

Syria & Iraq: July 2015

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Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 20 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 That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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 (17 U.S.C. §107) That is why I do not quote most of an article by a news agency or newspaper.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. On 25 July, the Associated Press website changed its search engine, and the new search failed

to function, so I stopped citing AP news articles. On 27 July, the AP restored its old search engine, but with a database that only included recent news.

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 a large group of jihadists, formed on 22 November 2013. Ahrar al-Sham is one of the major organizations in the Islamic Front.
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.

[Stanford Univ.](#) has a website with descriptions of ten terrorist organizations in Syria (e.g., Nusra, ISIL, etc.).

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

Beginning in October 2013, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) issued monthly reports on chemical weapons on Syria. My [webpage](#) has links to each of these reports.

The international community's lack of interest in chemical weapons in Syria is shown by the difficulty in finding a copy of the OPCW monthly reports submitted to the U.N. Security Council in June and July 2015.

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 May 2014.

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.

On 9 July 2015, the U.S. asked the United Nations Security Council to form a committee to determine *who* was using chemical weapons in Syria. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [New York Times](#)(AP). Neither the U.S. State Department nor the U.S. Mission to the United Nations posted a press release about this topic at their websites, which may indicate that this topic is not important.

Chlorine Released by ISIL

In July 2015, there were allegations that ISIL was using chemical weapons against Kurds in northern Syria and northern Iraq.

- "ISIS is using chlorine as a weapon, Australia's Foreign Minister says," [Reuters](#), 6 June 2015.
- "ISIS Has Fired Chemical Mortar Shells, Evidence Indicates," [New York Times](#), 17 July 2015. (homemade 120 mm mortar shell)
- "Islamic State used poison gas in northeast Syria — Kurds, monitor," [Reuters](#), 01:25 GMT, 18 July 2015.
- "ISIL 'chemical attack' on Kurds raises fear of gas warfare," [The Telegraph](#), 18 July 2015.
- Agence France-Presse, "ISIL uses chemical weapons against Kurds," [The National](#) in UAE, 18 July 2015.
- "Report: ISIS steps up use of chemicals on battlefields in Iraq and Syria," [CNN](#), 20 July 2015.

If either OPCW or the United Nations is investigating the use of chemical weapons by ISIL, then it is a well kept secret that has evaded journalists.

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 *unlikely*. 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](#).
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Deaths in Syria

On 18 July the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published the death toll during the month of Ramadan, which began at sundown on 17 June and ended on 17 July 2015.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented death of 5026 people in Ramadan.

The death toll distributed as follows:

- 1220 civilians, including 224 children and 222 women, distributed as follows:
 - 576 civilians, including 148 children and 178 women killed by airstrikes carried out by the regime air force.
 - 31 citizens tortured to death inside the regime jails.
 - 11 citizens, including 9 children, died due to shortage of foods and medicines.
 - 74 civilians, including 9 children and 13 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.
 - 18 civilians, including 6 women, executed by IS.
 - 220 people, including 44 children and 19 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: 564.
- Non-Syrian fighters of IS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaysh al Muhajereen wal Ansra Army, Turkestan Islamic Party and the Chechen Jonound al-Sham: 1665.
- Defected soldiers: 8.
- Regular regime soldiers and officers: 775
- Militiamen of the People's Committees and NDF as well as informants: 642

- Hezbollah militiamen: 38
- Pro-regime foreign fighters who are from the Shiite Sect: 99
- Unidentified victims (documented by photos and footages): 15

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 800 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 demanded US Security Council to move urgently in order to stop the massacres committed against the Syrian people every day, and to issue a binding resolution to refer the file of war crimes and crimes against humanity to specialized international courts in order to punish the murderers of Syrian people and those who work on destroying the infrastructure and social fabric in Syria as well as to help the Syrian people to ensure safe future for them.

"5026 people killed in Ramadan," [SOHR](#), 18 July 2015.

Adding the numbers of civilians in the doubly-indented list gives a total of 1243, not 1220.

I waited for the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights to publish either a death toll for the month of July or a cumulative death toll since the civil war began in March 2011. However, on the night of 6 Aug I stopped waiting and posted this essay.

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.

Rebels in Syria

In recent months, there have been few news reports about the Free Syrian Army. On 28 July, Bloomberg reported:

As for the Free Syrian Army, the U.S. largely [abandoned](#) most of its brigades in northern Syria late last year, after they suffered heavy losses to other rebel groups, including the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front. The remaining forces are busy fighting for their lives in and around Aleppo.

Josh Rogin, "U.S. Shoots Down Idea of Syria Safe Zone," [Bloomberg View](#), 28 July 2015.

Training of Moderate Rebels 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.

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](#).

The U.S. Congress approved the training and equipping of Syrian rebels on 18 Sep 2014. The Pentagon moved with glacial slowness for seven months on this project. My essay for [May 2015](#) mentions that training finally began in Jordan and Turkey. My essay for [June 2015](#) mentions that there were fewer than 100 Syrian rebels being trained by the U.S. Military on 29 June 2015 and none had completed training.

On 7 July 2015, the U.S. Secretary of Defense testified at the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Associated Press reported:

Facing blistering criticism from Republican senators, Defense Secretary Ash Carter acknowledged on Tuesday [7 July] that the U.S. has only 60 trainees in a program to prepare and arm thousands of moderate Syrian rebels in the fight against Islamic State militants.

"That is a small class," Carter told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "This is the number that got through a very vigorous vetting and selection process that we have. ... We expect that number to improve."

Sen. John McCain, chairman of the committee and a persistent critic of Obama's foreign policy, wasn't convinced. "I got to tell you that after four years, Mr. Secretary, that is not an impressive number," McCain, R-Ariz., said in one of several testy exchanges with Carter and Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

....

The U.S. goal is to train and equip 5,400 rebels a year for three years.

....

However, McCain, who lost to Obama in the 2008 presidential election, argued that there is no compelling reason to think that anything the U.S. is doing will achieve the president's goal of degrading and ultimately destroying IS. He accused the president of engaging in a "disturbing degree of self-delusion" when it comes to battling IS.

Deb Riechmann, "Senators quiz military chiefs, criticize US fight against IS," [Associated Press](#), 15:45 EDT, 7 July 2015.

[Reuters](#) also reported this story.

We Need to Support the Kurds in Syria

My comment is that instead of this expensive, slow, and piddling (intended 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. Clearly, the Kurds have the will to fight against ISIL, and the Syrian Kurds have twice defeated ISIL in major battles.

While it is true that the Kurds in Syria want to fight ISIL only in Kurdish territory in northern Syria, 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, and other insurgents.

My essay for [June 2015](#) mentioned bellicose statements by the president of Turkey during 26-29 June, including possibly invading Syria and establishing a 33 km deep "buffer zone" inside Syria, along the border with Turkey. By 3 July, the rhetoric from Turkey had calmed and Turkish government officials reiterated "there was no plan to enter Syria unilaterally". [Today's Zaman](#). On 4 July, a leader of the Kurds in Turkey threatened civil war if the Turkish military attempted to create a buffer zone inside Syria. [Today's Zaman](#)

I am uncertain of the significance of this rhetoric. Erdogan was one of the founders of the AK Party in Turkey in 2001. Subsequently, Erdogan was prime minister from March 2003 until his election as president in 2014. In the general election on 7 June 2015, the AK Party lost its majority. Erdogan, and others in the AK Party, *may* believe that bellicose rhetoric will make them more important and increase their political power. An opposition politician has suggested that Erdogan seeks a quick victory in Syria, followed by an early election in Turkey with increased support for Erdogan's AK Party. [Today's Zaman](#).

Erdogan says the Kurds in Syria are a bigger threat to Turkey than ISIL. See, e.g.,

- "Turkey's Drift From NATO," [NY Times](#), 13 March 2015 ("Public opinion polls show that the Turks don't consider ISIS a primary threat, and Mr. Erdogan is more concerned with opposing Kurdish autonomy within Syria and with bringing down the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad.")
- "Erdogan's Kurdish blind spot," [Cihan](#), 18 June 2015 ("In a discourse that empathized with ISIL while demonizing the Kurds, Erdogan said" Opinion: "It is high time for the AKP and Erdogan to realize that they can't deal with Kurdish demands for autonomy by unleashing Turkish nationalism. This is a disastrous recipe for civil war. Why is it so hard to see that Kurds in Syria would make a much better neighbor for Turkey than ISIL?")
- "Turkey steps up diplomatic efforts to express concern over Tel Abyad," [Today's Zaman](#), 19 June 2015 ("The pro-government *Sabah* daily, on its front page on Friday, suggested that the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) is a far bigger threat to Turkey than ISIL.")
- "Pro-gov't media praises ISIL, condemns YPG," [Today's Zaman](#), 19 June 2015 ("The *Sabah* daily, known to be a staunch supporter of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and

the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), on [19 June], went out with the headline: 'PYD is more dangerous than DAESH [Arabic acronym for ISIL].')

- Columnist, [Today's Zaman](#), 28 June 2015 ("In an ironic situation, Ankara seems to think that the Syrian Kurds are more dangerous than ISIS.").
- "Turkey plans no imminent action into Syria," [Hurriyet Daily News](#), 1 July 2015 ("The pro-government media first described the PYD as more dangerous than ISIL").
- "Signs of change in Turkish foreign policy," [Hurriyet Daily News](#), 3 July 2015 ("There are strong indications that the government line — about the removal of Bashar al-Assad from power in Syria being as important as fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), and about the Syrian Kurdish group the PYD taking control of areas on the Turkish border being more dangerous than ISIL — is quietly being replaced by rhetoric that ISIL is the number one threat for Turkey.").

It is bizarre for Erdogan and his henchmen to say that the Kurds in Syria are a bigger threat than ISIL. It is no exaggeration to say that ISIL is one of the worst terrorist groups in the world. One can negotiate with Kurds, but ISIL refuses to negotiate. Further, ISIL flagrantly commits atrocities, unlike the Kurds.

Turkey may have supplied weapons to ISIL in Syria

Erdogan has recently imposed restrictions on freedom of journalists in Turkey. And opposition politicians in Turkey — as in many other nations — sometimes make bizarre accusations that are false. So I ignored reports from Turkey earlier this year that alleged that trucks from Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) were delivering weapons to ISIL in Syria. My searches of Google News found few news sources in the USA and Western Europe have reported on this alleged scandal involving a NATO ally supporting Islamic terrorists, which added to my initial skepticism.

But now those reports make some sense, in that Erdogan might have hoped that ISIL would annihilate both the Kurds in Syria and Assad's military, which would rid Erdogan of two enemies. Further, Erdogan might be concerned that Kurdish control of northern Syria could disrupt Turkey's shipments of weapons to insurgents in Syria.

It has been known, at least since October 2013, that Qatar and Saudi Arabia were financing Islamic insurgents in Syria. However, neither Qatar nor Saudi Arabia share a border with Syria, so Turkey was apparently the conduit for sending the weapons into Syria.

Here is a brief list of citations to news stories about one major incident in January 2014:

- "Turkish governor blocks police search on Syria-bound truck reportedly carrying weapons," [Hurriyet](#), 2 Jan 2014.
- "Inspectors' report on MIT trucks reveals gov't cover-up attempts," [Today's Zaman](#),

30 Sep 2014.

- "‘MIT trucks carrying arms to extremists in Syria will cause trouble for Turkey under international law’," [Today's Zaman](#), 11 May 2015 (Mentions that Turkish government arrested on 7 May four prosecutors and one former provincial gendarmerie commander, because they intercepted a MIT shipment of weapons to Syria.).
- "Prosecutor says weapon-laden MIT trucks made 2,000 trips to Syria," [Today's Zaman](#), 13 May 2015 ("[T]rucks belonging to the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) were searched in January 2014. ... Prosecutor Ali Dogan stated in court that trucks owned by MIT made at least 2,000 trips to Syria." The prosecutor filed to dismiss "the investigation into the trucks").
- "Exclusive: Turkish intelligence helped ship arms to Syrian Islamist rebel areas," [Reuters](#), 21 May 2015 ("Turkey's state intelligence agency helped deliver arms to parts of Syria under Islamist rebel control [including ISIL] during late 2013 and early 2014, according to a prosecutor and court testimony from gendarmerie officers seen by Reuters." MIT trucks were searched on 7 Nov 2013, 1 Jan 2014, and 19 Jan 2014.).
- "Video purports to show Turkish intelligence shipping arms to Syria," [Reuters](#), 29 May 2015 ("A Turkish newspaper [Cumhuriyet] published video footage on Friday [29 May] which it said showed security forces discovering weapons parts being sent to Syria on trucks belonging to the MIT state intelligence agency.").
- "Turkish daily probed over scoop on Syria-bound intelligence trucks," [Hurriyet](#), 29 May 2015 ("Turkish prosecutors have launched an investigation into daily Cumhuriyet over its May 29 story on Syria-bound trucks belonging to the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), which were stopped and searched by soldiers last year.").
- "Gov't hastily secures gag order for Syria-bound arms footage," [Today's Zaman](#), 29 May 2015 ("A Turkish daily's [Cumhuriyet's] damning publication of pictures of weapons carried by Syria-bound trucks run by Turkey's intelligence organization prompted the government to immediately secure a gag order from a judge in order to contain the fallout from the scandal." The MIT trucks "contained a total of 1,000 artillery shells, 50,000 machine gun rounds, 30,000 heavy machine gun rounds and 1,000 mortar shells.").
- "Intel trucks' content no one's business, says PM," [Hurriyet](#), 31 May 2015 ("Questioning the content of trucks that were stopped by the gendarmerie while carrying 'logistical assistance to Turkmens' in Syria last year was nobody's business, Turkish PM Ahmet Davutoglu has said,.... Davutoglu told private broadcaster Habertürk in an interview on May 31.").
- "Cumhuriyet publishes more photos from scene of intercepted trucks," [Today's Zaman](#), 4 June 2015.

"Turkish officials involved in supplying arms to radical Syrian groups," [Cihan](#), 18 June 2015 (More on criminal trial of former prosecutor who intercepted weapons shipment in January 2014.).

- "Turkey: Life sentences sought for MIT truck case suspects," [Anadolu Agency](#), 3 July 2015 (The four former prosecutors and one former provincial gendarmerie commander are charged with "attempting to overthrow the Turkish government by using force and violence or attempts to destroy the government's function totally or partly." The government seeks a life sentence in prison for each of the five accused.).

It has been known that the border between Turkey and Syria is "porous", and weapons and fighters are entering Syria via this border. But the allegation here is that the Turkish *government* willfully sent weapons to ISIL, the worst of the Islamic terrorist groups in Syria. And then the Turkish government criminally charged its government officials who investigated such smuggling of weapons!

Erdogan's official explanation is that the MIT trucks were delivering humanitarian aid to the Turkmen in Syria. (See, e.g., [Daily Sabah](#), 31 May 2015.) This official explanation is not even remotely plausible:

1. Photographs of the cargo in the trucks (and evidence at trial) show there was mostly ammunition in the MIT trucks.
2. If the trucks were really delivering humanitarian aid, then the government of Turkey would not object to searches.
3. The Turkmen in Syria deny receiving humanitarian aid from Turkey. See, e.g., [Today's Zaman](#), 29 May 2015 ("Syrian Turkmen also refuted claims that they had received either arms or humanitarian aid from Turkey at the time."); [Today's Zaman](#), 4 June 2015 ("Syrian Turkmen groups have denied receiving such assistance, however.")
4. Why use secret deliveries by MIT of humanitarian aid? Deliveries of humanitarian aid are normally a source of pride and *not* secret. [Today's Zaman](#), 11 May 2015 ("[The main opposition Republican People's Party leader] asked why Turkey, a country generally eager to highlight its humanitarian aid contributions to other countries, would start sending humanitarian aid in secret.").
5. *If* the trucks really carried humanitarian aid (as claimed by the government), then it is inconsistent to charge the prosecutors who searched the trucks with "attempting to topple or incapacitate the Turkish government through the use of force or coercion". [Today's Zaman](#).

Also see article titled "Former President Gül's chief adviser doubtful about arms shipment to Syrian Turkmen," [Today's Zaman](#), 27 July 2015. The *Zaman* article cites the original article in *Hurriyet*, but on 27 July I was unable to find the original article in the English-language version of *Hurriyet*.

I am *not* optimistic that we are going to learn the Truth about what really happened with MIT sending weapons to Syria. Personal loyalty to Erdogan seems more important than loyalty to the rule-of-law in Turkey. Further, Erdogan is actively using government secrecy to conceal newsworthy facts, and Erdogan is actively intimidating journalists. [Human Rights Watch](#); [Reporters Without Borders](#).

In an entirely separate story, on 9 Feb 2015, [Today's Zaman](#) reports that one of 11 alleged ISIL members arrested in Turkey says Turkey's National Intelligence Organization helped smuggle weapons to insurgents in Syria.

As reported in my essay for [May 2015](#), Turkey and Saudi Arabia apparently agreed in March 2015 to provide aid to anti-Assad rebels in Syria. This program in 2015 may be separate from earlier efforts reported above about Turkey supplying weapons to ISIL in Syria.

On 16 May 2015, U.S. Military raided the ISIL office of Abu Sayyaf in Syria and captured computers and papers. On the night of 25 July, *The Guardian* newspaper reported the analysis of flash drives seized during that raid:

The target of that raid [on 16 May], the first of its kind since US jets returned to the skies over Iraq last August, was an Isis official responsible for oil smuggling, named Abu Sayyaf. He was almost unheard of outside the upper echelons of the terror group, but he was well known to Turkey. From mid-2013, the Tunisian fighter had been responsible for smuggling oil from Syria's eastern fields, which the group had by then commandeered. Black market oil quickly became the main driver of Isis revenues — and Turkish buyers were its main clients.

As a result, the oil trade between the jihadis and the Turks was held up as evidence of an alliance between the two. It led to protests from Washington and Europe — both already wary of Turkey's 900-mile border with Syria being used as a gateway by would-be jihadis from around the world.

The estimated \$1m-\$4m per day in oil revenues that was thought to have flowed into Isis coffers over at least six months from late 2013 helped to transform an ambitious force with limited means into a juggernaut that has been steadily drawing western forces back to the region and increasingly testing state borders.

....

In the wake of the raid that killed Abu Sayyaf [on 16 May], suspicions of an undeclared alliance have hardened. One senior western official familiar with the intelligence gathered at the slain leader's compound said that direct dealings between Turkish officials and ranking Isis members was now "undeniable".

....

However, Turkey has openly supported other jihadi groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham, which espouses much of al-Qaida's ideology, and Jabhat al-Nusra, which is proscribed

as a terror organisation by much of the US and Europe. “The distinctions they draw [with other opposition groups] are thin indeed,” said the western official. “There is no doubt at all that they militarily cooperate with both.”

Martin Chulov, "Turkey sends in jets as Syria's agony spills over every border," [Guardian](#), 23:07 GMT, 25 July 2015.

The clandestine oil sales from ISIL to Turkey are a violation of the spirit of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2199. Turkey's purchase of oil from ISIL funded ISIL military operations, one of the most dangerous operations in the world. This news was reported in Turkey by [Today's Zaman](#).

Turkey begins to fight against ISIL

On 7-8 July, John Allen — Obama's Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL — was in Ankara for discussions with the government of Turkey. Allen urged that the Turks do more to prevent fighters and weapons from crossing the Turkish border and entering Syria. Another issue for discussion was the role of Kurds in Syria, but the USA and Turkey continue to disagree on that. [Daily Star](#); [AFP](#); [Reuters](#). Allen again requested Turkey's permission to use the Incirlik base in Turkey for airplanes bombing ISIL in Syria, but in exchange Turkey "demanded U.S. assistance in establishing secure zones inside Syria and their protection by air." [Hurriyet](#) in Turkey.

On Monday, 20 July 2015, a suicide bomber exploded in Suruc, a Turkish town near Kobane in Syria. A total of at least 32 Turks were killed in this attack. The bomber exploded at a meeting of socialist youth who were planning to help Kurds in Kobani, Syria. Although not proven, ISIL was suspected to be the attacker. [Hurriyet](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [Reuters](#).

This attack is significant, because it seems to have jolted the government of Turkey into suddenly fighting against ISIL. *If* ISIL caused the bombing in Suruc, it was a stupid move by ISIL, because it motivated the Turkish government to:

1. stop secretly supplying ISIL with weapons (described [above](#))
2. allow the U.S. to fly airstrikes against ISIL from the Incirlik airbase in Turkey
3. begin Turkish airstrikes against ISIL, and
4. attempt to seal the Turkish/Syrian border, to prevent fighters and weapons from entering Syria.

There has been speculation that the Turkish government (e.g., the intelligence agency, MIT, or the dominant political party, AKP) *may* be responsible for the suicide bombing in Suruc. See, e.g., [BBC](#), 21 July; [Today's Zaman](#), 26 July; [Today's Zaman](#), 28 July; [Politico](#), 29 July. It is not clear how much of these accusations are politically motivated as an attack on Erdogan's AKP party. It is also not clear whether these accusations have a reasonable basis in fact. Note that ISIL never claimed responsibility for the bombing in Suruc. Given the excessive secrecy that surrounds MIT in Turkey, and given the lack of accountability of the Turkish government, we may never know the Truth in this matter.

On 22 July, Obama called Erdogan in Turkey, and the two leaders "discussed efforts to increase cooperation to stem the flow of foreign fighters and secure Turkey's border with Syria." [White House](#).

On 23 July, it was announced that Turkey would allow U.S. Military to use the Incirlik air base in Turkey for airstrikes against ISIL in Syria. [Wall Street Journal](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#). Turkey's agreement comes ten months after Obama began airstrikes in Syria. The delay by Turkey caused extra costs for U.S. taxpayers who pay for jet fuel. The delay by Turkey also caused longer flight times for U.S. pilots, which frustrated the ability to strike temporary, short-lived opportunities — and also inconvenienced pilots.

On 24 July, the announcement in the previous paragraph was confirmed by Turkey. [Anadolu Agency](#) in Turkey; [Today's Zaman](#); [Reuters](#); [Daily Sabah](#).

In the early morning of 24 July, F-16 aircraft flown by Turkish pilots bombed ISIL targets inside Syria, near the Turkish border. The airstrikes were in retaliation for ISIL killing a Turkish soldier on 23 July in the town of Kilis, Turkey. [Daily Sabah](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [Washington Post](#).

More about Turkish airstrikes on ISIL is included in the section on Coalition airstrikes, [below](#).

Turkey also attacks PKK

However, the sudden change in Turkish government policy is *not* all good. On the night of 24 July, in a second set of airstrikes, the Turkish air force bombed a PKK camp inside Iraq. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [Reuters](#).

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has since 1984 conducted an insurgency in Turkey, and the Turkish government considers the PKK to be terrorists. The obvious consequences of Turkish attacks on Kurds in Iraq is to hugely complicate the coordination (1) between U.S.-led coalition airstrikes and (2) the Kurdish fighters on the ground. Kurdish fighters are the most effective ground troops who are fighting against ISIL in both Syria and Iraq. (On 24 July the U.S. Secretary of Defense called the Kurdish peshmerga in Iraq "the model of what we're trying to achieve" in the war against ISIL. [Reuters](#); [Arab News](#)(AFP).) But now, Turkey — a so-called ally of the U.S. — begins bombing Kurds in Iraq.

