and the Coalition represents only some of the rebel groups and none of the jihadists. As explained in detail in my second and third essays on Syria, the Coalition is unable to make decisions, and — in my opinion — has no credibility as a future government of Syria. However, the Coalition is the least objectionable alternative government for Syria. Since October 2013, several commentators

have noted that Assad is preferable to having Al-Qaeda control Syria. The topic of a future government for Syria is discussed in my separate essay.

Chemical Weapons

Chlorine in Syria

As chronicled in my previous essays, someone used canisters of chlorine gas on civilian towns in Syria beginning on 11 April 2014. Politicians and diplomats were hysterical about "war crimes", but OPCW was slow to investigate and returned empty-handed from its first fact-finding mission.

In my essay for April 2015, I cited three separate chlorine attacks in Syria from 16 March to 29 April 2015. In my essay for May 2015, I cited two chlorine attacks in Syria on 2 and 7 May. Apparently, there were no chlorine attacks in June 2015.

On 3 June, it was announced that an OPCW fact-finding team had arrived in Syria to investigate releases of chlorine gas. Associated Press.

On 16 June, John Kerry gave a press conference in which he talked about the use of chlorine gas in Syria.

QUESTION: It's Margaret Brennan from CBS. I have a question about Syria. How certain are you that it's the Assad regime that is carrying out these chlorine gas chemical attacks, and have you made any progress in getting them to stop?

SECRETARY KERRY: I am absolutely certain — we are certain — that the preponderance of those attacks have been carried out by the regime, and we're putting together a portfolio of that data that supports that even as we speak now. But that is not to say that some element of an opposition may not have had access at one point in time or another and have actually utilized something at one point in time or another. But when I talk about the vast preponderance, I mean vast preponderance. It has been significantly documented. It's dropped from airplanes. There are only — the opposition isn't flying airplanes or helicopters. And you can go through a certain sort of tracking of the delivery system and delivery approach. So it's frankly not that hard to pin down in the end, and that's some of what we will lay out at the appropriate time.

QUESTION: Any progress in making him stop?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, I discussed this with Foreign Minister Lavrov just yesterday, as a matter of fact, and I'm confident that he will raise it with him yet again. But I think everybody's patience is wearing thin with respect to the extraordinary depravity of the weaponry and mechanisms for delivery, which Assad has used against his own people. If you look at Aleppo, for instance, ISIL is in the region, ISIL in the area, ISIL is in fact attacking a community up there which could close off the movement of humanitarian assistance if they were to be successful. And Assad has never tried to lay a finger on them. He's never attacked them. Instead, he has dropped

barrel bombs on civilians in Aleppo. And I raised that issue with Foreign Minister Lavrov yesterday, and that will increasingly be something that we'll be focusing on more publicly.

But needless to say, we are engaged in a number of efforts right now diplomatically and otherwise to see whether or not there might be some life in the political track, and it's too early to answer that question, but we are not simply sitting there and allowing this to happen without any efforts to see if there's a way to stop it. Thus far, it has not been stopped, and I think it is only increasing the international community's anger at the Assad regime.

Daily Press Briefing, State Dept., 16 June 2015.

Syria
Why Peace Negotiations in Syria Futile
Disorganization of the Syrian National Coalition
& Politics of the Peace Process

My previous essays on Syria explain why I believe peace negotiations are futile with the current conditions in Syria. The following information continues this history of frustrated negotiations.

Diversions

Various major problems in the world diverted attention of politicians and diplomats away from Syria, and also diverted resources that might have helped the crisis in Syria. There are *at least nine* of these major problems in the world:

1. Beginning in mid-February 2014, there has been a crisis in the **Ukraine**, including the annexation of the Crimea by Russia. The threats during the Ukraine crisis mean that further cooperation between Russia and the USA on the civil war in Syria is temporarily *un*likely. By 30 May, the crisis in the Ukraine appeared to be winding down, as Russia had withdrawn most of their troops from the border. But on 28 June, the Ukraine government and pro-Russian separatists were again fighting a civil war. On 17 July, someone in eastern Ukraine shot down a civilian airliner. On 28 Aug, Russia sent troops into eastern Ukraine to aid rebels. On 5 Sep, another ceasefire began. On 24 Jan 2015, Russian rebels violated agreements and began an offensive against Mariupol. From the end of April 2014 to 2 Feb 2015, the United Nations says 5358 people died in the war in the Ukraine. During the first two weeks of Feb 2015, the war in the Ukraine seemed to dominate the attention of diplomats in Europe, as another ceasefire was negotiated.

2. a continuing civil war in the **Central African Republic**

3. more violence in **South Sudan**, as ceasefires are violated

4. On 14 April 2014, the Boko Haram Islamic terrorists in **Nigeria**, kidnapped more than 230 girls from a boarding school. On 20 May, an Islamic bomb in Jos, Nigeria killed at least 130 people. Approximately ninety people were kidnapped by Islamic terrorists on 21 June in Nigeria. On 10 Nov, a suicide bomber killed at least 48 pupils at a high school in Nigeria. On 28 Nov 2014, Boko Haram attacked a mosque in Kano, killing more than 102 people. On 3-7 Jan 2015, Boko Haram attacked 17 towns and slaughtered approximately 2000 people, "too many to count". Guardian.

5. On 18 May 2014, a former Libyan general led an assault against the Libyan Parliament building, causing another crisis in **Libya**. Various parts of the government and military supported the general's anti-Islamist campaign. On 16 July, Islamic rebels attacked the airport at Tripoli, destroying airplanes and damaging the terminal building. On 31 July, Islamic extremist rebels seized control of Benghazi. On 23 Aug 2014, Islamic extremists captured the airport at Tripoli.

6. On 10 June 2014, ISIL — an Al-Qaeda inspired group that operates in both Iraq and Syria — captured Mosul, the second-largest city in **Iraq**. On 11 June, ISIL captured Tikrit. (See my essays for June, July, and August 2014.) The crisis in Iraq pushed Syria out of the news in Western newsmedia. Moreover, the capture of Mosul, Iraq by ISIL — as well as the declaration of ISIL's caliphate on 29 June 2014 — changed the Western view of the insurgency in Syria.

7. On 12 June 2014, palestinians kidnapped three boys in **Israel** and killed them. Their dead bodies were found in a field on 30 June. After terrorists in Gaza fired hundreds of rockets and mortar shells into Israel, the Israeli military began a military campaign in Gaza on 8 July. Despite the blatant provocations by the palestinians, the Arab newsmedia pushed Syria and Iraq out of the news in order to hysterically report the so-called "Israeli aggression" in Gaza. On 14 July, Egypt proposed a ceasefire in Gaza, which Israel accepted but Hamas in Gaza rejected. After more than 1300 rockets and mortar shells were fired from Gaza into Israel since 8 July, the Israeli Army invaded Gaza on the evening of 17 July. On 26 August 2014, a ceasefire of indefinite duration was arranged in Gaza.

8. Ebola hemorrhagic fever in western Africa (e.g., Liberia and Sierra Leone), which had killed approximately 2800 people by 23 Sep 2014. On 23 Sep 2014, the U.S. Government forecasts between 0.5 and 1.4 million people infected by 20 Jan 2015, killing perhaps half of those infected. After massive intervention by the USA and other nations, the death toll on 20 Dec 2014 was only 7400.

9. For many years, **Yemen** has been an impoverished, failed nation, infested by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. In 2012, longtime president Saleh was deposed. On 19 Jan 2015, Houthi (Shiite) rebels surrounded the home of the president (a Sunni) who is supported by the U.S.-government. On 22 Jan 2015, the president and cabinet resigned, plunging Yemen deeper into anarchy. On 10 Feb 2015, the U.S. State Department closed the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, because of rapidly deteriorating security. On

20 March, ISIL attacked two Shiite mosques in Yemen during Friday prayers, killing at least 137 people. AP. On 26 March 2015, Saudi Arabia began airstrikes in Yemen, with the intent to defeat Iranian-sponsored Houthi Shiite rebels. Associated Press; Al-Arabiya.

Deaths in Syria

On 9 June the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published a new death toll of *at least* 230,618 dead since the Syrian civil war began on 18 March 2011.

> The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented death of 230618 persons since 18/03/2011, which witnessed the fall of the first martyr in Daraa, until 08/06/2015.
>
> The casualties are as follows:
>
> - Civilians: 108086 civilians, including 11493 children and 7371 women.
> - Rebel and Islamic fighters: 38592
> - Defected soldiers and officers: 2524
> - Arab, European, Asian, American and Australian fighters from the ISIS, al-Nusra Front, Junoud al-Sham battalion, Jund Al-Aqsa battalion, Jund al-Sham Movement and al-Khadra' battalion: 31247
> - Regular regime soldiers and officers: 49106
> - Combatants from Popular Defense Committees, National Defense Forces, al Shabiha, pro-regime informers and the "Syrian resistance to liberate the Sanjak of Alexandretta": 32533
> - Pro-regime Shia militiamen from Arab and Asian nationalities, Al Quds Al Felastini Brigade and other pro-regime militiamen from different Arab nationalities: 2844
> - Fighters from Hezbollah: 838
> - Unidentified dead people (documented by photos and footages): 3191.
>
> It is worth to mention that the numbers do not include more than 20000 detainees in regime prisons and thousands of those who disappeared during regime raids and massacres. It does not include more than 7000 regular soldiers and pro-regime militants and about 2000 of "regime supporters" captured by IS, Islamic fighters, Al-Nusra front, rebel and Islamic battalions on charge of "dealing with the regime".
>
> The numbers also do not include more than 1500 fighters from the YPG, IS, al-Nusra Front, Islamic battalions and rebel battalions who were kidnapped during clashes among the mentioned parties. These statistics do not include the destiny of 4000 abductees from the civilians and fighters inside IS jails from Shaitaat tribe who were kidnapped by the Islamic State in the province of Deir Ezzor.
>
> We in the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates the real number of non-Syrian casualties from the IS, al-Nusra Front, Islamic factions, Jund Al-Aqsa battalion, Junoud al-Sham, al-Katiba al-Khadra', Jund al-Sham, rebel battalions, regular forces

and pro-regime militants to be approximately 90,000 more than the documented number due to the extreme discretion by all sides on the human losses caused by the conflict and due to the difficulty of communication in Syria.

The silence of the International community for the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria encourages the criminals to kill more and more Syrian people because they have not found anyone that deter them from continuing their crimes that cause to wound more than 1,500,000 people; some of them with permanent disabilities, make hundreds of thousands children without parents, displace more than half of Syrian people and destroy infrastructure, private and public properties.

Despite our loss of hope in an international community capable and willing to put an end to the ongoing atrocities in Syria, we in the Syrian Observatory call upon all sides that claim to defend the freedoms of the people and their rights, to take a serious and responsible stance in order to end the bloodshed in Syria amid the increasing violence and the escalating number of casualties.

We also call upon all sides to support the Syrian people in their aspirations towards freedom, equality and democracy and to exert all effort in guaranteeing that the perpetrators and their wrongdoings will not go unpunished, through the International Criminal Court or through establishing a special court for Syria.

"320,000 people killed since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution," SOHR, 9 June 2015.

When I added the numbers in the list, I found 268,961, *not* 230,618. A total of 268,961 is not plausible given previous totals and a rate of about 5000 deaths/month. So there must be typographical error(s) in the indented list.

The 320,000 number in the title of the SOHR article comes from adding 230,618 to the estimated 90,000 undocumented deaths from insurgents and pro-regime fighters.

On 1 July, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that 5247 people were killed in Syria during June 2015:

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented death of 5247 people in June 2015.

The death toll is as follows:

- 1502 civilians, including 288 children and 222 women, distributed as follows:
  - 576 civilians, including 148 children and 88 women killed by airstrikes carried out by the regime air force.
  - 42 citizens tortured to death inside the regime jails.
  - 10 citizens, including 8 children, died due to shortage of foods and medicines.
  - 113 civilians, including 28 children and 17 women, killed due to shelling by Jabhat al-Nusra, Islamic State, the rebel and Islamic battalions.
  - 22 civilians, including 9 children and 4 women, killed in airstrikes carried out by US-led coalition warplanes.

285 people, including 29 children and 60 women, executed by IS militants, most of them from the city of Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) and village in its countryside.

- 6 men executed by Jabhat al-Nusra and 3 judges executed by Jund al-Aqasa.
- 20 civilians, including 2 children and 5 women killed in southwest the city of Ras al-Ayn (Sari Kanyeh); the activists accused YPG of shooting them,
- 445 people, including 66 children and 53 women, died due to the regime firing and shelling, explosion of mines and IEDs, firing by unknown gunmen and in unknown circumstances.

- Syrian fighters of YPG, Rebel and Islamist factions: 573.
- Non-Syrian fighters of IS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaysh al Muhajereen wal Ansra Army, Turkestan Islamic Party and the Chechen Jonound al-Sham: 1585.
- Defected soldiers: 8.
- Regular regime soldiers and officers: 781
- Militiamen of the Peoples Committees and NDF as well as informers: 644
- Hezbollah militiamen: 33
- Non-Syrian pro-regime fighters who are from the Shiite Sect: 107
- Unidentified victims (documented by photos and footages): 14

We in the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates the real number of non-Syrian casualties from the IS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Islamic factions, Jund Al-Aqsa battalion and pro-regime militants is approximately 1000 soldiers and fighters more than the documented number because of reticence about casualties by all parties, the difficulties of reaching to the outback and the difficulties to investigate about those who have died inside the regime or IS jails.

SOHR renews its appeal to UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities and work on using its power in order to stop the daily killing committed against the Syrian people and destroying their social structure, coexistence, past, present and future by using all kind of weapons, whether they are firearms or media, where the Syria helicopters intensified and concentrated on using explosive barrels in the last six months, despite the adoption of resolution 2139 by the Security Council, where the most important mission of this resolution is to maintain the international peace and security.

"In the second highest statistics since the beginning of this year, 5247 people killed in the last June," SOHR, 1 July 2015.

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a table of death tolls announced by SOHR, beginning 31 Aug 2013, including the average death rate per 30 days. There I estimate that a total of 234,468 people died in the Syrian civil war from March 2011 through 30 June 2015.

Rebels in Syria

Training of Free Syrian Army Begins

Previous plans, chronicled in my September 2014 essay on Syria, is that it will take *one year* to train the first 5000 rebels, and that a total of at least 15,000 rebels will be needed in Syria.

The U.S. Congress approved the training and equipping of Syrian rebels on 18 Sep 2014. The Pentagon has moved with glacial slowness during the past seven months on this project. I suspect the Pentagon is not eager to be blamed for either (1) the future defection of U.S.-trained rebels to jihadist or terrorist groups, or (2) the capture of U.S-supplied equipment by Nusra Front or ISIL. My essay for May 2015 mentions that training finally began in Jordan and Turkey.

On 3 June 2015, *The Washington Post* reported some grim news about the training of so-called moderate rebels from Syria.

> The U.S. military is gradually expanding a new program to train and equip Syrian opposition fighters, but building a force that can effectively take on the Islamic State may take longer than expected, President Obama's top military adviser [Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,] said Wednesday [3 June].
>
> **. . . .**
>
> In May, the Pentagon launched the long-awaited effort when it began training an initial class of about 90 fighters in Jordan. **....** A senior military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a program whose details are veiled in secrecy, said that the U.S. military had begun working with a second class of about 50 Syrian fighters in Turkey in mid-May. Training is expected to eventually expand to Saudi Arabia and Qatar.
>
> **. . . .**
>
> But the relatively small scale of the training, and the difficulty U.S. military officials are facing in getting the right fighters, has raised questions about the effect the program can have in a conflict characterized by a kaleidoscope of armed groups fighting the Assad regime and one another.
>
> **. . . .**
>
> Opposition fighters undergo elaborate vetting procedures to minimize risks to U.S. trainers and to ensure that the rebels use U.S.-provided weapons responsibly. So far, a large share of Syrians recruited for the program have been disqualified in the vetting process, officials said, for health or age reasons, or because of suspected links to extremist groups.
>
> **. . . .**
>
> But military officials said it was too early to say how long it would take to reach the

goal of fielding 3,000 to 5,000 Syrians a year, suggesting it will not happen soon. Missy Ryan, "U.S. faces challenges in building up Syrian training program," Washington Post, 3 June 2015.

On 12 June 2015, *The Washington Post* reported the the U.S. Congress proposed to cut the budget by 20% for the so-called "secret CIA effort in Syria".

> Key lawmakers have moved to slash funding of a secret CIA operation to train and arm rebels in Syria, a move that U.S. officials said reflects rising skepticism of the effectiveness of the agency program and the Obama administration's strategy in the Middle East.
>
> The House Intelligence Committee recently voted unanimously to cut as much as 20 percent of the classified funds flowing into a CIA program that U.S. officials said has become one the agency's largest covert operations, with a budget approaching $1 billion a year.
>
> . . . .
>
> But the sudden contraction of Assad's sphere of control has focused renewed attention on Syria and the CIA program set up in 2013 to bolster moderate forces that still represent the United States' most direct involvement on the ground in Syria's civil war.
>
> The cost of that CIA program has not previously been disclosed, and the figure provides the clearest indication to date of the extent to which the agency's attention and resources have shifted to Syria.
>
> At $1 billion, Syria-related operations account for about $1 of every $15 in the CIA's overall budget, judging by spending levels revealed in documents The Washington Post obtained from former U.S. intelligence contractor Edward Snowden.
>
> U.S. officials said the CIA has trained and equipped nearly 10,000 fighters sent into Syria over the past several years — meaning that the agency is spending roughly $100,000 per year for every anti-Assad rebel who has gone through the program.

Greg Miller and Karen DeYoung, "Secret CIA effort in Syria faces large funding cut," Washington Post, 12 June 2015.

This CIA program is secret only from U.S. taxpayers who are paying for it. On 28 Feb 2013, *The New York Times* publicly revealed this CIA program that began sometime in the year 2012. NY Times. On 24 March 2013, the Times reported again on the so-called secret CIA program.

My comments: At US$1 billion/year, this program is a very bad value for U.S. taxpayers. The moderate rebels that are supported by this program are the weakest of the four groups of insurgents that also includes ISIL, Nusra Front, and various gangs of jihadists. When Assad's government crumbles, most of Syria will be controlled by Islamic extremists. Outside the areas controlled by the Islamic extremists, there will be anarchy and various warlords.

I strongly believe that the U.S. government should *not* be financing rebellions against lawful

governments in other nations. Such foreign interference in internal affairs of other nations is a violation of national sovereignty and a violation of international law. The USA would be outraged if some foreign nation was trying to influence politics inside the USA (e.g., the communist Chinese financed Democratic Party candidates in 1996) — let alone finance an armed rebellion — and the USA should show the same respect to other nations.

On 18 June 2015, *The Washington Post* reported more bad news about the U.S. Military's training program for Syrian rebels that began in Jordan on 5 May 2015, and began in Turkey sometime before 28 May 2015.

> Less than 200 moderate Syrian rebels have started training with U.S. military advisers through a new Pentagon-run program, and none has graduated, a Defense Department spokesman said Thursday [18 June].

> The program, run at training sites in Jordan and Turkey, was developed to help the rebels counter the Islamic State, which has control of broad areas in Iraq, and exercises even greater sway in Syria. Col. Steve Warren, a Pentagon spokesman, said Thursday that more than 6,000 rebels have been recruited, but there are a variety of problems in getting them to and through training.

> . . . .

> Thus far, about 2,000 rebels have been vetted [for possible ties to terrorist groups], but only 1,500 made it through the screening process, Warren said. Of those, "at best" 180 have started training, he added.

> . . . .

> The Pentagon's lack of progress, as well as potential cuts to a CIA training program, raise questions about the ability of the United States to help field a rebel force large enough to take back territory from the militants. The initial Pentagon plan called for the training of about 5,000 rebels, but Dempsey said last year that it would take more like 12,000 to 15,000 to recapture territory.

> Warren said Thursday that it is unclear how long the rebels will remain in training once they arrive at the sites in Turkey and Jordan. That will be determined by their capabilities as fighters.

Dan Lamothe, "Here's how badly the Pentagon effort to train Syrian rebels is lagging," Washington Post, 18 June 2015.

Back on 26 Sep 2014, General Dempsey said that " 'Five thousand's never been the end state,' the general said of the number of trained rebels he believes are needed in Syria. An estimated 12,000 to 15,000 would be needed 'to recapture lost territory in eastern Syria.' " The vetting also "make[s] sure they don't pose a threat to the U.S. troops who would train them". Washington Post.

On 18 June, Reuters reported:

> The U.S. effort to build a moderate Syrian opposition force that can stand up to Islamic

State rebels is moving more slowly than expected due to complications vetting volunteers and bringing them out of Syria for training, the Pentagon said on Thursday [18 June].

Army Colonel Steve Warren, a Defense Department spokesman, said between 100 and 200 Syrian fighters were undergoing training in the region, while hundreds more were still being screened or waiting to be brought out of the country.

"As of now, none have completed training," Warren said.

"We are certainly below our expectation on throughput," he added. "As far as recruits for the Syrian train-and-equip mission, we're satisfied. It's the final step that we're having difficulty (with)."

. . . .

"There's another difficulty, which is exfiltrating these individuals out of Syria. ... Syria is a very complex, very dangerous place, multiple armed sides battling each other. So the exfiltration process is also a significant challenge," he said, calling it a "choke point."

. . . .

Asked whether the Pentagon still hoped to have the first trainees ready to enter the battle sometime this summer, Warren said, "Let's see how it unfolds."

David Alexander, "U.S. training for Syrian rebels moving slower than expected: Pentagon," Reuters, 20:53 GMT, 18 June 2015.

On 29 June, the Associated Press reported that the U.S. program to train rebels in Syria was "losing ground" after a sputtering start:

The U.S. military's program to train and equip thousands of moderate Syrian rebels is faltering, with fewer than 100 volunteers, raising questions about whether the effort can produce enough capable fighters quickly enough to make a difference in the war against the Islamic State.

The stated U.S. goal is to train and equip 5,400 rebels per year, and military officials said last week that they still hope for 3,000 by year's end. Privately, they acknowledge the trend is moving in the wrong direction.

On June 26, 2014, the White House said it was asking Congress for $500 million for a three-year train-and-equip program. The training, however, only got started in May after months of recruiting and vetting of volunteers.

. . . .

Officials said that as of Friday [26 June], the number in training had dropped below 100 and that none has completed the program. Dozens who were initially accepted

have been sent home during training or quit because of revelations about their background or other problems, according to two senior U.S. defense officials. They were not authorized to discuss details and spoke on condition of anonymity.

. . . .

U.S. officials have pointed to the Syrian Kurds' successes in the north as an example of what U.S. airpower can enable when coupled with a credible, reliable ground force. But it does not answer the question posed by Rep. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., to Dempsey. When she asked him whether the rebel training program is worth continuing, he offered something less than a ringing endorsement. "It's a little too soon to give up on it," Dempsey said.

Robert Burns, "US program to train Syrian rebels losing ground," Associated Press, 17:52 GMT, 29 June 2015.

An earlier version (07:35 GMT) of this Associated Press article says: "Fewer than 100 Syrian rebels are currently being trained by the U.S. military to fight the Islamic State group, a tiny total for a sputtering program with a stated goal of producing 5,400 fighters a year." Fox News.

