

Syria & Iraq: August 2015

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Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 21 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 That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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 (17 U.S.C. §107) That is why I do not quote most of an article by a news agency or newspaper.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

- [All Iraq News](#),
- [Rudaw](#) in Kurdish Iraq,
- the Pentagon and the U.S. Central Command,
- the Associated Press,
- Reuters in the United Kingdom,
- *The Washington Post*, and
- news sources in Turkey (e.g., Anadolu Agency, Daily Sabah, Today's Zaman)

for news to summarize in this essay. When I found significant news, I attempted to find and cite the original source. Beginning on 6 Aug 2015, *The Daily Star* in Lebanon required a subscription, so I stopped using that source.

Terse Summary of Syria Fighters

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

1. The so-called "rebels" are moderates, many of whom are part of the Free Syrian Army. In 2011, these moderates wanted to continue a secular government in Syria, but without Assad.
2. The "jihadists" want to impose an Islamic government (i.e., Sharia law) on Syria. The Islamic Front is 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.

Chemical Weapons 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 21 August, ISIL apparently used mortar shells to deliver a chemical weapon (mustard gas?) to civilians in the village of Marea, north of Aleppo in Syria. [SAMS](#); [MSF](#); [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [The Telegraph](#).

U.N. begins to ask *who* used chemical weapons in Syria?

On 9 July 2015, the U.S. asked the United Nations Security Council to form a committee to determine *who* used chemical weapons in Syria. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [New York Times](#)(AP).

On 7 August, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2235 that requests the U.N. Secretary General form a committee to determine *who* released toxic chemicals (including chlorine) in Syria, in violation of Resolution 2118 of September 2013 and in violation of treaties prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. [United Nations](#); [Reuters](#) at 15:36 EDT; [Associated Press](#) at 16:29 EDT; all on 7 Aug 2015.

The text of Resolution 2235 is contained in a [Report](#) from the U.N. Security Council, which is also posted at [ReliefWeb](#) and at my website, [rbs0.com](#).

Politicians and diplomats released much propaganda on 6-7 Aug 2015 about bringing perpetrators to Justice, but we are still in the investigative stage. It is still unknown which court — if any — has jurisdiction over defendants in Syria.

I note that the first release of chlorine as a weapon in Syria was in April 2014. (See my essay for [April 2014](#).) There is nothing to celebrate about waiting 15 months to ask the question "*Who* did this?".

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2235, §5, says:

Requests the UN Secretary-General, in coordination with the OPCW Director General, to submit to the Security Council ... within 20 days of the adoption of this resolution [i.e., on or before 27 Aug 2015], recommendations ... regarding the establishment and operation of an OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify ... individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organizers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic....

On the 27 Aug deadline, the Secretary General submitted the requested recommendations. The Spokesperson's statement says:

The continuing reports of the use of chemical weapons, as well as the use of toxic

chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian conflict are deeply disturbing. The Secretary-General strongly condemns any such use by any party to the conflict.

He reiterates that Resolution 2235 (2015), which was unanimously adopted by the Security Council earlier this month, is a strong collective message from the international community that any such use shall not be tolerated and will have consequences. The international community has a responsibility to hold the perpetrators accountable and to ensure that chemical weapons never be used again as an instrument of warfare.

Pursuant to Resolution 2235, the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director-General, today submitted to the Security Council the requested recommendations, including elements of Terms of Reference, on the OPCW—UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to be established by the resolution on the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Secretary-General calls on all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the JIM. He counts on the continued engagement and support of the members of the Security Council as well as the entire UN membership to ensure the effective implementation of this resolution.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the implementation of Resolution 2235 (2015)," [UNSG](#), 27 Aug 2015.

The Associated Press reported that the Secretary General recommended creating a three-member committee, "headed by a U.N. assistant secretary-general, with a deputy in charge of political issues and a deputy in charge of the investigation". [Associated Press](#). See also [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP). The committee will have experts do the essential scientific and forensic work that diplomats can *not* understand.