In March 2013, the PKK declared a ceasefire. (See e.g., [Hurriyet](#)) After the Turkish airstrikes on PKK camps in Iraq on the night of 24 July, the PKK said "the truce has no meaning anymore". [Reuters](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [Hurriyet](#); [Washington Post](#). My comment is that the belligerent aggression by the Turkish government against the PKK will cause the PKK to resume an active insurgency, and gave Turkey a two-front war: (1) against the PKK and (2) against ISIL in Syria.

On 28 July 2015, Erdogan publicly declared that it was impossible to continue peace negotiations with the PKK. Reuters quoted Erdogan as saying: "It is not possible for us to

continue the peace process with those who threaten our national unity and brotherhood." [Reuters](#); [Today's Zaman](#). The Turkish airstrikes against PKK, together with Erdogan's declaration of impossibility, kills the peace process with the PKK.

In my opinion, it was incredibly stupid for Turkey to attack the PKK. This problem could be solved by creating an autonomous state for the Kurds in Turkey. But the Turkish government will surely resist such a solution, because that is what the PKK has requested for the past thirty years. A similar autonomous state needs to be created for Kurds in Syria. At some future time, the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria might want to form one independent nation. Uniting ethnic groups makes more sense than the Sykes-Picot boundaries drawn by the UK and France in 1916. In Eastern Europe during the 1990s, Yugoslavia became five nations and Czechoslovakia became two nations — so, even in modern times, new nations can be created.

Both the government of Turkey and the Kurds have a common enemy in ISIL. Instead of cooperating to defeat this common enemy, Turkey has decided to waste resources in battles against the Kurds, which will also force the Kurds to waste resources. These resources should be focused on defeating ISIL. The [Hurriyet](#) newspaper reports that both the Turkish government and the PKK are "trapped by decisions taken years ago".

On the night of 26 July, Turkey launched a second wave of airstrikes against the PKK in Iraq, using four F-16 fighters. [Reuters](#).

On 27 July, the Kurds in Syria allege that Turkish artillery or tanks shelled a YPG location, but Turkey denied that. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [ARA News](#); [France24](#).

On 28 July, Turkey launched airstrikes against the PKK inside southeastern Turkey. [Reuters](#).

On the night of 28 July and early on 29 July, Turkey again launched airstrikes against the PKK in Iraq. [Rudaw](#); [Daily Sabah](#). [Reuters](#) reports: "But Turkey's assaults on the PKK have so far been far heavier than its strikes against Islamic State, fuelling suspicions that its real agenda is keeping Kurdish political and territorial ambitions in check, something the government denies."

Hurriyet Daily News says Turkey claimed it killed 190 PKK terrorists during 24-29 July. The *Daily Sabah* reports that the PKK killed a total of 17 soldiers, policemen, and civilians in terror attacks in Turkey. But the Associated Press says: "Kurdish rebel attacks have claimed the lives of four policemen, eight soldiers and one civilian in the past two weeks [since 16 July], according to count by the Associated Press." On 30 July, thirty F-16 fighters from Turkey bombed the PKK in Iraq for 2□ hours. [Hurriyet](#); [Daily Sabah](#); [Associated Press](#). [Rudaw](#) reports that Turkey destroyed a medical clinic in the bombing. The massive airstrikes on the PKK on 30 July is a significant escalation of hostilities by Turkey.

During 24-30 July, there were significantly more Turkish airstrikes against PKK than against ISIL. This suggests to me that Turkey continues to consider the PKK a bigger threat than ISIL, as mentioned [above](#). This may also hint that Turkey's new cooperation in the war against ISIL is partly a scheme to buy silence from Western governments when Turkey blasts

the PKK.

Because the subject of this essay is the civil war in Syria and the war against ISIL in both Syria and Iraq, on 30 July I ended my coverage of Turkey's attacks on the PKK.

A discussion of the reaction of U.S. Government to the attacks by Turkey on the PKK is given [below](#).

Turkey to Create "Safe Zone" in Syria

On 25 July, the Turkish foreign minister announced that the Turkish military would unilaterally create a "safe zone" in northern Syria that was free of ISIL fighters. There are three advantages for Turkey. First, the safe zone allegedly protects the Turks from attacks by ISIL. Second, refugees from Syria could be settled in the safe zone, reducing the burden on Turkey from approximately two million refugees. Third, Turkish military supervision of the safe zone will prevent the Kurds in Syria from establishing an independent nation there. Further, the safe zone would help seal the border and prevent insurgents and their supplies from entering Syria. [Reuters](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [The Telegraph](#). Later, Turkey attempted to justify the safe zone as protecting Turkmen in Syria from both ISIL and the Kurds in Syria. [Anadolu](#). However, the creation of a safe zone is a monumental undertaking that has been opposed by the U.S. Military. [Al-Arabiya](#), 7 May 2015; [Today's Zaman](#), 1 July 2015.

I am concerned that it is a serious violation of the sovereignty of Syria for Turkey to use airstrikes to create a safe zone inside Syria. Moreover, if Turkey moves refugees into camps in the safe zone, Turkey will be using Syrian land.

On the night of 26 July, *The Washington Post* says there is a tentative agreement between Turkey and the U.S. on "a plan to drive the Islamic State out of a 68-mile-long area west of the Euphrates River and reaching into the province of Aleppo that would then come under the control of the Syrian opposition." On the morning of 27 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports "The United States and Turkey are finalizing plans for a military campaign" to create an "Islamic State-free zone" inside Syria. *The New York Times* says the zone will be "60 miles" in length (96 km). At 23:30 EDT on 27 July, the [Associated Press](#) summarized the plans for the safe zone.

On 28 July, the United Nations humanitarian aid chief warned Turkey against calling the buffer zone in northern Syria a "'safe zone' unless there is a guarantee of protection for civilians who are likely to flood the area for help." [Reuters](#).

On 27 July, the Spokesperson for the U.S. State Department unequivocally said the U.S. had *not* agreed to a "no-fly zone" in Syria. The Spokesperson had no announcement to make about a "safe zone". [State Dept](#).

On 28 July, Bloomberg reported:

... U.S. officials are insisting that — contrary to reports — there are definitely no U.S. plans for a "safe zone" inside Syria. In fact, there really is no "zone," and there is no plan to keep the area "safe."

This confusion is a microcosm of the disorganized U.S. approach to the Islamic State threat since last summer. Each incremental escalation into which the U.S. gets dragged in Syria seems poorly thought out and even more poorly explained.

Josh Rogin, "U.S. Shoots Down Idea of Syria Safe Zone," [Bloomberg View](#), 28 July 2015.

On 29 July, a news article in [Today's Zaman](#) says the U.S. Government has denied that the USA will participate in creating a "safe zone" inside Syria. The U.S. has only agreed to conduct more airstrikes on ISIL inside Syria. Note that the U.S. has been conducting airstrikes inside Syria since September 2014, so there is nothing new about airstrikes. The article in *Today's Zaman* contains an interesting sentence: "If the 98-kilometer-long [proposed safe zone] falls into the hands of the Kurds, Turkey will not have access to moderate Syrian rebels because the entire border will either be controlled by Kurds or Syrian regime forces."

My comment on the quotation above from the *Today's Zaman*: This is apparently the view of the Turkish government, who considers the Kurds an enemy of Turkey. But, in reality, the Kurds in Syria are part of the moderate opposition to ISIL, and an ally of the U.S.-led Coalition. The Kurds in Syria often fight alongside the Free Syrian Army, so the quoted sentence from the *Zaman* is nonsense.

My comments:

- Creation of a safe zone would be a significant escalation in the U.S. war against ISIL in Syria. It is a serious violation of Syrian sovereignty for Turkey and the USA to be using or allocating land inside Syria.
- It is obviously *not* a smart idea to put refugees in a "safe zone" that will be bombed to kill ISIL fighters. The United Nations is correct that this zone should not be called a "safe zone" unless troops on the ground will protect civilians from attack. Further, someone needs to provide water, food, housing, electricity, medical care, etc. to refugees who return to Syria — these basic requirements have been ignored by Turkey.
- The belief of the Turkish government that a "safe zone" will prevent ISIL attacks inside Turkey is *wrong*. A safe zone might prevent classical warfare of a group of vehicles moving toward Turkey, but will *not* prevent guerrilla attacks (e.g., one ISIL suicide bomber) in Turkey.
- However, obviously, Turkey is the only nation that can seal the northern border of Syria, since Assad has abandoned northern Syria. It is essential to seal the Turkey/Syria border, to choke the flow of supplies and new fighters to insurgents like ISIL. This makes Turkey an indispensable partner in the fight against ISIL.

Arrests in Turkey

Incidentally, 590 alleged members of either the PKK or ISIL — the Turkish government

considers *both* the PKK *and* ISIL as terrorists — were arrested during 24-25 July 2015. [Today's Zaman](#); [Turkish Radio](#). Earlier reports had a smaller number of arrested people. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#).

My comment is that such massive arrests also characterized Assad's initial response to pro-democracy demonstrators in Syria during March 2011. Such an overreaction by the government led to the Syrian civil war. In the case of Turkey, the airstrikes against the PKK and the massive arrests may be the beginning of a civil war in Turkey. It is strange to see the Turkish government make no distinction between the PKK and ISIL, because they are entirely separate problems with entirely separate histories.

On 25 July, police in Ankara dispersed approximately 1000 people who were protesting the recent airstrikes in Syria and Iraq. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP). Again, this is just like the early days of the pro-democracy protests in Syria during March 2011. Heavy-handed crackdowns by the government can radicalize moderate people.

During 24-27 July, a total of 1050 people — allegedly members of either the outlawed PKK, ISIL, or the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party (DHKP-C) — were arrested in Turkey. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#). I wonder where Turkey will find the judicial resources to have a fair trial for 1050 alleged terrorists, in addition to trying the routine criminals. In the USA, when hundreds of rioters are arrested, charges are usually dismissed because of lack of prosecutorial and judicial resources.

On 29 July, the total number of arrested alleged terrorists increased to 1302. [Daily Sabah](#). [Reuters](#) reports of these 1302, "847 are accused of links to the PKK and just 137 to Islamic State, government spokesman Bulent Arinc said." See also [Associated Press](#).

It is estimated that 40,000 people have already died in the PKK insurgency in Turkey since 1984. [Today's Zaman](#); [Washington Post](#); [Wall Street Journal](#); [Cihan News Agency](#); [Daily Star](#). Is the Turkish government smart enough to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the PKK? Nope. It appears that Erdogan wants massive airstrikes on the PKK and Erdogan wants to arrest large numbers of alleged PKK members, to show that Erdogan is fighting *terrorism*. Erdogan apparently hopes this fight against terrorism will increase the number of votes for his political party in the next election, which might restore his party to a majority that they lost in the 7 June 2015 election.

Foreign Reaction to Turkey

The U.S. reaction to the Turkish airstrikes against the PKK is [below](#).

On the afternoon of 25 July, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, made a telephone call to the Turkish Foreign Minister. A statement issued by the European Union Foreign Office said in part:

.... [Mogherini] reaffirmed the support for Turkey's efforts to step up on ISIL and to the fight against any form of terrorism.

At the same time, Federica Mogherini underlined the fundamental importance of

keeping the settlement process with Kurdish people alive and on track. Terrorist groups must not spoil the process and the ceasefire must be preserved. Any action taken should avoid the risk of endangering the ceasefire and the Kurdish peace process that remains the best opportunity in a generation to solve a conflict that has claimed far too many lives.

Press Release, "High Representative Federica Mogherini speaks to Foreign Minister of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu," [EU](#), 25 July 2015.

Reported by Turkish news media at: [Anadolu Agency](#); [Hurriyet](#); [Today's Zaman](#). A simple interpretation of Mogherini's remarks is: go kill ISIL terrorists — but stop killing PKK members.

On 26 July, The German chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel, urged Turkey to continue peace negotiations with the PKK. She also mentioned "the principle of proportionality" if it were necessary for the Turkish government to attack the PKK. [Deutsche Welle](#); [Reuters](#).

On 27 July, the president of Kurdistan in Iraq, Masoud Barzani, publicly called on the PKK to end their campaign of violence in Turkey. [Rudaw](#). On 29 July, Barzani "encouraged both sides [Turkey and PKK] to return to dialogue and to the principles of the peace process." [Rudaw](#). On 1 Aug, Barzani asked the PKK to withdraw from the Kurdish region in Iraq. [Associated Press](#).

On 28 July, the Iraqi prime minister condemned Turkey's airstrikes against the PKK in northern Iraq, because the airstrikes were "a dangerous escalation and a violation of Iraq's sovereignty." [Associated Press](#) (20:25 Brussels time); [Rudaw](#); [Iraqi News](#); [BAS News](#); [Reuters](#). Remarkably, the English-language version of [All Iraq News](#) did *not* report this story. On 1 August, the Iraqi prime minister again asked Turkey to respect the sovereignty of Iraq. [All Iraq News](#).

Iran/Syria Reaction to Turkey

On 25 July, a spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Minister said: "Any type of campaign against terrorism must respect the basic principles of international law, especially the national sovereignty of governments," [PressTV](#); [Tasnim News](#); [IRNA](#); all in Iran. This seems to be a veiled criticism of Turkey for airstrikes inside Iraq and Syria, without permission of those governments.

On 28 July, I looked at the SANA website, and I searched both the *Syria Times* and Google News for reaction from Syria to Turkey's intention to create a safe zone in northern Syria (including airstrikes), but I found nothing in the news media.

On 29 July, Agence France-Presse reported the first public reaction from the Syrian Foreign Ministry was to ask whether the genuine intention of Turkey was to fight against ISIL, or whether the primary reason was to fight against the Kurds. AFP said Syria ignored the Turkish airstrikes inside Syria. [Hurriyet](#); [Daily Star](#). On 29 July, the Syrian Arab News Agency ([SANA](#)) published an article titled "Syria rejects Turkish regime's attempts to depict itself as the victim when its support for terrorism is known".

NATO Meeting

During the Cold War (1950-1990) Turkey had a strategic location near the southeast border of the USSR. Turkey let the U.S. Air Force build a base at Incirlik, which has operated since 1955. In exchange for the base at Incirlik, Turkey was allowed to join NATO, and Turkey was supplied with modern weapons.

On 26 July, Turkey requested an emergency meeting of NATO ambassadors. This meeting on 28 July was the fifth emergency meeting during the 66-year history of NATO. The meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes. [Associated Press](#).

At the conclusion of the meeting, a [statement](#) was issued. This eight-sentence statement is vague and generic, so I am *not* quoting it here. The statement mentions neither ISIL, PKK, Syria, nor the Kurds — the statement only vaguely speaks of "terrorism" and "terrorist".

More important is what happened inside the closed meeting. At 16:05 Brussels time, the [Associated Press](#) reported information from an anonymous NATO official: "alliance members have used the closed-door meeting in Brussels to call on Turkey not to use excessive force. Although public statements from the NATO meeting stressed unity, the official said members also urged Turkey to continue peace efforts with representatives of the Kurdish minority." See also [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

My comment is that Turkey helped created its so-called emergency, by clandestinely sending weapons to ISIL, by failing to seal the border with Syria, by ignoring the threat posed by ISIL for the past two years, and by failing to cooperate with the U.S.-led Coalition against ISIL.

Turkey has been a problem, in their attack on Cyprus (in 1974) and their support for Arab terrorists in palestine.

Given Turkey's recent history of purchasing oil from ISIL, sending weapons to ISIL, allowing insurgents to cross the border into Syria, and Turkey's continuing hostility towards Kurds, it is clear that Turkey is *not* a reliable partner in the fight against ISIL.

The mere 90-minute duration of the emergency meeting is a hint that this meeting was *pro forma*. Because Turkey is a member of NATO, they have the right to call an emergency meeting. But Turkey does *not* have the right to be taken seriously. The vague official statement indicates the absence of serious decision(s) at the meeting.

Also the 32 people killed in the alleged ISIL bombing in Suruc on 20 July is a rather small attack. (In contrast with approximately 3000 people dead in the USA on 11 Sep 2001; 224 dead in bombings of two U.S. Embassies in Africa on 7 Aug 1998; 191 dead in bombing of four railway trains in Madrid on 11 March 2004; there is a total of more than thirty fatalities in bombings in Baghdad nearly every week; ...) I suggest the bombing at Suruc is a pretext for Erdogan beginning a war on terrorism that is mostly focused on the PKK, but also includes ISIL in order to obtain support from the USA.

U.S. Reaction to Turkey

[Above](#), I mention that Turkey began airstrikes against the PKK inside Kurdish Iraq on the night of 24 July. It was easy to predict that these continuing attacks on the PKK would anger Kurds in both Iraq and Syria. As mentioned above, the Kurds in Iraq and Syria are the best fighters on the ground in the war against ISIL.

Late at night on 25 July and again on the night of 26 July, I looked at the websites of the White House, U.S. State Department, and the Pentagon. I was surprised that none of them had posted any comment on the Turkish airstrikes against ISIL or the PKK. Obama was in Africa during 24-28 July, where he ignored Turkey, Iraq, and Syria.

The only U.S. Government reaction during 24-26 July to Turkish airstrikes on the PKK was a terse Twitter announcement by Ambassador Brett McGurk on 25 July: "There is no connection between these airstrikes against PKK and recent understandings to intensify U.S.-Turkey cooperation against ISIL." [Reuters](#); [Voice of America](#); [Hurriyet](#) in Turkey. McGurk: "We have strongly condemned the PKK's terrorist attacks in Turkey and we fully respect our ally Turkey's right to self-defense." [Washington Post](#). McGurk's Twitter message is *not* posted at the U.S. State Department's website. The *Post* suggests that the Obama administration is delighted that Turkey is now fighting against ISIL, so the U.S. government will be unlikely to criticize the Turkish government for attacking the PKK.

On 27 July, *The New York Times* editorial board wrote: "Having sought Turkey's greater involvement in Syria for a long time, American officials appear reluctant to criticize Turkey's bombing of the P.K.K. Brett McGurk, a State Department official who is among those leading the effort against the Islamic State, noted in a statement over the weekend that the United States played no role in the airstrikes against the Kurdish group, but recognized Turkey's 'right to self-defense.'" [NY Times](#).

There was a widespread *perception* that the U.S. Government had agreed that Turkey could attack the PKK, in exchange for Turkey allowing the U.S. to use the Incirlik air base for airstrikes against ISIL in Syria. See, e.g., the column by Lale Kemal, titled "Turkey ties Incirlik usage to safe zone and non-criticism of Kurdish operations", and published by [Today's Zaman](#) on 27 July. Copy at [Cihan News Agency](#).

On Monday, 27 July, Spokesperson John Kirby gave a press briefing at the U.S. State Department, where he said:

.... I don't think that I could say it any better than Ambassador McGurk did. We are grateful for Turkey's cooperation against ISIL to include now use of some of their bases for coalition aircraft to go against targets — ISIL targets, particularly in Syria. So we're grateful for that support. The — so separate and distinct from that, Turkey has continued to come under attack by PKK terrorists, and we recognize their right to defend themselves against those attacks. And it was in retaliation for recent attacks by the PKK that Turkey conducted these most recent strikes.

As for ISIL in Syria, we continue to discuss with Turkey ways at which we can go after this particular threat. Again, we value their cooperation thus far. They have a vested interest, obviously, because of its — it's their border. And while there's nothing new to announce with respect to what kind of cooperation may come in the future,

we're going to continue to talk to them about that.

I understand the coincidence of all of this, but it is just that. The attacks against the PKK were in retaliations for attacks they, the Turks, endured, and what they're doing against ISIL in Syria I'll let them speak to. But obviously, we welcome all coalition members' efforts against ISIL, particularly in Syria.

....

... does [the Turkish airstrikes on the PKK] hinder the fight against ISIL? What we're trying to focus on here is a coalition to go after ISIL, counter ISIL. I recognize that, in some cases, the PKK have fought against ISIL. But [the PKK] are a foreign terrorist organization. We designated them that, as an FTO. And our fight against ISIL is not in cooperation with, coordination with, or communication with the PKK. Our fight against ISIL is with 62 other nations in this coalition who are helping us go after these guys, and in Syria specifically. And again, DOD is working a train and equip program to get a moderate opposition capable enough to go after ISIL inside Syria.

So the fight against ISIL will continue. We are grateful for the contributions of Turkey and other coalition members. And the pressure that we are going to put on them, regardless of what Turkey is doing against the PKK or will do in the future, that's not going to diminish.

....

QUESTION: So you deny the allegation that Turkey basically used its part in fighting ISIS as a ploy just to go after the Kurds?

MR KIRBY: I'm not going to characterize Turkish motives. We don't observe a connection between what they did about going after PKK and what we're trying to do as a coalition against ISIL.

....

QUESTION: Incirlik base. Will the coalition jets — manned or unmanned planes will be also helping PYD forces, the ones that take off from the Incirlik base? Is this —

MR KIRBY: You're talking about the YPG? These are the counter-ISIL fighters ... in northern Syria.

MR KIRBY: They have already benefited from coalition air support.

QUESTION: Yes.

MR KIRBY: The fact that we now have access to bases in Turkey will allow for that support to be more timely and perhaps even more effective. So I would expect that that kind of air support will continue.

....

MR KIRBY: We recognize the right of Turkey to defend itself against terrorists.

....

MR KIRBY: As I said to Matt [Lee of Associated Press], even though he thinks I'm the only person in the world that believes it, there's no connection between what they did against the PKK —

QUESTION: Well, no. I think there may be three or four, but they're all inside the Administration.

MR KIRBY: There's no connection between that and the discussions that we continue to have with Turkey about how to get — go after ISIL.

QUESTION: So it never — it was never raised?

MR KIRBY: I'm not going to get into the details of discussions that we have with the Turks. What I'm telling you is there's no connection between what they did against PKK and what we're going to try to do together against ISIL.

....

QUESTION: Yeah. John, yesterday [26 July], to answer one of my questions, the Pentagon Press Office, they told me that the Turkey's counterattack on ISIL in Syria is not part of the coalitions. It's not under the command of the joint cooperation that the other —

MR KIRBY: Yeah. I think tactically that's correct.

QUESTION: They do it independently.

MR KIRBY: Yes.

.... ... these specific strikes were done in a extra-coalition manner. In other words, they weren't part of the coalition air campaign for that day. That doesn't mean that that might not change in the future. Again, I would let Turkey speak to the way in which they're going to contribute to coalition efforts.

....

MR KIRBY: I think we've talked about this before. So our concern, our larger concern for the coalition is against ISIL. The Turks have agreed to improve their cooperation as part of the coalition against ISIL, and talks will continue to see where that cooperation can even get better over time. PKK is an FTO. We talked about his before. Turks

retaliated with strikes against the PKK for strikes that they suffered as a result of PKK violence.

PKK is a foreign terrorist organization. The Turks have a right to defend themselves against it. That was separate and distinct from the fight against ISIL, which the Turks have now agreed to even more cooperation on.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 27 July 2015.