Some of the failure of the U.S. training program is due to the fact that the USA insists that the trained Syrian rebels fight *only* against ISIL, while most of the Syrian rebels want to fight against both Assad and ISIL. By ignoring the goals of the Syrian rebels, the U.S. training program doomed itself. The training program is, however, a successful waste of U.S. taxpayers' money.

We Need to Support the Kurds in Syria

My comment is that instead of this expensive, slow, and piddling (only 5000/year) program to train and equip Syrian rebels, what we *really ought* to do is to train and equip the Kurds in Syria. Back in January 2015, after a heroic four-month battle, the Kurds expelled ISIL from Kobani. On 16 June 2015, the Syrian Kurds liberated Tal Abyad from ISIL. Associated Press; Daily Star; Daily Star(AFP); Hurriyet in Turkey; Pentagon. Clearly, the Kurds have the will to fight against ISIL, and the Syrian Kurds have twice defeated ISIL in major battles.

On 18 June, commentator Dr. Charles Krauthammer says we need a new strategy for fighting ISIL: "Redirect our efforts to friendly forces deeply committed to the fight, beginning with the Kurds, who have the will and the skill and have demonstrated considerable success." Washington Post; Chicago Tribune.

However, if the USA were to support the Kurds, Turkey would get its knickers in a twist. The president of Turkey is very strongly opposed to empowering Kurds, who he believes are terrorists. On 26 June, the president of Turkey said Turkey "will never allow" the Kurds to establish a state in northern Syria. Rudaw in Kurdish Iraq; Today's Zaman in Turkey; Daily Sabah in Turkey.

My comment is that the fight against ISIL in Syria has been frustrated by Obama's obsession with removing Assad, the Sunni neighbors of Syria (i.e., Turkey, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia) wanting to remove Assad (who is a Shiite), and the lack of a ground partner in the military campaign against ISIL in Syria. Finally, the U.S. realizes the Kurds in Syria are a willing and effective ground partner, only to have Turkey strongly object to assisting the Kurds.

On 29 June, *The New York Times* reported why Turkey is concerned as the U.S. increases support for Syrian Kurds:

> The United States has stepped up its military support for Syrian Kurdish militias fighting the Islamic State, efforts that have angered Turkey, a longtime ally and NATO member, which is now weighing new measures to contain the ambitions of the Kurds, including a buffer zone within Syria.
>
> Ankara sees the Syrian Kurds as a serious national security threat because of their links to Kurdish nationalists in Turkey, who have waged a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. So it has looked on with growing concern at the expanding cooperation between the Syrian Kurdish militias and the United States military in the fight against the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL.
>
> . . . .
>
> In comments on Friday [26 June], Mr. Erdogan offered some of his strongest words yet against the Syrian Kurds, whose main militia is the People's Protection Units, or Y.P.G. The Y.P.G. is the armed wing of the Democratic Union Party, or P.Y.D., which is affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has waged a three-decade insurgency against the Turkish state.
>
> "I say to the international community that whatever price must be paid, we will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria," Mr. Erdogan said in comments delivered at an iftar meal to break the day's Ramadan fast and broadcast on Turkish television.
>
> . . . .
>
> While coordination with the Syrian Kurds has been successful, there are limits to the strategy because the Kurds are seen as willing to fight only for Kurdish territory and unlikely to lead an operation to capture Raqqa, for instance. It is a similar dynamic to that in Iraq, where the Kurds have defended their northern region well but are considered unlikely to play a major role in defeating ISIS in Mosul or other Arab lands in the country.
>
> Still, for the United States, which is trying to ramp up a training program for rebels in Syria to fight ISIS — as opposed to the Assad government — the Kurds have been the only viable partners so far.

Tim Arango & Eric Schmitt, "Turkey Uneasy as U.S. Support of Syrian Kurds Grows," NY Times, 29 June 2015.

While it is true that the Kurds in Syria want to fight ISIL only in Kurdish territory, the Kurds

could perform the vital task of sealing the border between Turkey and Syria, and stopping the flow of foreign munitions and supplies to ISIL, Nusra Front, etc.

On 29 June, the Associated Press reported that Turkey is concerned with Kurdish victories in Syria, "most notably in the border town of Tal Abyad".

> As Kurdish rebels in northern Syria rack up wins against the Islamic State group, Turkish media is abuzz with talk of a long-debated military intervention to push the Islamic militants back from the Turkish border — a move that will also outflank any Kurdish attempts to create a state along Turkey's southern frontier.
>
> President Recep Tayyip Erdogan began chairing a National Security Council meeting Monday [29 June], only days after he vowed to prevent the Kurds from establishing a state in Syria.
>
> Pro-government newspapers are rife with purported proposals, ranging from loosening the rules of engagement to give Turkish troops a freer hand to fire into Syria, to a tanks-and-troops invasion aimed at occupying a 110-kilometer (70-mile) long, 33-kilometer (20-mile) wide buffer zone.
>
> . . . .
>
> But the idea of military intervention across the border remains unpopular in Turkey. Any battles in urban areas would almost certainly mean heavy casualties in a fight against a determined and entrenched foe. The Dogan News Agency on Monday broadcast footage of what it said were IS militants digging ditches and planting mines across from the Turkish border.
>
> Even a more limited intervention, such as artillery or air strikes, could increase the flow of Syrians seeking shelter in Turkey, which is already burdened with the world's largest number of refugees.
>
> Fighting in Syria could also weaken the standing of Turkey's Justice and Development Party, which recently lost its parliamentary majority and is now courting potential coalition partners to stay in power.
>
> Most seriously, any fighting in Kurdish areas of Syria risks derailing the peace process with Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey, overturning a key achievement of Erdogan's leadership and potentially spreading violence across [Turkey].

Suzan Fraser & Raphael Satter, "As Kurds gain in Syria, Turkish govt ponders military action," Associated Press, 13:19 GMT, 29 June 2015.

Reuters reported:

> Ankara has looked askance as the Syrian Kurds have made military advances against Islamic militants, fearing the creation of an autonomous Kurdish state in Syrian territory that would further embolden Turkey's own 14 million Kurds.
>
> President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday Turkey would never allow formation of a

Kurdish state along its southern borders.

. . . .

Saban Disli, an adviser to [Prime Minister Ahmet] Davutoglu, told Reuters the meeting was likely to result in a change in the Turkish military's rules of engagement, describing advances of both Kurdish forces and Islamic State militants as "dangerous".

. . . .

"Turkey will not take any unilateral step on the Syrian side independent of the international coalition. We have a clear stance on this," a senior government official told Reuters.

"But we have our sensitivity on border gates not coming under the control of ISIL or the PYD (Kurdish forces)."

Military action would likely enrage Turkey's Kurdish minority at a time when the peace process between Ankara and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has stalled.

. . . .

Brokerage Finansbank said in a note to clients that given Turkey's current political uncertainty — Davutoglu's AK Party still needs to find a junior partner to form a government following its election setback this month — any intervention would likely be limited.

Ercan Gurses & Daren Butler, "Turkey to take 'necessary measures' on border security - PM Davutoglu," Reuters 13:30 GMT, 29 June 2015.

Recognition that Assad is Not Winning the Civil War

Beginning on 10 March 2014 and continuing through October 2014, journalists reported that Assad is winning the civil war in Syria. Some of these reports by journalists are cited in my previous essays.

On 7 May 2014, the rebels and jihadists withdrew from Homs. Assad then moved to take control of the city of Aleppo. But Assad's assault on Aleppo stalled, raising the possibility that Assad is now unable to take control of Aleppo. My essay for Nov 2014 cites a *Washington Post* article on 29 Nov that Assad may lack economic resources to win the civil war. My essay for Dec 2014 cites a *Washington Post* article on 28 Dec that Assad's army has been depleted by recent "soaring casualties" and desertions. Replacements are not arriving because of "evasions of compulsory military service".

Beginning in December 2014, I no longer believe that Assad can win the civil war against a large number of opponents, when only two nations (i.e., Russia and Iran) are supporting

Assad with military equipment and money. Not only are there *only two* nations supporting Assad, but also both of those two have their own significant problems. Iran is suffering crippling economic sanctions because of its development of nuclear weapons, and Iran is diverting resources to fighting ISIL in neighboring Iraq. Russia is suffering economic sanctions because of its support for rebels in the Ukraine, beginning in Feb 2014.

———————————

On 3 June, Sylvia Westall in the Beirut office of Reuters reports that the mood amongst Syrian government officials in Baghdad was "black", because of recent military advances by insurgents. Westall says: "Assad still believes the West will eventually rehabilitate him as a partner in the fight against Islamic State — a shift that shows no sign of happening but which he thinks is inevitable given the risk of a full jihadist takeover."

My comment is that Assad fails to grasp the depth of the hatred of him by Obama, the United Kingdom government, and the French government.

On 3 June, a political source in Lebanon told the Daily Star that Iran had sent 15,000 soldiers to Syria, to assist Assad's army. Also on 3 June, an Agence France-Presse (AFP) story quotes an anonymous Syrian security official: "Around 7,000 Iranian and Iraqi fighters have arrived in Syria over the past few weeks and their first priority is the defense of the capital." An additional 3,000 Iraqi and Iranian soldiers are expected in Syria. Daily Star(AFP). Arutz Sheva in Israel, Newsweek magazine, and Rudaw in Kurdish Iraq quoted this AFP story.

My comment is — *if* this report is true — it represents a significant escalation in the Syrian civil war, which risks Turkey or Saudi Arabia sending combat soldiers to Syria. Note that the USA hopes to train 15,000 rebels by the end of the year 2017, while Iran can allegedly supply a similar number of fighters in one month. On the night of 3 June, I looked at five English-language news websites in Iran, but found no confirmation of the *Daily Star* or AFP stories. The lack of confirmation by Iran does *not* mean that the story is false, because the Iranians have a history of concealing their involvement in Syria and Iraq.

On 8 June, Reuters reports that the G-7 summit believes that recent military setbacks for Assad might encourage Assad to resign as leader of Syria. Reuters says: "The sources did not say when or how they would advance such a transition [to different leadership in Syria], with no obvious alternative to Assad on the government side." My comment is that it is a dream that Assad will resign just because the situation is bleak — to get Assad to resign, he will need to receive something valuable in exchange for his resignation, such as immunity from prosecution for war crimes.

On 19 April 2015 an Iranian general, Hadi Kajbaf, was killed in battle in Syria, about 100 km south of Damascus. Daily Star. His body was flown to Iran on 12 June. Reuters;   Daily Star. My search of four English-language news sources in Iran on 19:00 GMT, 13 June found nothing on this story. The lack of news in Iran is strange, because the funeral of a major general should be a big event. Apparently, Iran does not want to inform the USA and Western Europe that Iranian military officers are dying in Syria. Incidentally, the Islamic religious doctrine is that a dead Muslim should be buried as soon as possible, preferably

within 24 hours of death. But the Islamic terrorists held Kajbaf's corpse for almost two months, which tells us that the Islamic terrorists are bad Muslims, but we already knew that.

On 29 June, Reuters summarized six main insurgent groups in Syria — ISIL, Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda in Syria), Free Syrian Army, Ahrar Al-Sham (a Salafist group), Islam Army, and the Kurdish YPG. Reuters notes: "The array of combatants with competing agendas is one of the factors complicating diplomatic efforts to end [the Syrian civil] war". The Reuters article also mentions that at least 400 Iranians have died in Syria while fighting for Assad.

A year ago, 7 June 2014, Brahimi predicted that Syria is "going to be a failed state, with warlords all over the place." (See my eighth essay.) On 29 June 2015, Reuters reports that there is already a de facto partitioning of Syria:

> ... Syrian President Bashar al-Assad can no longer defend the whole country or hope to regain lost territory and his forces are retreating and fortifying their core strongholds, from the capital Damascus up to the coastal strip in north-western Syria.
>
> At the same time, the main blocs of insurgents, Islamic State in the east, a rival Islamist alliance in the northwest, nationalist rebels in the south and Kurds in the north are carving out their own fiefdoms in what looks like the de facto partition of Syria.
>
> While few things are certain in the chaos of Syria's civil war, few experts who study the conflict are in any doubt that the blood-spattered pieces of the puzzle are rearranging themselves into a new pattern — of arenas ruled by warlords.
>
> . . . .
>
> Since March [2015], Assad has steadily lost more territory and his shrunken army and militia, reinforced over the past months by Iranian forces and Shi'ite allies like the Lebanese Hezbollah paramilitaries, are withdrawing to more defensible lines.
>
> . . . .
>
> Fawaz Gerges, professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, says "The old Syria, the nation state, the state itself, is no longer; what we have now is warring, rival ... tribes, non-state actors, warlords."
>
> "It will be extremely difficult to glue Syria back together as one country, the social fabric, the thick ties that bind it together have been dismantled," says Gerges, an expert on Syria.

Samia Nakhoul, "Insight - Syrian insurgents carve out fiefdoms in de-facto partition," Reuters, 14:27 GMT, 29 June 2015.

On 30 June, Reuters reports that Amos Gilad, strategic adviser to the Israeli Defense Minister, says Assad now controls 20% of the area of Syria "and [Assad] may end up in charge of a rump state dominated by his minority Alawite sect." My comment is that most of the area of Syria is worthless desert, so what really matters is how many people Assad controls and the economic productivity of those people.

Peace Negotiations for Syria

de Mistura's proposal

On 10 July 2014, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban, appointed Staffan de Mistura as the new peace negotiator for the Syrian civil war. After the appointment ceremony, de Mistura disappeared from public view, until 9-13 Sep 2014 when he appeared in Damascus, Syria.

It is *not* clear whether de Mistura will continue to insist on the "transitional governing body" (TGB) specified by the Geneva1 conference in June 2012. I criticized the need for a TGB in my essay, as one of the reasons why the Geneva peace negotiations in Jan/Feb 2014 failed. On 30 Oct 2014 Mistura briefed the U.N. Security Council and he said that the Geneva1 communiqué — including the TGB — was "still valid". Associated Press.

My essays for Nov and Dec 2014 mention de Mistura's proposal for a ceasefire in Aleppo. Unfortunately, his proposal has no support from the insurgents. de Mistura's proposal seems to have died sometime around 7 Dec 2014. But on 11 Feb 2015, Assad agreed to suspend airstrikes and artillery attacks on Aleppo for six weeks after the freeze begins. (See my essay for Feb 2015.) On the evening of 1 March, the Syrian National Coalition and rebels fighting in Aleppo rejected Mistura's freeze. (See my essay for March 2015.)

de Mistura begins meetings on 5 May 2015

In response to public marching orders from Ban, on 14 April 2015 Mistura proposed one-on-one talks between himself and opposition groups in Syria and governments of nations involved in Syria. (See my essay for April 2015.) Such talks began on 5 May 2015. (See my essay for May 2015.) Somehow these one-on-one talks are expected by the U.N. to revive the peace negotiations.

On 4 June, the political committee of the Syrian National Coalition met with de Mistura in Istanbul. The SNC gave de Mistura a copy of the SNC's "Document of Basic Principles for a Political Settlement in Syria". SNC. In May 2015, the SNC petulantly refused to meet with de Mistura, but later the head of the SNC legal committee gave some documents to de Mistura. I find it strange that the SNC does *not* post at its website copies of the documents that they gave to de Mistura. The SNC posts press releases and news bulletins nearly every day at its website.

In my essay for May 2015, I observed that Mistura's schedule is too rushed: he invited too many delegations before the end of June. So it was no surprise when, on 10 June, Mistura's spokesperson said that Mistura's meetings would "continue into July". U.N. Geneva (10 June); U.N. News; Daily Star(AFP).

On 14 June, it was reported that de Mistura had accepted an invitation to Damascus to talk

with the Syrian government. But the discussions will be unpleasant because de Mistura said he will (1) ask the Syrian government to stop slaughtering civilians with barrel bombs, (2) increase deliveries of humanitarian aid to civilians, and (3) protect civilians from harm. Associated Press; Reuters. My comment is that *if* the Syrian government wanted to do these three things, they would have done them long ago, and *not* wait for de Mistura to ask them. Indeed, the U.N. Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has been clamoring for these three things at least since March 2014, but the Syrian government has consistently ignored Ban.

On 15 June, de Mistura arrived in Damascus. U.N. News; Associated Press. On 16 June, Assad told de Mistura that the international community should "take a 'clear' and 'bold' stand against all who fund, arm and facilitate the movement of terrorists and against all who disregard the Security Council's resolutions [2170 and 2178] related to countering terrorism in the region." SANA. While it is certainly true that foreign nations (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, USA) are funding insurgents in Syria, it is also true that the Syrian government is engaged in misconduct. On 17 June, de Mistura condemned *both* the insurgent shelling of civilians in Aleppo and Assad's bombing of civilians. Reuters; Associated Press. Interestingly, the United Nations Office in Geneva issued press releases during 15-19 June about the continuing consultations on the Syrian civil war, but those press releases did *not* mention de Mistura and did *not* mention any visit to Damascus. Instead, the press releases mentioned the Deputy Special Envoy's meetings in Geneva with various minor organizations from Syria (e.g., Syrian Feminist Lobby).

---

third peace conference in Moscow?

On 26-29 Jan 2015 and again on 6-9 April 2015 there were meetings in Moscow between the Syrian government and various opposition leaders. (See my essays for Jan 2015 and April 2015.) The second conference ended without setting a date for a third conference.

On 29 May, I searched Google News for reports of scheduling a third conference in Moscow. I found a vague report in RIA-Novosti: "Moscow is willing to host the third round of intra-Syrian talks, with many participants desiring to continue negotiations in this format, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said Thursday [28 May]."

I suggest that additional, and more frequent (e.g., twice/month), conferences are desirable. While one would *not* expect significant agreements to come quickly, that is precisely why it is desirable for the parties to meet frequently and continue their discussions, until compromise is reached. Holding infrequent conferences (e.g., two months between successive conferences) slows progress towards reaching a compromise.

On 14 and 28 June, I searched Google News for reports of scheduling a third conference in Moscow, but I found no news in June.

U.N. Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2165

On 22 Feb 2014, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2139, which

required parties in Syria to allow humanitarian aid and to stop targeting civilians. Although this Resolution was effective immediately, *all* of the parties in Syria ignored it. The U.N. Secretary General, Ban, issued Reports in March, April, May, June, and July 2014, each of which recognized that Resolution 2139 had failed.

As mentioned in my essay for May 2015, the U.N. document delivery system has been nonfunctional since 22 April 2015. On 30 June I looked at the U.N. Security Council webpage for reports from the Secretary General, but the most recent report was dated 16 June, two weeks earlier. Fortunately, one can find Ban's 23 June 2015 Report at ReliefWeb.

I am discontinuing my quotations from the Secretary General's monthly reports, because all parties in the Syrian civil war are continuing to ignore the Secretary General.

A list of all of the Secretary General's reports on Syria can be found at my webpage, which has links to the original reports.

Incidentally, on 30 June, Ban Ki-moon said "It should shame us all that, three years since the adoption of the Geneva Communiqué on resolving the cataclysmic conflict in Syria, the suffering of the Syrian people continues to plumb new depths." U.N.;   Associated Press. I disagree. I think the insurgents in Syria should be ashamed of what they have done to destroy Syria. Further, I am opposed to pushing the Geneva Communiqué on the people of Syria, for reasons expressed in my separate essay.

Debacle in Iraq

Death Toll in Iraq

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a table of monthly death tolls announced by UNAMI during 2013-2015.

Atrocities in Iraq

My previous essays, beginning in June 2014, documented numerous atrocities by Islamic terrorists:

- ISIL executed hundreds of captured Shiite soldiers in Mosul and Tikrit during 11-14 June 2014.
- ISIL *crucified* eight rebels near Aleppo in Syria on 28 June 2014.
- ISIL threatened genocide of Yazidis in Iraq during August 2014 and 20-22 Oct 2014.
- an attack on a Sunni mosque in Iraq on 22 Aug 2014.
- ISIL executed captured Syrian soldiers in Raqqa, Syria in August 2014.
- Shiite militias in Iraq are murdering innocent Sunnis (reports: 14 Oct 2014, 26 Jan 2015).

ISIL burned alive al-Kasasbeh, a pilot in the Jordanian Air Force, (see my essay for Feb 2015).
- ISIL in Libya beheaded 21 Christians on 15 Feb 2015.
- and — beginning with my essay for Oct 2014 — I documented some of the car bombs in Iraq that killed large numbers of people, most commonly in or near Baghdad.

On 2 June, an Islamic car bomb in the parking lot of a restaurant killed at least 6 people in Baghdad. Rudaw(AP).

On 3 June, four bombs in or near Baghdad killed 11 people. Associated Press.

On 6 June, an ISIL car bomb at roadside restaurants in Balad Ruz, 70 km from Baghdad, killed 15 people. Associated Press;   Daily Star(AFP).

On 9 June, four bombs in or near Baghdad killed at least 20 people. Associated Press.

On 10 June, two suicide car bombs in Iraq killed at least 18 people. One bomb detonated at a police checkpoint in Baghdad, the other bomb detonated at a police station east of Fallujah. Associated Press.

On 14 June, a car bomb at a market in Baghdad killed 10 people. Daily Star(AP); Rudaw(AP);   Reuters.

On 21 June, two bombings near Baghdad killed at least 5 people. Also three corpses were found dumped in streets of Baghdad, after each was shot in the head. Associated Press.

On 22 June, two bombs in Baghdad killed 5 people, and a bomb in a town 20 km north of Baghdad killed 3 people. Associated Press.

On 23 June, ISIL in Iraq released a video of 15 "spies" being executed in three different Islamic ways: "[1] drowning them in a cage, [2] shooting a car in which they sit with an RPG, and immolating them, and [3] beheading them with explosive cord wrapped around their necks." SITE Intel.   Press TV in Iran says 5 were drowned in a cage lowered into a swimming pool, 3 were burned to death in a car struck by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), and 7 were decapitated by detonation cord wrapped around their neck. See also Wall Street Journal;   IBT;   Iraqi News.

On 26 June an ISIL suicide bomber detonated at a Shiite mosque in Kuwait City after the Friday mid-day prayers concluded, killing at least 27 people. This was the first terrorist attack in Kuwait in more than 20 years. Associated Press;   Reuters;   Kuwait News Agency, 22:49 local time.

On 27 June, four bombs detonated near shops and markets in Baghdad, killing at least 12 people. Associated Press.

On 29 June, the Associated Press reported: "A police officer says drive-by shooters killed a

pro-government Sunni tribal sheikh along with his three guards in the town of Tarmiyah, 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of Baghdad. Another officer said three civilians were killed and nine wounded in a bomb explosion at an outdoor marker in Baghdad's western Ghazaliyah neighborhood." In addition to those 7 dead, 6 people were executed and their corpses were dumped in streets in and around Baghdad.

On 30 June, four bombs in a 30 km radius from Baghdad killed at least 8 civilians. Associated Press.

My comments: Such attacks have become an almost routine part of life in Iraq since Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003. Not only are there attacks, but also there seems to be no effort by the Iraqi government to find and punish the attackers — an indication that civilization has collapsed in Iraq.