ISIL Releases Chemical Weapons in Iraq

My essay for [November 2014](#) mentions two different instances of ISIL releasing chlorine gas in Iraq.

My essay for [July 2015](#) cited six news reports about ISIL releasing chlorine gas during fights with Kurds in Iraq.

There were more reports of ISIL releasing chemical weapons in Iraq, this time in the town of Makhmur on 11 Aug:

- "Germany confirms Peshmerga fighting ISIS were attacked by chemical weapons," [Rudaw](#), 13 Aug 2015.
- "Evidence that 'Islamic State' used chemicals on Kurds, says Bundeswehr," [Deutsche Welle](#), 13 Aug 2015.
- "Islamic State Uses Chemical Weapons Against Peshmerga in Makhmour,"

[BAS News](#), 13 Aug 2015.

- "US investigating whether Islamic State used chemical weapons," [Associated Press](#), 19:19 EDT, 13 Aug 2015.
- "Islamic State Suspected of Using Chemical Weapon, U.S. Says," [Wall Street Journal](#), updated 21:00 EDT, 13 Aug 2015 (mustard gas)
- "U.S. believes Islamic State likely used mustard agent in Iraq attack: WSJ," [Reuters](#), 00:07 GMT, 14 Aug.
- "BREAKING: Tests prove ISIS using mustard gas against Kurds," [Rudaw](#), 14:00 GMT, 14 Aug.
- "Chemical Weapons Group Says It Is Open to Investigation of Iraq Mustard Agent Claims," [Wall Street Journal](#), 12:02 EDT, 14 Aug.
- "U.S. believes Islamic State launched mustard attacks in Syria, possibly Iraq," [Washington Post](#), 20:42 EDT, 14 Aug.
- "Department of Defense Press Briefing with Brigadier General Kevin J. Killea, chief of staff, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve via DVIDS from Southwest Asia on Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 21 Aug (transcript).
- "US: Tests show mustard gas traces in Islamic State attack," [Associated Press](#), 13:06 EDT, 21 Aug 2015 ("Preliminary tests show traces of the chemical agent sulfur mustard on mortars that Islamic State militants used to attack Kurdish forces in Iraq, final tests are underway").
- "Islamic State mortar fragments show traces of chemical arms: U.S. general," [Reuters](#), 02:28 GMT, 22 Aug ("fragments would be further tested to confirm the finding." "...the testing was would take a couple of weeks to finalize.").

Initial reports mention chlorine, but then the *Wall Street Journal* reported on 13 August the U.S. Government believes ISIL used mustard gas.

Apparently, no one at OPCW or the United Nations wants to investigate these reports of ISIL using chemical weapons in Iraq. I speculate that *if* ISIL were found to be releasing chemical weapons in Iraq, then it would be more plausible that ISIL is also responsible for releases of chemical weapons in Syria, thereby giving reasonable doubts to blaming Assad for *all* releases of chemical weapons in Syria. This is a problem with deciding to blame Assad *before* the investigations are completed, what lawyers call a "rush to judgment".

On 17 August 2015, OPCW posted a press release that said: "Recent reports of possible use of chemical weapons in Iraq by non-State actors are a matter of serious concern." [OPCW](#). My comment is that it is a "serious concern" that OPCW does not have a fully equipped chemical laboratory that can *promptly* (i.e., within 24 hours) identify suspected chemical weapons. If OPCW does not want to operate its own laboratory, perhaps OPCW could contract with the chemistry department in a major university in Europe.

Speculation is that ISIL *may* have stolen mustard gas from warehouses of Assad's army in Syria or Saddam Hussein's army in Iraq. Back on 19 June 2014, ISIL seized Hussein's main chemical weapons production facility. [The Telegraph](#); [WSJ](#). My essay for [July 2014](#) mentions that the Iraqi government admitted in July 2014 that ISIL captured a Hussein-era chemical weapons storage facility north of Baghdad on 11 June 2014 and began looting it. The U.S. Government assured journalists in June 2014 that it would be difficult for ISIL to obtain usable chemical weapons from that site in Iraq.