Let me summarize what McGurk and Kirby said. The U.S. negotiated with Turkey only about ISIL in Syria. Coincidentally, Turkey retaliated against the PKK, because of terrorist attacks in Turkey by the PKK. The U.S. Government recognizes Turkey's legal right to defend itself from terrorists like the PKK. The U.S. Government is *not* responsible for what Turkey did to the PKK.

On 28 July, the U.S. State Department posted the [transcript](#) of journalists interacting with three anonymous senior government officials about the efforts of the Counter-ISIL Coalition.

On 29 July 2015, the Associated Press reported:

President Barack Obama's stepped-up partnership with Turkey in fighting the Islamic State may come at the cost of alienating another key group he's counting on for help in the same conflict: the Kurds.

....

The White House has publicly sided with Turkey, endorsing the NATO ally's right to defend itself against recent deadly attacks in Turkey by the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. But Iraq's prime minister says the Turkish strikes violate Iraq's sovereignty, and U.S. officials have quietly signaled they're urging Turkey to lay off.

....

"Knowingly or not, the U.S. is going to end up having to choose between the Turks and the Kurds," said Blaise Misztal, national security director at the Washington-based Bipartisan Policy Center.

....

"The price Turkey wants for cooperation is a free hand against the Kurds," said Jon Alterman, a former State Department official who runs the Mideast program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Josh Lederman, "Turkish attacks on Kurds muddle Obama's Islamic State fight," [Associated Press](#), 16:27 EDT, 29 July 2015.

My comment is that the U.S. should choose the Kurds instead of Turkey. There is a strong consensus amongst military commentator that airstrikes alone will *not* defeat ISIL — troops on the ground are needed. The Kurds in both Iraq and Syria are the most effective troops on the ground in the war against ISIL. That is the pragmatic reason for supporting the Kurds. There is also an idealistic reason that favors supporting the Kurds, who are victims of long-

standing ethnic discrimination in both Iraq and Turkey. In my opinion, Europe and the USA will sometime need to force Turkey to accept a Kurdish state in northern Syria and northern Iraq.

On 30 July, [Rudaw](#) reported: "Kurds took to social media to express their frustrations at Turkish air strikes on its Kurdish opposition, with many accusing Washington of giving Ankara the green light for attacks in return for use of a strategic air base."

On 30 July, Agence France-Press reported:

Turkey's allies know it is playing a double game with its twin onslaught against Kurdish rebels and ISIS, but are turning a blind eye to keep NATO's only Muslim member on side, analysts said.

The very public show of solidarity for Turkey's fight against "terrorism" at an emergency NATO meeting Tuesday hid the discomfort some allies feel about President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's strategy.

Suspicious are swirling that Erdogan's sudden embrace of the U.S.-led campaign against ISIS in Syria and Iraq simply provides cover to pound Kurdish rebels, viewed in the West as a bulwark against the extremists.

Western capitals had "massive mistrust" in the motives of Turkey, which under the authoritarian and Islamist-rooted Erdogan has been accused of turning a blind eye of its own to ISIS, said Ege Seckin, Turkey analyst at IHS Country Risk.

"The member states are fully aware that the Turkish priority is an attack on the Kurds — to be more specific, the prevention of a contiguous Kurdish entity in northern Syria," Seckin told AFP.

"Attacking ISIS is more a concession given to the United States."

....

[Michael Stephens, head of the British Royal United Services Institute's center in Qatar] said Ankara "backed off right away" when the Syrian Kurds accused Turkish forces of shelling them over the weekend and it was "clear the Americans sent out the message that these guys are not to be touched."

Danny Kemp, "Allies tolerate Turkey's double game to boost ISIS fight," [Daily Star](#), 30 July 2015.

On 30 July, the Associated Press reported:

Just when it seemed Turkey was getting serious about the fight against IS, it has turned its military focus to pounding its old foe: the Kurdish rebels.

In Turkey's Kurdish heartland, the government's renewed military onslaught against the rebels has left many people crying treachery — with suspicions rife that Turkey used a brief offensive against IS as a cover to launch a broad attack against the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. Many Kurds also are venting frustration against the United

States, accusing Washington of turning a blind eye to Turkish attacks on the Kurds in exchange for logistical support on IS.

....

The mayor of Diyarbakir [in Turkey's Kurdish heartland] said distrust is growing toward both the government and the U.S.

"People here see that there have been several weak operations against IS while there have been repeated operations against Kurds both politically and militarily," Gultan Kisanak said in an interview.

She said many constituents are asking whether there was a tacit deal between Turkey and the U.S. — for the U.S. to look the other way on Kurdish operations in exchange for access to Turkish air bases. The White House has denied such claims.

....

Kurdish activists and government critics believe the government's crackdown on the PKK is a tactic aimed at strengthening the ruling party ahead of possible new elections in November.

Desmond Butler & Suzan Fraser, "Turkey onslaught on Kurds, after IS attack, fuels anger," [Associated Press](#), 15:28 EDT, 30 July 2015.

The U.S. State Department Press Briefing for 27 July was quoted above. There was no press briefing on 28-29 July. At the 30 July press briefing, the Deputy Spokesperson, Mark C. Toner, said:

QUESTION: There are some media reports, including a story in today's edition of *The New York Times*, that the U.S. relationship with the Syrian Kurds, namely the PYD, had become complicated because of the Turkish bombardment of the PKK in northern Iraq. Are those reports accurate?

MR TONER: Not at all. We've — I mean, we did a background call the other day where we talked at length about this, but we've been very clear in delineating between the PKK and, as we talked, the anti-ISIL forces, of which the Kurds are some of them, but also there's Syrian Arabs that are also engaged in this fight and this struggle, and frankly, have been very effective in bringing the fight against — in bringing the fight to ISIL, and frankly, clearing them out of parts of northern Syria. And so the coalition's been helpful in bringing airstrikes to help these forces — these anti-ISIL forces — in their efforts to clear ISIL.

Now, you're talking about the PKK — that's a separate organization. We've been very clear that we support Turkey's right to self-defense, and frankly, the PKK has carried out attacks on Turkish troops, Turkish soldiers, Turkish police, and so we view Turkey's strikes against PKK elements, mostly in northern Iraq, as a form of self-defense. And our view is quite clear: We view the PKK as a foreign terrorist organization.

....

QUESTION: John Kirby said on Monday [27 July] that Turkish air bases will be used to provide air support for YPG forces in Syria. But Turkish foreign ministry spokesperson disagreed with that and said it wasn't part of the Turkish-American understanding. Is there a misunderstanding in here or —

MR TONER: Not at all, and I wouldn't — I think you're putting words, perhaps, into John's mouth. I think he was very clear saying in support of anti-ISIL forces, of which Kurdish forces are a part, but it's a much broader group of people.

QUESTION: He exactly said, "The fact that we now have access to bases in Turkey will allow for that support to be more timely and perhaps even more effective. So I would expect that that kind of air support will continue."

MR TONER: For anti-ISIL forces in northern Iraq.

QUESTION: But the question was related to YPG.

MR TONER: All I know is [Kirby] was referring to — again, I don't want to — I mean, he was referring to, more broadly, anti-ISIL. You're right that that includes Syrian Kurds as part of that group, as well as Syrian Arabs, but it's not fair to say it's just one group.

....

MR TONER: I can't reinforce that enough, that the recent PKK attacks, and, of course, the Turkish military response, have nothing to do with our counter-ISIL efforts. And I know that there's a tendency to lump them together. We've been — we can't be more clear about that. That said, it's PKK that's initiated this violence; Turkey's retaliated in self-defense. But we want to see, obviously, that situation calm down. We want to see the PKK cease violence and return to negotiations, and we would urge the Turkish Government, obviously, to respond proportionately.

QUESTION: Is there a concern that they have not responded proportionally so far?

MR TONER: Again, I don't — these are longstanding issues. This was the PKK that carried out attacks against Turkish military. They have carried out a series of airstrikes in retaliation. I think what we want to see generally is the PKK to stop these attacks so that the situation can calm down.

QUESTION: Yeah, but do you think that the Turkish airstrikes have been disproportionate?

MR TONER: No. I would say it's been in self-defense, and ... and that's been very clearly our line.

QUESTION: So thus far, at least, what the Turks have done in terms of the airstrikes against the PKK is okay and is in accordance with the U.S.-Turkey understanding on how to go about business, the business of countering ISIL?

MR TONER: Well, again, I don't want to — I want to separate the two out. Because what we agreed to in terms of our coordinating closely with Turkey on anti-ISIL efforts is a different thing altogether than these PKK attacks and the strikes carried out by Turkey.

QUESTION: So you're saying in conversations with the Turks about this the PKK has not come up once?

MR TONER: Oh, I don't necessarily think that. In fact, we — look, our position's clear. We're — they're a foreign terrorist organization. We consult with the Turks a lot on PKK issues. But I think we want to see — just to be clear, we want to see the PKK stop these provocative attacks, and we want to see the Turkish Government respond proportionately.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 30 July 2015.

Notice that when asked about airstrikes in support of YPG who are fighting against ISIL, Toner evaded the question by accusing the journalist of misquoting Kirby. See the quotation from Kirby's press briefing on 27 July that is quoted above, which makes clear that Toner misinterpreted Kirby's clear statement. On 31 July, two newspapers in Turkey, [Today's Zaman](#) and [Hurriyet](#), interpreted Toner's answer as confirming that airstrikes in support of the YPG would be launched from air bases in Turkey.

On the topic of proportional response by Turkey to PKK terrorism, it is obviously *not* a proportional response when the Turkish government claims to have killed 260 PKK ([Anadolu Agency](#)) in retaliation for the PKK killing approximately 20 soldiers and policemen ([AP](#)). Toner's response is absurd when he refuses to recognize that the Turkish government is overreacting — *not* a proportional retaliation. This absurdity reinforces the perception that the U.S. Government will *not* criticize the Turkish government for attacking the PKK.

The *Times* story mentioned in the 30 July briefing at the State Department appears to be "Turkey's Focus on Crushing Kurdish Separatists Complicates the Fight Against ISIS", which is at [NY Times](#).

On 1 Aug, Barzani asked the PKK to withdraw from the Kurdish region in Iraq. [Associated Press](#). Where should the PKK go? If the PKK depart Iraq for Turkey, the Turkish government will slaughter the PKK. If the PKK depart Iraq for northern Syria, that will hugely complicate relations between the Syrian Kurds, Turkey, and the U.S.-led Coalition.

On 31 July, [Channel 4](#) news in London published an article titled "Turkey has hijacked the fight against IS". Macer Gifford, a British citizen who recently fought with the Kurds in Syria, said: "The Turkish government has hijacked the fight against the Islamic State for their selfish national interest. The Turks are incredibly angry, jealous and frustrated with the

successes of the Kurds against IS. They would rather see all of Syria burn than have the Kurds on their doorstep."

The hijack metaphor is interesting, because the Syrian civil war began in 2011 as a pro-democracy movement. Later, that movement was hijacked by Al-Qaeda (Nusra Front), and additionally hijacked in mid-2013 by ISIL. By January 2014, ISIL had become so obnoxious that other insurgents were fighting against ISIL, as well as fighting against Assad's government. In September 2014, Obama decided that defeating ISIL was more important than removing Assad.

On 1 Aug 2015, journalists continue to doubt the sincerity of Turkey's fight against ISIL. Erdogan's real goal is to destroy the PKK. See, e.g., [Gulf News](#); [Sunday's Zaman](#).

My Comments

My comment is that Turkey is an ally from Hell. Turkey has committed a long series of acts, or failures to act, that make Turkey an unreliable partner in the war against ISIL. The Turkish government:

1. sent ammunition and weapons to ISIL in January 2014 and probably many other times.
2. allowed insurgents and their supplies to enter Syria.
3. purchased oil from ISIL, thereby funding ISIL's terrorist activities.
4. denied the U.S. Air Force the use of the Incirlik airbase for bombing ISIL in Syria from Sep 2014 through July 2015. Turkey caused extra costs for U.S. taxpayers who pay for jet fuel. Turkey also caused longer flight times for U.S. pilots, which frustrated the ability to strike temporary, short-lived opportunities — and also inconvenienced pilots.
5. bombed the PKK in Iraq, beginning 25 July 2015.

In each instance, Turkey was rowing the wrong direction, either directly helping ISIL or greatly complicating the fight against ISIL. Astoundingly, until 20 July 2015, Turkey seemed oblivious to the danger posed to Turkey by Islamic terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

Because Assad has abandoned northern Syria, Turkey is the only nation that can seal the northern border of Syria. It is essential to seal the Turkey/Syria border, to choke the flow of supplies and new fighters to insurgents like ISIL. This makes Turkey an indispensable partner in the fight against ISIL.

It appears that many of these problems with Turkey are owing to the personal policies of Erdogan. By problems, I mean the erroneous beliefs that:

- ISIL and PKK are indistinguishable (see [above](#)),
- the PKK is a bigger threat to Turkey than ISIL (see [above](#)),

Turkey "will never allow" a Kurdish state in Syria (see cites in my essay for [June 2015](#)),

- Turkey refuses to cooperate with Syrian Kurdish fighters in the war against ISIL,
- excessive secrecy (and unaccountability) of Turkish government,
- intimidation and imprisonment of journalists by Turkey,

If Erdogan's party loses more seats in parliament at the next election, we could see a more moderate Turkey.

Meanwhile, the USA is being tainted by its cooperation with Turkey in the fight against ISIL. The slow and clumsy way that the U.S. Government responded to reports of Turkish airstrikes on the PKK further harmed the reputation of the USA. Once a rumor or perception has begun, it is difficult to replace it with facts. If Kirby's 27 July press briefing had come a day or two earlier, it might have helped the reputation of the USA — although Matt Lee of Associated Press was incredulous of Kirby's assertion that Turkey's airstrikes on PKK had *no* connection to the agreement with Turkey for cooperation against ISIL.

There are active insurgencies or civil wars in many nations with a Muslim majority (e.g., Afghanistan, Syria, Libya). It would have been good if the USA and NATO had quickly condemned the Turkish bombing of the PKK, and forced Turkey to continue peace negotiations with the PKK. Aside from avoiding an unnecessary civil war in Turkey, we need full cooperation from Kurds in Iraq and Syria in the war against ISIL, without threats to the Kurds from Turkey.

Both Assad and Erdogan put people in prison for criticizing their government. Obama says Assad has lost his legitimacy to rule Syria, while Obama is eager to cooperate with Erdogan. I suggest that Obama is inconsistent in being idealistic about opposing Assad, while being pragmatic about cooperating with Erdogan. The U.S.-led fight against ISIL needed Turkey to

1. stop sending weapons to insurgents in Syria,
2. seal the Turkey-Syrian border, to stop fighters and supplies from entering Syria,
3. give the U.S. Air Force access to the Incirlik air base for airstrikes in Syria.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Government has given the impression of ignoring the plight of the Kurds in exchange for Turkey cooperating in the fight against ISIL.

There is the very difficult question of whether the PKK is either a (1) terrorist organization that needs to be annihilated or (2) legitimate political organization that represents some fraction of an oppressed minority ethnic group (i.e., Kurds in Turkey). I do not know enough to answer this question. Because it is a very emotional issue, it will be difficult to find unbiased information on which one can rely. There may be elements of *both* terror *and* legitimate politics in the PKK.

Recognition that Assad is Not Winning the Civil War

Introduction

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.

July 2015

On 17 July, Assad made a rare public appearance to pray in a mosque. [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Rudaw](#).

On 26 July, Assad gave a rare public speech in Damascus, in which Assad acknowledged that the Syrian army was short of manpower. The manpower shortage forced Assad to abandon parts of Syria to ISIL and other insurgents, so Assad could concentrate his small army on more important parts of Syria. [The Telegraph](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#). The manpower shortage is **not** new, *The Washington Post* reported it on 28 Dec 2014, as mentioned in my essay for [Dec 2014](#). What is new is that Assad publicly admits the manpower shortage.

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 2015, 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 essays for [May 2015](#) and [June 2015](#).) Somehow these one-on-one talks are expected by the U.N. to revive the peace negotiations.

July 2015

On 10 July, de Mistura met with Ban Ki-moon at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, where de Mistura "discussed the findings from the initial phase of the Geneva Consultations". The terse (three-sentence) press release also says: "The Special Envoy intends to finalize by the end of July his proposals to the Secretary-General on a way forward to support Syrian parties in their search of a political solution to the conflict, in preparation for a briefing to the Security Council." [U.N. Geneva](#). On 13 July, I looked at the webpages of the U.N. Secretary General, but found nothing about his 10 July meeting with de Mistura.

On 23 July, de Mistura was again in Baghdad, where he met with the Syrian foreign minister, Walid al-Moallem. [Associated Press](#); [SANA](#).

On 24 July, [Reuters](#) reported: "Syria's foreign minister said on Friday [24 July] it was too early to hold another United Nations-backed peace conference on Syria, indicating the dim prospects for diplomacy as a U.N. envoy wraps up three months of consultations on the war."

On 29 July, de Mistura appeared at the United Nations headquarters in New York City and announced it was too soon to have a peace conference. Instead, de Mistura proposed to convene meetings amongst Syrians to create a consensus about a political solution. Apparently, the only item on which everyone now agrees is that there needs to be a so-called "political solution" to the civil war in Syria. But there is no consensus on the details of that political solution.

The United Nations press release says:

Describing the more than four years of "slaughter" in Syria as a "shameful symbol of the international community's divisions and failure," United Nations Secretary-General

Ban Ki-moon today appealed to the Security Council to endorse his Special Envoy's recommendations on reaching the political solution that "all parties claim to support."

"On March 28, I instructed my Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to intensify efforts to find a political settlement to the conflict," [reminded](#) Mr. Ban, who specifically asked him to work to "operationalize the Geneva Communiqué."

....

After extensive consultations, Mr. de Mistura came up with what the Secretary-General called a "viable alternative,"

[de Mistura said:] "What I am today proposing is to deepen the Geneva consultations format. I now intend to invite Syrians to parallel thematic discussions through intra-Syrian working groups addressing the key aspects of the Geneva Communiqué," [1] safety and protection for all; [2] political and constitutional Issues; [3] military and security issues; [4] public institutions; and [5] reconstruction and development.

These working groups will start generating movement towards a "Syrian-owned framework document" on the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué, explained Mr. de Mistura, convinced that this effort should be led by a "Steering committee" composed of Syrians from these thematic groups and possibly elsewhere.

"The framework document will also provide for a transitional governing body, procedures for a national dialogue, the constitution drafting process and transitional justice issues," continued the Special Envoy.

"At Security Council, Ban and UN special envoy outline 'way forward' on political solution for war-torn Syria," [U.N.](#), 29 July 2015.

The Associated Press reported:

The U.N. point man on Syria [Staffan de Mistura] said Wednesday [29 July] it's too soon for another peace conference in Geneva and invited Syrians to hold intensive preparatory talks on key issues including a political transition and fighting terrorism.

....

The U.N. chief [Ban Ki-moon] urged the Security Council to endorse de Mistura's recommendations and convince the Syrian parties to participate in the proposed talks. He also urged the council, Syria's neighbors and regional sponsors of the parties fighting in Syria "to stem all flows of arms and foreign fighters pouring into the country" and "to stop using the country as a proxy battleground."

Over the last 20 months de Mistura held talks with over 200 individuals — Syrians and non-Syrians — on finding a political solution.

He said the talks revealed a shared sense of urgency given recent gains by the Islamic State extremist group and the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front, and "talk about

fragmentation, radicalization and sectarianism." He said there was also wide support for "a managed, phased, gradual or controlled transition, avoiding a repeat of Libya or Iraq."

De Mistura said the two past peace conferences in Geneva in 2012 and 2014, which failed to bring peace, still got opposing Syrian parties to start talking to each other, even indirectly.

He said his aim was now to hold simultaneous discussions among Syrians on addressing key aspects of the 2012 Geneva roadmap and Ban said the U.N. hopes to get four working groups operational in September.

De Mistura said they will tackle [1] safety and protection of civilians, [2] medical access and the release of detainees, [3] political and constitutional issues, [4] combatting terrorism, as well as [5] reconstruction and development.

Edith M. Lederer, "UN says too soon for new Syrian peace conference," [Associated Press](#), 20:11 EDT, 29 July 2015.

Reuters reported:

The United Nations mediator in Syria's conflict on Wednesday [29 July] proposed inviting warring parties to take part in four U.N.-led working groups on how to implement a roadmap to peace, since the groups were not ready to hold formal peace talks.

Mediator Staffan de Mistura told the U.N. Security Council that the groups would address [1] safety and protection for all, [2] political and constitutional issues, [3] military and security issues, and [4] public institutions, reconstruction and development.

Michelle Nichols, "U.N. mediator proposes Syria working groups on roadmap to peace," [Reuters](#), 14:30 EDT, 29 July 2015.

There are some discrepancies between the Associated Press and UN/Reuters news articles about the subjects for working groups. "Combatting terrorism" in the AP list is probably included in "military and security" in the UN and Reuters lists. I inserted numbers in brackets in the quotations from the UN, AP, and Reuters. Note that AP has five topics for four working groups.

The reaction of the Syrian government is found at [SANA](#).

My comment is did we really need three months of consultations by de Mistura to determine that no consensus exists about the future government of Syria? These consultations were a waste of money and time. The end result — de Mistura's proposal for more meetings — was essentially the same thing that the Moscow meetings were accomplishing, albeit at a snail's pace, since 26 Jan 2015. I have a better idea: forget about the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 and let the Syria people design their own future government. (My criticisms of the Geneva Communiqué of 2012 are in my separate [essay](#).) Furthermore, the big problems in Syria since mid-2013 are how to exterminate ISIL, Nusra Front, and other terrorist organizations. The Syrian government — regardless of who leads it — does *not* have the

resources to defeat the multiple terrorist insurgencies. And the continuing civil war and its destruction of buildings, electricity supply, and other infrastructure is continuing to deplete resources of Syria.

Note that, consistently since mid-2013, *none* of the insurgent groups in Syria want to attend negotiations. That alone will kill any possible political solution for the Syrian civil war.

Ban and de Mistura are now trying to solve the problem that existed in the years 2011 and 2012: convert Assad's dictatorship to a democratic government. But the current big problem is ISIL's creation of a caliphate in Syria, Iraq, and eventually other nations. Another current problem is Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda) creating an emirate in Syria. Other current problems are numerous jihadist organizations who want to create an Islamic government to replace Assad's secular government. Looking at all of these current problems, I conclude that Assad is better than any of the alternatives amongst the insurgents.

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 28 June and 26 July, I searched Google News for reports of scheduling a third conference in Moscow, but I found no news in June or July.

On 24 July, [Reuters](#) reported the Syrian foreign minister "said the Syrian government welcomed the idea of more talks with members of the Syrian opposition hosted by Russia."

U.N. Reports

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 monthly Reports on the situation in Syria, beginning March 2014.

Beginning in June 2015, I discontinued 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.

Beginning in October 2013, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) issued monthly reports on chemical weapons on Syria. My [webpage](#) has links to each of these reports.