The English-language news websites in Iraq appear to either ignore or minimize these terrorist attacks. *All Iraq News* typically ignores terrorists attacks in Iraq, but when they do report an attack, they report only a small fraction of the actual deaths. *Iraqi News* ignores terrorists attacks in Iraq. I do not know the news coverage in the Arabic-language news media in Iraq, but the English-language news in Iraq is failing to truly inform Iraqis.

Islamic Public Relations Problem

Introduction

Beginning in August 2014, I have included this section in my essays. Initially, I commented on the series of atrocities by Islamic terrorists, who acted in the name of their interpretation of Islam, and besmirched the reputation of Islam. That was a public relations problem for Muslims. But then some military leaders and politicians developed the notion that Muslim clerics needed to explain why so-called "Islamic terrorism" was <u>un</u>Islamic, to stop the flow of foreigners into Syria to fight for ISIL and Nusra Front, and to stop the financial support of terrorists. This exposure of the erroneous ideology of Islamic terrorism is a different kind of public relations problem from defending mainstream Islam.

Back in August 2014 there was a burst of condemnation of terrorism by Islamic clerics. (See my tenth essay on Syria.) But beginning in September 2014, Muslim clerics stopped publicly denouncing terrorism. There needs to be a consistent and continuing condemnation of terrorism by Muslim clerics, in part to discourage young Muslims from joining Al-Qaeda and ISIL.

This continuing condemnation by Muslim clerics is *not* something that is nice to have. It is an essential element in fighting against Islamic terrorism. On 3 Dec 2014, sixty nations agreed that "ideological delegitimization" was one of five "lines of effort" that would be used to defeat ISIL, see my essay for Dec 2014.

In the context of the Islamic terrorist attack in Paris on 7-9 Jan 2015, my essay explains two different reactions by Christian politicians to Islamic terrorism:

1. Some Christian politicians have condemned Islamic terrorism as unIslamic, but I think it is inappropriate — and *not* credible — for Christians to say what is, or is not, proper Islam. Instead, such distinctions should come from Islamic clerics.

2. Other Christian politicians carefully refuse to make a connection between Islam and terrorism. This may be "politically correct", but it is factually wrong. The facts are obvious, but I will tersely review them anyway. Leaders of Al-Qaeda and ISIL clearly and repeatedly invoke their concept of Islam in justifying or explaining their actions. Individual Islamic terrorists shout Islamic slogans as they commit their terrorist acts, and the individual terrorists are endorsed by Islamic terrorist organizations. Further, Al-Qaeda and other jihadists seek to establish Sharia law in Syria and/or Iraq — instead of a secular government. ISIL is even more extreme with its caliphate. These Islamic governments are part of the attraction of young Muslims to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and jihadist groups.

It is essential that mainstream Muslim clerics consistently and continually publicly condemn the use of terrorism to impose any Islamic government.

On 19 June 2015, the U.K. prime minister, Cameron, gave a speech in Bratislava (in Slovakia) in which he called upon Muslim clerics in the U.K. to do more to oppose Islamic terrorism. As mentioned below, many Muslims were offended. Reuters reported:

> British Prime Minister David Cameron urged Muslim communities and families on Friday to do more to fight extremism, warning some Muslims risk fostering radicalism in young people by quietly condoning extreme views.
>
> Cameron highlighted two cases this week — a 17-year-old from northern England who blew himself up in Iraq and three sisters who abandoned their husbands and are believed to be in Syria with their nine children — as examples of how people can slide from prejudice to extremism.
>
> He told a security conference in Bratislava that people who for example believe democracy is wrong, women are inferior and religious doctrine trumps the rule of law share the ideology of Islamist extremists.
>
> "There are people who hold some of these views who don't go as far as advocating violence, but do buy into some of these prejudices giving the extreme Islamist narrative weight and telling fellow Muslims 'you are part of this,'" he said.
>
> "This paves the way for young people to turn simmering prejudice into murderous intent ... Part of the reason it's so potent is that it has been given this credence," he added.
>
> . . . .
>
> In a commentary on Cameron's speech, the Muslim Council of Britain said it was wrong to suggest Muslim communities had led young people to extremism. "It has been suggested that Muslims are not doing enough and somehow condone extremism,"

> said Shuja Shafi, secretary general of the umbrella organisation representing some 500 groups in Britain. "We would argue that clear evidence should be presented and wrongdoing challenged, rather than perpetuate insinuation persistently."

"Cameron tells Muslim communities to do more to tackle extremism," Reuters 13:22 GMT, 19 June 2015.

The Associated Press reported:

> Prime Minister David Cameron charged Friday [19 June] that some British Muslims quietly condone the radical ideology of the Islamic State group, prompting accusations that he is scapegoating the large and diverse community.
>
> Speaking at a security conference in Slovakia, Cameron urged British Muslims to do more to stop the group from recruiting young Britons. He said disaffected youths are being drawn to an ideology that believes "the West is bad and democracy is wrong, that women are inferior, that homosexuality is evil."
>
> Saying this ideology "is quietly condoned" among some Muslims, Cameron blamed radicalization in part on "people who hold some of these views who don't go as far as advocating violence, but who do buy into some of these prejudices, giving the extreme Islamist narrative weight."
>
> . . . .
>
> Some Muslim groups reacted to Cameron's comments with anger. Mohammed Shafiq, chief executive of Muslim think-tank the Ramadhan Foundation, called them "deeply offensive." "We do not need a lecture about being good citizens from a government that thinks the way to build alliances with the Muslim community is to trash us," he said.
>
> Opposition lawmaker Yasmin Qureshi accused Cameron of conflating religious conservatism with support for extremism. "To make the comparison he has done the way he has done, it is not only unhelpful but actually wrong," she told BBC radio.

Philipp-Moritz Jenne & Jill Lawless, "British PM says Muslims must do more to counter IS ideology," Associated Press, 16:13 GMT, 19 June 2015.

Also posted at Rudaw in Kurdish Iraq.

The Guardian newspaper in Manchester, U.K. published an article by Lady Sayeeda Warsi, a Muslim and a leader in the U.K. Conservative party. Warsi said:

> David Cameron is right. Isis poses a massive threat — one of the biggest we face today. He is right when he describes the poisonous narrative they preach and I welcome his comments that British Muslim communities have a powerful and important role to play in dealing with a situation that is becoming increasingly grave. As prime minister, he is right to bring the authority of his office to bear.
>
> However, what concerns me about the prime minister's speech in Slovakia is his emphasis on one aspect of the challenge, while overlooking all the other aspects of the problem. He has apparently decided to focus on the idea that "some" in our Muslim

communities condone the activities of Isis and "perhaps" encourage young people to take the ruinous path of joining the terrorists. Although he rightly said there are "many reasons" why young people become radicalised and then take the next step towards acting on those warped beliefs, his speech focused only on the notion of Muslim community complicity. Friday's newspapers were also heavily briefed to that effect ahead of the speech.

. . . .

....   The prime minister ... should also have been advised not to choose Bratislava as the backdrop to speak to his own British Muslim communities, but to opt for Birmingham, or dare I even suggest, Bradford. His last major speech of this type was delivered in Munich, when it could have been Manchester.

. . . .

Cameron is right that there are "some" — a minority within a minority within a minority — who condone the Isis view of the world, but there are so many more of this minority who are fighting a very real and sustained battle, the same battle he is fighting. They know they have to do more, they are willing to do more, but they will do it a lot better knowing we are on the same side.

Government needs to champion them, support them. Only then will it have the credibility to demand that communities themselves do more.

Sayeeda Warsi, "Remember, prime minister: British Muslims hate Isis too," The Guardian, 18:39 GMT, 19 June 2015.

The Guardian also posted a summary of Warsi's article.

My reading of Warsi's article is that she is determined to criticize Cameron, despite the fact that she agrees with much of what Cameron said. Warsi seems to want Cameron to praise the Muslim community for what they are doing to counter extremism, when the efforts of the Muslim community have proven inadequate. In her penultimate paragraph, Warsi admitted that "[Muslims] know they have to do more, they are willing to do more, but they will do it a lot better knowing we are on the same side." Warsi's rambling criticism of Cameron is an important reaction from Muslims in the U.K.

Let me make Cameron's point by referring to an entirely different event. On the night of 17 June 2015, a white supremacist walked into a black church in Charleston, South Carolina and killed 9 people in a Bible study session. Suppose the U.S. president called upon Christian clergy to continually condemn racial bigotry, and tell white supremacists that they are going to Hell. Would Christian clergy be offended? No. Many Christian clergy in the USA have been advocating racial tolerance and diversity since the 1950s. Christian churches — both black and white — have been a major force in the civil rights movement in the USA since the mid-1950s.

Perhaps Muslims in the U.K. are sensitive to government urging a specific viewpoint, because Muslims are a minority in the U.K. — approximately 4% of people in the U.K. are Muslim — and Muslims are outside the Judeo-Christian majority.

As a matter of public policy, we need to stop the flow of foreign fighters to join Islamic terrorist groups. The most obvious way to do this is for respected Muslim clerics to continually condemn Islamic terrorism, and to forbid fighting for Al-Qaeda or ISIL. Christian politicians have no credibility amongst disaffected Muslim youth, and so the task falls on Muslim clerics and other opinion leaders in the Muslim community.

Back on 18 Jan 2015, the U.K. government urged Muslim leaders to condemn Islamic extremism, but the reaction of Muslims was highly negative, as mentioned in my essay for Jan 2015. Apparently, some Muslims are resistant to the U.K. government's call to teach young Muslims that terrorism is wrong.

On 23 June, Reuters reported a Muslim cleric in Pakistan had developed a curriculum to explain why Islamic terrorism was unIslamic:

> A prominent Pakistani Islamic cleric launched a "counter-terrorism" curriculum in London on Tuesday [23 June], to rebut the message of militant groups such as Islamic State (ISIS) and stop young people becoming radicalised and heading to Syria.
>
> Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri, a politician, scholar and fiery orator, said he wanted his 900-page curriculum, containing theological and ideological arguments to undermine extremists, to be taught not just at mosques and Islamic institutions but at schools across Britain.
>
> "We want to make clear that all activities being carried out by ISIS or any other terroristic and extremistic organisation either in the name of God or religion or establishing any kind of Islamic state by acts of violence ... are totally in violation of the Koran and Islam," he told Reuters.
>
> . . . .
>
> "The children who are going to ISIS and fighting over there and leaving the comforts of their own British society, they are going to hell," said Qadri, who five years ago issued a fatwa declaring that terrorists and suicide bombers were unbelievers. "They are our children. They are our sons and daughters. We have to save the future of mankind."
>
> Experts and politicians argue the slick, online propaganda of ISIS is seducing and radicalising young people in their own bedrooms.
>
> Asked how his academic work could counter this, Qadri, head of the global Minhaj ul-Quran religious and educational organisation, said 50 young Britons and 50 others in the rest of Europe were being trained to take his narrative online.
>
> "This will be a two-way war, not only through books in the study circles, mosque and schools, but on social media too," said Qadri who plans to take his curriculum to Pakistan, India, across Europe and to the United States.

Michael Holden, "Pakistani cleric launches anti-ISIS curriculum in Britain," Reuters,

14:43 GMT, 23 June 2015.
The Associated Press published a brief article on this topic.

The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) reported:
> Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri says he wrote the curriculum — in English, Arabic and Urdu — to counter and undermine the extremists' arguments that they speak in the name of Islam.
>
> It was unveiled at a launch in London on Tuesday [23 June].
>
> "This isn't a process that started yesterday. That radicalisation began to happen 30 years ago," he says.
>
> "You can see this gradual process of grooming by extremist groups such as IS and we must address that, and the arguments used by IS to justify their criminal, terrorist activities.
>
> "You have to tell young people that IS and others are giving them the wrong interpretations of Islamic concepts such as jihad.
>
> "Many young people don't have the scriptural or textual knowledge to interpret their religion properly and Islamic State exploits the emotions and the idealism of the young, although this ideology has nothing to do with the Koran.
>
> "So this curriculum goes to the source material of Islam, and answers the questions young people are asking."
>
> . . . .
>
> [Baroness Warsi] spoke at Tuesday's launch, telling an audience of imams, police, politicians and academics that the government should consider using the curriculum in all schools.

Caroline Wyatt, "Cleric launches 'counter-terrorism' curriculum," BBC, 23 June 2015.

Qadri's curriculum seems to be acceptable to Muslims in the U.K. because the curriculum comes from a Muslim cleric and *not* from the U.K. government.

However, Qadri is a Sufi, so Muslims who are either Sunni or Shiite may reject Qadri's curriculum because he comes from a different sect of Islam. Such a rejection would suggest that Sunni cleric(s) make an independent curriculum, and Shiite cleric(s) make another independent curriculum.

Furthermore, I see problems with including this anti-terrorism curriculum in U.K. schools: the curriculum is appropriate only for Muslim children, because of the many quotations from Islamic theology. So what do Christian or atheist children do while their Muslim classmates are studying the anti-terrorism curriculum? Is it appropriate for the government to require religious instruction for Muslim children, but not for other children? Perhaps the better way is to put this curriculum in Mosques and on the Internet, but *not* in schools operated by the

government.

The BBC mentions that Qadri said Islamic terrorism began 30 years ago. We have needed an anti-terrorist curriculum at least since Al-Qaeda bombed two U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998. Unfortunately, Muslim clerics failed to respond to this need. Now Islamic terrorism is a worldwide scourge, which has infested Afghanistan, part of Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and which threatens Syria and Iraq.

My Proposal

I agree with Cameron that Muslims need to do much more to oppose Islamic terrorism. However, I am troubled by a small part of Cameron's speech on 19 June, where he says the ideology of ISIL includes "women are inferior". There are genuine cultural differences between mainstream Islam and Christianity. For example, Saudi Arabia does *not* issue driver's licenses to women. Women in Afghanistan wear a burqa. The effort here should *not* be to impose orthodoxy and make mainstream Islam more like Christianity. Instead, the effort here should be for Muslim clerics and other Muslim opinion leaders to cite their holy book and other theological documents to show that it is forbidden for Muslims to:

- invade nations in an attempt to spread an interpretation of Islam on other Muslims
- invade nations in an attempt to spread Islam on non-Muslims
- kill civilians (i.e., noncombatants)
- kill unarmed military prisoners
- deny water, food, and/or medical supplies to besieged cities
- impose a tax (i.e., Jizya) on non-Muslims
- sell captured women as sex slaves

In other words, the focus should be on defeating Islamic terrorism (e.g., Al-Qaeda and ISIL), and *not* on attacking mainstream Islam.

On 8 May 2015, I suggested creating hundreds of small companies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere to hire Arabs to counter propaganda from ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

> I suggest that the U.S. government fund a hundred small companies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab nations to hire native speakers of Arabic-language to counter ISIL propaganda. Some of these employees could monitor social media and post counter-propaganda. Other employees could design websites that explain why ISIL is violating teachings of Islam, violating Fatwas, and list atrocities committed by ISIL. Using small companies (e.g., 30 employees per company) ensures that they are quickly adaptable to changing conditions. Using native speakers of Arabic adds authenticity. A few thousand Arabs might be able to swamp ISIL's propaganda operation.

> There are millions of Arabs who have fled from their homes in Syria and Iraq, because of Islamic terrorists. Many of these refugees are either unemployed or have minimal income. Putting them to work countering propaganda on the Internet from Al-Qaeda or ISIL would not only help defeat Islamic terrorism, but also provide much needed income to refugees.

Standler, Syria & Iraq: May 2015, 1 June 2015. See end of the section on the Terror Attack in Garland, Texas.

A manager would recognize that there are economies of scale, by having *one* central office to handle payroll, benefits, etc. And I have no problem with consolidating payroll in one central office that serves all of the small companies.

A manager would also recognize cost savings by purchasing equipment and Internet access in large quantities in *one* central office, to provide *all* of the small companies. Whoa! I want managers in each small company to be able to use a credit card to *quickly* purchase whatever they need, without going through a central bureaucracy. There are security advantages when different companies use different computer operating systems, different webbrowsers, different antivirus and firewall software, and different Internet service providers. That way one computer virus, or one denial of service attack, will not affect all of the different companies.

I want the small companies to maximize creativity in attacking ISIL's message, and to maximize productivity. To do that, equipment costs would not be minimized.

I envision these small companies attacking ISIL and Al-Qaeda in four ways:

1. **Collect and display truth about Islamic terrorism:**
   Create and operate websites that
   - A. explain why ISIL and Al-Qaeda are violating teachings of Islam,
   - B. collect and display Fatwas against ISIL and Al-Qaeda,
   - C. list atrocities committed by ISIL and Al-Qaeda,
   - D. hire Muslim clerics to write blogs or essays about how terrorism is evil.
   Each website to have versions for Arabic, French, and English languages.

2. **Social media:** Monitor social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and refute propaganda. Cite URLs of websites that display truth about Islamic terrorism.

3. Produce press releases that can be published by newspapers or reported by radio/television stations.

4. Use ridicule and parody to humiliate ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

I have seen calls for Internet Service Providers to shut down websites that espouse Islamic terrorism. (See, e.g., plan for Europol to shut down ISIL's social media accounts. Associated Press; Reuters; 22 June.) I am opposed to shutting down websites for three reasons:

1. First, if we shut down a website, the terrorists will move their webpages to a new location, making the shut-down efforts futile. The goal here is *not* to inconvenience Islamic terrorists, but to defeat Islamic terrorists. Shutting down websites only inconveniences the terrorists.

2. Second, shutting down websites that we do not approve is censorship. The terrorists

will respond by saying Western Civilization can not win the debate in the marketplace of ideas, so Western Civilization simply censors unapproved messages.

3. Third, as Justice Brandeis famously said: "... the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence." *Whitney v. California,* 274 U.S. 357, 377 (1927) (concurring opinion).

In summary, Western Civilization *can* refute the arguments of Islamic terrorism. Winning the debate is the right way to defeat Islamic terrorism.

Need to Kill *Ideology* of Islamic Terrorism

The U.S. has killed several influential Islamic terrorists:

- In May 2011, the U.S. Military killed Osama bin Laden.
- In September 2011, a U.S. drone strike killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an Islamic cleric and Al-Qaeda terrorist in Yemen.
- On 9 June 2015, a U.S. drone strike killed Nasir al-Wuhayshi (aka al-Wahishi), head of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen). He was also the apparent heir to Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.
- On 13 June 2015, U.S. fighter jets may have killed Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Libya. He is/was a leader in Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

However the deaths of bin Laden and al-Awlaki had little effect on Al-Qaeda, and it is expected that the deaths of the two leaders in June 2015 will also have little effect on Al-Qaeda. Washington Post; Haaretz; BBC; Associated Press.

Al-Qaeda continued after these deaths because Al-Qaeda is driven by an *idea* of Islamic extremism. If we want to stop Islamic terrorism, we need to kill its ideology, something that requires persuasion and propaganda, *neither* bombs *nor* bullets.

This lesson is not difficult to understand. The USA continued after the deaths of President Roosevelt in 1945 and President Kennedy in 1963. Successful organizations are capable of continuing under new leadership.

No Criminal Prosecution of Iraqi Army Officers

Back on 10 June 2014, ISIL quickly seized Mosul. Although the Iraqi army significantly outnumbered the ISIL terrorists, the Iraqi army simply fled instead of fighting against ISIL. (See my eighth essay on Syria.) About a week later, there were news reports that Maliki had ordered the arrest of Iraqi army officers who deserted, instead of fighting ISIL. At that time, I was overwhelmed with reading and digesting the news from Iraq, so I ignored the criminal prosecution of these army officers.

On 17 June 2014, Reuters reports that Maliki sacked four top army officers in Mosul, because they "failed to fulfill their professional and military duties".

On 18 June 2014, Reuters reported that 59 officers will be tried in military court for fleeing from their posts. The same story also says on 17 June "Maliki dismissed four top generals and said they were being charged in military court for abandoning Mosul". Copy at Daily Star in Lebanon.

On 18 June 2014, Rudaw in Kurdistan reports that the four dismissed officers are "Lt. Gen. Mahdi al-Gharawi, his deputy Maj. Gen. Abdul Rahman al-Handal Mahdi, and chief of staff Brigadier General Hassan Abdul Razzaq Ghazi", along with one Kurdish officer, Brigadier General Hidayat Abdul Karim. Rudaw reports that only the Kurd will be charged in military court, the other three were dismissed but not criminally charged.

On 19 June 2014, The Daily Beast reports that Lt. Gen. Mahdi Al Gharawi, who commanded the Iraqi army in Mosul, was accused of torture when he commanded a police unit in Baghdad during 2005-2008. Maliki not only granted Gharawi immunity from prosecution, but also promoted him to head the Iraqi army in Mosul. Gharawi is a Shiite, Mosul is predominantly Sunni — this is one of the sectarian abuses perpetrated by Maliki. On 17 June 2014, as mentioned above, Maliki finally sacked Gharawi.

On 15 July 2014, about a month after the order for a court martial of Gen. Karim, Rudaw published an interview with Karim. He is living in Erbil, avoiding prosecution. He claims his troops had no ammunition, and he did not learn about the fall of Mosul until a day after it occurred. "Karim said that 85 percent of the Iraqi army is dominated by Shiites, with Kurds and Sunnis treated with suspicion and as outcasts."

On 21 Oct 2014, the Iraqi defense minister promised to investigate the failing of the Iraqi army and hold them accountable. Daily Star(AFP).

On 12 Nov 2014, Iraqi prime minister sacked 36 Iraqi army officers. Note there was *no* attempt to punish these corrupt officers. (See my essay for Nov 2014.)

On 23 Nov 2014, the New York Times reported on corruption in the Iraqi army, including army officers who sell weapons and ammunition and pocket the extra income. There is no mention of criminal prosecution for corrupt officers.

The conventional wisdom from journalists is that former prime minister Maliki wrecked the Iraqi army by replacing competent top officers with incompetent officers who were personally loyal to Maliki. See, e.g.,

- Washington Post ("... Maliki, who has been widely accused of promoting officers based on loyalty rather than merit.");
- Washington Post ("[U.S. officials] say [Maliki] assigned commanders on the basis of sectarian loyalty, diminishing military capabilities and undermining morale.");
- Associated Press ("Many have blamed the army's poor performance on al-Maliki, saying he replaced top officers with inexperienced or incompetent political allies in order to monopolize power.");
- Christian Science Monitor ("These [sectarian policies] fostered the promotion of incompetent Shiite officers on the basis of loyalty to Maliki, and a military culture

filled with greed and corruption.");

- Politico ("... [Maliki] systematically purged the most capable senior officers from the Iraqi Army and replaced them with Shiite cronies who were personally loyal to him, but were incompetent — and, under fire, proved to be cowards.");
- CNN, ("As then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki tightened his grip on power between 2006 and 2013, the high command of the Iraqi military became a political football — with loyalty to al-Maliki prized above competence.");
- Washington Post (General Petraeus: "The proximate cause of Iraq's unraveling was the increasing authoritarian, sectarian and corrupt conduct of the Iraqi government and its leader [Maliki] after the departure of the last U.S. combat forces in 2011.").

While Maliki appears to be responsible for part of the blame for the incompetent Iraqi army in June 2014, Maliki was appointed one of three Vice-Presidents of Iraq on 8 Sep 2014. It seems strange that the person who wrecked the Iraqi army is not only avoiding criminal prosecution, but continues to be a leader in the Iraqi government.

On 13 April 2015, Abadi involuntarily retired more than 300 Iraqi army officers. Abadi gave no public explanation for the retirements. Rudaw;   Daily Star(AFP).