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](#).

Deaths in Syria

On 6 August (about the same time I posted my essay for July at my website), the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published a new death toll of *at least* 240,381 dead since the Syrian civil war began on 18 March 2011.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented death of 240381 persons

since 18/03/2011, which witnessed the fall of the first martyr in Daraa, until 08/05/2015.

The casualties are as follows:

- Civilians: 111624 civilians, including 11964 children and 7719 women.
- Rebel and Islamic fighters: 36628.
- Defected soldiers and officers: 2541
- Arab fighters from Gulf countries, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, North Africa, Palestine, Jordan, Sudan and other Arab countries, as well as fighters from Europe, Russia, China, India, Chechnya, Afghanistan, America and Australia who fight with “Islamic State”, al-Nusra Front, Junoud al-Sham battalion, Jund Al-Aqsa battalion, al-Khadra’ battalion, Jund al-Sham Movement, Junud al-Sham al-Shishan, the Islamic Turkestan Party and other Islamist factions: 34375
- Regular regime soldiers and officers: 50570
- Combatants from People’s Committees, Syrian Social Nationalist Party, National Defense Forces, al Shabiha, pro-regime informant, the “Syrian resistance to liberate the Sanjak of Alexandretta”, al-Baath battalion and the Palestinian Liberation Army: 33839
- Pro-regime Shia militiamen from Arab and Asian nationalities, Al Quds Al Felastini Brigade and other pro-regime militiamen from different Arab nationalities: 3304
- Fighters from Hezbollah: 903
- Unidentified dead people (documented by photos and footages): 3225

It is worth noting that the numbers do not include more than 20000 detainees in regime prisons and thousands of those who disappeared during regime raids and massacres.

The numbers also do not include more than 1500 fighters from the YPG, IS, al-Nusra Front, Islamic battalions and rebel battalions who were kidnapped during clashes among the mentioned parties.

This statistic does not include the destiny of 5000 abductees from the civilians and rebels inside IS jails, including hundreds of people of Shaitaat tribe who were kidnapped by the Islamic State in the province of Deir Ezzor.

It does not include the destiny of more than 7000 detainees from the regime forces and allied militiamen and about 2000 abductees kidnapped by “Islamic State”, Jabhat al-Nusra, the rebel and Islamist factions for “supporting regime”.

In addition to, it does not include hundreds of non-Syrian Kurdish fighters who were killed in fighting with YPG in Syria.

We in the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimates the real number of non-Syrian ["non-Syrian" should be noncivilian?] casualties from the IS, al-Nusra Front, Islamic factions, Jund Al-Aqsa battalion, al-Ummah Brigade, the Islamic Turkestan Party, al-Battar Battalion, Jaysh al-Muhajereen and al-Ansar, Jund al-Sham, rebel battalions, regular forces and pro-regime militants to be approximately at 90,000 more than the documented number due to the extreme discretion by all sides on the human losses caused by the conflict and due to the difficulty of communication in Syria.

On the other hand, there are about 2 million were wounded and suffered from permanent disabilities, while more than 11 million have been displaced, as well as the infrastructure and properties have been destroyed.

SOHR is not going to stop to calls upon the members of the UN Security Council to issue a binding resolution that prohibits targeting the civilians in Syria, where massacres committed against them every day under the nose of the international community which do not make any step to stop the ongoing violations committed against the Syrian people who dream of establishing the state of democracy, justice, freedom and equality.

"More than 330,000 people die while about 1,3000,000 wounded and displaced since the beginning of Syrian revolution," [SOHR](#), 6 August 2015.

The 330,000 dead in the title refers to the count of 240,381 plus an estimated uncounted 90,000 fighters.