As mentioned in my essay for [May 2015](#), the U.N. document delivery system has been nonfunctional since 22 April 2015. Fortunately, there are alternative sources, such as [ReliefWeb](#) and [Security Council Reports](#).

Debacle in Iraq

Death Toll in Iraq

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a [table](#) of monthly death tolls announced by United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) during 2013-2015.

Atrocities in Iraq

Introduction

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.
-

July 2015

On 3 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports "Police officials say a bombing Friday near shops in the town of Madain, just south of Baghdad, left three people dead and wounded eight." Also "officials say a bomb blast in a commercial street in eastern Baghdad killed three people." Furthermore, two people were executed with gunshots and their corpses were dumped in Baghdad streets in the traditional Islamic way.

On 4 July, the [Associated Press](#) reported that three car bombs, plus one bomb in an outdoor market, all in or near Baghdad, had killed at least 19 people. See also [Reuters](#).

On 5 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports four bombs in Baghdad and its suburbs killed at least 15 people.

On 9 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports four bombs in Baghdad killed 14 people.

On 11 July, 7 civilians were killed in or near Baghdad. The [Associated Press](#) reports: "[Police] say a bomb near an outdoor market killed two people in the town of Youssifiya just south of Baghdad. In the northeastern suburbs of the capital, police say gunmen killed two people in a drive-by shooting. In Rashidiya just north of Baghdad, they say a bomb exploded near a vegetable and fruit market, killing three people and wounding five."

On 12 July, three car bombs, one suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest, and one roadside bomb killed at least 29 people in Baghdad. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) says 35 people were killed.

On 17 July, the last day of the Ramadan month, an ISIL suicide car bomb at a market in the Diyala province of Iraq killed at least 115 people.

- [Associated Press](#), 21:03 GMT on 17 July ("40 people killed").
- [Associated Press](#), 24:05 GMT on 17 July (at least 80 dead).
- [Reuters](#), 21:45 GMT on 17 July ("more than 100 people" dead).
- [Associated Press](#), 11:26 GMT on 18 July ("killed 115 people").
- [Washington Post](#), 17:01 GMT on 18 July ("at least 130 are dead").

[Reuters](#) reported that ISIL claimed the 17 July car bomb contained "around three tonnes of explosives". The explosion caused "several buildings" to collapse, which explains the increasing death toll as rubble was removed. My comment is that 3000 kg of explosives would greatly exceed the carrying capacity of a passenger car. Later reports say the bomb was in a truck. The [Associated Press](#) concluded that the 17 July attack was the most deadly terrorist attack on civilians in Iraq since the year 2011. The speaker of Iraq's parliament said the attack on 17 July struck an "ugly sectarian chord", probably because ISIL is Sunni and most of the victims were Shiites. [Associated Press](#); [Daily Star](#). He could have said that Iraq is a failed nation, in which civilization has collapsed, terrorism is routine, and laws are no longer enforced.

On 21 July, two car bombs in Baghdad killed at least 23 people. Another 7 people were killed

by car bombs in the towns of Mandali and Tarmiya. [Daily Star](#)(AFP).

On 22 July, two car bombs at markets in Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad killed at least 26 people. [Associated Press](#).

On 25 July, two suicide bombers exploded at a swimming pool in northern Iraq, killing at least 12 people. [Reuters](#).

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* often ignores terrorists attacks in Iraq, but when they do report an attack, they report only a small fraction of the actual deaths. *Iraqi News* rarely reports on the daily 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 unIslamic, 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.

July 2015

On 8 July, the U.S. State Department announced the formation of The Sawab Center in Abu Dhabi, UAE to counter ISIL propaganda on social media.

The United States and the United Arab Emirates today launched The Sawab Center,^{*} the first-ever multinational online messaging and engagement program, in support of the Global Coalition Against Daesh. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel and UAE Minister of State Anwar Gargash participated in the launch event in support of the millions of people in the region and around the world that oppose Daesh.

The Sawab Center will use direct online engagement to counter terrorist propaganda rapidly and effectively, including messages used to recruit foreign fighters, fundraise for illicit activities, and intimidate and terrorize local populations. The Sawab Center will increase the intensity of online debate by presenting moderate and tolerant voices from across the region and amplifying inclusive and constructive narratives.

Co-founded by the United States and the UAE, the Sawab Center will expand to welcome other partners in the 63 country Coalition and with people, organizations and businesses throughout the world to challenge Daesh's doctrines of hate and intolerance. The Center will also engage and expand the network of people willing to speak out against the terrorist group's propaganda, recruitment and fundraising efforts.

^{*}The Arabic word "sawab," means "right" or "correct" as in "the right path."
"Launch of the Sawab Center," [State Dept.](#), 8 July 2015.

The Associated Press reported:

IS supporters have deftly harnessed social media to spread the group's slickly produced

Hollywood-style film clips and other messages aimed at recruiting and drawing support from plugged-in young Muslims.

The Obama administration has urged Arab allies to do more to combat the media blitz, characterizing the fight on the communications front as a key pillar in the overall effort to defeat the group.

The new Sawab Center is one of the most concrete responses to that call yet in the region. Named for the Arabic word for "the right or proper way," it will be based in Abu Dhabi, the oil-rich capital of the United Arab Emirates, a key American ally and a member of the U.S.-led coalition against the IS group.

....

Journalists were not allowed to attend the project's unveiling or visit the center, which has been testing its operations and developing its branding over the past three months.

More work still needs to be done. The center does not yet have an active website of its own, and a planned Facebook presence and a dedicated YouTube channel are expected to take several more weeks to develop. Officials say they hope the center will eventually launch "proactive online messaging campaigns" to target IS propaganda.

About 15 to 20 full-time staff, mostly Emiratis, will work at the center for now, said Rashad Hussain, the U.S. special envoy and coordinator for strategic counterterrorism communications.

He did not have precise details on the price tag, saying it was in the tens of millions of dollars, but said the "Emiratis are taking the lead on the cost."

Separately, the United States has been expanding an existing U.S. State Department division set up in 2011 that Hussain heads known as the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications.

Its responsibilities include countering jihadist messages online and coordinating American counterterrorism messaging efforts. Following a revamp, it is increasingly sharing stories of defectors and former radicals, highlighting Muslim victims of terrorism, and showcasing living conditions and battlefield realities in IS militant-held areas, Hussain said.

Adam Schreck, "US, UAE launch anti-IS online messaging center in Abu Dhabi," [Associated Press](#), 19:35 GMT, 8 July 2015.

See also [Gulf News](#); [The National](#); Opinion by Dr. Anwar Gargash And Mr. Richard Stengel in [The National](#); all in UAE. The [Sawab Center](#) website is currently in English and Arabic languages.

My comment is that the U.S. Government should have begun something like this Sawab Center in 1998, when Al-Qaeda attacked two U.S. Embassies in Africa. But better late than never. Given that journalists were not allowed to tour the Sawab Center on 8 July, it appears

that the Center is not yet operational.

The cost of the Sawab Center — which is "in the tens of millions of dollars" — is a bargain compared to airstrikes and training-equipping ground forces. U.S. Military operations in Iraq and Syria have cost an average of US\$ 8.5 million/day from 8 August 2014 to 12 March 2015. [Pentagon](#). More recent data, from Aug 2014 through 21 May 2015, has a total cost of at least US\$ 2.7 billion, which averages to US\$ 9.1 million/day. [Military Times](#). The cost per day is increasing, as the military bombs more sites per day.

On 20 July 2015, the prime minister of the United Kingdom announced a five-year plan to discourage "Islamist extremist ideology", which he called a "poison". Details of the plan will be announced in Autumn 2015. Transcript of speech at [UK Govt](#); [The Independent](#). News reports: [The Telegraph](#); [The Guardian](#); [The Independent](#); [Reuters](#); [BBC](#). The reaction of Muslims in the UK is reported by [The Guardian](#). My comment is that all nations needed this kind of effort in the 1990s, and here we are in the year 2015 still without an effective effort to discourage recruitment of terrorists. At least Cameron in the UK is *talking* about a plan, unlike most politicians who are doing *nothing* about this problem.

On 24 July, [Rudaw](#) reported on a Japanese anime cartoon with a female character named ISIS-chan, who chops watermelons instead of heads of hostages. Parody can be an effective weapon.

My Proposal

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 June 2006, a U.S. airstrike killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (the predecessor of ISIL).
- 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 successor to current 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.
- On 16 June 2015, an airstrike in Syria smote "a senior ISIL leader", Tariq bin Tahar al-'Awni al-Harzi. [Reuters](#); [AP](#).
- On 11 July 2015, Abu Khalil al-Sudani, an Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan, was killed

by a U.S. airstrike. The [Pentagon](#) boasted of the accomplishment. See also, [NY Times](#); [Reuters](#).

However the deaths of bin Laden and al-Awlaki had little effect on Al-Qaeda, and it is expected that the deaths of the leaders in June 2015 will also have little effect on Islamic terrorism. [Washington Post](#); [Haaretz](#); [BBC](#); [Associated Press](#), 16 June 2015; [Associated Press](#), 2 July 2015.

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 U.S. Government continued after the deaths of President Roosevelt in 1945 and President Kennedy in 1963. Successful organizations are capable of continuing under new leadership. Indeed, the U.S. Constitution, 22nd Amendment, limits a president to a maximum of two terms (8 years).

My point is that continually attacking the ideology of Islamic terrorism is more detrimental to a terrorist organization than the brief inconvenience of killing a terrorist leader.

On 6 July 2015, Obama gave a speech (quoted [below](#)) that recognized the importance of fighting the ideology of "violent extremism", but failed to mention specific proposals for that effort.

Mullah Omar was the leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan since 1996. Omar was reclusive and not seen in public since 2001. On 29 July 2015, there were unconfirmed reports that Omar had died in a hospital in Karachi, Pakistan in April 2013. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). On 30 July 2015, the reports were confirmed and the Taliban appointed a new leader. [Reuters](#); [Express Tribune](#) in Pakistan; [Associated Press](#). This example shows us how unimportant a leader is to a terrorist organization. The Taliban functioned successfully with a dead leader for more than two years! Journalists report that Omar's death may make peace negotiations more difficult, because some Taliban want to continue fighting. But — regardless of who leads the Taliban — there will be some Taliban who want to continue fighting, in the hope for a total victory.

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 was on vacation — during all of June — 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.

Iraq is a failure

Introduction

During an existential crisis — the invasion of Iraq by ISIL — the Iraqi parliament held infrequent meetings, had small attendance when they met, and made glacially slow progress on solving Iraq's problems. This abysmal performance of parliament was chronicled in my essays for [July 2014](#) through [February 2015](#). The data for July through October 2014 are summarized in my [table](#).

My essay for [June 2015](#) mentions corruption in Iraq, and criticism of the Iraqi government by journalists. 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 2015.

July 2015

When the Iraqi parliament reconvened for a new term on 1 July 2015, the meeting was initially postponed for two hours because of the lack of a quorum. [All Iraqi News](#). Parliament convened at 13:57 on 1 July with 220 members (67%) present. [All Iraqi News](#). After a two-hour meeting, parliament was adjourned until 2 July. [All Iraqi News](#). The failure of the Iraqi parliament to achieve anything significant on 1 July is typical of its performance.

On 5 July, the Iraqi parliament adjourned until 25 July. [All Iraqi News](#) (5 July); [All Iraqi News](#) (25 July). After a one-month vacation during June, it is astounding that the do-nothing Iraqi parliament takes a three-week vacation in July. Only 175 members (53%) attended the 25 July parliament session.

On 8 July, trial began for 28 defendants who are accused of the murder of 1700 unarmed Iraqi soldiers at Camp Speicher, near Tikrit, in June 2014. After a three-hour trial, 24 defendants were sentenced to death by hanging. A spokesman for Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council said 604 other suspects have not yet been arrested. The Associated Press reports: the defendants "told the court that their confessions were coerced under torture by Iraqi officers." The Associated Press also reports that four defendants were acquitted "for lack of evidence." Of the five news sources cited here, only Reuters mentioned the quick trial: "Dispensing swift justice, the court issued the death sentences within hours of the start of the trial on Wednesday [8 July], based on what a spokesman described as strong evidence and confessions from the convicted men." I inferred the three-hour duration of the trial from the times on two news reports in *All Iraq News*. [Rudaw](#), 11:00 GMT; [All Iraq News](#), 07:45 GMT (trial begins); [All Iraq News](#), 10:48 GMT (death sentences); [Reuters](#), 12:55 GMT; [Associated Press](#), 13:57 GMT; all on 8 July 2015.

A large part of law is about fair procedure (e.g., "due process of law" in the U.S. Constitution). A three-hour trial that results in death sentences for 24 defendants is appalling. I have no problem with sentencing murderers to death, but I want some assurances that they are really guilty, and that their alleged confessions were not coerced. This sham trial increases my belief that Iraq is a failed nation.

Send munitions directly to Kurds in Iraq?

The U.S. Government continues to insist that all foreign military aid to Iraq flow through the central government in Baghdad. That policy is good for empowering the central Iraqi government and good for dreams of a unified Iraq. In practice, the sectarian bureaucrats in Baghdad send essentially all military aid to the Shiite regions, and deprive both the Kurdish peshmerga and the Sunni tribes, both of whom are eager to fight against ISIL. This scheme has three illogical consequences:

1. munitions are denied by the Iraqi government to people who are eager to fight against ISIL, but given to the Iraqi army, which the U.S. Secretary of Defense said, on 24 May 2015, "showed no will to fight".
2. the Iraqi army repeatedly flees from battle with ISIL and abandons its U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles, which are then stolen by ISIL. In other words, the U.S. taxpayer is paying to equip ISIL and make ISIL a more formidable enemy.
3. The central government in Baghdad denies weapons to the Kurds and Sunnis because of fear that they will sometime revolt against the central government. But the continuing discrimination against the Kurds and Sunnis increases the number of grievances, which makes a future revolt more likely.

On 16 June 2015, the U.S. Senate defeated (by a vote of 54 for, 45 against) Senate Amendment 1549 to the National Defense Authorization Act that would allow the President to give weapons directly to the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, instead of sending all weapons through the central government in Baghdad. The Iraqi ambassador to the USA had his knickers in a twist about this Amendment, which he said "would undermine Iraq unity and sovereignty at this critical time." [Politico](#). Of course, if there really was "unity" in Iraq, this Amendment would not be needed to prevent the Shiite majority from denying weapons to the Kurds. Given Obama's strong opposition to this proposal, it is remarkable that the Amendment failed by only 6 votes. [U.S. Congress](#); [The Hill](#); [Radio Iowa](#). Similar proposals are languishing in the U.S. Congress: H.R. 1654 (introduced 26 March 2015) and S. 1188 (introduced 5 May 2015).

The repeated failures of the Iraqi army to defeat ISIL rightfully concerns Iraq's Arab neighbors, who are threatened by ISIL.

On 2 July 2015, in response to this sectarian logjam in Baghdad, *The Telegraph* in London reports that unnamed Arab government(s) attempted to send military supplies directly to the Kurdish peshmerga:

The United States has blocked attempts by its Middle East allies to fly heavy weapons directly to the Kurds fighting Islamic State jihadists in Iraq, *The Telegraph* has learnt.

....

[High level officials from Gulf and other states] now say they are willing to "go it alone" in supplying heavy weapons to the Kurds, even if means defying the Iraqi

authorities and their American backers, who demand all weapons be channelled through Baghdad.

....

The Peshmerga have been successfully fighting Isil, driving them back from the gates of Erbil and, with the support of Kurds from neighbouring Syria, re-establishing control over parts of Iraq's north-west.

But they are doing so with a makeshift armoury. Millions of pounds-worth of weapons have been bought by a number of European countries to arm the Kurds, but American commanders, who are overseeing all military operations against Isil, are blocking the arms transfers.

One of the core complaints of the Kurds is that the Iraqi army has abandoned so many weapons in the face of Isil attack, the Peshmerga are fighting modern American weaponry with out-of-date Soviet equipment.

....

The US has also infuriated its allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf states, by what they perceive to be a lack of clear purpose and vacillation in how they conduct the bombing campaign. Other members of the coalition say they have identified clear Isil targets but then been blocked by US veto from firing at them.

Con Coughlin, "US blocks attempts by Arab allies to fly heavy weapons directly to Kurds to fight Islamic State," [The Telegraph](#), 07:36 GMT, 2 July 2015.

The two big newspapers in Kurdish Iraq reported this news:

- "Gulf States' Plan to Arm Kurds Directly Blocked by Obama," [BAS News](#), 07:23 GMT, 2 July 2015.
- "Arab allies blast US strategy on ISIS, may arm Kurds," [Rudaw](#), approximately 11:00 GMT, 2 July 2015.

My comments: The expedient method of fighting ISIL would be to arm the Kurdish peshmerga and Sunni tribes directly. But foreign weapons shipments directly to minority regions inside Iraq would violate the sovereignty of the central Iraqi government in Baghdad. That government in Baghdad would probably retaliate in some way(s), such as developing a stronger relationship with Iran, causing even more difficulties for the fight against ISIL.

The incompetence and sectarian policies of the Iraqi government in Baghdad led to an incompetent Iraqi army with many corrupt officers. (See [above](#) and my previous essays, beginning in June 2014.) The Iraqi army failed to prevent the ISIL invasion during January-June 2014. In the past 18 months, Iraqi army has expelled ISIL from *only one* Iraqi city (Tikrit). ISIL's capture of Ramadi on 17 May 2015 shows that the Iraqis have learned nothing since ISIL's capture of Mosul on 10 June 2014. In summary, the incompetence and sectarian policies of the Baghdad government are responsible for ISIL's conquest of 1/3 of Iraq. It is

not surprising that those continuing problems in Baghdad are frustrating the defeat of ISIL.

Unless Abadi can salvage the Iraqi government in Baghdad — something he has been unable to do during his first ten months in office — it appears inevitable that the dysfunctional Iraqi government will collapse. Iraq will then split into three ethnic regions (i.e., Shiite, Sunni, and Kurd). There is never a good time for a government to collapse, but in the middle of a war is particularly bad time for a government to collapse.

At the Daily Press Briefing at the U.S. State Department at 13:00 EDT on 2 July, Spokesperson John Kirby denied the story in *The Telegraph*:

QUESTION: Thank you, John. There were — there was a report today in *Telegraph* newspaper that your Arab allies have wanted to send arms directly to the Peshmerga but the United States has effectively prevented them from doing so. Is that true?

MR KIRBY: We have talked about this a lot, so I'll just say it again: The Kurdish forces in Iraq, the Peshmerga, have been getting material, aid, and assistance from the coalition — not just from the United States, but from the coalition. It is being provided through and by the Iraqi Government in Baghdad, which is how we're going to keep doing this. And the government in Baghdad has not held things up, has not caused there to be impediments to the delivery of this material. And as I said I think last week — and I kind of went through the extensive amount of arms and ammunition that have been provided and will continue to be provided.

QUESTION: But those officials who have talking to the newspaper on the condition of anonymity — multiple officials, apparently, from different Gulf countries — they are saying — they are very critical of the Obama strategy and saying that there should be more advanced weapons transferred to the Peshmerga, and more directly. But you have apparently, according to them, effectively told them to — do not do it. Is that true?

MR KIRBY: I'm not aware of any instructions that were given by the United States to other nations about the manner in which they would or would not arm Peshmerga forces. What I can speak to is our consistent, persistent policy of making sure they get the arms and ammunition they need quickly, efficiently, effectively, and that has — and that's been going on. That's been happening, and it's been happening through the government in Baghdad.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 2 July, 2015.

Note that Mr. Kirby denies that the government in Baghdad is withholding shipments of munitions to the Kurdish peshmerga. Mr. Kirby also denies that the U.S. Government has blocked attempts by Arab nation(s) to deliver munitions directly to the Kurds. Those two denials seem to indicate that the U.S. Government believes the story in *The Telegraph* is false. The Kurdish newspaper [Rudaw](#) reported Kirby's denials.

I searched the news transcripts at the Pentagon and found an acknowledgment in August 2014 that the Baghdad government had previously been failing to equip the Kurds:

QUESTION: ... I mean, the Peshmerga still say they haven't received the heavy weapons that they've requested. And you're creating a task force, I understand, on that?

GEN. DEMPSEY: A task force for the equipping effort with the Kurds? Yes, the secretary [of defense] has a task force that oversees that. And they have begun to receive supplies, not just, by the way, from us or regional partners, but also from the government of Iraq, which incidentally is not to be discounted as a significant moment, with the possibility that there will be a single state of Iraq in the future. And we are providing, you know, the — those that were conducting assessments in those joint operations centers have continued to evolve. So this isn't just about airstrikes.

"Department of Defense Press Briefing by Secretary Hagel and General Dempsey in the Pentagon Briefing Room," [Pentagon](#), 21 August 2014.

I searched the daily press briefings at the State Department and found a 19 Nov 2014 briefing said:

QUESTION: Yeah, just two quick follow-ups on Iraq. Further to my colleague's point, there was some discussion some months ago in this room about whether the United States would provide military aid directly to the Kurdish Peshmerga or whether it'd go through Baghdad and it would be the Government of Iraq in Baghdad that would allocate those resources. Do you know what stream is currently underway now, if it's a direct aid to Erbil or if it is routed through Baghdad?

MR. RATHKE: Right.

QUESTION: Because that has a lot of weight on when those weapons are delivered and how often.

MR. RATHKE: Well, our policy remains that all arms transfers have to be coordinated through the sovereign central government of Iraq. As far as the exact pathway, I'd refer you to colleagues at the Defense Department, but the central point for us — that is, the sovereign central government of Iraq — these have to be coordinated through them.

QUESTION: Right, so — and the point being that it could be that the central government is holding up some of the delivery of this aid to the regional authorities.

MR. RATHKE: Not that I'm aware of, but again, that's — if you're asking about the logistical route followed, then — [end of answer]

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 19 Nov 2014.

A 9 Feb 2015 State Department briefing said:

QUESTION: One more question, sorry. There also seems to be a difference between Germany's position on the United States on supporting the Kurds. German foreign minister, sitting next to Secretary Kerry, said despite public criticism, I'm in favor of supporting the Peshmerga in northern Iraq by way of military equipment and weapons, and we're going to continue doing that. But the as Senator Ted Cruz criticized the Obama Administration hasn't been willing to directly arm the Kurds.

MS. PSAKI: Well, let me be clear on the facts here and what we have provided. As you know, we provide assistance in coordination with the central Government of Iraq. Our policy remains that all arms transfers must be coordinated via the sovereign central

Government of Iraq. This is a legal requirement under U.S. law.

But we also have a significant part of over — of the over 1,100 airstrikes that have been conducted in Iraq have been in support of Peshmerga operations. As for military equipment and response to Kurdish requests and with the coordination of the Government of Iraq, we have coordination — we have coordinated a coalition effort, including the Germans, to provide weapons. This includes heavy weapons and other equipment, including mortars, T-62 tank rounds for their over 100 existing tanks, vehicles, and counter-IED equipment.