On 17 May 2015, prime minister Abadi announced the dismissal of legal action against deserters from the Iraqi military, "as well as crimes against the military regime and the affairs of the service". Iraqi News. No reasons were given for this end to legal prosecution. Perhaps there were too many defendants for a small number of prosecutors and judges. Perhaps Abadi wants to increase morale in the military by stopping prosecution of military personnel.

The failure to prosecute corrupt army officers may be more evidence that Iraq is a failed nation, which no longer enforces its laws. Karim *may* be a victim of ethnic discrimination and now a scapegoat.

On 19 May 2015, a press release posted at Abadi's website says the Iraqi Council of Ministers have agreed to "directing harsh penalties to the indolent who led to negative impacts in Ramadi." Abadi. Astoundingly, this comes just two days after Abadi dismissed prosecution for similar offenses in Mosul in June 2014.

On 21 May 2015, Abadi "open[ed] an investigation into the causes of the fall of the city of Ramadi" with the intention "to bring the guilty security leaders to the military courts". Iraqi News;   Rudaw.

On 30 May 2015, Abadi reiterated his intent to investigate the rout at Ramadi and punish those leaders who gave orders to flee.

> The prime minister also promised to take "legal action" against commanders who "left Ramadi without approval" and said the Iraqi government has created a committee to investigate the fall of the city.
>
> "The Iraqi forces pulled out, not because they couldn't fight, but they have been given orders to withdraw," said Abadi.
>
> "We will take those commanders to court who have destroyed the reputation of brave

Iraqi commanders. We will remove them from security agencies," Abadi added. "PM Abadi says Ramadi codename is 'Labaik Ya Iraq'," Rudaw, 30 May 2015.

On 9 June 2015, the Iraqi parliamentary committee that investigated the rout at Mosul has finished its report, but the report can not be published until July, because the Iraqi parliament is currently on vacation (beginning 31 May) during an existential crisis. Rudaw. The new term of parliament is scheduled to begin on 1 July. All Iraq News.

On 29 June 2015, Abadi retired the chief of staff of the Iraqi army, Babeker Zibari. The reason for the retirement was *not* publicly disclosed. Because there was no praise for Zibari's service, I assume that Abadi was dissatisfied with Zibari. Daily Star(AFP);   All Iraq News; BAS News;   Iraqi News.

No Criminal Prosecution for Employing "Ghost Soldiers"

My essays for Nov 2014 and Dec 2014 mention that corrupt Iraqi army officers maintained *at least* 50,000 fictitious "ghost soldiers" on the payroll, then pocketed the salaries of these fictitious soldiers. I have seen no reports of criminal prosecutions of any of these corrupt army officers.

On 19 May 2015, *The Washington Post* reported:

> Ahmed al-Sharifi, an Iraqi political analyst, cited corruption as a major reason why the Iraqi army performed poorly in Ramadi. He estimated that there were as many as 23,000 "ghost soldiers" on the government payroll in the province — people listed as drawing salaries but who were not actually performing military service. The actual number of soldiers who fought to defend Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province, was closer to 2,000, he said.
>
> In November, Abadi announced as part of a preliminary investigation that at least 50,000 such "ghost soldiers" across Iraq had been receiving salaries, highlighting the level of corruption in a force that Washington spent billions of dollars to train and equip.
>
> "When you have corruption at this scale, then fighting the Islamic State is going to be even more of a challenge," Sharifi said. "This is a major reason for the security and military collapse in Anbar."

Hugh Naylor, "Fall of Ramadi reflects failure of Iraq's strategy against ISIS, analysts say," Washington Post, 19:04 EDT, 19 May 2015.

Apparently. Abadi has been unable to end the "ghost soldier" problem since it was uncovered in December 2014.

Daily News About Iraq & Syria

23 Feb 2015: ISIL kidnaps Assyrian Christians

On 23-24 Feb, more than 220 Assyrian Christians were abducted by ISIL in Syria, as cited in my essay for Feb 2015.

Approximately 23 of the abducted Assyrians were released in early March, as cited in my essay for March 2015.

On 9 April, Fox News reported that ISIL was demanding payment of US$100,000 per abducted Assyrian for their release, as cited in my essay for April 2015.

On 27 May, ISIL continues to hold 210 Assyrian Christians, as cited in my essay for May 2015.

It may be necessary to maintain silence about the remaining Assyrian hostages, to avoid jeopardizing negotiations about their release, and to avoid increasing the value of the hostages. Nonetheless, we should not forget about these hostages.

This topic will be continued in my essay for July 2015.

AUMF for anti-ISIL campaign
Stalls in U.S. Congress

The USA has been bombing ISIL in Iraq since August 2014. This program continues without the required Congressional Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF). Congressional approval of all wars is specified in the U.S. Constitution, Article I, § 8, clause 11. See also War Powers Act, 50 U.S.C. § 1541, et. seq. (enacted 1973). Ironically, Obama is now seeking Congressional approval for something that Obama has been doing nearly every day since August 2014.

My essay for Dec 2014 described the failure of Congress to pass an AUMF and my essay for Feb 2015 quoted and criticized Obama's draft AUMF. The brief hearings on Obama's draft are described in my essay for March 2015. Obama's draft AUMF stalled in Congress, as described in my essays for April 2015 and May 2015.

On 8 June, Senators Kaine (D-Va) and Flake (R-Az) announced they would introduce a bipartisan AUMF against ISIL. Politico; Washington Post, 8 June; Washington Post, 10 June.

My comment is that Obama's unlawful ten-month old campaign of airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, and the failure of the U.S. Congress to pass an AUMF that would make these airstrikes lawful, is a bad example of how a democracy should function.

Fighting Continues at Baiji

The town of Baiji is near the largest oil refinery in Iraq, and ISIL desires to control both the town and the refinery. My essay for June 2014 cites conflicting information on whether ISIL or Iraq control the refinery, leading me to the conclusion that information from the Iraqi government was unreliable. My essay for Nov 2014 cites reports that the Iraqi army finally captured the town of Baiji.

The refinery processed approximately half of Iraq's oil, until June 2014 when the refinery was shut down because of attacks by ISIL. *If* Iraq could continuously control the refinery — and also control the area surrounding the refinery — then the refinery could significantly boost Iraq's exports, and provide much needed revenue to the Iraqi government. Moreover, the town of Baiji is located on the road between Baghdad and Mosul, so Baiji needs to be liberated before Mosul.

My essay for April 2015 mentions that ISIL breached the perimeter of the refinery on 11 April, but the Iraqi army claimed complete control of the refinery on 20 April. However fighting continued in the area, as shown by continuing airstrikes near Baiji.

My essay for May 2015 mentions continuing battles for the refinery and the town of Baiji.

On 2 June, Abadi announced that the Iraqi security forces again controlled the refinery at Baiji. Iraqi News.

On 7 June, All Iraq News reported that a Shiite militia announced that they controlled the town of Baiji. Iraqi News agreed. All Iraq News. reported that the ISIL fighters in Baiji fled north toward Mosul. But the Associated Press reported that the Iraqi army and Shiite militia had "recaptured key parts" of Baiji, and the Iraqi army commander "hope[ed] hope that the whole city will be cleared within few days". I think the Associated Press is more credible than the Shiite militia reports in the Iraqi news media.

On 7 June, *Iraqi News* reported the liberation of the town of Baiji:
> The Secretary-General of Righteous Movement, Sheikh Qais al-Khazali, announced on Sunday [7 June] the liberation of Baiji.
>
> Khazali said in an interview for IraqiNews.com, "We liberated the city of Baiji entirely," noting that "Joint forces of the Iraqi army and al-Hashed al-Sha'bi militia backed by Iraqi aviation were able today to fully liberate the district."

Abdelhak Mamoun, "Righteous Movement announces full liberalization [sic] of Baiji," Iraqi News, 7 June 2015.

Did you notice what was wrong with Khazali's announcement? There was *no* mention of the U.S.-led coalition who provided 20 airstrikes "near Baiji" that were reported during 1-7 June.

This refusal of the Iraqis to acknowledge the U.S.-led coalition's airstrikes occurred previously during the liberation of Tikrit, as mentioned in my essay for April 2015. Refusal to say "thank you" is more than just ungrateful, it is dishonest to fail to acknowledge assistance and to pretend that the Iraqis liberated a town without any foreign assistance.

Further, as mentioned in the next paragraphs, it was an exaggeration to say Baiji had been liberated.

On 8 June, Agence France-Press reported: "Iraqi forces and militia fighters have rolled back the Islamic State group in the northern town of Baiji and at a nearby oil refinery but it is too soon to declare victory in either battle, the Pentagon said Monday [8 June]."
Daily Star(AFP). Reuters also reports that Baiji is not yet liberated. But Reuters says "Iraqi forces backed by U.S.-led coalition air strikes ... [are] making progress at last against Islamic State rebels in a seesaw battle that has gone on for months".

At 08:57 GMT on 9 June, CNN reported that the U.S. Military believes that Iraqi forces control "only about half" of the town of Baiji.

Iraqi Army Intends to Liberate
Anbar Province

The previous history is chronicled in my essays for April 2015 and May 2015. In particular, on 17 May the Iraqi army fled from Ramadi. Worse, the fleeing army abandoned large quantities of weapons, ammunition, equipment, and vehicles — which was a gift to ISIL.

Fleeing Iraqi Army Abandoned Equipment:
Gift to ISIL

In my essay for May 2015, I said: "Abandoning weapons and equipment for ISIL to acquire makes ISIL stronger and more difficult to defeat. Moreover, when ISIL has the same type of advanced weapons as the Iraqi army, the Iraqi army no longer has a technical advantage in quality of weapons."

On 6 June, *Rudaw* made the same point:
> On its brutal advances into Mosul, Tikrit, Kirkuk and Ramadi, the Islamic State group, or ISIS, has been able to seize loads of military equipment when the Iraqi army fled, leaving their gear behind.
>
> After capturing a number of bases of the Iraqi Army, ISIS could take even more equipment. Everything, from guns, mortars and rockets to tanks, Humvees and other army vehicles has fallen into the hands of the extremists.
>
> Some of the supplies and weapons were transferred to Syria, to help in the battle against other rebel groups. Much of it stayed in Iraq, however, and was used against the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army.
>
> One of the reasons behind the recent defeat of the Iraqi army in Ramadi, was that Iraqi forces were out-gunned by weapons that were once their own.
>
> . . . .

The weapons add to the fear the Iraqi Army feels towards ISIS, as well as adding to the hardship of the Peshmerga and Sunni militias, both of which fighting with relatively light weapons.

In the past months, ISIS seemed to have lost much of its captured Iraqi weapons in bombing raids by the coalition forces. But it regained important tanks and Humvees in Ramadi, tipping the military balance back into its favor.

Judit Neurink, "Captured weapons keep ISIS in the fight," Rudaw, approximately 02:00 GMT, 6 June 2015.

On 11 June, Masrour Barzani, chairman of the Kurdistan Region Security Council, said that the fleeing Iraqi army in Mosul and Ramadi (and their deserted military bases) is the biggest supplier of weapons to ISIL. The peshmerga is outgunned by the U.S.-supplied weapons acquired by ISIL. Rudaw.

Iraq attempts to liberate Ramadi

As chronicled in my essay for May 2015, on 26 May the Shiite militias and Iraqi army began an attempt to retake Ramadi from ISIL. However, the liberation of Ramadi quickly stalled.

On 1 June, ISIL suicide bombers drove three Humvees to an Iraqi police station in the Tharthar area north of Ramadi and detonated, killing at least 41 police and Shiite militia. Associated Press.

On 2 June, All Iraq News reported that Iraqi security forces "are approaching Ramadi from [three sides] ... in order to eliminate the ISIL terrorists inside it." But that was reported before, on 26 May.

On 4 June it was reported that ISIL had closed the gates of the dam on the Euphrates river in Ramadi, which deprives the city of Ramadi and towns downstream of drinking water, as well as prevent irrigation of agricultural crops. But ISIL's intent may be to enable its fighters to walk across the Euphrates river more easily, to enter Ramadi when the Shiite militia have control of all of the roads into Ramadi. *All Iraq News* says: "Iraqi forces have launched a counteroffensive to try to recapture Ramadi but have so far either stopped on the city's outskirts or focused efforts on severing jihadi supply lines." All Iraq News;   Reuters Associated Press;   Daily Star(AFP).

On 21 May 2015, ISIL seized Husseiba, a small town between Ramadi and the Habbaniya military base, where Shiite militias have assembled to retake Ramadi. Two days later, Shiite militias liberated Husseiba. On 6 June 2015, the Associated Press reported:

> Police and military officials said IS fighters attacked the government-held town of Husseiba with heavy mortar fire early Saturday [6 June]. They say the attackers retreated after an hours-long battle, leaving behind three destroyed vehicles and five dead fighters. At least 10 troops and militiamen were wounded in the clash.

Sameer N. Yacoub, "Iraqi troops, militias repel IS attacks in Anbar province," Associated Press, 13:23 GMT, 6 June 2015.

Back on 25 May, Abadi promised Iraqi forces will recapture Ramadi "in days". But, on 7 June, the battle to liberate Ramadi had not yet begun, 13 days after Abadi's promise. I am frustrated because I am scouring English-language news sources in Iraq and elsewhere, looking for news about the promised liberation of Ramadi, but finding very few stories about Ramadi. On the other hand, there is a steady stream of news stories in Iraq about military victories in Salahuddin Province, where Tikrit is the capital city and where the large oil refinery at Baiji is located. My reaction to hearing about victories in Salahuddin, when I am looking for battles in Anbar, is like going to a shoe store, desiring black shoes, and have the salesman tell me there is a 50% off sale on green shoes. Not only is the promised imminent liberation of Ramadi *not* occurring, but also ISIL is probably using the delay in retaking Ramadi to install land mines, roadside bombs, and booby traps in buildings.

At 23:25 Baghdad time on 7 June, All Iraq News reported that the Anbar Provincial Council had announced the liberation of Ramadi "will start soon". ISIL has now had *three weeks* to fortify Ramadi against the invasion by the Iraqi army and Shiite militia.

On 11 June, Rudaw reported that ISIL was detonating dozens of homes of Iraqi officials in Ramadi. My comment is that ISIL must be bored waiting for the cowardly Iraqi army to try to retake Ramadi, so ISIL is out looking for mischief.

On 12 June, the Associated Press reported that Hadi al-Amiri, the head of the Popular Mobilization Forces, said: "We think the liberation of Fallujah will allow us to enter Ramadi without any fighting, so the battle that we are preparing is the battle of Fallujah. God willing, it will be imminent." There was no explanation of *why* liberating Fallujah would cause ISIL to flee from Ramadi. Moreover, the Shiite militias and Popular Mobilization Forces are arrogantly saying they do *not* need airstrikes from the U.S.-led coalition.

On 19 June, a U.S. Military officer gave reporters an update on the efforts to liberate Ramadi:
> During a telephone conference from Southwest Asia with Pentagon reporters, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve Chief of Staff Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Thomas D. Weidley provided operational updates on coalition and anti-ISIL force efforts in Iraq and Syria.
>
> . . . .
>
> Weidley said he is encouraged by the activities of Iraq's government, which are setting the stage for a future counterattack in Ramadi.
>
> "Great efforts have been made in advancing organizational, and command and control changes that will facilitate success in future operations," he said.
>
> Weidley said the coalition views this as a positive step, as the situation in Ramadi is "probably best described as anticipatory," from both an Iraqi security force and ISIL perspective.
>
> Although ISIL forces continue to prepare their defenses within Ramadi, he said, Iraqi forces are conducting shaping operations and working towards the city's liberation.

The general described numerous ongoing "shaping" activities, such as securing logistical lines of communications, securing t-road junctions, intersections, key terrain, establishing logistics areas, finalizing planning, rehearsals, preparing equipment and collecting intelligence.

These shaping operations will set the conditions for follow-on operations, Weidley said.

"General: 'Significant' Gains Made by Anti-ISIL Forces in Northern Syria," Pentagon, 19 June 2015.

My comment is that General Weidley did *not* say that the Iraqi army would liberate Ramadi next week, or in July. This is one of those times when what is *not* said is more important than what was said. General Weidley is probably disappointed that the Iraqi security forces were *not* ready to promptly retake Ramadi, before ISIL "prepare[d] their defenses within Ramadi".

On 21 June, Rudaw reported that the head of the Anbar provincial council, Sabah Karhut, announced on 20 June that 7000 Sunnis had joined the Iraqi army, to liberate Anbar province. But Karhut added: "To fully control Anbar we need at least 20,000 soldiers to protect civilians and prevent threats pose by Daesh." Rudaw also reports that the Iraqi security forces were "allegedly ready to recapture Ramadi", according to Karhut. (The quotation in the previous sentence with "allegedly" is from Rudaw, *not* Karhut.)

On 27 June, Abadi admitted the obvious — the Iraqi army in Ramadi had disobeyed an order from Abadi. Agence France-Presse reports:

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said Saturday [27 June] that Iraqi forces made an "unauthorized" withdrawal from Ramadi last month, leading to ISIS's takeover of the Anbar provincial capital.

"The withdrawal of the forces from Ramadi was unauthorized — the orders were the opposite. The forces had to resist, and if they had resisted, we would not have lost Ramadi," Abadi said in televised remarks.

. . . .

Abadi's remarks came a week after a senior officer in the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS said the withdrawal was militarily unnecessary.

"Ramadi was lost because the Iraqi commander in Ramadi elected to withdraw. In other words, if he had elected to stay, he would still be there today," said Brig. Christopher Ghika of the British army.

Ghika said it was "the Anbar Ops commander" who gave the order to withdraw, referring to the head of the military command responsible for Anbar province.

"Iraq forces made 'unauthorized' withdrawal from Ramadi: PM," Daily Star, 27 June 2015. Copy at Al-Arabiya and BAS News.
Also see Iraqi News, 28 June.

I say Abadi's announcement is obvious, because on 17 May, Abadi publicly ordered the Iraqi army *not* to flee from Ramadi, as chronicled in my essay for May 2015.

I had not seen Ghika's remarks previously, so I did a search on Google News. On 18 June, *Sky News Australia* quoted Brigadier Ghika:

> The Islamic State group took the city of Ramadi because an Iraqi commander unnecessarily ordered his forces to withdraw, a senior officer in the US-led anti-jihadist coalition says.
>
> 'Ramadi was lost because the Iraqi commander in Ramadi elected to withdraw. In other words, if he had elected to stay, he would still be there today,' the British army's Brigadier Christopher Ghika told journalists in Baghdad.
>
> 'Ramadi was not a Daesh victory — Daesh did not win Ramadi, Daesh did not fight and defeat the Iraqi army in Ramadi,' Ghika said, using an Arabic acronym for the jihadist group that overran large parts of Iraq last year.
>
> Iraqi security forces have been plagued by incompetent leaders, some of whom were political appointees, and dozens of officers have been sacked over the past year.
>
> 'It was the Anbar Ops commander' who gave the order, Ghika said, referring to the head of the military command responsible for Anbar province, of which Ramadi is the capital.

"Ramadi fell 'because Iraqis pulled out'," Sky News Australia 18 June 2015.

On 25 May, Abadi promised to recapture Ramadi "in days", but a month later the invasion of Ramadi had not yet begun. On 27 June, "Iraqi Prime minister Haider al-Abadi said on Saturday [27 June] the next days will witness an increase in the campaigns to liberate the ISIL held-cities." All Iraq News. Presumedly, Abadi is referring to both Ramadi and Mosul.

Liberation of Ramadi Postponed Indefinitely

On 25 May, Abadi said the Iraqi forces will recapture Ramadi "in days". (See the five citations in my essay for May 2015.) But Abadi was a liar, because on 15 June — three weeks later — the battle to retake Ramadi has *not* yet begun. In fact, journalists are failing to mention Ramadi, as if it were a long-forgotten bad dream. ISIL has now had four weeks to entrench themselves in Ramadi, making the liberation of Ramadi more difficult and more deadly for the Iraqi army and Iraqi militias. On 15 June, I spent several hours searching Google News, the Associated Press, and Reuters websites for explanations of *why* the liberation of Ramadi had been delayed, but found nothing. What I did find was the terse information in the next few paragraphs. Apparently, the cowardice and incompetence of the Iraqi army and militias is a closely guarded secret of both the Iraqi and U.S. governments. I emphasize that the postponement of the liberation of Ramadi has been generally ignored by journalists.

On 10 June, *Foreign Policy* reported:

US President Barack Obama's administration is ramping up its efforts to train and arm Sunni tribal fighters, who it hopes will lead a coming effort to reclaim Anbar province from the Islamic State, a tacit admission that the Iraqi military itself won't be up to the job anytime soon — and that the Islamic State has managed to expand its control of the region despite months of U.S. airstrikes.

. . . .

The new push comes just weeks after Ramadi fell to the Islamic State, which managed to conquer the city of 500,000 with a force estimated at just a few hundred fighters. As with previous cities claimed by the militants, the Iraqi forces deployed there fled in droves, leaving behind large quantities of U.S.-provided weaponry and vehicles. The militants have in turn converted large quantities of armored American Humvees into Mad Max-style rolling bombs.

. . . .

Much of the new training will revolve around Iraqi special operations forces and building up the depleted strength of the Iraqi 8th Division, which has lost hundreds to fighting and desertion. U.S. officials estimate that 3,000 raw Iraqi recruits will have to be trained to make up for the shortfalls.

Turning those recruits into a cohesive fighting force, while trying to integrate thousands of Sunni tribal fighters with little love for the central government into a force that can stand on its own, will be a huge test for American patience and Iraqi will. And the first step in this uncertain process will be to maintain pressure on the Iraqi government to make a consistent effort to not only reach out to those tribes, but also to arm, equip, and sustain them over the long haul.

Paul McCleary & Laura Jakes, "U.S. Works to Bring More Sunni Tribal Fighters Into Islamic State War," Foreign Policy, 10 June 2015.
Plagiarized by All Iraq News, 15 June 2015.

On 10 June, as cited below, Obama ordered additional U.S. Military personnel to Iraq, to specifically train Sunni tribesmen for the fight against ISIL. On the night of 11 June, *The New York Times* reported:

Although the goal is to retake the city of Ramadi, which fell to the Islamic State last month, General Dempsey indicated that an effort may be months away. He said it would take several weeks for the initial command and control center to be set up at Al Taqqadum. "Timetables are fragile," he said. "They are dependent on so many different factors."

Peter Baker, Helene Cooper, & Michael R. Gordon, "Obama Looks at Adding Bases and Troops in Iraq, to Fight ISIS," NY Times, 11 June 2015.

A Pentagon 11 June press release tersely says: "There is no timetable for any offensive in the province, Dempsey said, but the base at Taqaddam and the support to the tribes will be an enabler for the counterattack to reclaim Ramadi."

On 12 June, Reuters reported that "Army Colonel Steve Warren, a Pentagon spokesman,

asked if U.S. troops [at Taqaddum] would be involved in helping Iraqis plan to retake Ramadi, Warren said, 'Absolutely.' " On 13 June, Rudaw reports that the first 80 U.S. soldiers arrived at Al Taqqadum, an Iraqi base near the town of Habbaniya.