When I add the numbers in the indented list, I obtain 277,009, *not* 240,381. The difference is equal to the 36,628 "Rebel and Islamic fighters". But a total of 277,000 is *not* plausible, given previous totals and a rate of approximately 5000 deaths/month.

On 1 September 2015, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported 4830 deaths in August 2015 in Syria.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the death of 4830 people in August 2015.

The death toll is as follows:

- 1205 civilians, including 252 children and 151 women, distributed as follows:
 - 674 civilians, including 154 children and 87 women, killed by airstrikes carried out by the regime warplanes and helicopters.
 - 32 civilians, includes 3 women, executed by IS.
 - 43 civilians, including 8 children and 3 women, killed by US-led coalition airstrikes.
 - 55 civilians killed under torture inside the regime jails.
 - 162 civilians, including 15 children and 25 women, killed due to shells launched by YPG, Jabhat al- Nusra, IS, the rebels and Islamist factions.

- 239 civilians, including 33 women and 75 children, killed in the regime forces shelling, sniper shots, the border guards' bullets, explosions and unknown circumstances.
- Syrian fighters of YPG, Rebel and Islamist factions: 885.
- Non-Syrian fighters of IS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaysh al Muhajereen wal Ansra Army, Turkestan Islamic Party and the Chechen Jonound al-Sham: 1165.
- Defected soldiers: 3.
- Regular regime soldiers and officers: 684
- Militiamen of the People's Committees and NDF as well as informers: 684
- Hezbollah militiamen: 36
- Non-Syrian pro-regime fighters who are from the Shiite Sect: 64
- Unidentified victims (documented by photos and footages): 10

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 700 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 is not going to stop to calls upon the members of the UN Security Council to issue a binding resolution that prohibits targeting the civilians in Syria, where massacres committed against them every day under the nose of the international community which do not make any step to stop the ongoing violations committed against the Syrian people who dream of establishing the state of democracy, justice, freedom and equality.

"About 5000 people killed in Syria in August," [SOHR](#), 1 Sep 2015.

When I add the numbers, I obtain a total of 4736, not 4830.

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

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.

August 2015: Training

On 14 June 2015, the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) formed a committee to create a new Free Syrian Army (FSA) Supreme Military Command during the next month. [SNC](#) and [SNC](#).

On 20 July 2015, the SNC issued a press release that denounced efforts by "the dissolved FSA Supreme Military Council" to establish military leadership. [SNC](#). On 1 August, the SNC extended the task to create a new FSA High Military Command for "another two months". [SNC](#) This series of events over the past two months — and continuing for perhaps another two months — shows that the FSA continues to be disorganized and fragmented.

Back on 7 May 2015, CENTCOM began calling the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels the "New Syrian Forces" (NSF). [Pentagon](#); [Foreign Policy](#).

New U.S. Airstrike Policy in Syria

On 31 July 2015, Nusra Front attacked U.S.-trained Syrian rebels in Azaz, north of Aleppo, and south of Kilis in Turkey. The U.S. responded with airstrikes to protect those rebels. Reuters notes: "The Nusra Front, one of the most powerful insurgent groups in northern Syria, has a track record of crushing rebel groups that have received support from Western states, including the Hazzm movement that collapsed earlier this year." [Reuters](#) at 07:26 EDT; [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

On the night of 2 August, *The Wall Street Journal* announced that the Obama administration had decided a few days earlier to use U.S. airstrikes to defend Syrian rebels inside Syria. This new policy specifically includes attacking Syrian government forces when necessary to protect rebels.

President Barack Obama has authorized using air power to defend a new U.S.-backed fighting force in Syria if it is attacked by Syrian government forces or other groups, raising the risk of the American military coming into direct conflict with the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

Adam Entous, "U.S. to Defend New Syria Force From Assad Regime," [WSJ](#), 21:38 EDT, 2 Aug 2015.