To date, as a part of this effort, more than 3 million pounds of equipment in over 60 cargo flights have been delivered to Erbil — over 15,000 hand grenades, nearly 40 million rounds of light and heavy machine gun ammo, 18,000 assault rifles, 45,000 mortar rounds — I could keep going on and on. We're also — we've also begun training the Peshmerga. So the fact is it just isn't accurate to say we aren't supporting. We're supporting with a range of assistance, we're coordinating the efforts of the coalition, and we're doing that through the central Government of Iraq.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 9 Feb 2015.

The press briefing by General Dempsey in August 2014 suggests that the government in Baghdad *was* preventing weapons from being delivered to the peshmerga. But, overall, press briefings by both the Pentagon and U.S. State Department see no problem in the delivery of weapons to the peshmerga. This blindness is in marked contrast to members of the U.S. Congress who want to send weapons directly to the peshmerga, without passing through the central government in Baghdad. This blindness is also in marked contrast to numerous reports by journalists in respected newspapers, e.g.:

- [Wall Street Journal](#), 21 Sep 2014 ("The Iraqi government has insisted that all weapons supplies be shipped through Baghdad, while Kurdish officials have called for direct arming to Erbil." "For the decade since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the U.S. poured billions of dollars into training the Iraqi army, while the Peshmerga wasn't provided sophisticated weaponry for fears it would accelerate Kurdish moves toward secession.").
- [Los Angeles Times](#), 9 Oct 2014 ("For eight years we didn't get one dinar or one bullet from the Iraqi army,' said Brig. Gen. Hazhar Ismail, [Kurdistan] ministry director of coordination and relations. 'Only after the current situation did they begin sending us resources and only under great pressure from foreign countries.'").
- [Washington Post](#), 12 Nov 2014 ("But Kurdish officials say the supplies they have received have comprised only light and medium arms, including ammunition, automatic weapons and artillery rounds. They say heavy arms are needed to combat an adversary such as the Islamic State, which seized large quantities of U.S.-made weapons and equipment abandoned by Iraqi soldiers as the militants advanced this summer.").
- [The Guardian](#), 22 Feb 2015 ("Kurdish leaders seethe at the decisive weaponry sent to Baghdad in recent months, much of which is being used to replace six divisions worth

of trucks and tanks that were abandoned when the Iraqi army fled the north of the country in June [2014].").

- [Washington Post](#), 6 March 2015 ("Kurdish officials, meanwhile, ... note that they still lack the heavy weaponry they need to provide support in any major operation. 'Nothing heavy has been delivered, neither from the United States or other allies,' [Kurdish intelligence chief Masrour] Barzani said,").
- [Washington Post](#), 6 May 2015 ("Kurds have complained that Baghdad hasn't provided them with weapons earmarked for peshmerga fighters. Many Sunni Arabs, meanwhile, accuse the Shiite Abadi of dragging his feet in arming Sunni tribesmen and integrating them into the army.").

I have omitted from the above list news articles in *Rudaw* and *BAS News* because of possible bias of the Kurdistan news media, although I personally find them credible.

On 5 July, Jay Garner — a retired U.S. Army Lt. General who served in Iraq — told the *Tampa Tribune* that the

... Kurds should be directly armed with Javelin and TOW anti-tank weapons, 81 mm mortars and M113 armored personnel carriers and uparmored Humvees. Deploy A-10 Thunderbolt IIs and Apache attack helicopters specifically to provide rapid close air support....

By "directly", *The Tribune* says:

So far, the U.S. has insisted on going through the Shia Baghdad central government for most of the weapons earmarked for the Kurds. And that, says Garner, has been a recipe for failure.

Garner says there are three reasons for this failure:

1. "Number one, there is a policy in the State Department that says you can only give stuff to recognized governments," says Garner, adding that the rationale is bunk given past realities. "We gave tons of stuff to the Contras. Charlie Wilson gave more Stingers than we had in the inventory to the rebels in Afghanistan back in the '80s. We've done that before for our convenience, but we are overlooking that now."
2. Secondly, says Garner, "the Baghdad government does not want the Kurds armed. They know a conflict between them and the Kurds is highly possible."
3. And thirdly, "the Iranians have told the administration not to arm the Kurds," says Garner. "They back the government in Baghdad, which is a puppet government to Iran. Our administration is so immersed in this nuclear deal (with Iran) that I think they will do anything the Iranians tell them to do."

Iraq, the Frankensteinian post-Ottoman empire melding of Kurd, Sunni and Shia, will never come back together, says Garner. "It is a fool's folly to think you can take a bunch of lines that were drawn in the 1920s on a map without any regard to ethnicity, religion or tribes and think you can hammer all that together," says Garner.

Howard Altman, "To defeat Islamic State, arm the Kurds, retired general says,"

[Tampa Tribune](#), 5 July 2015.

Garner currently has business dealings with Kurds in Iraq, which may give Garner a bias. Further, Garner retired from the U.S. Army in 1997, so he probably is not aware of current U.S. Government thinking. Nevertheless, what Garner says makes sense to me.

My comment on Garner's first reason why the U.S. Government wants to provide military aid to the Kurds only through the central government in Baghdad: since 2012 the CIA has had a program to provide clandestine military aid to moderate rebels in Syria. Obviously, this aid did *not* pass through Assad's government in Damascus, because the rebels are attempting to overthrow Assad's government. Obama would probably say that this military aid directly to rebels is acceptable, because Assad has "lost all legitimacy" to rule Syria. But it is *not* for Obama — and *not* for the USA — to determine who is the legitimate ruler of Syria. Instead, it is for the Syria people to determine their government. Indeed, the United Nations still recognizes Assad as the legitimate government of Syria. This example strengthens Garner's conclusion that it is bogus for the USA to assert that it *always* sends military aid through a nation's central government.

Daily News About Iraq & Syria

23 Feb 2015: ISIL kidnaps Assyrian Christians

Introduction

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](#).

On 17 June, the Assyrian International News Agency ([AINA](#)) reported that one hostage had been released by ISIL, but 227 hostages remain in captivity by ISIL.

July 2015

There was no news about the hostages in July 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.

Fighting Continues at Baiji

Introduction

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 essays for [May 2015](#) and [June 2015](#) mention continuing battles for the refinery and the town of Baiji.

July 2015

On 2 July, [Reuters](#) reported that the Iraqi Shiite militia claim to have expelled ISIL "from most of the northern town of Baiji". The Reuters article clarifies that "most" means 90%.

On 5 July, [Reuters](#) reports that ISIL attacked the town of Baiji at 17:00 GMT on 4 July, and the Iraqi army and Shiite militias retreated.

On the night of 6 July, [Reuters](#) reports ISIL has "launched repeated strikes to retake lost ground in the refinery town of Baiji, north of Tikrit." On 30 July, this is the most recent report by Reuters of the battles near Baiji.

On 18 July, Iraqi security forces killed a total of 31 ISIL fighters in the district of Baiji. [All Iraq News](#).

On 28 July, Iraqi federal police killed a total of 29 ISIL fighters in the district of Baiji. [All Iraq News](#).

At the end of July, there were no reports of victory over ISIL in either the town of Baiji or the nearby oil refinery.

Iraqi Army Intends to Liberate Anbar Province

The previous history is chronicled in my essays for [April 2015](#), [May 2015](#), and [June 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.

July 2015

On 28 June, the U.S.-led Coalition had trained a total of 10,000 Iraqi soldiers. [CENTCOM](#).

On 13 July, F-16 fighter jets purchased by Iraq in 2011 began arriving at the Balad Airbase 64 km north of Baghdad. The initial delivery of four F-16s will become part of a squadron of 36 F-16s. [All Iraq News](#); [Reuters](#); [Daily Star](#)(AFP); [The Hill](#); [Fox News](#). The arrival of the F-16s is an important advance for the decrepit Iraqi air force, which is currently flying used Sukhoi Su-25s from Russia. The Su-25 was designed in the mid-1970s. These used Russian airplanes have neither modern electronics nor modern engines. The delivery of the F-16s had been delayed because of attacks by ISIL near Balad Airbase, where U.S. citizens employed by Lockheed Martin will maintain the F-16s.

On 13 July, the Iraqi government announced that the liberation of Anbar province had begun. The government has committed 10,000 soldiers of the Iraqi army and Shiite militias to this operation. [All Iraq News](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that the Iraqi army, and especially Shiite militias, often announce "beginnings" and "victories" that are either exaggerations or total fiction. For example, on 25 May 2015 Abadi announced that the liberation of Ramadi would begin in the next few days, but 67 days later the liberation had *not* yet begun. In the battles for Tikrit and Baiji, there were many premature announcements of total victory. So I wait for real accomplishments, instead of bogus announcements.

On 14 July, [Iraqi News](#) reported that Abadi said on 13 July: "The heroes of our armed forces, police, al-Hashed al-Shaabi volunteers and tribal fighters will announce the news of victory of Anbar liberation soon, God willing." It is *not* credible that the Iraqis will liberate *all* of Anbar province — including Fallujah and Ramadi — in the next few days (i.e., before 18 July). For example, Agence France-Presse reports: "Top commanders have admitted, however, that entering Ramadi and Fallujah, where U.S. forces faced their toughest battles during their eight-year occupation of Iraq, would be difficult." [Daily Star](#)(AFP).

One reason that the liberation of Anbar fizzled during 15-17 July is unusually high air temperatures — 51 celsius on 16 July — in Iraq. The effect of those high temperatures on people were exacerbated by the fasting (including no water) during each day of Ramadan, which could lead to serious dehydration. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 29 July, the Iraqi Council of Ministers declared a four-day holiday from 30 July to 2 August, because of forecast high temperatures above 50 celsius. [Associated Press](#); [All Iraq News](#) (erroneously claims 2 day holiday); [Reuters](#).

Iraq postpones liberation of 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. My essay for [June 2015](#) explains that, sometime around 5 June 2015, the liberation of Ramadi was indefinitely postponed. The reasons for the postponement were sparingly released, and are not entirely convincing to me.

On 7 July 2015, General Dempsey testified at the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Associated Press reported:

Dempsey said that about a month ago the Iraqi forces were poised to start a counteroffensive in Ramadi but were persuaded by U.S. military leaders that they should wait to make sure their forces were ready.

"The Ramadi campaign, which about a month ago was about to be executed precipitously, has actually (become) — with our help — now a very deliberate campaign first to isolate it and then to go back and recapture it, with a supporting effort in Fallujah," Dempsey said.

Deb Riechmann, "Senators quiz military chiefs, criticize US fight against IS," [Associated Press](#), 15:45 EDT, 7 July 2015.

Not mentioned in the Associated Press article is a decision to train Sunni tribesmen to assist in the liberation of Ramadi, instead of relying on Shiite militias. The Shiites may not be enthusiastic about risking their lives to liberate Sunni territory, and the Shiite militias have a history of vandalizing or looting Sunni property. See my essay for [June 2015](#).

On 7 July, the U.S. Secretary of Defense told the Senate Armed Services Committee that 500 Sunni tribesmen were currently being trained by the U.S. Military in Anbar, in addition to having armed 800 Sunni tribesmen. [Washington Times](#). A simple calculation shows that at the rate of 500 Sunnis/6 weeks, it will take 7 years to train 30,000 Sunnis. Obviously, Iraq needed those 30,000 trained and equipped Sunnis in January 2014, when ISIL invaded Anbar. Instead, they are scheduled to be ready in the year 2022. This is *not* a good strategy.

It seemed that the liberation of Ramadi would be postponed for months, while the U.S. trained Sunni tribesmen. But on 12 July, the U.S.-led Coalition delivered a whopping 29 airstrikes near Ramadi. [Pentagon](#). At dawn on 13 July, the Iraqi army plus Shiite and Sunni militias attacked Ramadi. [Military Times](#); [Voice of America](#). It is not clear how many Shiite militiamen are participating in the liberation of Ramadi. Previously it had been reported that the Shiite militia had moved to the vicinity of Fallujah.

On 13-15 July, the Iraqi news media are emphasizing the battles near Fallujah and ignoring

the battles near Ramadi. One exception is an Agence France-Presse story in the [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon. In Europe and North America, news about the 14 July agreement with Iran on nuclear weapons development and continuing news about collapse of banks in Greece have temporarily pushed both Syria and Iraq out of the news media.

On 16 July at 14:36 Baghdad time, [All Iraq News](#) tersely reported: "The Iraqi security forces broke through Ramadi city and they are very close to the centre of the city, the civil spokesman of the Ministry of Defense, Nasir Nouri Muhammad said on Thursday [16 July]."

On 19 July, ISIL destroyed a 30,000-seat sports stadium near Ramadi that had been used as a military base by the ISF and Shiite militias. [Associated Press](#).

On 20 July, [All Iraq News](#) reported that the commander of the Iraqi Federal Police (IFP) said: "The Cell of Intelligence of the IFP in coordination with the Iraqi Air Force completely destroyed the headquarter of ISIL terrorist group in Ramadi city, killing and wounding dozens ISIL terrorists and destroying 7 vehicles." Also reported at [Iraqi News](#). My comment is that the Air Force bombing probably destroyed the building which ISIL headquarters was occupying. The Iraqi government can barely afford to fight the war against ISIL, and the government can *not* afford to rebuild destroyed buildings.

On 23 July, the U.S. Secretary of Defense visited Iraq to hear about plans to liberate Ramadi. Separately, the Iraqi army assigned 3000 U.S.-trained Iraqi soldiers to participate in the liberation of Ramadi. The Pentagon said the liberation of Ramadi "could start within several weeks." [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 26 July 2015, [All Iraq News](#) triumphantly reported: "The Iraqi Security Forces within the Counter-terrorism Department liberated the building of the University of Anbar from the ISIL terrorists." See also [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). But that is really strange, because back on 25 May 2015 [All Iraq News](#) reported: "The security forces, the tribesmen and the popular mobilization units liberated Anbar university in western of Ramadi." And on 18 July 2015, an Iraqi army officer told the German Press Agency: "The troops, backed by Iraqi warplanes, were able to impose full control on Anbar University after fierce battles." [Daily Sabah](#). How many times are the Iraqis going to announce the liberation of one University?

On 29 July, ISIL sent two suicide bombers in stolen Humvees loaded with explosives to the University of Ramadi (also known as Anbar University), where the bombers detonated and killed at least 12 Iraqi soldiers. [Associated Press](#).

Iraq attempts to liberate Fallujah

In early July, it became apparent that the Iraqis had decided to liberate Fallujah, *before* liberating Ramadi.

On 5 July, the Iraqi army and Shiite militias surrounded Fallujah and cut off supplies to ISIL in Fallujah. [Reuters](#) says ISIL responded with "heavy resistance, including suicide bomb attacks". Also see [All Iraq News](#).

On 8 July, the [Washington Post](#) reports that the Shiite militias and Iraqi air force will attempt to expel ISIL from Fallujah. "An attempt to enter Fallujah itself may still be weeks or months off, militia leaders said." Meanwhile, the Iraqi army, Sunni militias, and U.S.-led coalition airstrikes will concentrate on Ramadi.

On 11 July, [Reuters](#) reports "Colonel Ali al-Yasiri, commander of Iraq's 4th armored regiment, 1st division, which is fighting near Falluja, said plans for a quick offensive to retake Ramadi were shelved in June after commanders concluded that Falluja would be 'a dagger pointed at the army in Ramadi' unless it was tackled first." Because the Shiite militias are leading the liberation of Fallujah, "... a U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, suggested a lack of Iraqi army control of militia activities in Falluja would prevent the kind of air support for the campaign that the United States has offered elsewhere in Iraq."

As mentioned in my essay for June 2015, the U.S. Military is intolerant of the Shiite militia because those Shiite militias:

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

By moving the Shiite militias from the Ramadi campaign to the Fallujah campaign, the U.S. found useful work for those militias, while the U.S. concentrates on training Sunni tribesmen to liberate Ramadi. The downside of this decision is that postponing the liberation of Ramadi gives ISIL more time to entrench in Ramadi, including planting mines, roadside bombs, and booby trapping buildings — which will make the liberation of Ramadi more bloody.

On the early morning of 14 July, the Iraqi army and Shiite militias entered Fallujah from four directions. [All Iraq News](#).

On the morning of 14 July, [Rudaw](#) reported a prominent Sunni tribal chief in Anbar, Sheikh Yahya al-Sunbul, said: "I do not expect Fallujah to be liberated in a short time despite Hadi Amiri's [Amiri is the commander of the Shiite militia known as People Mobilization Forces] pledge to pray in Fallujah in two days. I don't see any such thing in the horizon.' "

On 16 July, [Reuters](#) reports that "tens of thousands of civilians" are trapped in Fallujah. ISIL is prohibiting the civilians from leaving, and ISIL intends to use the civilians as "human shields" during the attempted liberation of Fallujah.

On 16 July, [All Iraq News](#) reports the Iraqi army and Shiite militia have "completely encircled" Fallujah.

On 28 July, [Rudaw](#) reports: "According to reports from the front, there has been little progress in efforts to retake [Fallujah]." Rudaw also reports the head of the General Hospital of Fallujah said 3,234 people have died from military battles in Fallujah since the beginning of the ISIL occupation in January 2014.

Abadi's megalomania: Liberate Mosul too!

Introduction

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".

July 2015

On 4 July, the Iraqi air force dropped leaflets on Mosul, saying in Arabic: "The solution, with God's help, is close." [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#); [All Iraq News](#).

6 July 2015: Ooops!

On 6 July 2015, a Sukhoi fighter airplane flown by the Iraqi air force "accidentally" dropped a bomb on residences in eastern Baghdad, killing at least 12 innocent civilians. The Iraqi government did what any manager would do: form a committee to investigate. [Associated Press](#); [All Iraq News](#); [All Iraq News](#); [Washington Post](#).

My comment is that it seems reckless for military airplanes to fly over friendly cities with a "stuck" bomb that had failed to drop on a combat mission.

6 July 2015: Obama's Speech

On 6 July 2015, Obama gave a speech at the Pentagon. I have boldfaced the keywords "ideology", "quick", and "generational struggle" in his speech.

... the work that brings me here today — our mission to degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group ISIL.

....

I want to start by repeating what I've said since the beginning. **This will not be quick.** This is a long-term campaign. ISIL is opportunistic and it is nimble. In many places in Syria and Iraq, including urban areas, it's dug in among innocent civilian populations. It will take time to root them out — and doing so must be the job of local forces on the ground, with training and air support from our coalition.

As with any military effort, there will be periods of progress, but there are also going to be some setbacks — as we've seen with ISIL's gains in Ramadi in Iraq and central and southern Syria. But today, it's also important for us to recognize the progress that's been made.

Our coalition has now hit ISIL with more than 5,000 airstrikes. We've taken out thousands of fighting positions, tanks, vehicles, bomb factories, and training camps. We've eliminated thousands of fighters, including senior ISIL commanders. And over the past year, we've seen that when we have an effective partner on the ground, ISIL can be pushed back.

In Iraq, ISIL lost at the Mosul Dam. ISIL lost at Mount Sinjar. ISIL has lost repeatedly across Kirkuk Province. ISIL lost at Tikrit. Altogether, ISIL has lost more than a quarter of the populated areas that it had seized in Iraq. In Syria, ISIL lost at Kobani. It's recently endured losses across northern Syria, including the key city of Tal Abyad, denying ISIL a vital supply route to Raqqa, its base of operations in Syria.

So these are reminders that ISIL's strategic weaknesses are real. ISIL is surrounded by countries and communities committed to its destruction. It has no air force; our coalition owns the skies. ISIL is backed by no nation. It relies on fear, sometimes executing its own disillusioned fighters. Its unrestrained brutality often alienates those under its rule, creating new enemies. In short, ISIL's recent losses in both Syria and Iraq prove that ISIL can and will be defeated.

....

Meanwhile, we continue to ramp up our training and support of local forces that are fighting ISIL on the ground. As I've said before, this aspect of our strategy was moving

too slowly. But the fall of Ramadi has galvanized the Iraqi government. So, with the additional steps I ordered last month, we're speeding up training of ISIL ["ISIL" should be "Iraqi"] forces, including volunteers from Sunni tribes in Anbar Province.

More Sunni volunteers are coming forward. Some are already being trained, and they can be a new force against ISIL. We continue to accelerate the delivery of critical equipment, including anti-tank weapons, to Iraqi security forces, including the Peshmerga and tribal fighters. And I made it clear to my team that we will do more to train and equip the moderate opposition in Syria.

Now, all this said, our strategy recognizes that no amount of military force will end the terror that is ISIL unless it's matched by a broader effort — political and economic — that addresses the underlying conditions that have allowed ISIL to gain traction. They have filled a void, and we have to make sure that as we push them out that void is filled. So, as Iraqi cities and towns are liberated from ISIL, we're working with Iraq and the United Nations to help communities rebuild the security, services and governance that they need. We continue to support the efforts of Prime Minister Abadi to forge an inclusive and effective Iraqi government that unites all the people of Iraq — Shia, Sunnis, Kurds and all minority communities.

In Syria, the only way that the civil war will end — and in a way so that the Syrian people can unite against ISIL — is an inclusive political transition to a new government, without Bashar Assad — a government that serves all Syrians. I discussed this with our Gulf Cooperation Council partners at Camp David and during my recent call with President Putin. I made it clear the United States will continue to work for such a transition.

....

While the focus of our discussions today was on Iraq and Syria, ISIL and its **ideology** also obviously pose a grave threat beyond the region. In recent weeks we've seen deadly attacks in Tunisia, Kuwait and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. We see a growing ISIL presence in Libya and attempts to establish footholds across North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Southeast Asia. We've seen attacks in Ottawa, Sydney, France and Copenhagen.

So I've called on the international community to unite against this scourge of violent extremism. In this fight, the United States continues to lead. When necessary to prevent attacks against our nation, we'll take direct action against terrorists. We'll continue to also partner with nations from Afghanistan to Nigeria to build up their security forces. We're going to work day and night with allies and partners to disrupt terrorist networks and thwart attacks, and to smother nascent ISIL cells that may be trying to develop in other parts of the world.

This also includes remaining vigilant in protecting against attacks here in the homeland. Now, I think it's important for us to recognize the threat of violent extremism is not restricted to any one community. Here in the United States, we've

seen all kinds of homegrown terrorism. And tragically, recent history reminds us how even a single individual motivated by a hateful **ideology** with access to dangerous weapons can inflict horrendous harm on Americans. So our efforts to counter violent extremism must not target any one community because of their faith or background, including patriotic Muslim Americans who are our partners in keeping our country safe.

That said, we also have to acknowledge that ISIL has been particularly effective at reaching out to and recruiting vulnerable people around the world, including here in the United States. And they are targeting Muslim communities around the world. Numerous individuals have been arrested across the country for plotting attacks or attempting to join ISIL in Syria and Iraq. Two men apparently inspired by ISIL opened fire in Garland, Texas. And because of our success over the years in improving our homeland security, we've made it harder for terrorists to carry out large-scale attacks like 9/11 here at home.

But the threat of lone wolves or small cells of terrorists is complex — it's harder to detect and harder to prevent. It's one of the most difficult challenges that we face. And preventing these kinds of attacks on American soil is going to require sustained effort.