The best explanation I have seen for the postponement of the liberation of Ramadi is that the Shiite militias do *not* want to fight and die to liberate Sunni towns, like Ramadi. (See, e.g., Foreign Policy 29 May 2015, which says Shiite militia will *not* die to protect "the Sunni heartlands and cities like Ramadi.") And if the Shiite militia were unleashed in Ramadi, they might vandalize or loot buildings owned by Sunnis, as the Shiite militia did in Tikrit. So maybe it is good that the Shiite militias are not liberating Ramadi.

On the other hand, it will take month<u>s</u> to train adequate numbers of Sunni tribesmen to expel ISIL from Ramadi. On 15 June, ISIL already has four weeks to install land mines, roadside bombs, and booby traps in buildings in Ramadi. After months of delaying the liberation of Ramadi, ISIL will be firmly entrenched in Ramadi, and the liberation of Ramadi will be a bloodbath.

On 16 June, *Rudaw* in Kurdish Iraq reported what had become obvious:
> The Iraqi army's military campaign to liberate Ramadi from the Islamic State has been halted, an official from the Anbar provincial council told Rudaw on Tuesday [16 June].
>
> "Over the past three days there have been no advances or attacks against ISIS bases and position on the outskirts of Ramadi," said Farhan Mohammed, a member of the Anbar provincial council.
>
> Criticizing the mechanics of military operations against ISIS in Ramadi, Mohammed said, "Hashd al-Shaabi militants [i.e., Popular Mobilization Units] are not committed to the orders being issued by the leadership of the Anbar operation."
>
> "There has been no cooperation between the joint forces," he added. "The USA has once again sent military advisers for Iraq to train tribal militants and Iraqi forces, and this has meant a delay for the operations until further notice."

"Ramadi military operations halted," Rudaw, about 18:00 GMT, 16 June 2015.

On 24 June, Agence France-Presse reported that the U.S. Military was *not* cooperating with Shiite militias in the effort to liberate Ramadi.
> The Pentagon said Tuesday [23 June] that there are some Shiite fighters at an Iraqi military base where Washington just sent 450 reinforcements, but they were not working with U.S. forces, underscoring concerns over links with the sectarian fighters.
>
> Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steve Warren said that while there is a "small group" of Shiite fighters at the Taqaddum base, there numbered only in the lower double digits, did not form full units and did not interact with U.S. forces.
>
> Taqaddum is a key area in the fight to retake the city of Ramadi and the Sunni province of Al-Anbar from ISIS.
>
> Shiite and Kurdish fighters have been critical in bolstering a weakened Iraqi military in

efforts to fight ISIS. But the United States is hesitant to see Shiite militias involved in its efforts to battle ISIS, despite their battle readiness.

. . . .

Warren said the Shiite fighters are coordinating with Iraq government forces at the strategic base, and that the U.S. made it a condition of troop deployment to the airbase that Shiite militia units be withdrawn.

"There were Shia militias units on Taqaddum at one point," Warren added. But "one of the conditions for our arrival there was that these units move off Taqaddum airbase."
"US, Shiite fighters not working together at Iraq base: Pentagon," Daily Star, 06:30 GMT, 24 June 2015.

There are three broad reasons why the U.S. does not want to work with the Shiite militia in Iraq:

1. The Shiite militias in Iraq fought against the invading U.S. Military in the years 2003-2011.
2. Shiite militias have a history of vandalizing and looting property belonging to Sunni Muslims. Anbar Province, including Ramadi, is predominantly Sunni.
3. The Shiite militias are supplied and advised by Iran, the enemy of the USA since 1979.

My comment is that the refusal of the U.S. Military to work with Shiite militias in Anbar province means that the liberation of Ramadi will be delayed until the U.S. can train a few tens of thousands Sunni tribesmen.

Airstrikes near Ramadi

How the battle for Ramadi stalled is clearly shown in the following table of U.S.-led Coalition airstrikes "near Ramadi". The source of the data is press releases from CENTCOM and the Pentagon, as copied in my essay for May 2015 and below.

Day Ending 08:00 Iraqi time	Number Airstrikes "Near Ramadi"
14 May 2015	2
15 May 2015	1
16 May 2015	4
17 May 2015	7
18 May 2015	8

19 May 2015	4
20 May 2015	0
21 May 2015	0
22 May 2015	5
23 May 2015	4
24 May 2015	4
25 May 2015	1
26 May 2015	0
27 May 2015	no report
28 May 2015	1
29 May 2015	1
30 May 2015	1
31 May 2015	2
1 June 2015	1
2 June 2015	0
3 June 2015	3
4 June 2015	1
5 June 2015	0
6 June 2015	0
7 June 2015	0
8 June 2015	0

8 June 2015	0
10 June 2015	0
11 June 2015	0
12 June 2015	2
13 June 2015	0
14 June 2015	0
15 June 2015	1

ISIL captured Ramadi on 17 May. Note the large number of airstrikes during 16-19 May and 22-24 May. On 22 May, the Pentagon's announcement of airstrikes near Ramadi appears to include destroying U.S. supplied vehicles that were captured by ISIL. There were zero airstrikes during 5-11 June, showing that the Iraqis had abandoned the fight.

Counter-ISIL Coalition Meets in Paris

On 28 May, the Kuwait News Agency reported:
> French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius Thursday urged "a political solution" to stop spread of Islamic State (ISIL), and he especially urged Iraqi authorities to put in place an inclusive government that would not "ostracise" Sunnis and push them into hands of ISIL.
>
> "Regarding Daash (ISIL), it is an absolute evil and we must fight against it," the Foreign Minister stated.
>
> "But fighting against Daash needs that politically - in the case of Iraq - all the country must be together. If you have a government that gives special treatment to the Shiite (community) but which ostracises Sunnis, obviously the Sunnis will say they shouldn't fight against Daash because the government ostracises us," Fabius warned.
>
> . . . .
>
> Fabius will host a major conference in Paris June 2, which will be attended by 24 important, anti-ISIL Coalition members, ... "We have committed militarily (in Iraq), but with a political condition that the government is inclusive, that means bringing everyone together, Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds," Fabius commented. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi will be co-presiding next Tuesday's [2 June] meeting.

"Fabius calls for 'political solution' to counter ISIL influence," Kuwait News Agency, 28 May 2015.

On 31 May 2015, Agence France-Presse reported on the French government position in advance of the meeting of foreign ministers in Paris on Tuesday, 2 June:
> The anti-ISIS coalition will meet in Paris Tuesday [2 June] after a series of shock battlefield gains by the jihadis, with Iraq under pressure to step up its fight by being more inclusive of the Sunni minority. ....
>
> . . . .
>
> "We are going to discuss Iraq, how to get ISIS to retreat," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said last week, warning Baghdad over sectarian tensions which experts say are impeding the country's ability to counter the jihadis.
>
> "We engaged militarily but with a political condition: That the government be inclusive, that means bringing everyone together, Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds."
>
> "I am saying clearly that this needs to be better respected from now on," Fabius said in separate comments to parliament.
>
> . . . .
>
> The coalition has pushed for Sunni tribal fighters to be trained to fight the largely Sunni ISIS fighters in their own areas, but Shiite-ruled Baghdad is reticent to arm a population it fears may turn on it.
>
> . . . .
>
> Observers and politicians have warned that sectarianism in Iraq could be the death knell to efforts to combat ISIS.

Fran Blandy, "Anti-ISIS strategy to face scrutiny at Paris meeting," Daily Star, 21:12 GMT, 31 May 2015.

Similarly, the Associated Press reported:
> France's foreign minister says airstrikes against Islamic State extremists will be effective only if there is political reconciliation in Iraq.
>
> Speaking in Germany a day before an international conference to tackle the problem of IS, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said Monday [1 June] the Iraqi population conquered by the extremists won't rise up against the group "unless there is the feeling that the government is inclusive."
>
> Iraq's government has faced criticism for alienating Sunni Muslims, and French and American officials are impatient with what they see as sluggish efforts at reconciliation.

Sylvie Corbet, "France: Iraq airstrikes must be backed by political accord," Associated Press,

14:22 GMT, 1 June 2015.

See also Reuters.

The above remarks suggests that Abadi could get an earful at the Paris conference. Similarly, since June 2014, Obama has also been telling the Shiite majority in Iraq to become more inclusive of Sunnis and Kurds.

On 1 June, the State Department provided a background briefing for journalists by an anonymous "senior state department official". He listed five lines of effort, from the Brussels meeting in December 2014, plus one new line of effort. I have summarized these six lines of effort with quotations from his briefing:

1. [the military effort]   "We have 12 coalition partners now in Iraq training Iraqi forces. We've trained so far 7,000 Iraqi soldiers; 4,000 are in training now."

2. "The second line of effort is the foreign fighter networks, trying to cut down on the foreign fighter flows into the Syria and Iraq theater."   "... more than 22,000 fighters from a hundred countries all around the world have poured (inaudible) Syria to join extremist organizations, mostly ISIL."

3. "The third line of effort is the financing, cutting down on ISIL's attempts to finance itself and also to access global financial markets."

4. "The fourth line of effort is focusing on the humanitarian crisis, which has been generated by the fighting."

5. "... the fifth is countering ISIL in the messaging space."

6. "And the sixth is a new line of effort that we created a couple months ago focused on stabilization, and that is really (inaudible) cleared of ISIL, how do you flush resources into those areas, how do you take care of people, how do you bring services back."

Here is some of what the senior state department official said about the military efforts:
    .... We're coming in the wake of the events in Ramadi, and we're coming to discuss with Prime Minister Abadi his plan — his plan — for liberating Ramadi and Anbar province. And this is important because in the immediate wake of Ramadi, Prime Minister Abadi called together his national security council, his cabinet — Sunni, Shia, and Kurds — and they unanimously adopted a national program for taking back Ramadi, and not just Ramadi but securing Anbar province and cutting off the access route that we know ISIL is using to funnel its — funnel resources all the way up north into Mosul, because as you may recall, we've been successful in cutting off its access routes into Mosul from the north with various operations we did with the Peshmerga and some of the Arab tribes in that area earlier this year.

    So the Iraqi plan has — which was endorsed by their entire cabinet in about 72 hours after the events of Ramadi — really has five key elements, all of which we're going to

discuss tomorrow. One, and very significantly, is mobilizing the tribes of Anbar (inaudible). Iraqis have been working to do this. They need help, and we're ready to help. Since this plan was announced, 800 tribal fighters have been enrolled as volunteers to serve with a paycheck from the state, with a weapon to go out and join the fight alongside Iraqi Security Forces, again, in a coordinated, organized way, in a way that we can help. So that happened — those 800 fighters were formally enrolled at Habbaniyah just last week, and that is just a start. We have about 5,000 now enrolled in Anbar province. That number is going to keep going up.

So we'll be talking to Abadi tomorrow about his plan for mobilizing the tribes of Anbar province, and most significantly how we and other coalition members can help.

. . . .

.... But it's very important as this proceeds that all forces [including Shiite militias] be brought under the command and control of the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi prime minister, and its something that is a fundamental element of the plan for Anbar province. It's something that leaders, including religious leaders like Grand Ayatollah Sistani, speaks to quite frequently.

"Background Briefing on the June 2 Paris Counter-ISIL Coalition Small Group Ministerial," State Dept., 1 June 2015.

The meeting in Paris was to be hosted by the French foreign minister (Fabius), with the U.S. secretary of state (Kerry) and the Iraqi president (Abadi) also presiding over some sessions. But on 31 May, Kerry broke his leg during an accident while riding his bicycle in France, and Kerry was flown to Massachusetts General Hospital for surgical treatment. At the meeting in Paris, the U.S. was represented by the deputy secretary of state (Antony Blinken) and also by the special presidential envoy (Gen. Allen). Kerry participated via video-conference.

Before the conference began, Julie Bishop, the Foreign Minister of Australia, called for Iran to be included in the Counter-ISIL Coalition meetings. *The Australian* newspaper reported:

Ms Bishop, who recently visited Tehran, said, as a major provider of "boots on the ground" in the fighting against Islamic State, Iran should be invited to talks on the conduct of the war. "It throws into quite stark relief what's missing and that's dialogue with Iran," Ms Bishop said.

. . . .

[Ms Bishop said:] "The Iranians are doing much of the fighting but we are not hearing from them as to what their objectives are.

"Iran is not included in the coalition's discussions. We must have one of their military commanders and political leaders at the table informing us of what Iran is doing there."

Brendan Nicholson, "Julie Bishop wants Iran invited to talks on Islamic State," The Australian, 2 June 2015.
Also see: Australian Broadcasting Corp., 2 June 2015.

My comment is that it is logical for Iran to be part of the Coalition, because Iran is actively fighting against ISIL in both Syria and Iraq. However, fighting against ISIL does *not* change the fact that Iran is a rogue nation that sponsors terrorism in other nations. Including Iran would be unpalatable to the USA, because the Iranian terrorists seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979. Including Iran is also unpalatable to Arab-Gulf nations that are ruled by Sunni Muslims, who suspect that Shiites in Iran are attempting to dominate Syria and Iraq.

Before the conference began, Abadi whined about the alleged lack of weapons and ammunition for the Iraqi army. Reuters reported:

> Iraq's prime minister on Tuesday 2 June] accused the international coalition fighting Islamic State of not doing enough to tackle the group, and said important members such as Saudi Arabia are not curbing the flow of foreign fighters to his country.
>
> . . . .
>
> Abadi said Iraq urgently needed more intelligence and weapons, including anti-tank guns. He said Baghdad had received very few arms or ammunition despite coalition pledges to provide more weapons.
>
> "Almost none. We are relying on ourselves," he said, noting that he was waiting for U.N. approval to buy weapons from Iran.
>
> "The air campaign is useful for us, but it's not enough. It's too little. Surveillance is very small. Daesh is mobile and moves in small groups," he said.

John Irish, "Iraq PM says allies not doing enough to counter Islamic State," Reuters, 11:01 GMT, 2 June 2015.

The Associated Press reported:

> "Armament and ammunition, we haven't seen much. Almost none. We're relying on ourselves, but fighting is very hard this way," al-Abadi said Tuesday [2 June] before the conference.

Lori Hinnant & Jamey Keaten, "US-led coalition doubles down on IS group strategy," Associated Press, 18:39 GMT, 2 June 2015.

My comment on Abadi's whining is his army would have more weapons and ammunition if corrupt army officers were not selling them for personal profit. And his army would have more weapons and ammunition if his army had not fled from Mosul and Tikrit in June 2014, and fled from Ramadi in May 2015, each time abandoning huge quantities of weapons, ammunition, and vehicles to ISIL. It is incredible chutzpah for Abadi to be blaming the Coalition for an alleged failure to supply weapons, when the fleeing Iraqi army abandoned huge amounts of weapons, ammunition, and vehicles to be captured by ISIL.

What Occurred in Paris

As expected, during the conference Fabius criticized the Iraqi government for discriminating against Sunnis in Iraq. The Associated Press reported:

> "Stabilization of Iraq cannot be achieved if there is not a political transition in Syria,"

> [French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius] said. Just as important is political
> reconciliation within Iraq, notably between the Shiite-dominated government and
> disaffected Sunnis, who may not sympathize with IS but who have little love for the
> country's leadership.

Lori Hinnant & Jamey Keaten, "US-led coalition doubles down on IS group strategy,"
Associated Press, 18:39 GMT, 2 June 2015.

Abadi complained about the increasing number of foreigners traveling to Iraq to fight for
ISIL. The Associated Press reported:

> Al-Abadi said the flow of foreign fighters across the border into Iraq hasn't slowed, and
> the majority of the radical Sunni group is now foreign. Less than a year ago, he said, it
> was 60 percent Iraqi.
>
> "They have brought hundreds of new fighters, foreign fighters, well trained, well-
> armed," al-Abadi told a small group of journalists before the meeting. "This is a
> transnational organization. We need all the support of the world, the intelligence of the
> world, and we are not getting it."
>
> Officials in many Western countries who are part of the coalition have struggled to stop
> the flow of jihadi fighters from their territories to IS-controlled areas. Separately on
> Tuesday, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls tweeted that authorities have detected
> fewer than half of jihadis who left France for Syria before departure.

Lori Hinnant & Jamey Keaten, "US-led coalition doubles down on IS group strategy,"
Associated Press, 18:39 GMT, 2 June 2015.

My comment is that the failure of Muslim clerics and Arab governments to consistently and
continually counter propaganda from ISIL definitely helps ISIL recruit people, including
foreigners.

Communiqué

A Declaration of the Co-Chairs was issued by the French government. I posted a copy at
rbs0.com. Note that the *Declaration by the Co-Chairs* does not order Abadi to give weapons
to Sunni tribes in Anbar province, instead paragraph 5 diplomatically endorses the "the urgent
response plan for the Liberation of Anbar Province as approved unanimously on May 18th by
Iraq's Council of Ministers." This saves face for Abadi and makes the plan look like an Iraqi
idea. But advice from the USA and France, amongst other nations, caused the Iraqis to adopt
this plan.

I have posted a list of the Counter-ISIL Coalition meetings, including early meetings before
the participating nations were formally called a Counter-ISIL Coalition. My webpage has
links to the Communiqué from each meeting.

After the meeting in Paris, there was a press conference with Fabius, Abadi, and Blinken. An
English-language transcript was posted by the U.S. State Department.

My comments on the Paris Meeting

I learned long ago that managers go to meetings to prevent their group from being assigned more work without more resources. The other reason that managers attend meetings is to eat donuts. <*grin*> So I am not surprised when nothing significant occurs at a meeting.

At the meeting in Brussels on 3 Dec 2014, it was agreed that the Coalition would counter the propaganda from ISIL. (See my essay for Dec 2014.) Such an anti-propaganda effort is critical in decreasing the number of foreign fighters who pour into Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIL. But in the past six months, there has been no significant counter propaganda from the Coalition, despite the promises from the nations in the Coalition.

Further, a one-day meeting is *not* enough time to hear progress reports and throughly discuss strategy and make decisions for future efforts on such a complicated problem as defeating ISIL. Scheduling only one day hints that the meeting is more to eat donuts than to accomplish something significant.

––––––––––––––––

Abadi's megalomania:
Liberate Mosul too!

On 1 June, before he departed from Baghdad to Paris, Abadi announced:
> "We have started mobilization operations in Mosul to besiege the enemy from everywhere and everywhere," vowing to "expel them from every inch of ground in Iraq," Abadi added.

Abdelhak Mamoun, "Abadi announces the start of mobilization operations to liberate Mosul," Iraqi News, 2 June 2015.

At the press conference after the meeting in Paris, Abadi said:
> Our forces are now moving towards Nineveh, and the Nineveh operation has already started. We have now a new military commander, and our inclusive Iraqi Government wishes to go ahead.

Press Conference Transcript, State Department, 2 June 2015.

Nineveh is across the river from Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. Mosul has been held by ISIL since 10 June 2014, and is now heavily fortified to resist a future Iraqi invasion.

On 17 May 2015, the Iraqi army proved itself unable to hold Ramadi against a small number of ISIL attackers. (See my essay for May 2015.) Currently, the Iraqi army is fighting major battles in Salahuddin Province (Baiji), as well as attempting to liberate Anbar Province, including liberating Ramadi. Part of the Iraqi army must remain in Baghdad to defend the capital city against possible attack. One wonders where Abadi will find an adequate number of competent soldiers to fight in Salahuddin and Anbar provinces, defend Baghdad, *and* invade Mosul.

On 12 June, Al-Arabiya reported Iraqi General Najim al-Jubouri said "the operation to liberate Mosul from Islamic State of Iraq and Syria fighters has started with airstrikes targeting the militants".

––––––––––––––––

U.S. Propaganda

In an interview in Paris on 3 June, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Blinken, boasted that the U.S.-led coalition had killed more than 10,000 ISIL fighters. France Inter Radio;   BBC;   The Telegraph;   Associated Press;   Reuters;   all on 3 June 2015.

Blinken's body count is *not* the result of accurate counting on the battlefield, but only an estimate by some government bureaucrat. Even if the 10,000 number is approximately correct, the important fact is that ISIL is *winning* the war in parts of Syria and Iraq. Not only does ISIL continue to hold the cities of Raqqa (Syria) and Mosul (Iraq), but also in May 2015 ISIL captured Ramadi in Iraq and Palmyra in Syria. And ISIL is resilient and adaptable, unlike the depleted army in Syria and the incompetent army in Iraq. It may be that ISIL can recruit new fighters at a higher rate than ISIL fighters are being killed. Several news articles were critical of Blinken's 10,000 number. Bloomberg;   Daily Star(Bloomberg);   Frontline(PBS);   Daily Beast.

Truth: It will be a *long* war.

Not widely reported is General Allen's prediction that the war against ISIL will take a generation (i.e., approximately twenty years).
> And this will be a long campaign. Aspects of it, like defeating Daesh's ideology, will likely take a generation or more. But we can and must rise to this challenge. In an age where we are more interconnected than at any time in human history, Daesh is a global threat.

General John Allen, "Remarks at Brookings-Doha U.S. Islamic World Forum," State Dept., 3 June 2015.

I remind the reader that, on 3 July 2014, General Dempsey said: "we're stuck with [the threat of Islamic extremists] for the foreseeable future, a generation or two." (See my essay for July 2014.) Back on 24 Sep 2014, Obama himself said that the war on terrorism was a "a generational task". (See my essay for October 2014.) So it should come as no surprise that we will all be stuck in a war against Islamic terrorism for *many years,* possibly past the year 2035.

On the morning of 9 June, retired U.S. Navy admiral John Kirby — recent Pentagon spokesman and now the new spokesman for the U.S. State Department — appeared on the MSNBC cable television channel and said that even if the U.S. and its allies go "all in", defeat of ISIL in Iraq "is still going to take three to five years. It's not going to happen overnight." Voice of America;   Associated Press.

---

8 June 2015: Obama's Press Conference

On 8 June 2015, after the G-7 Summit in Krün Germany, Obama gave a press conference:
> QUESTION [by Justin Sink]: Thanks, Mr. President. I wanted to ask about two things

that were on the agenda at the G7 this weekend. The first was the Islamic State. You said yesterday, ahead of your meeting with Prime Minister Cameron, that you'd assess what was working and what wasn't. So I'm wondering, bluntly, what is not working in the fight against the Islamic State. And in today's bilateral with Prime Minister Abadi, you pledged to step up assistance to Iraq. I'm wondering if that includes additional U.S. military personnel.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: .... With respect to ISIL, we have made significant progress in pushing back ISIL from areas in which they had occupied or disrupted local populations, but we've also seen areas like in Ramadi where they're displaced in one place and then they come back in, in another. And they're nimble, and they're aggressive, and they're opportunistic.

So one of the areas where we're going to have to improve is the speed at which we're training Iraqi forces. Where we've trained Iraqi forces directly and equipped them, and we have a train-and-assist posture, they operate effectively. Where we haven't, morale, lack of equipment, et cetera, may undermine the effectiveness of Iraqi security forces. So we want to get more Iraqi security forces trained, fresh, well-equipped and focused. And President Abadi wants the same thing.

So we're reviewing a range of plans for how we might do that, essentially accelerating the number of Iraqi forces that are properly trained and equipped and have a focused strategy and good leadership. And when a finalized plan is presented to me by the Pentagon, then I will share it with the American people. We don't yet have a complete strategy because it requires commitments on the part of the Iraqis, as well, about how recruitment takes place, how that training takes place. And so the details of that are not yet worked out.