I can not read beyond the first paragraph, because I am not a subscriber to the *WSJ*.

CNN reported:

Syrian rebels backed by the United States will now have air cover if they come under

attack after President Barack Obama signed off on the decision, a senior administration official confirms to CNN on Sunday [2 Aug]. The official said "this has been months in the making."

This comes after the United States conducted airstrikes last week [Friday, 31 July] to protect two groups after they came under attack: U.S.-trained rebels and the U.S.-affiliated rebels of the 30th division. The United States believes that [attack](#) was carried out by the al-Nusra front, which is a group affiliated with al Qaeda.

The U.S. aircraft came in, provided air support and "successfully repelled the attack," one U.S. official told CNN. The strikes last week signified for the first time there was actual policy and actionable decision to support those forces.

....

The Wall Street Journal first reported the presidential authorization. Elise Labott and Barbara Starr, "Syrian rebels backed by the U.S. will have air cover, source says," [CNN](#), 01:58 EDT, 3 Aug 2015.

The Associated Press reported:

... under new rules, the U.S. can defend the rebels if they come under fire from government forces or any other group, such as the al-Nusra Front. But American forces still can't launch offensive missions against those other groups.

....

[Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman,] declined to provide details on the new rules of engagement for the military, including what conditions have to exist before the U.S. can defend the Syrian rebels, and whether strikes would be limited to instances when only U.S.-trained rebels are at risk, or if other rebels who have not yet been trained can also be defended.

The shift in military strategy had been pushed by members of Congress who argued that the U.S. couldn't train the rebels then send them into battle against the Islamic State with no back-up. Others, however, warned that many of the rebel groups are primarily focused on overturning the Syrian government, and that supporting them would put the U.S. into a messy war with a sovereign nation that has sophisticated air defenses.

Lolita C. Baldor, "US begins armed drone flights from Turkey," [Associated Press](#), 15:49 EDT, 3 Aug 2015.

The Washington Post reported:

On Friday [31 July], U.S. aircraft took the unusual step of conducting strikes against fighters from Jabhat al-Nusra, which had reportedly attacked the U.S.-backed unit. The strikes signaled a shift in policy for the Obama administration, which had resisted committing to using air power to protect the U.S. trainees, known as the New Syrian Force, from anyone other than the Islamic State.

Over the weekend, military officials said the new authorization extended to the use of American aircraft to shield fighters from attacks by the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which have used chemical weapons and barrel bombs against opponents. The move marks a potential escalation for the United States four years into the Syrian conflict, creating the prospect of a direct U.S. engagement with Assad's forces.

....

Military officials played down that scenario [direct U.S. engagement with Assad's forces] Monday [3 Aug], saying that a confrontation with Assad's units is unlikely in large part because the United States has sent members of the New Syrian Force — who number only about 55 so far — into areas not contested by the government.

“It's important to remember that's not what this is about,” [Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman,] said. “We're not at war with the Assad regime. The people who we are training and equipping are pledged to fight ISIL and only ISIL.” ISIL is another name for the Islamic State.

....

Part of the reason that the number of trainees has been so low is that the United States has struggled to find Syrians, after four years of bloody battles, who will agree to fight only the Islamic State and not the Assad regime.

Missy Ryan, "For the first time, U.S. launches armed flights over Syria from Turkish base," [Washington Post](#), 3 Aug 2015.

At night on 3 August, the *Los Angeles Times* reported:

U.S. officials Monday [3 Aug] confirmed an expanded bombing campaign in Syria that increases the risk of confrontation with forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad, possibly drawing Washington more deeply into that country's punishing four-year war.

The Obama administration authorized the Pentagon to use force to help defend a small, U.S.-trained Syrian rebel unit against other insurgent factions — or against fighters allied with the Syrian government, officials said.

....