So I just want to repeat, the good news is that because of extraordinary efforts from law enforcement as well as our military intelligence, we are doing a better job at preventing any large-scale attacks on the homeland. On the other hand, the small, individual lone wolf attacks or small cells become harder to detect and they become more sophisticated, using new technologies. And that means that we're going to have to pick up our game to prevent these attacks.

It's also true why, ultimately, in order for us to defeat terrorist groups like ISIL and al Qaeda it's going to also require us to discredit their **ideology** — the twisted thinking that draws vulnerable people into their ranks. As I've said before — and I know our military leaders agree — this broader challenge of countering violent extremism is not simply a military effort. **Ideologies** are not defeated with guns; they're defeated by better ideas — a more attractive and more compelling vision.

So the United States will continue to do our part, by working with partners to counter ISIL's hateful propaganda, especially online. We'll constantly reaffirm through words and deeds that we will never be at war with Islam. We're fighting terrorists who distort Islam and whose victims are mostly Muslims. But around the world, we're also going to insist on partnering with Muslim communities as they seek security, prosperity and the dignity that they deserve. And we're going to expect those communities to step up in terms of pushing back as hard as they can, in conjunction with other people of goodwill, against these hateful **ideologies** in order to discredit them more effectively, particularly when it comes to what we're teaching young people.

And this larger battle for hearts and minds is going to be a **generational struggle**. It's ultimately not going to be won or lost by the United States alone. It will be decided by the countries and the communities that terrorists like ISIL target. It's going to be up to

Muslim communities, including scholars and clerics, to keep rejecting warped interpretations of Islam, and to protect their sons and daughters from recruitment. It will be up to all people — leaders and citizens — to reject the sectarianism that so often fuels the resentments and conflicts upon which terrorists are currently thriving. It will be up to governments to address the political and economic grievances that terrorists exploit.

Nations that empower citizens to decide their own destiny, that uphold human rights for all their people, that invest in education and create opportunities for their young people — those can be powerful antidotes to extremist **ideologies**. Those are the countries that will find a true partner in the United States.

Obama, "Remarks by the President on Progress in the Fight Against ISIL," [White House](#), 16:10 EDT, 6 July 2015. [Boldface added by Standler to "ideology", "quick", and "generational struggle".]

Obama is wrong to say that we are making progress in defeating ISIL. Foreign fighters are continuing to pour into Syria to fight for ISIL. ISIL not only continues to win victories in Syria and Iraq, but also ISIL has spread to other nations where it engages in terrorism. For example:

1. On 10 June 2014, ISIL captured Mosul (the second largest city in Iraq), but the Iraqis have been unable to begin the liberation of Mosul.
2. My essay for [Jan 2015](#) chronicled the spread of ISIL to Egypt, Libya, and Afghanistan.
3. On 23-24 Feb 2015, ISIL abducted more than 220 Assyrian Christians in Syria. As of July 2015, only approximately two dozen have been released by ISIL.
4. On 17 May 2015, ISIL captured Ramadi in Iraq, and the Iraqis have been unable to begin the liberation of Ramadi, as explained in detail in my essays.
5. On 20 May 2015, ISIL captured Palmyra in Syria. [Reuters](#); [BBC](#).
6. On 22 May 2015, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in a Shiite mosque in Saudi Arabia, killing 21 people. [Washington Post](#); [Arab News](#)(AFP).
7. My essay for [June 2015](#) cited that an ISIL suicide bomber killed 27 people at a Shiite mosque in Kuwait on 26 June.
8. On 26 June 2015, an ISIL terrorist killed 38 people on a beach in Tunisia. [Associated Press](#).
9. On 1 July 2015, ISIL attacked Egyptian army posts in the Sinai, killing at least 64 Egyptian soldiers. [Associated Press](#).
10. On 11 July 2015, an ISIL car bomb damaged the Italian consulate in Cairo, killing 1 pedestrian. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Casualties were few because the bomb exploded at 06:30 local time, when few people were on the street. The attack shows

that ISIL can strike anywhere.

11. On 16 July 2015, ISIL in the Sinai Province of Egypt fired a missile that caused a fire on an Egyptian Navy ship. [Ahram](#) in Egypt; [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
12. On 17 July 2015, the last day of the Ramadan month, an ISIL suicide truck bomb at a market in the Diyala province of Iraq killed at least 115 people.

Let us not forget that the ISIL captured huge amounts of weapons, ammunition, and vehicles when the Iraqi army fled from Mosul and Tikrit in June 2014, and again when the Iraqi army fled from Ramadi in May 2015. The U.S. taxpayer funded these equipments and supplies to the Iraqi army, but the equipment and supplies enabled ISIL to become more ferocious.

While ISIL has had effective fighters in Syria since mid-2013, the USA is *planning* on training and equipping 15,000 rebels in Syria by the end of the year 2017. Halfway through 2015, a total of zero rebels have completed their training. (See [above](#).)

In Obama's list of seven examples of success against ISIL, six of them were achieved with Kurdish forces in Iraq or Syria. In my opinion, that indicates that the USA ought to be supplying more weapons and ammunition to the Kurds in Iraq, and less to the ineffective Iraqi army. Obama's mention of Kurdish victories were a source of pride in Kurdistan, as reported by [Rudaw](#). But nowhere in this 18-minute speech does Obama mention that the Kurds are responsible for most of the victories on the ground. Obama still clings to his dream of "an inclusive and effective Iraqi government that unites all the people of Iraq". Given Obama's fantasy about a united Iraq, Obama can not say that the Kurds are better fighters than either the Iraqi army or Shiite militias in Iraq.

The situation in Syria is more complicated than Iraq, because the U.S. Military does *not* have an invitation from the lawful government of Assad in Syria. As I have argued in my essays since October 2013, we ought to be cooperating with Assad in the fight against Islamic terrorism, because Syria controlled by Assad is better than Syria controlled by ISIL and Al-Qaeda. Further, the clandestine CIA program to send weapons to rebels in Syria should be terminated, and the train-and-equip program for Syrian rebels be ended — both programs are too little to make a difference in the Syrian civil war.

Obama is absolutely right to say we need to defeat the ideology of ISIL. But Obama can not bring himself to say the words "Islamic terrorism", which identifies the ideology that needs to be defeated. And Obama has no specific proposals for how to defeat the ideology of ISIL. However, Obama is right to say: "It's going to be up to Muslim communities, including scholars and clerics, to keep rejecting warped interpretations of Islam,"

My essays for [Jan 2015](#) and [June 2015](#) mention efforts in England to have Muslim opinion leaders oppose Islamic terrorism, but those efforts were criticized by many Muslim leaders. Obama is *not* saying how he would recruit Muslim leaders in the fight against the ideology of Islamic terrorism.

Obama is also correct to say that the defeat of terrorism is a "generational struggle". General Dempsey said the same thing one year ago, as quoted in my essay for [July 2014](#).

15-18 July: USA and Iran

On 14 July, the foreign ministers of Iran, USA, Germany, France, UK, European Union, Russia, and China ended marathon negotiations by agreeing to a treaty that allegedly limits Iran's development of nuclear weapons for a few years. Despite serious concerns about the adequacy of this treaty, Obama was delighted to finally have a foreign policy accomplishment. On 15 July, Obama held a press conference:

QUESTION [by Michael Crowley]: Thank you. You alluded earlier to Iran's role in Syria, just to focus on that for a moment. Many analysts and some former members of your administration believe that the kind of negotiated political settlement that you say is necessary in Syria will require working directly with Iran and giving Iran an important role. Do you agree? And is that a dialogue you'll be actively seeking?

And what about the fight against ISIS? What would it take for there to be explicit cooperation between the U.S. and Iran?

THE PRESIDENT: I do agree that we're not going to solve the problems in Syria unless there's buy-in from the Russians, the Iranians, the Turks, our Gulf partners. It's too chaotic. There are too many factions. There's too much money and too many arms flooding into the zone. It's gotten caught up in both sectarian conflict and geopolitical jockeying. And in order for us to resolve it, there's going to have to be agreement among the major powers that are interested in Syria that this is not going to be won on the battlefield. So Iran is one of those players, and I think that it's important for them to be part of that conversation.

I want to repeat what I said earlier. We have not — and I don't anticipate any time in the near future — restored normal diplomatic relations with Iran. And so I do not foresee a formal set of agreements with Iran in terms of how we're conducting our counter-ISIL campaign.

"Press Conference by the President," [White House](#), 15 July 2015.

On 18 July, the Associated Press reported the reaction of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader:

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Saturday [18 July] a landmark nuclear deal won't change his country's policy toward the "arrogant" U.S., making his first public speech since the Islamic Republic's historic pact with world powers.

Khamenei said a more wide-ranging agreement with America is unlikely, striking a different pose than moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who earlier said the Vienna accord could "step-by-step remove bricks from the wall of mistrust" between Iran and the U.S.

.....

"Our policy toward the arrogant U.S. government won't change at all," Khamenei said

in an address carried live by state television. "We have no negotiations with America about various global and regional issues. We have no negotiations on bilateral issues."

....

.... [Bavand, a former diplomat and a professor of international law at Science and Research University in Tehran] also said that Khamenei's carefully worded speech likely contains a warning to Rouhani to slow down the pace of detente with Washington.

Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran supreme leader: Nuclear deal won't change policy to US," [Associated Press](#), 17:57 GMT, 18 July 2015.

There was a similar report by [Reuters](#).

The following day, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, refuted Khamenei's speech. The Associated Press reported:

Israel's prime minister says an "aggressive and confrontational speech" by Iran's supreme leader shows that any expectations a nuclear deal would soften the militancy of the Islamic Republic were misguided.

Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday [19 July] that Iran doesn't "even try to hide the fact" that it will use a looming lifting of sanctions to further arm regional militant groups and to oppose American and Israeli interests around the Middle East.

"Israel premier: Iran leader's speech shows nuke deal's folly," [Associated Press](#), 18:12 GMT, 19 July 2015.

More detail on Netanyahu's speech is available at [Arutz Sheva](#); [Haaretz](#).

I cringe whenever I see the anti-USA diatribes at Iranian news media websites. But chronicling history requires that both sides of an issue be presented. The FARS news agency in Iran reported:

"In any case the policy of the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic system visa-vis the US will not change," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing worshippers in the Eid al-Fitr (marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan) prayers in Tehran on Saturday [18 July].

Iran's Supreme Leader reiterated that whether the text of the nuclear agreement is ratified by the Iranian parliament or not, Iran will continue supporting the oppressed Palestinian nation, Yemen, Bahrain as well as the nations and governments of Syria and Iraq and the honest warriors of Lebanon and Palestine.

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated that Iran's policy towards the US will never change. "Leader: No Change in Iran's Policy towards US," [FARS](#), 18 July 2015.

My comment on the FARS news story is that Iran defiantly continues supporting terrorists in palestine and Yemen. The word "arrogant" does not appear in this FARS story.

The Islamic Republic News Agency reports:

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Saturday

said that Iran's regional policies are in sharp contrast with those of the arrogant powers, the US in particular.

....

Referring to the developments in Iraq, the Supreme Leader said that the policies of the hegemonistic powers in Iraq are toppling a democratically-elected government, pitting Shia and Sunni Muslims against each other and finally dividing the country, while Iran's policy on Iraq is supporting the country's democratically-elected government, resistance against factors contributing to the country's civil war and guaranteeing Iraq's territorial integrity.

On the difference between Iran's policy towards Syria and that of the hegemonistic powers, Ayatollah Khamenei said that the arrogant powers are seeking to impose their will on the Syrian nation and overthrow a government that has firmly stood against the Zionist regime, while the Islamic Republic of Iran considers as an opportunity the government, whose platform, objective and plan is resistance against Zionists.

....

Ayatollah Khamenei said that the Americans call Lebanon's Resistance 'terrorist' and say that Iran is a supporter of terrorism for its support for Lebanon's Hezbollah, while the real terrorists are the Americans themselves who have created Daesh and back 'the evil Zionists' and for that they have to be brought to justice.

"Iran's policies in sharp contrast with those of US: Leader," [IRNA](#), 18 July 2015.

PRESSTV in Iran reports:

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the ongoing sectarian and tribal wars have been imposed on the Middle East region to deflect Muslims' attention away from the atrocities of the Israeli regime.

....

The Leader added that certain incompetent officials in Muslim countries support the "illegitimate" Israeli regime, noting that arrogant powers created "criminal" terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the ISIL.

"Iran has no trust in the US because American politicians are completely dishonest and unfair," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

....

"The Americans dub the Lebanese resistance [Hezbollah] as terrorist and regard Iran as a supporter of terrorism because of its support for the Lebanese Hezbollah, while the Americans, themselves, are real terrorists who have created Daesh [ISIL] and support the wicked Zionists," the Leader said.

"Sectarian, tribal wars protecting Israel: Leader," [PRESSTV](#), 18 July 2015.

My comment on the IRNA and PRESSTV news stories is that they are filled with inflammatory hyperbole that shows the anti-Semitic bias of the Iranian government. It is true that what is now known as Daesh or ISIL came from Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which was created in response to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. But the USA did *not* "create" ISIL. Indeed, Al-Qaeda in Iraq was fighting against the U.S. invasion.

Notice that the Associated Press and three Iranian news agencies all have different coverage of the one speech by Khamenei. The Associated Press and FARS covered the relationship between Iran and the USA. IRNA and PRESSTV spewed anti-Semitic propaganda and blamed the USA for creating ISIL.

My essay for [January 2014](#) describes how, on 19 Jan 2014, the United Nations invited Iran to the Montreux conference on Syria, and how the Syrian National Coalition (supported by the U.S. Government) forced the U.N. to withdraw the invitation to Iran. While I am *not* a supporter of Iran, a successful negotiation requires the participation of *all* of the stakeholders — so Iran must be included in negotiations about the future of Syria. So I am pleased that Obama now recognizes that Iran must be included in negotiations about Syria. But Obama's new opinion comes 18 months *after* the conference in Montreux. The subsequent negotiations in Geneva failed for reasons having nothing to do with Iran's participation.

On 20 July, in an interview with *Al-Arabiya*, John Kerry said it was "very disturbing" to hear the Ayatollah's speech on 18 July that indicated Iran would continue to defy U.S. policies in the Middle East. The interview with Kerry was published on 21 July. Transcript of interview at [Al-Arabiya](#); [State Dept.](#) News reports at: [Al-Arabiya](#); [The Telegraph](#); [Reuters](#); [Arab News](#). Does Kerry really expect Iran — an enemy of the USA for the past 35 years — to conform their behavior to U.S. Government policy? Under the deal negotiated by Kerry, Iran will soon have access to US\$ 100 billion in frozen funds. It is expected that Iran will spend some of that money on sponsoring Shiite terrorists in Yemen and Lebanon.

Further, Ayatollah Khamenei said a number of vile things about Israel on 18 July, but Kerry did *not* mention any objection or concern with those anti-Semitic remarks. Perhaps that is because Israel has been highly critical of Kerry's draft treaty with Iran — analogous to Israel calling Kerry's new baby "an ugly bastard".

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 July 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 1 July 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 30. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted five airstrikes using attack, bomber and fighter aircraft.

Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 12 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL terrorists.

"The coalition continues to use air power responsibly," said Brig. Gen. Thomas Weidley, CJTF-OIR [Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve] chief of staff. "Highly precise deliveries, detailed weaponeering, in-depth target development, collateral damage mitigation and maximized effects on Daesh, are characteristics of coalition airstrike operation in Iraq and Syria."

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, one airstrike struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike destroyed seven ISIL vehicles.
- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL staging area, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL building.
- Near Rawah, one airstrike had inconclusive results.
- Near Sinjar three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL sniper position, destroying an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.
- Near Waleed, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 1 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 1 July 2015.

2 July 2015: airstrikes

The Fourth of July holiday in the USA comes on a Saturday this year. To celebrate, CENTCOM took a four-day weekend, beginning Thursday, 2 July.

On Thursday, 2 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria: 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 and fighter aircraft conducted 10 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, six airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and two ISIL antennas, destroying four ISIL vehicles, three ISIL bunkers, an ISIL structure and an ISIL building.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Abyad, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL structure.

Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 18 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL building.
- Near Fallujah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL recoilless rifle, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL tunnel system and an ISIL cave.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL structure.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, two ISIL mortar firing positions and an ISIL fighting position, destroying an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle bomb.
- Near Rawah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL bulldozer.
- Near Sinjar, four airstrikes struck three ISIL staging areas and an ISIL heavy machine gun, destroying two ISIL buildings.

[Pentagon](#), 2 July 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

3 July 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 3 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria: 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 and fighter aircraft conducted nine airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, six airstrikes struck one large and three small ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL vehicles, three ISIL structures, an ISIL building, five ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL bunker and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike had inconclusive results.
- Near Tal Abyad, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 15 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tunnel systems and an ISIL tunnel entrance.
- Near Haditha, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL bunkers, two ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL rocket system.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL checkpoint, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Rawah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL buildings and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL building, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.

[Pentagon](#), 3 July 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

4 July 2015: airstrikes

On Saturday, 4 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

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

Attack, bomber and fighter aircraft conducted 14 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, six airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL vehicles, two ISIL structures, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Aleppo, four airstrikes struck four ISIL staging areas.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying seven ISIL

fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

- Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.

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

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery, an ISIL fighting position and two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL building and an ISIL tunnel.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL buildings, an ISIL cache and an ISIL light machine gun.

[Pentagon](#), 4 July 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

5 July 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 5 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

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

Attack, bomber and fighter aircraft conducted 26 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL vehicles, and four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ar Raqqa, 18 airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL vehicles and 16 ISIL bridges.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

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

- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL tunnel entrance, an ISIL heavy machine gun and two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroying a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position.

- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL mortar firing position, destroying an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun, four ISIL mortar tubes and an ISIL ammo bunker.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL building.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL cache and an ISIL building.

[Pentagon](#), 5 July 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

6 July 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 6 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 5, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight airstrikes using bomber, remotely piloted and fighter aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Coalition airstrikes continue to destroy Daesh vehicle-borne IEDs, the most recent near Kirkuk, Iraq,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Gilleran, CJTF-OIR spokesman. “Removing these weapons from the battlefield and the threat they pose to our ISF partners is a high priority for the coalition.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL tank, six ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building, an ISIL staging position and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck and destroyed an ISIL armored personnel carrier.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL mortar position.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck and destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Fallujah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying an ISIL bunker.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL technical vehicle.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL VBIED ["vehicle-borne improvised explosive

device", also called a car bomb], an ISIL cache and striking an ISIL heavy machine gun.

- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL fighting position and ISIL cache and striking an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL excavator and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, and an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.

Separately, near Aleppo, Syria, coalition military forces conducted one airstrike against a network of veteran al Qaeda operatives, sometimes called the "Khorasan Group," who are known to plot external attacks against the United States and our allies. The airstrike struck a tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 6 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 6 July 2015.

The airstrike near Aleppo is considered separately, perhaps because it targeted the Khorasan Group instead of ISIL. The Khorasan Group has been the target of previous airstrikes reported on 14 and 19 Nov 2014, 1 Dec 2014, and 9 March 2015. See the [Pentagon](#) news release on 20 Nov 2014.

7 July 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 7 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 6, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 15 airstrikes using bomber, 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 targets.

"Coalition pilots continue their success against ISIL targets as they carefully consider potential effects on non-combatants," said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Unlike Daesh, we value innocent lives and abide by the laws of armed conflict."

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, four airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL building.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL artillery piece and five ISIL fighting positions.

- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit.
- Near Tal Abyad, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, six ISIL tactical units, destroying three ISIL vehicles, four ISIL fighting positions and striking one ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Asad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun and four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike destroyed three ISIL structures.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL crossing point and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Haditha, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL vehicles, an ISIL armored personnel carrier, two ISIL VBIEDs and an ISIL mortar.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle and three ISIL buildings.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL building and six ISIL staging areas.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, and two ISIL light machine guns, destroying five ISIL vehicles and two ISIL buildings.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL light machine gun and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 7 July 2015.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 7 July 2015.

8 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 7, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 11 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, fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Coalition airstrikes target Daesh units, weapon systems, and fighting positions,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Gilleran, CJTF-OIR spokesman. “Such strikes significantly weaken Daesh and provide a tactical advantage to our partners on the ground in Syria and Iraq.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying four ISIL vehicles, two ISIL bunkers and five ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Abyad, five airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL fighting position and two ISIL structures.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL mortar.
- Near Haditha, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL VBIED, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL front end loader.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, and two ISIL tactical units, destroying two ISIL light machine guns, four ISIL heavy machine guns, three ISIL vehicles, 11 ISIL buildings, an ISIL anti-aircraft weapon, an ISIL VBIED and an ISIL C2 Node.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL light machine gun three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL bunker.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 8 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 8 July 2015.

9 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 8, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven airstrikes using bomber, fighter-attack, and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“The coalition is committed to diminishing Daesh’s military capacity,” said Brig. Gen.

Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. “Our disciplined targeting process and strike execution remain relentless in seeking out and prosecuting Daesh targets.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Bukamal, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck 20 ISIL staging areas.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, and an ISIL tactical unit destroying two ISIL fighting positions and three ISIL structures.
- Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Baghdadi, two airstrikes denied ISIL a tactical advantage and suppressed ISIL sniper fire.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Fallujah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, destroying an ISIL mortar, an ISIL tunnel entrance, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL recoilless rifle and two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck three ISIL staging areas.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL building and eight ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL building.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck two ISIL excavators.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, and an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL C2 Node.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, and destroyed an ISIL bunker.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 9 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 9 July 2015.

10 July 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 10 July, neither CENTCOM nor the Pentagon posted a press release on airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. Reuters also failed to report on airstrikes on 10 July, which suggests that no press release was issued to journalists. The press release for Friday was posted at the

Pentagon on Saturday, 11 July. The press release for Friday was posted at CENTCOM on Monday morning, 13 July.

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

On July 9, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 15 airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

"Coalition airstrikes destroyed a cave network near Haditha, Iraq," said Lt. Col. Thomas Gilleran, CJTF-OIR spokesman. "We will continue to use our disciplined targeting approach to destroy Daesh wherever we find them, including underground."

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and six ISIL tactical units destroying four ISIL vehicles and six ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL structure, an ISIL armored personnel carrier and two ISIL excavators.
- Near Ayn Isa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Tal Abyad, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL fighting position destroying three ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL structures and two ISIL vehicles.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL homemade explosive cache and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Haditha, four airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and an ISIL tactical unit, destroying two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL cave network and an ISIL building.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroying an ISIL mortar tube and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL mortar position and an ISIL rocket position.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, and four ISIL staging

areas destroying an ISIL light machine gun, an ISIL heavy machine gun and four ISIL buildings.

- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL building.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Separately, On July 8 near Idlib, Syria, coalition military forces conducted one airstrike against a network of veteran al Qa'eda operatives, sometimes called the "Khorasan Group," who are known to plot external attacks against the United States and our allies. The airstrike struck a tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

[Central Command](#), 10 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 11 July 2015.

11 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 10, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 17 airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

"Coalition airstrikes targeted 20 Daesh units yesterday in Iraq and Syria," said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "These strikes have significantly degraded Daesh's capacity to conduct operations, have put them on the defensive in most areas, and have enhanced the tactical advantage of ISF and VSO forces.