QUESTION: Is it fair to say that additional military personnel — U.S. military personnel are of what's under consideration?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I think what is fair to say is that all the countries in the international coalition are prepared to do more to train Iraqi security forces if they feel like that additional work is being taken advantage of. And one of the things that we're still seeing is — in Iraq — places where we've got more training capacity than we have recruits. So part of my discussion with Prime Minister Abadi was how do we make sure that we get more recruits in. A big part of the answer there is our outreach to Sunni tribes.

We've seen Sunni tribes who are not only willing and prepared to fight ISIL, but have been successful at rebuffing ISIL. But it has not been happening as fast as it needs to. And so one of the efforts that I'm hoping to see out of Prime Minister Abadi, and the Iraqi legislature when they're in session, is to move forward on a National Guard law that would help to devolve some of the security efforts in places like Anbar to local folks, and to get those Sunni tribes involved more rapidly.

This is part of what helped defeat AQI [Al-Qaeda in Iraq] — the precursor of ISIL —

during the Iraq War in 2006. Without that kind of local participation, even if you have a short-term success, it's very hard to hold those areas.

The other area where we've got to make a lot more progress is on stemming the flow of foreign fighters. Now, you'll recall that I hosted a U.N. General Security Council meeting specifically on this issue, and we've made some progress, but not enough. We are still seeing thousands of foreign fighters flowing into, first, Syria, and then, oftentimes, ultimately into Iraq.

And not all of that is preventable, but a lot of it is preventable — if we've got better cooperation, better coordination, better intelligence, if we are monitoring what's happening at the Turkish-Syria border more effectively. This is an area where we've been seeking deeper cooperation with Turkish authorities who recognize it's a problem but haven't fully ramped up the capacity they need. And this is something that I think we got to spend a lot of time on.

If we can cut off some of that foreign fighter flow then we're able to isolate and wear out ISIL forces that are already there. Because we're taking a lot of them off the battlefield, but if they're being replenished, then it doesn't solve the problem over the long term.

The final point that I emphasized to Prime Minister Abadi is the political agenda of inclusion remains as important as the military fight that's out there. If Sunnis, Kurds, and Shia all feel as if they're concerns are being addressed, and that operating within a legitimate political structure can meet their need for security, prosperity, non-discrimination, then we're going to have much easier time.

And the good news is Prime Minister Abadi is very much committed to that principle. But, obviously, he's inheriting a legacy of a lot of mistrust between various groups in Iraq — he's having to take a lot of political risks. In some cases, there are efforts to undermine those efforts by other political factions within Iraq. And so we've got to continue to monitor that and support those who are on the right side of the issue there.
"Remarks by President Obama in Press Conference after G7 Summit," White House, 15:08 GMT, 8 June 2015.

My comment is that Obama has been involved with Iraq for the past 12 months, so it may be surprising that Obama admits "We don't yet have a complete strategy". But the real problems are how to stop the overtly sectarian Shiite majority in the Iraqi parliament, how to stop the corruption in the Iraqi military, how to prevent the Iraqi army from repeatedly fleeing and abandoning U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles for ISIL to capture, how to increase the size of the Iraqi army, ... Obama can *not* solve these problems for the Iraqis. And, as I said in my essay for May 2015, the Iraqi parliament and Iraqi army had learned nothing in the past year — the Iraqi army fled from Ramadi in May 2015 just as it had fled from Mosul in June 2014.

U.S. State Department Spokesman, John Kirby, clarified that the U.S.-strategy was "incomplete" only because we need to train more soldiers in the Iraqi army. (See, e.g., Politico, The Hill; Voice of America.)

Obama admits that ISIL is "nimble", "aggressive", "and opportunistic". Unfortunately, the Iraqi government — and especially the U.S. Government — is a huge bureaucracy that is *neither* nimble *nor* adaptable to rapidly changing conditions. To be nimble and adaptable, one needs to give considerable discretionary power to low-level commanders in the field. But that would make upper-level commanders almost irrelevant, except for providing resources and deflecting criticism. No upper-level commander wants to make himself irrelevant, which is how bureaucracies become so rigid and unresponsive.

Obama also wants to stop "the flow of foreign fighters" into Syria and Iraq. A more fundamental solution would be to disrupt and diminish ISIL recruitment, by refuting ISIL propaganda and by getting Muslim clerics to continually criticize ISIL. However, as explained in my essay for Feb 2015, Obama refuses to publicly acknowledge that the problem is *Islamic* terrorism.

An hour before Obama's press conference quoted above, Obama spoke to journalists after a private meeting with Abadi.

> THE PRESIDENT: Well, it is a pleasure to be with Prime Minister Abadi and his delegation. Obviously, the United States has made an enormous commitment and investment in Iraq, and we're fortunate to have a reliable partner in Prime Minister Abadi.
>
> The challenges that Iraq face continue to be significant. Obviously, ISIL, or Daesh, has been active in its terrorist activities, particularly in Anbar and some of the western portions of the country. We have seen successes, but we've also seen setbacks. In areas like Tikrit, we've seen the Iraqi security forces operate very effectively with the international coalition to drive back ISIL. Most recently, in Ramadi, we saw ISIL concentrate its forces to get what I believe will be a short-term tactical gain.
>
> . . . .
>
> And in all of these discussions, what I found is that Prime Minister Abadi is very much committed to effective, inclusive governance. And there's a refreshing honesty, I think, on the part of the Prime Minister in recognizing that there remains a lot of work to be done. But as long as the international coalition sustains its efforts, and as long as Prime Minister Abadi and the Iraqi government stay committed to an inclusive approach to gaining back territory from ISIL and then instituting governance that is inclusive and serves the people, I'm absolutely confident that we will succeed.
>
> . . . .
>
> In discussions with the G7 and other coalition partners, they're absolutely committed to making sure that the Iraqi government can succeed in this process. And I'm confident that although it is going to take time and there will be setbacks and lessons learned, that we are going to be successful, ISIL is going to be drive out of Iraq, and ultimately it is going to be defeated.

"Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Al-Abadi after Bilateral Meeting," White House, 13:53 GMT, 8 June 2015.

My comment is that Obama's effusive praise for Abadi may have been polite or diplomatic, but it was *not* truthful.

At the Coalition meeting in Paris on 2 June, Abadi was blaming an alleged lack of weapons from the Coalition for the recent failures of the Iraqi army. Such chutzpah by Abadi does *not* justify Obama saying "we're fortunate to have a reliable partner in Prime Minister Abadi." More truthfully, Abadi is fortunate to have a Coalition that continues to support Abadi, despite the colossal incompetence and corruption of the Iraqi government and the Iraqi army.

Obama says: "Prime Minister Abadi is very much committed to effective, inclusive governance." That may be true, but Abadi has *not* been able to convince the Iraqi parliament to be either "effective" or "inclusive". Abadi has been prime minister of Iraq since 8 Sep 2014. During those nine months:

- The Iraqi army has been unable to recapture Mosul, and in May 2015 the Iraqi army fled from Ramadi. The Iraqi government has learned nothing from the failure of the Iraqi army in Mosul and Tikrit, one year ago.

- The overtly sectarian Shiite majority in the Iraqi parliament has failed to supply adequate weapons to the peshmerga and Sunni tribes, both of whom are eager to fight against ISIL.

- The Iraqi government had failed to end the corruption in the Iraqi military, and abandoned prosecution of Iraqi army officers for the debacle in Mosul and Tikrit in June 2014. (See above.)

- The U.S. Military has trained only 8900 soldiers in the Iraqi army, with another 2600 soldiers currently in training. (See e.g., Politico; Associated Press.) These 10,500 Iraqi soldiers are a trivial fraction of the entire Iraqi army.

- The Iraqi government had failed to increase the size of the Iraqi army. Instead, the Iraqi government is relying on Shiite militias that are poorly trained and not really under the control of the government in Baghdad. These Shiite militias are actually equipped and advised by Iran.

- In the midst of an existential crisis, the Iraqi parliament meets infrequently, for a few hours each session, with large numbers (e.g., 40%) of their members absent, and takes long vacations. Parliament is *not* solving Iraq's problems.

In contrast to Obama's platitudes, see the harsh reality in the section below on the failure of Iraq.

In summary, Iraq is a failed nation. It is very difficult to be optimistic about what is happening in Iraq. The problem is *not* Obama's strategy. The real problem is the dysfunctional, ineffective, and corrupt government in Iraq.

Let me remind the reader that when the U.S. Military departed from Iraq in December 2011,

the Iraqi army was in reasonable condition, as a result of massive training by U.S. Military personnel. Under the leadership of Iraqi prime minister Maliki, the Iraqi army was ruined in two years.

---

10 June 2015: Obama throws more resources at Iraq

On 7 June, the U.K. prime minister, Cameron, decided to send 125 additional U.K. trainers to Iraq to join the 150 who were already there. BBC;   Reuters;   The Telegraph. Three days later, Obama did the same, but in a larger way.

On 10 June, Obama announced that he would send another 450 U.S. Military personnel to Iraq to train Iraqi soldiers. The U.S. will staff a training site in Anbar that is dedicated to training fighters from Sunni tribes.
Sources (all on 10 June):

- White House
- Pentagon
- Washington Post, 12:20 EDT.
- Associated Press, 16:30 EDT.
- Reuters, 18:48 EDT
- NY Times
- Washington Post, 22:27 EDT ("President Obama's announcement ... highlights the central dilemma of his faltering strategy there: how to shore up the country's fragile government without being pulled more deeply into a war he never wanted.")

My comment is that two days earlier, Obama said about Iraq: "we've got more training capacity than we have recruits." Obama has 3100 U.S. Military personnel in Iraq, some of whom are currently training only 2600 Iraqi soldiers. So it seems a bit silly to add more training capacity, when the Iraqis are *not* utilizing existing resources.

In my opinion, Obama's decision to send more U.S. troops to Iraq is a symbolic "do something" that shows Obama is responding to a crisis. But Obama's decision will *not* fix the dysfunctional Iraqi government, with its corrupt army officers.

---

17 June 2015: Iraq is a failure

On 10 June, the chief of the Associated Press bureau in Baghdad reported:
> [Iraq's] sectarian divides grow deeper as millions remain displaced, military gains have seen militant counterattacks and a U.S.-led campaign of airstrikes appears not to have changed the stalemate.
>
> . . . .
>
> ... the battle on the ground appears at the least locked in stalemate — or at the worst, not in Iraq's favor. Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite who stepped down

in August [2014] amid calls for his resignation, is widely blamed for the corruption and incompetence in Iraq's armed forces after he replaced top Sunni commanders with his own loyalists. The Islamic State group's advance merely exposed the rot, as entire units collapsed and soldiers stripped off their uniforms as they fled, leaving behind large caches of U.S.-supplied weapons.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has vowed to empower Sunni tribesmen through the formation of a national guard, which would oversee security in the Sunni heartland — areas predominantly under Islamic State control today. But the force has failed to get off the ground and many [Sunnis] remain suspicious of the Shiite-led government in Baghdad.

. . . .

Pressure is mounting on the Iraqi government to stabilize the country and preventing further discontent, particularly among Sunnis living in militant-held areas and Kurds living in semi-autonomous northern Iraq. Some fear the country could be split into three parts otherwise, including a Shiite-dominated south.

Vivian Salama, "Iraq still in disarray 1 year after Islamic State took Mosul,"
Associated Press, 17:02 GMT, 10 June 2015.

Hey Obama! How's that partnership with Iraq working? On 17 June, Defense Secretary Carter testified before Congress about the shortage of Iraqi recruits. The Associated Press reported:

Carter told the House Armed Services Committee that the U.S. had initially envisioned training 24,000 Iraqi security forces at four sites by this fall. But he said the U.S. has received only enough recruits to be able to train about 7,000 — in addition to about 2,000 counterterrorism service personnel.

"Our training efforts in Iraq have thus far been slowed by a lack of trainees. We simply haven't received enough recruits," Carter said at a hearing about U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Deb Riechmann, "Carter: Iraqi training goal to fall short by 17,000 recruits,"
Associated Press, 11:10 EDT, 17 June 2015.
See also Reuters.

The Pentagon press release also mentioned corruption in the Iraqi army:

Vowing to achieve a lasting defeat of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant forces, Defense Secretary Ash Carter outlined the Defense Department's counterterrorism strategy today in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee.

. . . .

Calling the ground campaign a "work in progress," Carter said a combination of disunity, deserters and "ghost soldiers" — who are paid on the books but don't exist — have greatly diminished the capacity of Iraq's security forces.

. . . .

But the lack of Iraqi security forces recruits has slowed training, the secretary said, adding that while 24,000 recruits were anticipated by this fall, only 7,000 were trained, in addition to 2,000 counterterrorism service personnel.

All sectors of the Iraqi government must make a greater commitment to the recruitment and training effort, he said.

"Carter Vows Lasting Defeat of ISIL Forces," Pentagon, 17 June 2015.

CNN reported on the "bleak picture" in Iraq:

America's two top defense officials presented a dismal outlook on the situation in Iraq Wednesday during testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, even addressing possible U.S. policy if the country's current borders dissolve.

Defense Secretary Ashton Carter conceded that the U.S. did not move quickly enough to arm Iraqi Security Forces in their struggle against ISIS, and disclosed that the U.S. will train just 7,000 of the 24,000 Iraqi troops it had expected to by the fall due to a lack of recruits. Meanwhile, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cautioned skeptical committee members that there are limits to what America can do to stabilize a country torn by sectarian strife and the advances of ISIS, also known as ISIL.

"I would not recommend that we put U.S. forces in harm's way simply to stiffen the spine of local forces," Dempsey said. "If their spine is not stiffened by the threat of ISIL or their way of life, nothing we do is going to stiffen their spine."

. . . .

Carter also said that the U.S. has not been receiving the help it needs from the Iraqi government, repeating a critique he made last month that Iraqi forces showed "no will to fight" during the fall of Ramadi to ISIS forces.

. . . .

At one point, an exchange between Dempsey and Minnesota Republican Rep. John Kline became contentious over the situation. "Where are we in Iraq today?" Kline asked. "Are we winning? Are we losing? Is it a stalemate? Is it a quagmire? What is Iraq today?" A testy Dempsey pushed back against what he said was the congressman's use of "the personal pronoun 'we,' " saying it was up to the Iraqis, not the U.S., to prevail in the country. "This has to be them, right? So if you're asking, 'Is the United States winning?' that's the wrong question," the general replied.

Tom LoBianco, "Carter, Dempsey paint bleak picture of Iraq situation," CNN, 15:32 EDT, 17 June 2015.

Plagiarized by All Iraq News.

My comment is let us ignore the 2000 "counterterrorism service personnel" — whatever they are — and focus on what Iraq really needs: a competent army. By Fall 2015 the USA will

have trained only 7,000 soldiers of anticipated 24,000 soldiers. So the USA trained 30% of the anticipated number, or looking the other direction, the incompetent Iraqi government failed to deliver 70% of the anticipated number of recruits. Even if the USA had trained 24,000 soldiers by Fall of 2015, that would *not* be enough to expel ISIL from Iraq. A few years ago, before ISIL invaded, the Iraqis believed they needed *more* than 100,000 soldiers.

On 19 June, Rudaw reported: "National reconciliation is beyond Iraqis reach for now, Iraqi Vice President Ayad Allawi claimed Friday [19 June]." Also, "According to Allawi, the Shiite militia movement known as the Hashd al-Shaabi, or the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs), are poorly trained and do not follow the Iraqi government's commands." My comment is that the Iraqis need a leader who can unite the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites — but such a leader apparently does not exist.

Corruption in Iraq

This essay is concerned mostly with military details. But the two big underlying problems in the Iraqi government are corruption and sectarianism. Transparency International, a non-governmental organization that monitors and reports corporate and political corruption, in 2014 ranked Iraq as the *sixth most corrupt nation* out of 174 nations in the world. Transparency. Iraq is more corrupt than basket cases like Libya, Yemen, Venezuela, Haiti, Syria, Laos, Nigeria, Pakistan, ...

This corruption problem affects the Iraqi military in at least two ways. First, officers have "ghost soldiers" on the payroll, then the corrupt officers pocket the salary of these nonexistent soldiers. Aside from the waste of government money on ghost soldiers, no one knows exactly how many soldiers actually serve in the Iraqi army. Second, corrupt officers sell weapons and ammunition for personal profit.

The corruption problem in Iraq is so bad that the Iraqi News website has two subheadings, Budget and Corruption, under its Politics category.

On 18 June, Iraqi News reported that the Integrity Commission had issued 1700 arrest warrants, but only 373 warrants (22%) had been served.

On 21 June, Rudaw reports that Iraq's Commission of Integrity had indicted 1805 government employees, including 15 former ministers, for "stealing public funds, embezzlement, bribery, corruption and other charges" for misconduct in 2015. Rudaw also says "Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi said after taking office in August last year that $45 billion was missing from the 2014 budget, when his predecessor Nouri al-Maliki had been in charge."

During the years 2003-2011, the USA poured more than one trillion dollars and the lives of 4400 U.S. Military personnel into Iraq for basically nothing. The USA deposed Saddam Hussein, but in retrospect Hussein the tyrant was holding Iraq together and preventing Islamic terrorism, so Iraq is now in worse condition than when Hussein was in control. While the USA is to blame for some of Iraq's problems since 2003, the USA did give the Iraqis a genuine chance for democracy, and the Iraqis under Maliki blew their chance. I am opposed

to wasting more of the U.S. taxpayers' money on the corrupt government in Baghdad. I agree with Obama's refusal to commit U.S. Military personnel to ground combat roles in Iraq.

Ignore Iraqi Federal Government in Baghdad?

At night on 8 June, Carl Leubsdorf, the former chief of the Washington Bureau of *The Dallas Morning News*, suggested that Iraq was beyond repair. He notes that Iraq was "an artificially constructed unit of incompatible parts, created by European nations from the remains of the Ottoman Empire nearly a century ago and mainly maintained by the powers of kings and dictators", the last of whom was Saddam Hussein. Leubsdorf suggests dividing Iraq into three nations: Shiite, Sunni, and Kurd. Dallas Morning News. Leubsdorf does not have a clear answer for how to defeat ISIL in Iraq, but a foreign army may be needed to help the Sunnis eliminate ISIL. Deciding to partition Iraq into three nations is easy, the hard part is to decide precisely the borders of the three regions without a civil war.

As U.S. Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, told the U.S, House of Representatives Armed Services Committee on 17 June: "[T]he Kurdish forces are what we aspire to with respect to Iraqi security forces in general. They showed the will to fight, they showed the capability to fight. These guys [Kurds] do really fight." Rudaw. Also see The Guardian: ("Carter said that both the US and other allies were equipping the Kurds [in Iraq], 'who really know how to fight'.").

On 18 June, commentator Dr. Charles Krauthammer says we need a new strategy for fighting ISIL:

> It's time to rethink Iraq and Syria. It begins by admitting that the old borders are gone, that a unified Syria or Iraq will never be reconstituted, that the Sykes-Picot map is defunct.
>
> . . . .
>
> ....   In Iraq, for example, we are reaping one disaster after another by pretending that the Baghdad government — deeply sectarian, divisive and beholden to Iran — should be the center of our policy and the conduit for all military aid.
>
> . . . .
>
> We can train [the Iraqi army] forever. The problem is one of will. They don't want to fight. And why should they? They are led by commanders who are corrupt, sectarian and incompetent.
>
> . . . .
>
> On Wednesday [17 June], Defense Secretary Ashton Carter testified that we won't quite meet our objective of training 24,000 Iraqi troops by this fall. Why? A recruitment problem. Iraqis don't seem to want to join. We are 15,000 short.
>
> It's a fool's errand anyway. If we need to pretend to support the Baghdad government,

fine. But our actual strategy should be to circumvent it and help our real allies carry the fight.

Charles Krauthammer, "A new strategy for Iraq and Syria," Washington Post, 21:22 EDT, 18 June 2015.
Also at Chicago Tribune.

Krauthammer proposes that the USA provide weapons directly to the Kurds and Sunnis in so-called Iraq. Krauthammer also proposes to support the Kurds in Syria, as I explain above.
I think Krauthammer's suggestions make more sense than Obama's current policy of hoping that — somehow and sometime — the Iraqi government will become less sectarian and less corrupt.

Everyone recognized that the Iraqi army was worthless in June 2014, when it fled from Mosul and Tikrit, and abandoned a huge amount of weapons and vehicles to ISIL. But it happened again on 17 May 2015, when the Iraqi army fled from Ramadi, again abandoning weapons and vehicles to ISIL. As I noted in my essay for May 2015, the Iraqi government and the Iraqi army learned nothing in the 11 months since the humiliating rout at Mosul. In the week after the rout in Ramadi there were promises from Abadi and others in the Iraqi government that Ramadi would be liberated from ISIL in the next few days. Now, a month later, the liberation of Ramadi has *not* yet begun, and has been indefinitely postponed, as explained above. Moreover, the Iraqi parliament — which has failed to end corruption in the Iraqi army, and failed to create a nonsectarian National Guard that integrates Sunni tribesmen and Shiite militias under the firm control of the federal government in Baghdad — was on vacation beginning 31 May until 1 July. In summary, the Iraqi government has *failed* to solve its problems, and the Iraqi parliament is currently not even trying to solve Iraq's problems.

On 24 June 2015, General Dempsey said the Pentagon had a contingency plan to work directly with Sunni and Peshmerga fighters on the ground, if the central government in Baghdad failed to support Sunnis and Kurds. Pentagon; Rudaw. In my opinion, the government in Baghdad should see the statement of Dempsey as a warning to immediately discontinue the sectarian policies of the Iraqi government. Obama has been telling the Baghdad government to be more inclusive — less sectarian — for the past 12 months, but the Shiite majority in the Baghdad government is determined to be sectarian.

Tikrit

On 1 April 2015, the Iraqi government declared victory in Tikrit. But, as mentioned in my essay for April 2015, Tikrit was mostly destroyed by artillery and airstrikes. Many Sunni-owned buildings in Tikrit were shiitized: vandalized and looted by Shiite militias.

On 15 June 2015, Reuters reported the Iraqi government began to allow former residents to return to the rubble in Tikrit:

> Hundreds of people displaced from the Iraqi city of Tikrit started to return home on Monday [15 June], ...

> . . . .

A local official and a source in the operations command for Salahuddin province said the government had chartered buses to transport more than 300 families back to Tikrit from the tented encampments where they have been staying.

. . . .

[Resident Adnan al-Tikriti said:] "The city is dead. There are no markets, no services. Power and water are not available, they are working on it and we will wait and see how fast they can provide us with these services."

"First families return to Tikrit since city retaken from IS," Reuters, 13:43 GMT, 15 June 2015.

On 22 June 2015, *The New York Times* reported:
When Umm Ahmed returned to her Iraqi hometown, Tikrit, in recent days she found a city devastated by fighting with militants from the Islamic State: buildings burned, shops looted, schools shuttered and hospitals inoperable.

. . . .

While there was extensive looting in Tikrit, there were no mass revenge killings. Bad behavior by the Shiite militias was, according to Mr. Zaid al-Ali [an analyst and author of "The Struggle for Iraq's Future"], "nowhere near to the extent that had been expected."

Still, while the resettling of the first batch of families has gone reasonably well, challenges remain. Only about 1,000 families, a small portion of Tikrit's population, have returned so far, according to a local official.

Electricity in Tikrit is still scarce; generators are running, but the city has not been reconnected to the national grid. And the central government, facing a severe budget crisis because of the decline in the price of oil and the cost of the war against the Islamic State, is too short of cash to fund any major reconstruction.

Omar Al-Jawoshy & Tim Arango, "Iraqi Families Return to Fragile Stability in Tikrit After Liberation From ISIS," NY Times, 22 June 2015.

On 23 June 2015, the Associated Press reported:
Abdel Mowgood Hassan climbs over toppled bricks and a torn-away front door to enter his uncle's house in Tikrit, the first of his relatives to make a cautious return home since Islamic State militants were driven out.

"It's safe," Hassan calmly says. "I checked for booby traps."

He is one in a trickle of civilians to return to Saddam Hussein's hometown in recent days after Iraqi forces and allied militias captured the city in April from the Islamic State group. But while police now patrol the streets, its Sunni civilians are worried about the future, apprehensive about the Shiite militias that liberated Tikrit and fearful

the Islamic State group could come back.

.... Occasionally, loud explosions still echo through Tikrit's largely empty streets, as officers detonate roadside bombs and explosives left behind by the militants after their nearly 10-month occupation. Cleaners in orange jumpsuits sweep away debris as workers try to restore water and power.

Vivian Salama & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraqis return to shattered Tikrit after Islamic State routed," Associated Press, 06:49 GMT, 23 June 2015.

Kobani

In September 2014, ISIL invaded Kobani in Syria. In January 2015, Kurdish peshmerga defeated ISIL in and around Kobani. (See my essay for Jan 2015.) In the four months of fighting, the city of Kobani was destroyed. (See my essays for Jan 2015; May 2015.)

On the morning of 25 June 2015, *The Washington Post* reported that approximately 32 ISIL fighters penetrated the perimeter at Kobani in five cars. The ISIL fighters were disguised either as Free Syrian Army rebels or as Kurdish YPG rebels — journalists differ on which uniform the ISIL fighters were falsely wearing. Once inside Kobani, the ISIL fighters drove around, shooting civilians. Also ISIL detonated three car bombs inside Kobani.
Sources: (all on 25 June 2015)

- "Bomb attack, clashes in Syria's Kobani kill 12, wound 70: hospital officials," Reuters. 07:24 GMT
- "ISIL reenters key Syria border town of Kobane: live," The Telegraph
- "Islamic State returns to Kobane five months after it was driven out," Washington Post, 10:11 GMT
- "Syria crisis: IS makes deadly return to Kobane," BBC
- "ISIS Attacks Two Border Towns in Northern Syria," NY Times
- "YPG reports 75 civilians and militants killed in Kobani attack," Rudaw
- "How Islamic State Entered Kobani," BAS News
- "ISIS militants infiltrate into Kobane, commit massacre," ARA News in Kurdish Syria
- "At least 35 people killed in Islamic State attack on Syria's Kobani - monitor," Reuters, 16:47 GMT
- "Islamic State militants attack 2 cities in northern Syria," Associated Press, 19:32 GMT

The attack on Kobani reminds us that ISIL never gives up on occupying a town. If ISIL is expelled from a town, then ISIL will return. We have seen this clearly in the repeated capture of Baiji and the nearby oil refinery in Iraq, which repeatedly changed hands since June 2014. In the days before 25 June, the Syrian Kurds have been pushing towards the ISIL capital city of Raqqa, so the assault on Kobani may have been intended by ISIL to motivate the Kurds to move fighters from the assault on Raqqa and reposition them at Kobani.

On the morning of 26 June, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported: "'Islamic State' carries out the second-largest massacre since the declaration of its alleged 'caliphate' and kills at least 120 civilians [in the last 24 hours] in the city of Ayn al-Arab [aka Kobani]."

SOHR.

On 27 June, the Kurds in Kobani defeated the remaining ISIL fighters, and the battle in Kobani was concluded, until the next attempt by ISIL. In retrospect, the battle on 25-27 June was *not* a genuine attempt by ISIL to conquer Kobani, but only a nuisance raid by ISIL, who intended to kill as many innocent civilians as possible.

At night on 26 June, Agence France-Presse reported:
>ISIS killed 164 civilians in its offensive on the Kurdish town of Ain al-Arab, in what a monitor Friday [26 June] called one of the militants' "worst massacres" in Syria.
>
>. . . .
>
>The killing spree, which took place mostly inside Ain al-Arab itself, was widely seen as vengeance for a series of defeats inflicted on ISIS by Kurdish militia in recent weeks.
>
>. . . .
>
>The assault — in which 42 ISIS fighters and 10 Kurds also died — began Thursday [25 June] when three ISIS suicide bombers blew up vehicles at the entrances to Ain al-Arab, a symbol of Kurdish resistance.

"Death toll in Ain al-Arab assault hits 164," Daily Star(AFP), 21:38 GMT, 26 June 2015.

On 27 June, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported a total of 206 civilians "killed by a massacre by IS in Kobane city and a village [Barkh Botan] in its countryside". SOHR also reports 54 ISIL fighters and 16 YPG defenders were killed. SOHR.

On 27 June, Reuters reported:
>Syrian Kurdish fighters said they had fully secured the town of Kobani near the Turkish border on Saturday and killed more than 60 Islamic State militants, two days after the hardline group launched an incursion with suicide bombers.

Sylvia Westall, "Kurds secure Syria's Kobani as Islamic State targets northeast," Reuters, 17:11 GMT, 27 June 2015.

On 27 June, the Associated Press reported:
>Islamic State fighters who launched a surprise attack on a Syrian border town massacred more than 200 civilians, including women and children, before they were killed or driven out by Kurdish forces, activists said on Saturday [27 June].
>
>Kurdish activist Mustafa Bali, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Kurdish official Idris Naasan put at 40-50 the number of elite IS fighters killed in the two days of fighting since the militants sneaked into the town of Kobani before dawn on Thursday.
>
>. . . .
>
>"Kobani has been completely cleared of Daesh, and Kurdish forces are now combing

the town looking for fighters who may have gone into hiding," Bali, using the Arabic acronym for the IS, told The Associated Press by telephone from Kobani. The official Syrian news agency, SANA, also reported that Kobani has been cleared of IS fighters.

The more than 200 civilians killed in the last two days include some who perished in IS suicide bombings, including one at the border crossing with Turkey, but they were mostly shot dead in cold blood, some in their own homes, the activists said. "They were revenge killings," Rami Abdurrahman, the observatory's director, told the AP.
Hamza Hendawi, "Activists: IS fighters kill 200 civilians in Syrian town," Associated Press, 19:46 GMT, 27 June 2015.

On 28 June, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported a total of 223 civilians had been killed in Kobani by ISIL since the dawn of 25 June, also there were 79 dead ISIL fighters. SOHR.

Adding support to my observation that ISIL will return after being ejected, on 16 June 2015 the Syrian Kurds liberated Tal Abyad from ISIL, but on 30 June ISIL made a "surprise" attack on Tal Abyad. Associated Press.

Airstrikes in Iraq & Syria

Escalation of U.S. Military Engagement in Iraq

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a list of significant escalations of U.S. Military involvement in Iraq.

---

1 June 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 1 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq between 8 a.m., May 31, and 8 a.m., June 1, local time. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 airstrikes using attack, bomber and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 10 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

> **Syria**

> - Near Al Hasakah, nine airstrikes struck eight ISIL tactical units, destroying seven ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL weapons cache.
> - Near Ar Raqqah, one airstrike struck an ISIL airfield.
> - Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying 13 ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL resupply vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL staging areas, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL VBIED facility, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL rocket launcher.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL crane.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL buildings and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL mortar positions, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL building.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 1 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 1 June 2015.

---

2 June 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 2 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq between 8 a.m., June 1, and 8 a.m., June 2, local time. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted five airstrikes using bomber and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 10 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter and bomber aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "Coalition strikes compliment ground force activities against Daesh across Iraq and Syria," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Coalition advise and assist elements and build partner capacity trainers remain an essential component of our partner's ability to be successful in an environment of non-linearity."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Al Hasakah, four airstrikes struck three large and one small ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL command and control facility, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL truck and an ISIL weapons cache.
> - Near Kobani, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike had inconclusive results.

Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL buildings and three ISIL heavy machine guns.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar system.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. Central Command, 2 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 2 June 2015.

---

3 June 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 3 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq between 8 a.m., June 2, and 8 a.m., June 3, local time. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted four airstrikes using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"The coalition struck Daesh targets in 10 different locations across Iraq," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "These strikes were in support of our ISF partners and their efforts to drive out Daesh terrorists."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit, destroying six ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL armored vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL VBIED facility.
- Near Ar Rutbah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Bayji, three airstrikes struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying three ISIL vehicles.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck land features denying ISIL a tactical

advantage.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying five ISIL structures, two ISIL IEDs and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL tunnel system, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL building.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 3 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 3 June 2015.

---

4 June 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 4 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq between 8 a.m., June 3, and 8 a.m., June 4, local time. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"The application of Coalition pressure on Daesh C2, logistics and tactical-level terrorists continues," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "The cumulative effect of this pressure is advancing the incapacitation of Daesh systematically."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, four airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units, destroying seven ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying six ISIL excavators and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and two ISIL mortar positions, destroying an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL

structure.
- Near Bayji, three airstrikes struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike had inconclusive results.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL excavator.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns, three ISIL buildings and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns and two ISIL buildings.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 4 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 4 June 2015.

On 4 June, *Bloomberg News* reported:
However, underscoring the lack of good intelligence, the Central Command reported that as of April 30, more than three out of four strike aircraft returned without releasing their weapons. Coalition airstrikes are constrained by the absence of forward-deployed U.S. military spotters and by efforts to avoid civilian casualties.
Terry Atlas, "Why Body Count Is Bad Metric for Judging Islamic State Fight," Bloomberg, 4 June 2015.

My comment is that if only 1/4 of strike aircraft are dropping bombs, then the total number of flights is four times larger than the reported number of airstrikes. For example, today there were a total of 22 airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, suggesting a total of 88 flights.

5-6 June 2015: airstrikes

The U.S. Central Command failed to post press releases about airstrikes at its website on Friday, 5 June; Saturday, 6 June; and Sunday, 7 June, so I used the press releases from the Pentagon.

On Friday, 5 June, the Pentagon failed to post at its website a press release about airstrikes. However, Reuters was not so lazy:
The United States and its allies have conducted 15 air strikes targeting Islamic State militants in Iraq since early on Thursday [08:00 Baghdad time on 4 June] and an additional four targeting them in Syria, the Combined Joint Task Force carrying out the operations said on Friday [5 June].

In Syria, air strikes using bomber, attack and fighter aircraft hit near al Hasaka and Dayr Az Zawr, the task force said in a statement. In Iraq, air strikes conducted using bomber, attack, fighter and drone aircraft targeted areas near Baghdadi, Bayji, Falluja, Makhmur, Mosul, Sinjar and Tal Afar, it added.
"U.S., allies target Islamic State with 19 air strikes — task force" Reuters, 01:07 GMT, 6 June 2015.

On Monday morning, 8 June, the U.S. Central Command finally posted its press release for Friday, 5 June. Because the CENTCOM version is more detailed than the Reuters version, I am copying it here:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq between 8 a.m., June 4, and 8 a.m., June 5, local time. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted four airstrikes using bomber, attack and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 15 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using bomber, attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "The coalition is committed to degrading and defeating Daesh by, with, and through our regional partners," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs.
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL vehicle, destroying two ISIL trucks.
> - Near Dayr Az Zawr, two airstrikes struck an ISIL modular oil refinery and an ISIL crude oil collection point.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Baghdadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying four ISIL structures and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Bayji, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL fighting position.
> - Near Fallujah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL crossing point.
> - Near Makhmur, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL building, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL building and two ISIL fighting positions, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun.
>
> Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Central Command, 5 June 2015.
Not posted at the Pentagon.

On Saturday, 6 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> **[7] Airstrikes in Syria**
>
> - Near Al Hasakah, four airstrikes struck two large and two small ISIL tactical

units, destroying six ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL armored vehicle and an ISIL armored personnel carrier.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL anti-tank weapons and ISIL improvised explosive device manufacturing material.

[14] Airstrikes in Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Bayji, three airstrikes destroyed two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and an ISIL armored vehicle.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL armored vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar position, destroying an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area, destroying three ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL improvised explosive device.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL sniper position, destroying an ISIL vehicle.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Pentagon, 6 June 2015.
Later posted at Central Command.

Notice that the stock phrase "approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense" is missing from Pentagon press releases on 6-7 June about the airstrikes in Iraq. This stock phrase reappeared in the Pentagon press release on 8 June. This stock phrase continually appeared in the CENTCOM press releases, on days when CENTCOM posted a press release at its website. My guess is that the weekend crew at the Pentagon made an oversight.

---

7 June 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 7 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[11] Airstrikes in Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL fighting positions and a vehicle.
- Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL ant-aircraft artillery piece and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ar Raqqah, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL rocket system, an ISIL motorcycle and an ISIL weapon transportation vehicle.
- Near Kobani, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL

vehicles and two ISIL mortar systems.

[11] Airstrikes in Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL bridge, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL mortar position and an ISIL rocket position, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL building.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Pentagon, 7 June 2015.
Later posted at Central Command.

---

8 June 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 8 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 7. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven airstrikes using bomber, attack and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "We have conducted nearly 1,900 dynamic airstrikes during the campaign in Iraq, enabled by coalition Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) located in our Combined Joint Operations Centers, which have resulted in the destruction of approximately 70 VBIEDS, 800 vehicles (technical and tactical), 650 buildings/facilities, 600 fighting positions and 60 boats in the possession of Daesh," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "These JTACs have access to fused intelligence, operational situational awareness tools, direct communications with coalition aircraft, and real-time surveillance and reconnaissance assets, which has allowed them to be a highly effective component of the strike process and its effectiveness on the battlefield."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Dayr Az Zawr, two airstrikes struck two ISIL crude oil collection points.

- Near Kobani, five airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units, destroying seven ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL IED facility.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL tanker and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Bayji, three airstrikes destroyed two ISIL staging positions and seven ISIL vehicles.
- Near Hit, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck two ISIL mortar firing positions.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area, destroying two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL mortar system, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL rocket propelled grenade and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL tunnel entrance.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. Central Command, 8 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 8 June 2015.

Also on 8 June, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) whines about 7 civilians killed in Syria, allegedly by "US-led coalition airstrikes". According to SOHR, a total of 148 civilians have been killed by coalition airstrikes in Syria since September 2014. SOHR. My comment is that given that ISIL infests town and cities, it is inevitable that some civilians will be killed by airstrikes intended to hit ISIL. Accepting the SOHR's numbers, the number of civilians killed in coalition airstrikes is less than 0.07% of the total fatalities in the Syrian civil war.

Further, SOHR repeats the alleged "massacre committed by the U.S led coalition warplanes" in Syria on the night of 30 April 2015, a topic covered in my essay for May 2015. When ISIL lines captive up and shoots them, that is a massacre. Inadvertent and unintended deaths (e.g., collateral damage from military operations) are *not* a massacre. These hysterical exaggerations and inflammatory rhetoric reflects poorly on the SOHR. The U.S.-led coalition is attempting to help the people of Syria and surrounding nations, but the SOHR is *not* grateful for that help.

---

9 June 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 9 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 8. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using bomber and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes approved

by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack and fighter aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"The Coalition employs a detailed process involving technical and tactical means to verify the results of each airstrike executed," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "This allows the Coalition, with relative certainty, to provide post-strike analysis of the impact and effect each strike is having on Daesh terrorists and their capabilities."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqah, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Kobani, six airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying three resupply boats, an ISIL excavator, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL structures.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck two ISIL heavy machine guns.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying two ISIL buildings, two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying five ISIL buildings, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL rocket system and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 9 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 9 June 2015.

---

10 June 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 10 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 9. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted five airstrikes using bomber and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"Coalition Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) are airborne continuously over the operations area, providing rapid, flexible and lethal fires to our partners engaged in the fight

against Daesh," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Having armed aircraft airborne and ready to strike in synchronization with ground force maneuver or Daesh observed activities on a nonlinear battlefield, is a key component of the Campaign's successes to date."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Ar Raqqah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL armored vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL crude oil collection point.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL resupply vehicle.
- Near Bayji, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL building.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar system, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar system, destroying an ISIL building, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike truck an ISIL large tactical unit, an ISIL mortar firing position and an ISIL building, destroying five ISIL buildings, an ISIL VBIED, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an an ISIL rocket propelled grenade cache.
- Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, two ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL rocket firing position, destroying three ISIL buildings, an ISIL rocket and an ISIL tunnel system.

   Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 10 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 10 June 2015.

---

11 June 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 11 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

   Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 10. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes using attack, bomber and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 13 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"Coalition aircrew professionalism continues to be the catalyst for successful strike operations within the complex battlespace of Syria and Iraq where the combatant/civilian distinction is blurred," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Aircrews, as well as our Strike Approval Authorities, employ tactical patience, methodical procedures, proportionality and process integrity as they execute their actions in accordance with the Law of Armed Conflict."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Ar Raqqah, seven airstrikes struck six ISIL tactical units, destroying seven ISIL improvised rocket assisted munitions, two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL resupply points, two ISIL VBIEDs, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL VBIED warehouse.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, four airstrikes struck four ISIL crude oil collection points.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building and an ISIL mortar firing position.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Bayji, four airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL vehicles and three ISIL structures.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage and an ISIL heavy machine gun, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying three ISIL structures, two ISIL rocket propelled grenades, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL tunnel system.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL mortar firing positions, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL heavy machine gun.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 11 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 11 June 2015.

---

12 June 2015: airstrikes

The U.S. Central Command failed to post press releases about airstrikes at its website on Friday, 12 June; Saturday, 13 June; Sunday, 14 June; Monday, 15 June; and Tuesday, 16 June. This is strange, because CENTCOM compiles the information that the Pentagon is

posting at its website.

On Friday, 12 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[10] Airstrikes in Syria
Attack, bomber and fighter aircraft conducted 10 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Raqqah, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL rocket system.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, four airstrikes struck four ISIL crude oil collection points.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar firing position.

[13] Airstrikes in Iraq
Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Kirkuk, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL checkpoint and an ISIL staging area.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator, an ISIL tank and an ISIL artillery piece.
- Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units and an ISIL rocket, destroying five ISIL structures, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL mortar firing position and an ISIL rocket-propelled grenade.
- Near Walweed, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL armored vehicle.

Pentagon, 12 June 2015.

---

13 June 2015: airstrikes

On Saturday, 13 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[3] Airstrikes in Syria

- Attack and fighter aircraft conducted three airstrikes near Kobani, which struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL fighting position.

[12] Airstrikes in Iraq
Attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 12 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Baghdadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL vehicles, two ISIL fuel tankers and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Beiji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL rocket firing position.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck two ISIL mortar firing positions, destroying

two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL structure.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL sniper position, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns and three ISIL structures.

Pentagon, 13 June 2015.

---

14 June 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 14 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[1] Airstrike in Syria

- Fighter aircraft conducted an airstrike near Aleppo, which struck an ISIL tactical unit.

[12] Airstrikes in Iraq
Attack, fighter and bomber aircraft conducted 12 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL staging position.
- Near Beiji, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck two ISIL staging areas and land features, denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying two ISIL excavators, two ISIL buildings, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL rocket-propelled grenade and an ISIL tunnel system.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck an ISIL rocket firing position and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.

Pentagon, 14 June 2015.

---

15 June 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 15 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[3] Airstrikes in Syria
Attack and fighter aircraft conducted three airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL motorcycles, two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL tunnel systems and an ISIL communication tower.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit,

destroying an ISIL vehicle.

[16] Airstrikes in Iraq
Attack, fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 16 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL tunnel entrance and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Beiji, one airstrike destroyed six ISIL bunkers.
- Near Makhmur, four airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit, two ISIL staging areas and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL structures and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck two ISIL mortar firing positions, an ISIL rocket firing position and an ISIL rocket system.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying two ISIL buildings, two ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL tunnel systems and an ISIL rocket-propelled grenade.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle.

Pentagon, 15 June 2015.

---

16 June 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 16 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[9] Airstrikes in Syria
Bomber and fighter aircraft conducted nine airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Raqqah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL excavator.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Abyad, five airstrikes struck three large and two small ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL vehicles.

[16] Airstrikes in Iraq
Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 16 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL structure.

- Near Beiji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL structure.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, seven airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL excavator, an ISIL rocket system, an ISIL structure and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying three ISIL structures, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL fighting positions.

Pentagon, 16 June 2015.

---

17 June 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 17 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 16. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted four airstrikes using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted seven airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "As part of our campaign, Daesh is being systematically removed from the battlefield," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Coalition aviation, combined with ground force maneuver, forms an accelerant for these activities."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL antenna arrays and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
> - Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL resupply vehicle and an ISIL weapons cache.
> - Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
> - Near Bayji, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL armored vehicles.
> - Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing

position, destroying an ISIL structure.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns, three ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL tunnel entrances, an ISIL structure and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 17 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 17 June 2015.

It is *not* true that the above indented list "is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release". The last press release from CENTCOM was on 11 June, 6 days ago.

Also the Pentagon version reports airstrikes "between 8 a.m. yesterday and 8 a.m. today, local time," while the CENTCOM version literally says on "June 16", which implies from midnight on 15 June to midnight on 16 June.

---

18 June 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 18 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 17. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted six airstrikes using bomber, attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"Daesh fielded terrorist forces were the focus of today's strikes," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "This enables our ground force partners to operate from a tactical advantage."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL tunnel systems.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Abyad, four airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL excavator.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.

Near Bayji, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL pontoon bridge.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL rocket rails and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Ramadi, four airstrikes struck multiple defensive obstacles and fighting positions.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL buildings and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Tal Afar, five airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL bunker and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying two ISIL buildings, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL VBIED.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 18 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 18 June 2015.

---

19 June 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 19 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 18. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 11 airstrikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 13 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"Overnight, the coalition continued to strike Daesh crude oil collection points in Syria," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Attacking Daesh revenue generation activities remains a priority for the coalition."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL weapons manufacturing building.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, four airstrikes struck three ISIL crude oil collection points.
- Near Tal Abyad, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar system.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL

bunkers and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Mosul, five airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL rocket firing position and an ISIL structure, destroying an ISIL excavator, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL rocket and an ISIL tank.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns and four ISIL structures.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 19 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 19 June 2015.

---

20 June 2015: airstrikes

On Saturday, 20 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
[6] Airstrikes in Syria

- Near Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Raqqah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Tal Abyad, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions.

[16] Airstrikes in Iraq
Attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 16 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL checkpoint, destroying an ISIL storage container.
- Near Beiji, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Mosul, six airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, three ISIL staging areas and an ISIL tank, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL sniper position.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

Pentagon, 20 June 2015.
Later posted at Central Command.