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, 12 airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and nine ISIL tactical units destroying four ISIL vehicles, 11 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL resupply positions and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL structure and destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units destroying an ISIL vehicle an ISIL mortar position, five ISIL bunkers and an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one airstrike destroyed one ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL recoilless rifle.

- Near Habbaniyah, four airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and two ISIL tactical units destroying an ISIL excavator, two ISIL vehicles, six ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL boat, two ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL armored personnel carrier.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, an ISIL rocket position and 11 ISIL staging areas and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL buildings.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun position and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 11 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 11 July 2015.

12 July 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 12 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 11, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes using bomber, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Separately, Syrian aircraft conducted airstrikes within Ar Raqqa near the timeframe of Coalition forces. These Syrian airstrikes were not coordinated with the Coalition. The nearest Coalition airstrike to Ar Raqqa city-center was 6.75 km away and targeted four bridges.

“Coalition airstrikes continue to protect gains made by partners on the ground while opening up new avenues to further diminish Daesh capabilities,” said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. “With more than 5,200 strikes in Syria and Iraq since the beginning of the air campaign, the Coalition continues to show its commitment to supporting anti-Daesh forces.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, eight airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and five ISIL tactical units destroying three ISIL vehicles, five ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL sniper position and three ISIL motorcycles.

Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL bunker.

- Near Ar Raqqa, six airstrikes struck five ISIL staging areas and an ISIL personnel carrier destroying an ISIL t-wall and two ISIL excavators.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and an ISIL rocket position, destroying two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL cache and two ISIL buildings.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL fuel tanker.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying an ISIL rocket rail, an ISIL bunker and an ISIL artillery piece.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical destroying an ISIL rocket launcher, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL boat.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL rocket position.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL structure.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit, destroying two ISIL vehicles and four ISIL buildings.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL tunnel.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 12 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 12 July 2015.

Since U.S. airstrikes began in Syria on 22 Sep 2014, I have been concerned about possible interaction between the Syrian air force and U.S. Military airplanes. Such an interaction was narrowly avoided on 11 July 2015. On 21 July, Agence France-Presse reported that CENTCOM denied any coordination with the Syrian air force — and also denied indirect coordination through a Kurdish mediator. [Daily Star](#).

13 July 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 13 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 12, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using bomber, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 39 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using bomber, attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Coalition airstrikes support partner ground operations against Daesh; they degrade Daesh capacity to equip, assemble, plan and finance operations, and prepare defenses,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Gilleran, CJTF-OIR spokesman. “We target Daesh in depth and

will continue to strike them wherever they operate.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and five ISIL tactical units destroying seven ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL armored personnel carrier.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL rocket position.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying two ISIL bunkers, an ISIL cache and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Hit, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL rocket position.
- Near Ramadi, 29 airstrikes struck 67 ISIL staging areas destroying two ISIL excavators, an ISIL armored personnel carrier, and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and an ISIL tactical unit destroying an ISIL personnel carrier, four ISIL buildings and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL rocket position, suppressing ISIL heavy machine gun fire and destroying an ISIL fuel tanker and an ISIL building.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 13 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 13 July 2015.

14 July 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 14 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 13, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 20 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using bomber, attack, and fighter-attack aircraft against ISIL targets.

“We are supporting ISF operations in Ramadi with precision airstrikes on Daesh targets,” said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. “Coalition efforts to date in Ramadi have been a great enabler for the advancement of Iraqi ground forces.

It should be understood that the coalition only supports those security forces, tribal resistance fighters and Iraqi Army units that are under the control of the government of Iraq and report directly to the Ministry of Defense for operations.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Aleppo, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL towed artillery piece.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two airstrikes struck nine ISIL staging areas.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, six airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units destroying two ISIL excavators, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL heavy machine gun position, an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL VBIEDs, an ISIL armored personnel carrier and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units destroying an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL structure.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL rocket position.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar position and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator, an ISIL VBIED factory, an ISIL armored vehicle, an ISIL structure and four ISIL VBIEDs.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units destroying five ISIL buildings, two ISIL light machine guns, and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike had inconclusive results.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 14 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 14 July 2015.

15 July 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 15 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 14, Coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“In the past 48 hours, coalition airstrikes hit five Vehicle-Borne IEDs and a factory producing these weapons in Ramadi,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Gilleran, CJTF-OIR spokesman. “Removing these weapons from the battlefield is a high priority for the coalition. VBIEDs pose a threat to the ISF and the citizens in the areas where Daesh employs them.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, six airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and five ISIL tactical units destroying two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL tunnel entrance, an ISIL VBIED, an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon, an ISIL artillery piece and two ISIL checkpoints.
- Near Aleppo, six airstrikes struck 27 ISIL staging areas.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit destroying an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon and an ISIL mortar.
- Near Kirkuk, four airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, an ISIL tactical unit, and seven ISIL staging areas and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and suppressed ISIL mortar fire destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, two ISIL buildings and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit destroying an ISIL VBIED, four ISIL vehicles and five ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 15 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 15 July 2015.

16 July 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 16 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 15, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and

Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 15 airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using bomber, attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Airstrikes continue to degrade Daesh tactical equipment and units to facilitate ISF operations in the vicinity of Ramadi,” said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR Chief of Public Affairs. “Coalition Forces are committed to supporting ISF in their fight against Daesh.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL tank and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes destroyed four ISIL towed artillery pieces, three ISIL bunkers and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ar Raqqa, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, an ISIL structure and an ISIL checkpoint and destroyed an ISIL excavator and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Ayn Isa, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL fighting position and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Abyad, two airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL staging area.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL vehicle and destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Kirkuk, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun position and destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL IED, an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL armored personnel carriers.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit destroying an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL command and control center and an ISIL building.
- Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, and two ISIL heavy machine guns and destroyed an ISIL building and an ISIL tunnel.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 16 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 16 July 2015.

17 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 16, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 14 airstrikes using bomber, fighter-attack, and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 12 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using bomber, attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“The airstrikes conducted in the past 24 hours continue to destroy Daesh’s capability to conduct terrorist attacks in the region,” said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. “Coalition airstrikes are degrading Daesh’s ability to maintain territory in the region.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, nine airstrikes struck seven ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL structure and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator, three ISIL bridges and an ISIL T-wall.
- Near Tal Abyad, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tank and destroyed an ISIL sniper position and four ISIL buildings.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL building.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL VBIED, an ISIL boat and an ISIL barge.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL technical vehicle, an ISIL mortar tube, two ISIL buildings and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL up-armored HMMWV.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL rocket position and destroyed an ISIL technical vehicle, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 17 July 2015.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 17 July 2015.

18 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 17, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 23 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

"The coalition airstrikes targeted Daesh vehicles, weapons and units around Fallujah, Ramadi and Tal Afar," said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. "When coalition assets detect and positively identify Daesh targets, we strike them relentlessly and our strikes exact a heavy toll on this brutal enemy."

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and two ISIL small tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL armored vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike destroyed three ISIL T-walls.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon.
- Near Habbaniya, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, an ISIL small tactical unit and three ISIL IEDs and destroyed two ISIL IEDs, five ISIL vehicles and seven ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck one ISIL tactical units, an ISIL light machine gun position and an ISIL sniper position and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun position and an ISIL building.
- Near Tal Afar, ten airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, three staging areas, two weapons caches, a command and control center, an ISIL heavy machine gun position and suppressed ISIL mortar fire as well as destroying an ISIL building

and two ISIL vehicles.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 18 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 18 July 2015.

19 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 18, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, eight airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and seven ISIL small tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, two ISIL weapons caches an ISIL VBIED and a bunker system.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike destroyed eight ISIL T-walls.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL tunnels and an ISIL building.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL building.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar and destroyed an ISIL building.
- Near Ramadi, six airstrikes struck four ISIL small tactical units and destroyed two ISIL IEDs, three ISIL tanks, three ISIL armored personnel carriers, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL light machine guns, six ISIL buildings and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL bunkers, two ISIL buildings and an ISIL light machine gun.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 19 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 19 July 2015.

20 July 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 20 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 19, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine 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-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Coalition precision airstrikes continue to degrade key Daesh capabilities across our area of operations, from Ar Raqqa to Mosul to Ramadi,” said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. “These coalition strikes against Daesh tactical units erode the terrorists’ ability to conduct large scale offensive operations; moreover, these air strikes significantly enhance the ISF ability to maneuver throughout the battle space and advance on Daesh strongholds. Ramadi is a good example of this. After only one week, nearly all of the ISF forces have advanced to a point expected by Iraqi leadership for this phase of the operation. This is significant considering the heavy fighting and complex obstacle and IED belts encountered by the ISF. No doubt coalition air power has contributed greatly to the progress of the Ramadi operation.”

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

Syria

- Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Al Hasakah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL VBIED production facility and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and six ISIL mine field sections.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL recoilless rifle and an ISIL tunnel in support of the 1st Iraqi Infantry Division.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache and an ISIL tank.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, six airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, an ISIL rocket firing

position, an ISIL machine gun, and an ISIL mortar position and destroyed four ISIL bunkers, two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL machine guns, and an ISIL tunnel.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 20 July 2015.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 20 July 2015.

21 July 2015

On Tuesday, 21 July 2015, neither the U.S. Central Command nor the Pentagon reported airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.

The Pentagon announced that the head of the Khorasan Group had been killed in an airstrike in Syria on 8 July. [Pentagon](#); [Washington Post](#); [CENTCOM](#). The CENTCOM announcement on 9 July of airstrikes during 8 July did *not* mention the Khorasan Group. The CENTCOM announcements on 6 and 10 July did mention the Khorasan Group. The 10 July announcement mentions the airstrike on 8 July that killed the leader.

22 July 2015: airstrikes

On 22-23 July, CENTCOM had not posted at its website its press release of 22 July, so I used the version from the Pentagon. 23 July marks three consecutive weekdays with no press release about airstrikes posted at the CENTCOM website.

On Wednesday, 22 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
Fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 15 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, 10 airstrikes struck eight ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, five ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL staging area, two ISIL bunkers, an ISIL excavator and three ISIL check points.
- Near Raqqah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar position, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL heavy weapon and an ISIL fighting position.

Attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 15 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Beiji, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL bridges.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed eight ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and ISIL terrain denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed an ISIL sniper position and an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL

- heavy machine guns.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
 - Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL excavator, an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.
 - Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck an ISIL rocket firing position and destroyed six ISIL bunkers.

[Pentagon](#), 22 July 2015.

23 July 2015: airstrikes

On 24 July, the most recent report of airstrikes at the CENTCOM website is dated 20 July. For that reason, I am quoting the Pentagon's press release.

On Thursday, 23 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:
Fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted seven airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and two ISIL small tactical units and destroyed two ISIL bunkers, 12 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, an ISIL small tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle bomb and five ISIL fighting positions.

Attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 11 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Haditha, an airstrike destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar position and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL rocket position and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and an ISIL small tactical unit and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy weapons and an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Sinjar, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy weapon.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator and five ISIL bunkers.

[Pentagon](#), 23 July 2015.

24 July 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 24 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted eight airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, six airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and four ISIL small tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, two ISIL structures and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL structure and destroyed an ISIL headquarters, an ISIL logistics hub and an ISIL structure.

Attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 19 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Qaim, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and terrain denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed five ISIL vehicles.
- Near Fallujah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and three ISIL bridges and destroyed an ISIL excavator and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Makhmur, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL building and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL weapons cache and four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL heavy weapon and destroyed four ISIL heavy weapons, four ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL tanks, six ISIL armored vehicles, three ISIL heavy weapons and an ISIL structure.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL buildings.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrikes destroyed four ISIL bunkers.

[Pentagon](#), 24 July 2015.

25 July 2015: airstrikes

CENCOM very rarely posts press releases at its website on weekends, so no press releases about airstrikes at the CENTCOM website continued for a fifth consecutive day on Saturday, 25 July.

On Saturday, 25 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted nine airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL excavator and an ISIL bridge.
- Near Dayr Az, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and two small ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions.

Attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 22 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.
- Near Fallujah, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device facility, a weapons repair facility and five ISIL bridges, and destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL armored personnel carriers, four ISIL mobility obstacles, an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon, an ISIL heavy machine gun, three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL building.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL light machine guns, two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL camera embedded berm.

[Pentagon](#), 25 July 2015.

Although *not* mentioned in this Pentagon press release, three F-16 fighters from Turkey launched airstrikes against ISIL inside Syria during 03:40 to 03:53 on Friday, 24 July. The Turkish prime minister's office claimed these airstrikes "kill[ed] at least 35 militants and destroy[ed] two ISIS headquarters and one rallying point with guided missiles." [Daily Sabah](#). For an explanation of *why* Turkey began to fight against ISIL, see [above](#). Turkey's airstrikes are *not* part of the Coalition effort ([U.S. State Dept.](#) search for "tactically" in transcript), which is why press releases from CENTCOM do not include Turkey's airstrikes.

26 July 2015: airstrikes

As usual, the CENTCOM/Pentagon report on 26 July covered airstrikes that occurred on the previous day, 25 July.

On Sunday, 26 July 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units, two ISIL small tactical units and two ISIL fighting positions and destroyed an ISIL

weapons cache, an ISIL command and control center, two ISIL fighting positions and three ISIL checkpoints.

- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL towed artillery piece.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kobani, five airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and four ISIL small tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL mortar position.

Attack, fighter-attack, and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 20 airstrikes in Iraq, approved by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense:

- Near Al Asad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL structure.
- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL structure and an ISIL bridge.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL structures.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device factory and an ISIL mortar position and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, two ISIL tanks and an ISIL armored personnel carrier and destroyed an ISIL road block, an ISIL armored personnel carrier, an ISIL building, two ISIL structures and an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL ammunition cache and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tuz, four airstrikes struck four ISIL staging areas.

[Pentagon](#), 26 July 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

On 25 July, Turkey had second and third sets of airstrikes against ISIL in Syria. [Hurriyet](#). However, details about these airstrikes were not reported in the news media.

27 July 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 27 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Fighter, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, 10 airstrikes struck four ISIL large tactical units and five ISIL small tactical units and destroyed 15 ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Aleppo, an airstrike struck an ISIL mortar system and destroyed an ISIL

vehicle.

- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL motorcycle and an ISIL vehicle.

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

- Near Huwayjah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Rutbah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL structure.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL tank.
- Near Ramadi, four airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and three ISIL small tactical units and destroyed an ISIL excavator, 13 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL rocket-propelled grenade and an ISIL structure.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL staging area and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

[Pentagon](#), 27 July 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

28 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 27, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using fighter, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 23 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Coalition forces in coordination with the GoI [Government of Iraq] continue to strike Daesh in multiple locations throughout Iraq and Syria daily,” said Col Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. “Our 20 airstrikes in Ramadi over the past four days are assisting the Iraqi Security Forces to isolate the city and degrade Daesh’s ability to maneuver their forces.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, seven airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units and destroyed

four ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL staging position, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL motorcycle and an ISIL structure.

- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, seven ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL bunker.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Bayji, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and terrain denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed two ISIL buildings.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed six ISIL structures.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL structures.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed 19 ISIL fighting positions, 10 ISIL tunnels and three ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, six airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL excavator, two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL resupply truck, an ISIL mortar position, an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL structure.
- Near Sinjar, five airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and two ISIL staging areas and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL heavy machine gun, five ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 28 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 28 July 2015.

Note that on 28 July CENTCOM began a new URL without the date, and (starting on 29 July) with a number at the end.

29 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 28, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three airstrikes using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Idlib, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL structure.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL tunnel entrance.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL armored vehicle, an ISIL structure and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL fighting position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Separately, on July 28 near Salqin, Syria, U.S. military forces conducted one airstrike against a network of veteran al-Qaida operatives, sometimes called the "Khorasan Group," who are plotting external attacks against the United States and our allies. The airstrike struck a tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

[Central Command](#), 29 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 29 July 2015.

30 July 2015: airstrikes

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

On July 29, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using fighter-attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 22 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, eight airstrikes struck seven ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL VBIED, six ISIL motorcycles and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles.

Iraq

- Near Haditha, eight airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, five ISIL staging areas and as ISIL command and control site and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, three ISIL structures, an ISIL berm, an ISIL IED belt, eight ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun position.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and three ISIL buildings.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL bunkers, an ISIL weapon cache, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL tank, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL light machine gun and two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL fighting position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 30 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 30 July 2015.

31 July 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 31 July 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 30, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 24 airstrikes using fighter-attack, fighter and bomber aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Coalition forces struck multiple Daesh targets in the vicinity of the eastern Syria border to reduce the freedom of movement of Daesh,” said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. “These strikes will have a profound impact on the ability of Daesh in Syria to affect operations in Iraq, particularly in Ramadi. Denying Daesh the ability to use these targets severely reduces their efforts to destabilize the region. These airstrikes, combined with ground force activity throughout Iraq and northern Syria, are increasing the pressure on ISIL.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and five ISIL small tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL motorcycles, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL command and control center.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, 17 airstrikes struck eight ISIL staging areas, three ISIL bridges, four ISIL checkpoints, an ISIL training area and an ISIL logistics site.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, two airstrikes struck an ISIL staging area.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL structures and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL fighting position and four ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes destroyed five ISIL structures, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL weapons cache and an ISIL command and control center.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Ramadi, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and terrain denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and two ISIL excavators.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL bunkers.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.

[Central Command](#), 31 July 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 31 July 2015.

Terrorist in Chattanooga

On 16 July 2015 at 10:45 EDT, a gunman drove to the Armed Forces Career Center (i.e., recruiting station) in Chattanooga, Tennessee and fired dozens of shots from inside his car. The gunman then drove 11 km (7 miles) — while being chased by police — to the Marine Corps Reserve Center, where he killed four U.S. Marines and seriously wounded a sailor. The gunman was shot and killed at the Reserve Center at about 11:15 on 16 July. The sailor died in a hospital on the morning of 18 July. A policeman was shot in the ankle at the Reserve Center. During an afternoon press conference on 16 July, the U.S. Attorney for Tennessee, Bill Killian, described the attack as an "act of domestic terrorism."

Sources and Resources:

- "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), last updated 24:21 EDT, 16 July.
- "LIVE UPDATES: Attacker identified in shooting attack on military installations that killed four," Chattanooga [Times Free Press](#), 16 July.
- "UPDATE: 4 Marines killed, police officer shot in 'act of domestic terrorism'," [WRCB](#) in Chattanooga, last updated 09:19 EDT, 17 July.
- "Suspect in slaying of U.S. Marines made 2014 trip to Mideast," [Reuters](#), 19:50 EDT, 17 July.
- "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), last updated 22:38 EDT on 17 July.
- "The Latest: Sailor dies after being wounded in shooting," [Associated Press](#), 08:55 EDT, last updated 23:53 EDT, 18 July.
- The Associated Press did *not* publish a "The Latest" blog on 19 July.
- "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), last updated 21:38 EDT, 20 July.
- "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), last updated 21:42 EDT, 21 July 2015.
- "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), last updated 20:57 EDT, 22 July 2015.
- "Picture of Tennessee shooting emerges: 3-5 minutes of terror," [Associated Press](#), 22:40 EDT, 22 July 2015 (reports FBI press conference).
- "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), last updated 15:36 EDT, 23 July 2015.
- "Terrorist or extremist, was Abdulazeez a man with a plan?," [Times Free Press](#), 23 July 2015 ("... it is clear his faith played a significant role in his decision" to shoot at military.).

About the Gunman

Because Abdulazeez offers us a case study in why an apparently normal person becomes an Islamic terrorist, I have quoted some important news articles in chronological order and added my comments to explain what I believe is the significance of some of this information.

About five hours after the first shooting, the Associated Press reported:

A U.S. official says the gunman in the shootings in Tennessee has been identified as 24-year-old Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez.

He was believed to have been born in Kuwait, and it was unclear whether he was a U.S. or Kuwaiti citizen. The official was speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing, sensitive investigation. It was not immediately clear whether the gunman's first name was spelled Muhammad or Mohammad.

He is from Hixson, Tennessee, which is just a few miles across the river from Chattanooga.

"The Latest ...," [Associated Press](#), 16:00 EDT, 16 July 2015.

At 21:30 EDT, the Associated Press added that the gunman had received "a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering" from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

The newspaper in Chattanooga reported about the gunman:

A man named Youssuf Abdulazeez attended UTC, spokesman Chuck Cantrell said, and

graduated in 2012 with a degree in engineering.

Abdulazeez is from Hixson, Tennessee, which is just a few miles across the river from Chattanooga. He was booked for a DUI [driving under influence of alcohol] in April 2015.

"What we know about the Chattanooga shooter," [Times Free Press](#), 16 July 2015.

Later, Reuters reported:

The 24-year-old man accused of gunning down four Marines in Chattanooga, Tennessee, blogged on Monday that "life is short and bitter" and Muslims should not miss an opportunity to "submit to Allah," according to an organization that tracks extremist groups. The SITE Intelligence Group said a July 13 post written by suspected gunman Mohammod Youssuf Abdulazeez stressed the sacrifice of the Sahaba (companions of the Prophet) "fought Jihad for the sake of Allah." Reuters could not independently verify the blog postings.

....

Abdulazeez was a naturalized U.S. citizen born in Kuwait in 1990, according to NBC News. According to SITE, his mother is from Kuwait and his father from Palestine.

....

A resume posted online and updated as recently as March shows Mohammod Abdulazeez was trying to find work as an electrical engineer. He graduated in September 2012 with a bachelor's degree in that field from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, according to the posted resume.

Rich McKay, "Suspected gunman blogged about Islam days before Tennessee shootings: report," [Reuters](#), 19:31 EDT, 16 July 2015.

On 17 July, the Associated Press reported:

An Ohio company says the man who gunned down four Marines in Tennessee failed a background check in May 2013.

Todd Schneider, a spokesman for FirstEnergy Corp., says Muhammad Abdulazeez was conditionally hired as an engineer at a nuclear plant in east Cleveland. He spent 10 days there before he was let go because he failed a background check.

[Schneider] would not say why Abdulazeez didn't pass the screening process. Abdulazeez underwent general training on company procedures, but his access was limited during his brief employment.

"The Latest: Tennessee shooter failed background check," [Associated Press](#), 17:07 EDT, 17 July 2015.

At 20:15 EDT, the Associated Press added that Abdulazeez had "failed a drug test" at FirstEnergy.

On 17 July, the [Times Free Press](#) reported that Abdulazeez had been employed by "Superior Essex Inc. for three months". Essex manufacturers copper wire for conducting electricity. The job at Essex apparently ended Abdulazeez's thirty-month search for employment. More about his job at Essex is reported in [The Tennessean](#) newspaper.

[CNN](#) reports that friends characterized Abdulazeez as "a devout Muslim who kept in touch with his roots in the Middle East." Abdulazeez visited an uncle in Jordan in 2014, and a friend said that Abdulazeez had "changed" after that trip to Jordan.

[The New York Times](#) reports that the FBI is focusing on Abdulazeez's seven-month trip to Jordan in 2014.