---

21 June 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 21 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 20. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three airstrikes using fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "The coalition's air power asymmetric advantages continue to yield successes," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Strike, reconnaissance, surveillance and tactical lift platforms have performed superbly."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Tal Abyad, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL IED, an ISIL structure and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Ar Rutbah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
> - Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL supply truck.
> - Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL VBIED and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck an ISIL safe house and an ISIL headquarters.
> - Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL rocket and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
> - Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL buildings.
> - Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar system, three ISIL fighting positions and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying two ISIL buildings and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
>
> Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Central Command, 21 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 21 June 2015.

22 June 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 22 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 21. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven airstrikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 22 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "The coalition struck Daesh in northern Syria," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "Anti-ISIL forces in northern Syria have proven to be an effective and dependable force."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
> - Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL excavator, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Tal Abyad, five airstrikes struck one large and four small ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Baghdadi, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL rocket firing position.
> - Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL vehicles.
> - Near Hit, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL structure.
> - Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck an ISIL VBIED factory.
> - Near Mosul, five airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units, an ISIL rocket firing position and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying three ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL building, an ISIL motorcycle and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Ramadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Sinjar, five airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL staging areas, destroying three ISIL tunnel systems, two ISIL bunkers, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL cache and an ISIL mortar system.
> - Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL tunnel system, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL mortar firing position.
>
> Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Central Command, 22 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 22 June 2015.

On 22 June, the Pentagon announced that an airstrike near Mosul, Iraq on 15 June had killed an ISIL terrorist who was involved in the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya on 11 Sep 2012. Associated Press;   Reuters;   Pentagon.

23 June 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 23 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 22. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three airstrikes using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "Coalition air power provides a significant advantage for ground forces in hybrid warfare," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "We see this materializing daily in support of our enabled partners within the battlespace."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Tal Abyad, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed seven ISIL rocket rails.
> - Near Hit, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL anti-aircraft weapon.
> - Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL fighting position.
> - Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
> - Near Ramadi, four airstrikes struck multiple ISIL staging areas.
> - Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL bunker.
> - Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL mortar firing position.
> - Near Waleed, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
>
> Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Central Command, 23 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 23 June 2015.

24 June 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 24 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 23. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted one airstrike using bomber aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted eight airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "The coalition is dedicated to protecting noncombatants while striking Daesh targets," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "We strike with precision while always considering the appropriate level of risk and proportionality."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL staging area.
> - Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Sinjar, four airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL staging areas, destroying three ISIL buildings.
> - Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL building.
>
> Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Central Command, 24 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 24 June 2015.

---

25 June 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 25 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 24. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three airstrikes using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 13 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "Coalition aircrew legerity underpins the success of the air campaign," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Their contributions each and every day to this fight cannot be overstated."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tank.
- Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL road.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL structure.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL bunker.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL fighting position and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck two ISIL staging areas, destroying two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL staging areas and an ISIL mortar firing position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
Central Command, 25 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 25 June 2015.

---

26 June 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 26 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 25. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber and fighter aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"The coalition struck multiple Daesh terrorist targets in northern Syria," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "Many of these strikes were in response to Daesh attacks against anti-ISIL forces, who repelled all attempts by the terrorists to take ground."

The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqah, one airstrike struck an ISIL excavator.

- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Kobani, 10 airstrikes struck two large and six small ISIL tactical units, destroying six ISIL vehicles, three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL mortar firing positions and two ISIL staging areas.
- Near Tal Abyad, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL vehicles, destroying an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike had inconclusive results.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL structure, an ISIL staging area and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL checkpoint, an ISIL staging area and an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar firing position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. Central Command, 26 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 26 June 2015.

The 10 airstrikes near Kobani helped repel the ISIL invasion of Kobani that is mentioned above.

---

27 June 2015: airstrikes

On Saturday, 27 June 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 14 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL tank and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Aleppo, an airstrike struck an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Raqqah, five airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying five ISIL excavators, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL remotely piloted aircraft.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL boats, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Abyad, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.

Attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted seven airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Baghdadi, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL cache, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Beiji, an airstrike struck an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL mortar tube.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position, destroying an ISIL building.

Pentagon, 27 June 2015.

Later posted at Central Command, which marked the return of CENTCOM reporting airstrikes from 08:00 Baghdad time the previous day to 08:00 on the day of the reporting. CENTCOM deleted the 08:00 in reports issued during 17-26 June.

---

28 June 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 28 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported today.
>
> Officials reported details of the latest strikes, which took place between 8 a.m. yesterday and 8 a.m. today, local time, noting that assessments of results are based on initial reports.
>
> Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 17 airstrikes in Syria:
>
> - Near Aleppo, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL staging area, destroying five ISIL excavators, two ISIL fighting positions, an artillery piece and a mortar system.
> - Near Kobani, nine airstrikes struck three large and five small ISIL tactical units, destroying 10 ISIL vehicles, four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL armored vehicle.
> - Near Tal Abyad, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL tanks and an ISIL fighting position.
>
> Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 10 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:
>
> - Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck land features to deny ISIL a tactical advantage. The strikes destroying an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery piece and an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Fallujah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
> - Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an

ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, an airstrike struck an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Sinjar, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL rocket-propelled grenade.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun position, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL weapons cache.

Central Command, 28 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 28 June 2015.

---

29 June 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 29 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported today.

Officials reported details of the latest strikes, which took place between 8 a.m. yesterday and 8 a.m. today, local time, noting that assessments of results are based on initial reports.

Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted six airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Raqqah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL crane.
- Near Hasakah, an airstrike had inconclusive results.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying eight ISIL boats, three ISIL vehicles, two ISIL bunkers, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar system.

Attack, bomber and fighter aircraft conducted 17 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL logistics compound and an ISIL staging area.
- Near Haditha, an airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and three ISIL heavy machine guns, destroying four ISIL buildings.

- Near Tal Afar, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units and three ISIL bunkers, and also struck land features to deny ISIL a tactical advantage. Two ISIL mortar firing positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle were destroyed.

Central Command, 29 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 29 June 2015.

---

30 June 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 30 June 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

> Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq June 29. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.
>
> "Anti-Daesh fighters in northern Syria have proven to be a dependable and effective force," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "The coalition will continue to support them in a myriad of ways, including airstrikes."
>
> The following is a summary of the strikes conducted since the last press release:
>
> **Syria**
>
> - Near Al Hasakah, seven airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL vehicles, an ISIL armored personnel carrier and an ISIL tank.
> - Near Ar Raqqah, one airstrike struck an ISIL excavator.
> - Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle
>
> **Iraq**
>
> - Near Baghdadi, three airstrikes struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage, destroying two ISIL excavators.
> - Near Fallujah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL tunnel system.
> - Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL vehicles.
> - Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL building.
> - Near Waleed, one airstrike destroyed three ISIL armored personnel carriers.
>
> Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Central Command, 30 June 2015.
Also posted at the Pentagon, 30 June 2015.

Conclusions

I still agree with what I said in my Conclusion to my eighth essay on Syria that was written during June 2014.

The capture of Mosul, Iraq by ISIL on 10 June 2014 — as well as the declaration of ISIL's caliphate on 29 June 2014 — changed the Western view of the insurgency in Syria.

Western View of Insurgency in Syria
Before 10 June 2014

Before 10 June 2014, the conventional wisdom in the London11 nations — including the USA — was that Assad was Evil, and the removal of Assad was the Nr. 1 goal in Syria. The Syrian National Coalition has a consistent and intransigent demand that Assad resign. The intransigence of the Syrian National Coalition has been encouraged by Obama and Kerry, with the frequent U.S. declarations that Assad has lost his legitimacy as leader of the Syrian government.

Obama's foreign policy on Syria is essentially an obsession with the removal of Assad. (See my document that collects quotations from Obama and two U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry.) When Assad did not resign in 2011 or 2012 or 2013, Obama's foreign policy was increasingly divorced from reality.

One can summarize a series of events that exposed the futility of the plans of the London11 group of nations and the United Nations negotiations in Geneva:

1. The reality is that Assad is firmly in control of the Syrian government, Assad is winning the civil war in heavily populated western Syria, and the insurgents are unable to force Assad to resign.

2. Assad did *not* resign, and the Geneva peace negotiations ended in failure on 15 Feb 2014.   The Coalition's intransigent demand that Assad resign, and Assad's insistence on remaining in power, are *impossible* for compromise.

3. Not only are there no plans to resume Syrian peace negotiations in the foreseeable future, but also the United Nations negotiator (Brahimi) resigned in frustration on 13 May 2014.

4. Assad was re-elected for another seven-year term on 3 June 2014.

5. It is now obvious that neither side in the Geneva negotiations genuinely wanted to negotiate. The U.S. Government essentially forced the Coalition to attend the Geneva negotiations, and Russia forced Assad's government to attend.

Not all of these facts or events were known on 15 Feb 2014, when the Geneva negotiations

ended. But all of these facts are known at the end of June 2014, and were documented in my previous essays. A more detailed analysis of the failure of the Geneva negotiations is found in my separate essay. I suggest that the London11 group of nations — and the Syrian National Coalition — were so obsessed with deposing Assad that they did not recognize that their demand that Assad resign would cause the Geneva2 negotiations to fail. Not only was much diplomatic effort and expense wasted on Geneva2, but also the frustration caused the skilled U.N. negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi, to resign on 13 May 2014.

Western View of Insurgency in Syria
After 10 June 2014

After the capture of Mosul by ISIL on 10 June 2014, it was obvious that the big enemy in Iraq was ISIL. Because ISIL actively operated in *both* Syria and Iraq, the problems in the two nations were suddenly recognized to be intertwined. The U.S. Government's view was that terrorists in Syria had spilled into Iraq. The Truth is that ISIL was created in Iraq in 2004 under the name "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" and entered Syria in May 2013, when these terrorists took the name "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL).

Iran is one of the two major suppliers to Assad's government in Syria, and Iran is also active in influencing the Shiite government in Iraq. Suppose the U.S. Government continues its policy of demanding the removal of Assad, and continues its policy of supporting the government of Iraq. Then the USA would be in the awkward position of opposing Iran in Syria, and agreeing with Iran in Iraq. This awkwardness could be avoided if the U.S. Government would both (1) abandon its declaration that Assad must resign, and (2) focus on the defeat of terrorism (e.g., ISIL) in both Syria and Iraq. Once the USA makes these two changes, there can be an alliance between Syria and Iraq, with both Iran, Russia, and the USA contributing to this alliance against terrorism.

An important point to recognize is that Al-Qaeda in Iraq (the predecessor of ISIL) was essentially defeated when the USA pulled its combat troops out of Iraq in Dec 2011. The weak and ineffective government of Maliki in Iraq allowed ISIL to capture much of western and northern Iraq from January 2014 through June 2014. There is an obvious lesson here. If the weak and ineffective Syrian National Coalition were to control Syria, ISIL would exploit that weakness. The result would be that ISIL would quickly seize control of Syria. In other words, we *need* a strong, decisive, experienced leader (e.g., Assad) in control of Syria, to limit the expansion of terrorists like ISIL, because ISIL is worse than Assad.

Here is a list of citations to some commentators who have recognized that we should be cooperating with Assad in the fight against ISIL and other terrorist organizations:

- David Wearing, editorial, "Bashar al-Assad's interests and the West's coincide over Iraq," The Guardian, 28 June 2014.

- Leslie H. Gelb, op-ed, NY Times, 1 July 2014 ("The greatest threat to American interests in the region is ISIS, not Mr. Assad.").

- Fred Kaplan, "Kaplan: Obama must work with the bad to defeat the worse,"

Salt Lake Tribune, 21 Aug 2014 ("The fight isn't a cakewalk, but it doesn't have to be a huge struggle, if the Western politicians can get over their complexes about working with certain bad people in order to defeat even worse people.").

- Zeina Karam, "Syria opposition: Deadly chemical attack forgotten," Associated Press, 14:59 EDT, 21 Aug 2014 ("... global disapproval has shifted away from Assad and toward the Islamic extremists who are fighting him and spreading destruction across Syria and Iraq. **....** Calls for Assad's ouster are no longer made publicly by Western officials.").

- Sam Jones, "US and allies must join Assad to defeat Isis, warns British MP," Financial Times, 21 Aug 2014 (Sir Malcolm Rifkind — a former U.K. foreign secretary, former U.K. defence secretary, and a current member of Parliament — said " 'Sometimes you have to develop relationships with people who are extremely nasty in order to get rid of people who are even nastier,' ..., referring to working with Mr Assad's dictatorship.").

- Lizzie Dearden, "James Foley beheading: Former Army chief urges Britain to co-operate with Syria's Assad regime to combat ISIS," The Independent, 22 Aug 2014 ("The former head of the Army has said Britain must work with the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to combat the Islamic State (ISIS). Lord Dannatt, the former Chief of General Staff, called on the West to reconsider its relationship with the leader, who was internationally condemned for a crackdown on civil liberties during the 2011 Arab Spring."). See also The Telegraph ("Britain must co-operate with President Assad, the Syrian dictator, in order to confront ISIL, the former head of the Army has said.").

- Max Abrahms, "The U.S. Should Help Assad to Fight ISIS, the Greater Evil," NY Times, 18:27 EDT, 22 Aug 2014 (Assad does *not* threaten the USA; ISIL does threaten the USA. "But it's time for the Obama administration to pick its poison by prioritizing the safety of American civilians over the moral objection of helping out a leader who massacres his own.").

- Rajeev Syal, "David Cameron must 'consider cooperating with Syria' to crush Isis," The Guardian, 5 Sep 2014 (Lord Richards, former chief of the U.K. defence staff, urged the current U.K. prime minister to cooperate with Assad in defeating ISIL.).

- Ahmad Samih Khalidi, op-ed, "To Crush ISIS, Make a Deal With Assad," NY Times, 15 Sep 2014 ("... the West appears to be primarily appeasing Arab Persian Gulf allies that have turned the overthrow of Mr. Assad into a policy fetish that runs against any rational calculation of how to defeat Islamist terrorism. .... the only real 'boots on the ground' capable of destroying ISIS are the Syrian Army and its local allies, including Hezbollah.").

On 23 Sep 2014 there was a change in U.S. strategy in Syria from (1) defeating Assad to (2) defeating ISIL. This change occurred when the U.S.-led airstrikes in Syria began. A conspiracy theorist might accuse the U.S. Government with a secret deal with Assad: the USA will not attack Assad's military in exchange for Syria not shooting at Coalition aircraft that are attacking ISIL inside Syria.

My essays for Feb 2015 and Mar 2015 — in the section titled "Recognition that Assad is Winning the Civil War" — cite news stories about unnamed diplomats who want to cooperate with Assad.

―――――――――――

Conclusion for Syria

Obama needs to end his obsession with deposing Assad, and begin coordinating with Assad a strategy to defeat ISIL in both Syria and Iraq. It's past time for Obama to get with the program of defeating terrorism.

The refusal of Obama to cooperate with Assad has multiple disadvantages for the USA:

1. any U.S. airstrikes in Syria would be an illegal aggression against Syria.
2. unnecessary risks to U.S. pilots from Syrian anti-aircraft fire or Syrian fighter jets.
3. U.S. airstrikes will be less effective without Syrian intelligence on the ground
4. the airstrikes need to be coordinated with army action on the ground, and Assad has the best army in Syria (with the possible exception of ISIL).
5. it will be at least a year before we can train 5000 moderate Syrian rebels, while we would not need to train Assad's army — so we can attack ISIL in Syria sooner if we partner with Assad instead of the rebels.
6. helps Islamic terrorists defeat Assad, which is bad, because Assad is both the strongest and most experienced leader of Syria, and the only plausible secular leader of Syria (without Assad, Islamic extremists would likely be controlling Syria).

Assad's military is currently stretched thin by fighting against the jihadists in the Islamic Front, against Al-Qaeda (i.e., Nusra Front), and against ISIL. It is conceivable that Islamic terrorists could eventually defeat Assad. Having Syria under the control of Islamic terrorists would be a much worse outcome for not only Syria, but also for surrounding nations. That is another reason why Obama should cooperate with Assad to defeat ISIL.

Here is how Obama painted himself into a corner. ISIL has been in Syria since May 2013, with an increasing number of atrocities committed by ISIL. ISIL began to invade Iraq in Jan 2014. Obama ignored the ISIL problem in both Syria and Iraq. But, on 7 Aug 2014, — after ISIL threatened genocide of the Yazidis — Obama decided to help defeat ISIL in Iraq, by ordering airstrikes in Iraq. But eastern Syria is now a safe haven for ISIL, so Obama realized sometime around 21 Aug that ISIL would *also* need to be defeated in Syria. The logical plan would be for Obama to call Assad on the telephone and begin to arrange cooperation between the Syrian military and U.S. Military on defeating ISIL in Syria. But Obama will *not* do that, because of Obama's obsession with deposing Assad. As a result of the failure to cooperate with Assad, Obama's military campaign in Syria will be less effective, as explained in the previous paragraphs. Ironically, *both* Assad *and* Obama need help from each other, but Obama is too stubborn to ask Assad, and it would be futile for Assad to ask Obama for help in defeating ISIL.

However, even *if* the U.S. Government were to support Assad's fight against terrorism, and *if*

the moderate rebels rejoin the Syrian army, it will be a tough job to defeat the jihadists and Al-Qaeda in Syria. The third U.N. envoy for Syria, de Mistura, proposed a freeze in Aleppo that was rejected by the Syrian National Coalition and the insurgents. As of 30 June 2015, the possibility of peace in Syria looks grim for the foreseeable future.

Obama refuses to cooperate with Assad's military. Obama has refused to cooperate with Syrian Kurds, because the Turkish government considers the Kurds to be terrorists. Instead, Obama plans to train and equip the so-called "moderate rebels" in Syria, an effort that could take two or three years to train 15,000 rebels. Meanwhile, effective troops on the ground were needed in January 2014 to prevent ISIL from capturing cities and infrastructure. This lack of competent ground forces in Syria is a glaring defect in Obama's strategy.

End of Syria

Since October 2013, I have been advocating in my essays that Europe and the USA actively support Assad in his fight against terrorists. But it is increasingly clear that neither Europe nor the USA will support Assad. And, beginning in December 2014, it is becoming clear that Assad's resources are stretched too thin for him to win militarily against a formidable array of terrorists (e.g., ISIL, Nusra Front, Islamic Front). We have been here before. When the USA deposed Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003, the result in Iraq was anarchy, followed by civil war. And when NATO airstrikes helped depose Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, the result was again anarchy and civil war. And so, when Assad leaves power, the Syrian government will collapse, anarchy will prevail, and each terrorist organization — already present in Syria since 2012-2013 — will rule a small part of former Syria and continue fighting with each other. In retrospect, some nations should be ruled by a strong tyrant (e.g., Hussein, Gaddafi, Assad), because a transition to democracy quickly degenerates into fragmentation, anarchy, and civil war.

Back in June 2014, Lakhdar Brahimi — the second U.N. negotiator for Syria — predicted Syria will become "a failed state, with warlords all over the place." (See my eighth essay on Syria, at section titled: "Brahimi Interview".)

It should be an immense scandal that Obama's idealistic obsession with "supporting democracy" (i.e., opposing Assad) in Syria led to:

- the deaths of *more* than 220,000 people in Syria,
- the destruction of the Syrian economy and infrastructure,
- the destruction of a secular Syria government,
- the rise of Islamic terrorists (e.g., ISIL, Nusra Front) in Syria, and
- a huge refugee problem that has swamped Jordan and Lebanon.

The "SCPR Alienation and Violence Report 2014", cited in my essay for March 2015, contains an eloquent description of the destruction of Syria.

Conclusion for Iraq

The Syrians have an effective government and an effective military. In contrast, during 2014

the Iraqi Parliament slowly formed a new government (during an existential crisis) and the Iraqi army was <u>un</u>able to expel ISIL from towns and cities. Iraq — only slightly better than Yemen, Somalia, and Libya — is now a failed nation. These facts make the Iraqi government weaker than the Syrian government.

My essays for July 2014 through February 2015 summarized the infrequent meetings, and low attendance in the Iraqi Parliament. (See the summary for July through October 2014 in my webpage.) Clearly, the Iraqi Parliament made the existential problems in Iraq worse by their delay or failure to solve major problems.

The criminal justice system in Iraq is apparently incompetent and dysfunctional. The Iraqi government is unable to prosecute army officers for desertion at Mosul on 10 June 2014 (see above), and unable to determine who killed 70 people at a Sunni mosque on 22 Aug 2014.

I conclude that the government of Iraq is dysfunctional and <u>un</u>worthy of assistance. But the Iraqi people do *not* deserve to suffer at the hands of the barbaric ISIL terrorists. Furthermore, ISIL in Iraq and Syria must be annihilated to protect neighboring nations from future invasion by ISIL terrorists, as ISIL expands their caliphate.

In June 2014, the Iraqi army was exposed as at least partly cowardly, corrupt, and incompetent by its rout in Mosul and Tikrit, which abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles to be captured by ISIL. Astoundingly, in May 2015 the Iraqi army *again* fled and abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles during a rout in Ramadi. This shows that the Iraqi government learned nothing from the rout in Mosul, 11 months before the similar rout in Ramadi. It will take year<u>s</u> to fix these defects in the Iraqi army, while effective troops on the ground are needed *now* — truly were needed back in Jan 2014 — to prevent ISIL from capturing more cities and infrastructure. This lack of competent ground forces in Iraq is a glaring defect in Obama's strategy.

Need for Muslim Clerics to Continually
Condemn Islamic Terrorism

Beginning in August 2014, my essays on Syria and Iraq have had a section titled "Islamic Public Relations Problem", in which I have chronicled reaction by Muslim clerics and the need for these clerics to *continually* condemn Islamic terrorism.

Leaders of Al-Qaeda and ISIL clearly and repeatedly invoke their concept of Islam in justifying or explaining their actions. Individual Islamic terrorists shout Islamic slogans as they commit their terrorist acts, and the individual terrorists are endorsed by Islamic terrorist organizations. Further, Al-Qaeda and other jihadists seek to establish Sharia law in Syria and/or Iraq — instead of a secular government. ISIL is even more extreme with its caliphate. These Islamic governments are part of the attraction of young Muslims to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and jihadist groups.

These facts clearly show that an interpretation of Islam is central to the ideology of the terrorists who have infested Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, ...   The

problem is "Islamic terrorism" — the *use of terrorism* to further goals that are justified by an interpretation of the Islamic religion.

To defeat the *idea* of Islamic terrorism, and to stop young Muslims from joining terrorist organizations, it is essential that mainstream Muslim clerics consistently and continually publicly condemn the use of terrorism in the name of Islam, and especially condemn the use of terrorism to impose any Islamic government. Instead, Muslim clerics have only sporadically condemned Islamic terrorism, typically after some atrocity committed by Islamic terrorists.

Instead of writing only in the Arabic language, websites of major Islamic organizations (e.g., Al-Azhar University in Egypt) should also post webpages in French and English languages to discourage Europeans and non-Arabs from joining Islamic terrorist organizations.

Just to be clear, Western Civilization is *not* at war with *all* Muslims. I suggest that Western Civilization — *and* also mainstream Muslims everywhere — *should* be at war with Islamic terrorists. Indeed, mainstream Muslims are most affected by Islamic terrorism, as death tolls in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq show.

This document is at http://www.rbs0.com/syria22.pdf
begun 31 May 2015, last modified 1 July 2015.

The annotated list of my essays on Syria and links to historical documents.

my homepage