There is a tiny detail that was reported by journalists, but its significance was not mentioned by journalists. During the attack on 16 July, Abdulazeez was driving a Ford Mustang convertible that he had rented earlier in the week, instead of his "beat-up vehicle".

[Washington Post](#) ("Earlier this week, one of his neighbors noticed he was in a new rental car, instead of the beat-up vehicle he normally drove."); [CNN](#) (rented Ford Mustang). My interpretation is that Abdulazeez planned to be stylish while engaging in his attack. Getting a rental car may be part of his premeditation, along with obtaining two rifles, a pistol, and ammunition.

On the evening of 18 July, Reuters reported:

Hours before the Tennessee shooting that killed five U.S. servicemen, the suspected gunman texted his close friend a link to a long Islamic verse that included the line: "Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, then I have declared war against him."

....

Abdulazeez's friends said he had returned from a trip to Jordan in 2014 concerned about conflicts in the Middle East and the reluctance of the United States and other countries to intervene.

He later purchased three assault rifles [an AK-74, an AR-15, and a Saiga 12] on an online marketplace and used them for target practice, the friends said.

....

The night before the attack, just after 10 p.m., the close friend received a text from Abdulazeez with a link to a Hadith, or Islamic teaching: sunnah.com/nawawi40/38. Richard Valdmanis, "Tennessee suspect texted friend link to Islamic verse before attack," [Reuters](#), 18:21 EDT (23:21 BST), 18 July 2015.

My comment on the Reuters article is that Abdulazeez was apparently contemplating his religion 13 hours before his death in an attack on the U.S. Military. Because the U.S. had shown enmity to friends of Abdulazeez (e.g., Muslim terrorists in Syria and Gaza), Abdulazeez was obligated to declare war on the U.S. Apparently, Abdulazeez selected the U.S. Marines as symbolic of the U.S. Government. The AK-74 model is *not* a typographical

error, it is a different model from the older and more common AK-47. The Saiga 12 is a shotgun, *not* an assault rifle.

On the night of 18 July, *The Washington Post* reports on use of marijuana by Abdulazeed, and also says:

The portrait emerging of Abdulazeed isn't one of a committed Muslim or vengeful jihadist, but rather an aimless young man who came from a troubled home and struggled to hold down a job after college, said friends and law enforcement officials.

He never dated, the friend said.

In a statement, his family said Abdulazeed's mental illness had contributed to the crime. "For many years, our son suffered from depression. It grieves us beyond belief to know that his pain found its expression in this heinous act of violence," the statement said.

Abdulazeed had been in and out of treatment for his depression and frequently stopped taking his medication, despite his parents' pleas for him to continue, said a person close to the family.

....

The friend said Abdulazeed was especially ashamed of his DUI arrest, which led to his mugshot being posted online and in *Just Busted*, a newspaper sold at local gas stations.

"He was pretty upset about it," said the friend, who spoke with Abdulazeed almost daily in the weeks and days leading up to the shooting. "It was kind of degrading to him."

....

Abdulazeed also struggled to find work after he graduated from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with an engineering degree. He briefly landed a job at a nuclear power plant in Ohio but was dismissed when he failed a background check. He told friends he had failed the company's drug test after smoking marijuana.

Greg Jaffe, Cari Wade Gervin, & Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Tenn. gunman used drugs, struggled with clash of faith," [Washington Post](#), 21:37 EDT, 18 July 2015.

The above-quoted *Washington Post* article does not mention alcohol. Other sources have quoted the police report of Abdulazeed's arrest on 20 April 2015 that specifically says Abdulazeed "smelled of alcohol and marijuana" (See e.g., [Times Free Press](#); [NY Times](#); [CNN](#)).

My comment on the above-quoted *Post* article: Abdulazeed was scheduled to appear in court on 30 July on the DUI charge. (See e.g., [CNN](#).) If Abdulazeed was really humiliated by his arrest, perhaps dying in an attack on the U.S. Military was a way for him to redeem himself, and also avoid appearing in court two weeks later. If Abdulazeed was seriously mentally ill,

then that illness could have made him more susceptible to irrational thoughts like redemption via killing U.S. Military personnel.

On the night of 19 July, the Associated Press reported that Abdulazeez's family claims he was mentally ill.

A Kuwait-born man who shot and killed five service members in Tennessee suffered from depression since his early teen years and also fought drug and alcohol abuse, spending time in Jordan last year to help him clean himself up, a family spokesman said Sunday [19 July].

The representative, who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid unwanted publicity, said relatives of 24-year-old Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez believe those personal struggles are at the heart of last week's killings at a pair of military sites in Chattanooga.

....

Abdulazeez had spent several months in Jordan last year under a mutual agreement with his parents to help him get away from drugs, alcohol and a group of friends who relatives considered a bad influence, the spokesman said.

....

Abdulazeez, who was shot and killed by police after a hail of gunfire, was first treated by a child psychiatrist for depression when he was 12 or 13 years old, said the family representative.

....

The [20 April 2015] arrest was "important" because Abdulazeez was deeply embarrassed and seemed to sink further into depression following the episode, the representative said.

....

Bassam Issa, president of the Islamic Society of Greater Chattanooga, said he knew nothing of Abdulazeez's problems, despite knowing his father well through the mosque. But, he added, that is not surprising. Drinking alcohol and using drugs is strictly forbidden in the Islamic faith. "In our culture, if a son or daughter is having those sorts of problems, they keep it a secret because of the shame," Issa said. "As a parent, you always want to be able to say your child is making you proud, not that they are struggling."

Jay Reeves & Michael Biesecker, "Family spokesman: Mental issues dogged shooter who killed 5," [Associated Press](#), 21:03 EDT, 19 July 2015.

My comment is to reject the family's assertion that an 11 or 12 year history of depression somehow caused him to kill five U.S. Military personnel. Many people are depressed, but do

not murder. It is more likely that the cause of the murder is something in Abdulazeez's interpretation of the Islamic religion, as suggested by the text message that he sent 13 hours before his death. That text message quoted an Islamic teaching. (See Reuters story at 18:21 EDT on 18 July, quoted above.) Also, Abdulazeez created a blog three days before his attack, and that blog also mentions teachings of Islam. (See Reuters story at 19:31 EDT on 16 July, quoted above.) There were *many* different subjects that Abdulazeez *could* have chosen for his blog, but he chose Islam because it was important to him, and because he was contemplating religion three days before his death.

Dying in an attack on the U.S. Military was a way for Abdulazeez to redeem himself. He was apparently a failure as an electrical engineer (e.g., no patents, author of zero articles in engineering journals, no novel designs), but he was a successful jihadist in his attack on the U.S. Military.

Both *The Washington Post* article on 18 July and the Associated Press article on 19 July mention Abdulazeez was ashamed or embarrassed at his arrest. Dying in an attack on the U.S. Military was a way to avoid appearing in court two weeks later.

Note that his reason(s) for shooting at, and murdering, U.S. Military personnel do *not* need to be acceptable to mainstream Muslims, such as his family. The reason(s) only need to make sense to Abdulazeez.

Finally, the "several months in Jordan" in 2014 was actually 7 months. This was a long absence from friends who were a "bad influence". But it is also a deep immersion in the Middle East, where anti-Semitic propaganda and anti-American propaganda is common. The anti-Semitic propaganda is relevant, because the U.S. Government supports Israel, so propaganda criticizing Israel is also likely to criticize the USA. That propaganda could have helped Abdulazeez to see the U.S. Government as his enemy.

Journalists seeking evidence of "radicalization" of Abdulazeez seem to focus on propaganda from ISIL or Al-Qaeda. But there is also anti-Israel propaganda included in routine news reports in the Arab news media. One must not overlook the effect of a relentless stream of pejorative propaganda in news reports. For example, the relatively mellow Jordanian News Agency mentioned a minister in Jordanian government "condemned the Israeli occupation authorities for allowing Zionist extremists to storm the Al Aqsa Mosque". [PETRA](#). (There is *no* Israeli "occupation". Israel captured the so-called occupied land in wars initiated by Arabs, just as the USA captured Puerto Rico in a war with Spain.) The news media in Iran is much worse: "A member of the Iranian Parliament ... called on the Muslim nations to be united to liberate both Palestine and the occupied Holy Qods (Jerusalem) from the hegemony of the usurper Zionist regime." [IRNA](#). Also, the Iranian foreign minister said: "the root cause of extremism and terrorism in the Middle East is the policy of occupying by the US and the Zionist Regime". [IRNA](#). The inflammatory propaganda in IRNA needs no comment.

On the morning of 20 July, American Broadcasting Corp. (ABC) News reported that Abdulazeez was heavily in debt and contemplating bankruptcy, despite being employed.

With more than 30 FBI agents due to arrive today in Chattanooga, a diary belonging to

the gunman and FBI interviews with his parents paint a picture of a disturbed, suicidal young man using drugs, preparing for bankruptcy and facing an appearance in criminal court, according to a representative of the shooter's family.

Four days after the shooting, the FBI has not found any connection to overseas terrorist groups, but Mohammod Abdulazeez's diary says that as far back as 2013, he wrote about having suicidal thoughts and "becoming a martyr" after losing his job due to his drug use, both prescription and non-prescription drugs, the family representative said.

In a downward spiral, Abdulazeez would abuse sleeping pills, opioids, painkillers and marijuana, along with alcohol, the representative said.

Most recently, the 24-year-old was having problems dealing with a 12 hour overnight shift, and had to take sleeping pills, according to the representative. The young man was also thousands of dollars in debt and considering filing for bankruptcy.

....

The family representative said Sunday [19 July] that the family told the FBI there were no outward signs of radicalization but added Abdulazeez "was susceptible to bad influences" and would be affected by watching news accounts of "children being killed in Syria."

Brian Ross, Doug Lantz, & James Gordon Meek, "Chattanooga Shooting: FBI Recovers Gunman's Disturbing Diary," [ABC News](#), 06:58 EDT, 20 July 2015.

My comment is that Abdulazeez thinking about "becoming a martyr" is consistent with my suggestion above that he would redeem himself with an attack on the U.S. Military. His debts must have added to his sense of failure in his career. After dying in at attack on the U.S. Military, Abdulazeez will *not* be remembered for his use of marijuana and alcohol, and he will *not* be remembered for his failure in his career. Instead, jihadists will remember Abdulazeez as a martyr for fighting against the USA — but most people will remember Abdulazeez as a murderer of five innocent people.

At night on 20 July, *The New York Times* reported that Abdulazeez was "in a downward spiral":

[On Monday, 20 July,] a picture took shape of a deeply troubled young man who struggled with mental illness and drug abuse at the same time he found himself alienated from United States policies in the Arab world, according to the authorities, friends and the family representative.

The authorities who were examining Mr. Abdulazeez's computer found that he had viewed material connected to Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical American-born cleric who was killed in Yemen by an American drone strike in 2011, according to a person with knowledge of the investigation.

Mr. Abdulazeez had suffered for years from depression and possibly from bipolar disorder, the family representative said, adding that he had abused alcohol and possibly

prescription painkillers and had gained and lost jobs. In his last months, he faced the prospect of both bankruptcy and jail time on a drunken-driving charge.

....

In a few pages of rambling notes being pored over by the F.B.I., Mr. Abdulazeez wrote about suicide and martyrdom as long ago as 2013, a senior United States intelligence official said.

....

The family representative said the notes, all more than a year old, expressed Mr. Abdulazeez's discontent with United States military action in the Middle East, and "talks about his life being worthless." They are less a diary, the representative said, than a scattershot set of observations, some of them "gibberish," while others "were clearly things that were written by someone who was very depressed."

....

After college, [Abdulazeez] was "a guy who was sort of bouncing around," the representative said, at times disappearing for a few days, on a binge with friends. "He was able to get jobs, but never keep them."

Manny Fernandez, Alan Blinder, Eric Schmitt, & Richard Perez-Pena, "In Chattanooga, a Young Man in a Downward Spiral," [NY Times](#), 21 July 2015/

My comment is that the 30 July court hearing on the drunk driving charge is the end of his spiral downward. To avoid the humiliation of appearing in court, Abdulazeez apparently felt the need to end his life before 30 July. Debts, and plans for bankruptcy, may have added to the pressure on Abdulazeez. And, in contrast to his failure as an electrical engineer, Abdulazeez would be successful as a jihadist on a suicide mission. *The New York Times* article gives us a little bit more information about Abdulazeez being "alienated from United States policies in the Arab world", which may have influenced his selection of targets for his shooting spree that would end in his death.

Some of Abdulazeez's writings are characterized as "gibberish", which suggests that he is not always rational. That irrationality could have added to his failures (e.g., inability to hold a job) and also allowed him to accept a murder spree as a way out of his problems.

On 21 July, *The New York Times* revealed a little more information about Abdulazeez:

Counterterrorism investigators have uncovered evidence the gunman who killed five service members last week in Chattanooga, Tenn., searched the Internet in the days leading up to the attack for Islamic materials about whether martyrdom would lead to forgiveness for his sins, like drunkenness and financial debt, according to law enforcement officials.

.... The F.B.I., which is leading the investigation, has become increasingly convinced that Mr. Abdulazeez, who died in a shootout with police, turned to radical ideology as

he struggled with severe mental health and financial issues, the officials said.

....

The authorities have found no evidence that he was given orders to attack by any group overseas or was in touch with ISIS.

Michael S. Schmidt & Jodi Rudoren, "Chattanooga Gunman Researched Islamic Martyrdom, Officials Say," [NY Times](#), 21 July 2015.

The fact that Abdulazeez researched "whether martyrdom would lead to forgiveness" for drinking alcohol and financial debt is consistent with my suggestions above that Abdulazeez used his shooting spree to redeem himself.

On the night of 21 July, Reuters published a summary of what is known about Abdulazeez's motives, and adds some new information.

Members of Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazeez's family believe deep depression and shame over an drunken driving charge may have led him to go on a rampage in which five U.S. servicemen died last week, a source close to the family said on Tuesday [21 July].

....

Substance abuse combined with long-standing psychological issues appears to have stirred up intense religious guilt, driving Abdulazeez to find forgiveness in a violent outburst, they believe.

Two days before the Chattanooga attack, Abdulazeez told his family he was going to work, the source said, but they learned from his friends that he instead took a marijuana and alcohol-fueled "joy ride" in a rented car.

.... [Abdulazeez] was also "very ashamed" about the drunken driving arrest in April and an impending court appearance, the family source said, and may have had difficulty reconciling his drinking and marijuana use with his Muslim faith.

....

Investigators have evidence that Abdulazeez searched for general jihadist propaganda that may have inspired the rampage, a source close to the investigation said on Monday [20 July], although no direct link has so far been found between the suspect and any militant group such as Islamic State or al Qaeda.

His family believes Abdulazeez was looking for spiritual guidance on how he might be forgiven for sins, the family source said, and that quest may have contributed to his decision to attack.

But investigators think Abdulazeez's online activities included reading the writings of Anwar al Awlaki, a Yemeni-American militant preacher affiliated with al Qaeda in the

Arabian Peninsula, according to a government source. Al Awlaki was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen in 2011.

Mark Hosenball, "Tennessee suspect's family sees depression, shame behind rampage," [Reuters](#), 22:40 EDT, 21 July 2015.

It is *ir*responsible for Abdulazeez to be driving around, when he should have been at work. Further, he was heavily in debt, but he frivolously spent money on a rental car. Why? I suggest he knew he was going to die in an attack on the U.S. Military in a few days. Driving around was his final fling. A new car — here a rental car — is the American symbol of success.

In the above-quoted story, Reuters says Abdulazeez lived with an uncle in Jordan from April 2014 until November 2014.

At night on 1 August 2015, I searched the Reuters U.S. website for news about Abdulazeez, but the above-quoted article on 21 July is the most recent news about Abdulazeez. On 1 Aug, the search engine at the Associated Press website only retrieves articles on Abdulazeez that are newer than 27 July.

Conclusions About the Gunman

Given that Abdulazeez died in his attack on the U.S. Military, there is no way for psychiatrists and detectives to interview him now. That means that any conclusions are a bit speculative. Nonetheless, here is what I have concluded from reading news reports.

1. Abdulazeez realized he was a failure in life:
 - A. Inability to hold a job.
 - B. Failure as an engineer: no patents, author of zero articles in engineering journals, no novel designs.
 - C. Continuing use of marijuana and alcohol, despite being forbidden by Islamic theology.
 - D. Debts and possible future bankruptcy.
2. Martyrdom would allow Abdulazeez to redeem himself from his failures. This is not only forgiveness in Islamic theology, but also after his murder spree no one would remember Abdulazeez for his failures in life. Instead, everyone will remember Abdulazeez for killing U.S. Military personnel.
3. Martyrdom would allow Abdulazeez to avoid the embarrassment and humiliation of appearing in court on 30 July on the DUI charge.

Of course, most people will remember Abdulazeez as a terrorist who murdered five innocent people. Abdulazeez's shooting spree significantly worsened his reputation, according to mainstream values. But what is important here is Abdulazeez's personal reason(s), *not* mainstream, rational values. Apparently, Abdulazeez was influenced by some combination of:

1. suicidal thoughts from his severe depression,

2. Islamic theology about martyrdom, and
3. Islamic terrorist doctrines that he found on the Internet (e.g., material from Anwar al-Awlaki).

The Uncle of the Gunman

There are various spellings of the gunman's first name, the Associated Press calls him Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez. In 2014, to get Muhammed away from friends who were a bad influence on him (i.e., using marijuana and alcohol), Muhammed was shipped to his uncle in Jordan for seven months. On 17 July 2015, the uncle was arrested and interrogated by Jordanian police and U.S. FBI agents. On 21 July, the uncle's lawyer said he was *not* allowed to see the uncle. The uncle's lawyer told reporters that the uncle was a businessman who sold cellular telephones, and the uncle had no contact with Islamic terrorists. According to the uncle's lawyer, the uncle helped his sister's son. As the cliché says: no good deed goes unpunished. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#), both on 21 July.

There was no arrest warrant for the uncle, no appearance in court, no access to his attorney, and the uncle was never charged with a crime. However, the uncle spent more than 6 days in jail for helping his sister's son, before being released on 23 July. [Associated Press](#); [Gulf Times](#)(AFP).

My Comments

My essay for [May 2015](#) mentions a terrorist attack by two Muslims in Garland, Texas. The two gunmen in Garland were both college dropouts. One of them (Soofi) had multiple arrests for DUI during 1998-2002, and had been found guilty of possession of marijuana earlier in 2015.

In Chattanooga, the gunman was a college graduate who was still seeking employment 30 months after graduation. Abdulazeez used marijuana and he had one arrest for DUI involving both alcohol and marijuana. (I mention the DUI arrests of Soofi and Abdulazeez, because Muslims are forbidden to drink alcoholic beverages and forbidden to use psychoactive drugs like marijuana.)

It is not necessarily the fault of these three gunmen that they were unable to be successful in a career, given the poor job market during the Bush-Obama economy since 2008. However, the poor job market is absolutely *not* an acceptable reason to engage in terrorism.

Many people will read news about Muhammad Abdulazeez and think "*another* Muslim runs amok". The Truth is that there are Islamic terrorist groups (e.g., Al-Qaeda and the Taliban) who have been murdering people for more than twenty years, and those groups appear to be growing. Muhammad Abdulazeez fits the pattern of an Islamic terrorist, although he was neither trained nor a financed by any Islamic terror group. But when Dylann Roof murdered nine people in a church in Charleston, South Carolina on 17 June 2015, we did *not* say "*another* white supremacist runs amok", despite the fact that Dylann fits the pattern of white

supremacists who have murdered or terrorized black people in the USA since the end of the civil war in 1865. Perhaps the distinction between Muhammad and Dylann is that Dylann is part of the white Christian majority, while Muhammad is a member of the Muslim minority in the USA. People in the majority tend to see other members of the majority as *individual* people, while members of a minority are seen as a stereotype (e.g., all Muslims are terrorists) based on the acts of a few members of that minority. That is why I suggested in August 2014 that the Muslim religion has a public relations problem, to distinguish Islamic terrorism from the mainstream Islamic religion. Such a distinction is also necessary to defeat the ideology of Islamic terrorism, to reduce recruiting of terrorists by ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

It is *not* adequate that Muslim leaders condemn each terrorist attack after the attack happens. There must be a continuing effort by Muslim leaders to defeat the ideology of Islamic terrorism, to prevent attacks.

The U.S. Embassy in [Baghdad](#) mentioned estimates that between 2 and 7 million Muslims live in the USA. (A more precise value is not known, because the U.S. Census does not ask about religion.) Let's assume that there are 6 million Muslims in the USA. In the first seven months of 2015, three Muslims have run amok in the USA: two in Garland Texas and one in Chattanooga. That is a "defect" rate of about one part per million per year. Given the nature of human beings to sometimes commit evil acts, a defect rate of one part per million per year may be difficult to decrease. It is definitely *not* realistic to expect a zero defect rate, which is why local, state, and federal governments in the USA have a large number of law enforcement personnel to investigate crimes and arrest perpetrators. The defect rate might be higher, except that the FBI continues to arrest potential terrorists *before* they can kill innocent people or before they can travel to Syria to join a terrorist organization.

Abdulazeez is a lesson for young people. He went from an insignificant failure, to a significant murderer. No matter how bad life is, one can make it worse.

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.

My conclusions for [August 2014](#) through [June 2015](#) contained a list of citations to some commentators who recognized that we should be cooperating with Assad in the fight against ISIL and other terrorist organizations. In the interest of brevity, I have deleted those citations from current and future essays.

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. However, the USA, Europe, and Arab nations were unable to cooperate with Assad in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

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 31 July 2015, the possibility of peace in Syria looks grim for the foreseeable future.

Obama refuses to cooperate with Assad's military. Obama has been reluctant 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 might train 15,000 rebels by the end of the year 2018. 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 240,000 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.

The peace negotiations sponsored by the United Nations have moved at a snail's pace since mid-2013 and there have been no significant results. The United Nations (e.g., Ban and de Mistura) are now trying to solve the problem that existed in the years 2011 and 2012: convert Assad's dictatorship to a democratic government. But, since June 2014, the current big problem is ISIL's creation of a caliphate in Syria, Iraq, and eventually other nations. Another current problem is Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda) creating an emirate in Syria. Other current problems are numerous jihadist organizations who want to create an Islamic government to replace Assad's secular government. Looking at all of these current problems, I conclude that Assad is better than any of the alternatives amongst the insurgents.

The Syrian government — regardless of who leads it — does *not* have the resources to defeat the multiple terrorist insurgencies. And the continuing civil war and its destruction of buildings, electricity supply, and other infrastructure is continuing to deplete resources of Syria.

Note that, consistently since mid-2013, *none* of the insurgent groups in Syria want to attend negotiations. That alone will kill any possible political solution for the Syrian civil war.

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 unable 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 innocent civilians in repeated bombings in or near Baghdad.

I conclude that the government of Iraq is dysfunctional and unworthy 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 years 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/syria23.pdf>
begun 1 July 2015, last modified 1 August 2015.

The annotated [list](#) of my essays on Syria and links to historical documents.

[my homepage](#)