U.S. officials emphasized that the expanded mission was defensive in nature and did not signal an offensive push against Assad's military, which is also fighting Islamic State. The Pentagon downplayed the possibility of a confrontation with Assad's forces, though the Syrian air force is active in northern Aleppo province, where the U.S.-backed forces are operating.

“We are not at war with the Assad regime,” said Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. “This is not something we view as inviting confrontation with Assad in

any way.”

There was no official comment from Damascus. But wary Syrian officials have long viewed the U.S. bombing campaign against Islamic State in Syria as a possible precursor for bombardment of pro-government forces.

....

“We won't get into the specifics of our rules of engagement, but have said all along that we would take the steps necessary to ensure that these forces could successfully carry out their mission,” said Cmdr. Elissa Smith, a Pentagon spokeswoman. “We demonstrated our resolve in this respect on Friday [31 July].”

....

The Obama administration's \$500-million initiative to train and arm an opposition force in Syria has been beset by problems and delays and thus far has produced fewer than 60 fighters.

Patrick J. McDonnell & W.J. Hennigan, "Pentagon ramps up airstrikes in Syria to help U.S.-backed rebels," [Los Angeles Times](#), 21:22 EDT, 3 Aug 2015.

Reuters reported:

The United States has decided to allow airstrikes to defend Syrian rebels trained by the U.S. military from any attackers, even if the enemies hail from forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, U.S. officials said on Sunday [2 Aug].

The decision by President Barack Obama, which could deepen the U.S. role in Syria's conflict, aims to shield a still-fledgling group of Syrian fighters armed and trained by the United States to battle Islamic State militants — not forces loyal to Assad.

But in Syria's messy civil war, Islamic State is only one of the threats to the U.S. recruits. The first batch of U.S.-trained forces deployed to northern Syria came under fire on Friday [31 July] from other militants [Nusra Front], triggering the first known U.S. airstrikes to support them.

U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to confirm details of the decision, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, said the United States would provide offensive strikes to support advances against Islamic State targets.

The United States would also provide defensive support to repel any attackers.

Phil Stewart, "U.S. to defend Syrian rebels with airpower, including from Assad," [Reuters](#), 21:57 EDT, 3 Aug 2015.

On 4 August, the Deputy Spokesperson at the U.S. State Department, Mark C. Toner, exposed that the U.S. Government has *no* legal authority for the new policy:

QUESTION: What is the legal basis for the authority that the Obama Administration gave itself to attack anyone who's attacking Syrian opposition forces that the U.S.

trains?

....

MR TONER: I frankly don't know what the legal authority is. What we're very clear about is that they're fighting in, frankly, a lawless area of Syria. They're under attack [interruption deleted] They're under attack and under pressure from a lot of different forces — mostly ISIL, I-S-I-L, but other forces as well in that region. And I think what we were trying to convey — and we talked about this yesterday — is the fact that we're bringing airstrikes to bear on ISIL in that area as they advance on ISIL-held territory or I-S-I-L-held territory and supporting them in that way. And that's actually been effective in fighting ISIL.

It's a very complex and fluid situation; I get that. What we were trying to convey is that we'll also do defensive efforts in case or in the hypothetical that they would come under fire from Syrian forces.

....

MR TONER: Well, again, we have as part of the coalition and obviously — but we've been carrying out airstrikes in that region for many months now, almost a year — and the same — in defense of these groups, but also to help them gain territory back from ISIL. These are — any type of effort to protect them from Syrian forces would be defensive in nature, but I'm not going to talk about the legal framework for it.

QUESTION: This is — but I'm sorry, but this is a major shift in policy. It's one thing to go after ISIS; it's something else to attack forces that threaten the forces that go after ISIS. Do you have congressional approval for that? Are you seeking — are you going to seek congressional approval for that? Under what authorization are you doing that?

MR TONER: Whatever steps we took would be in close consultation with Congress.

....

MR TONER: Again, we're working with Congress on all of these issues, in close consultation with them, and I'll leave it at that.

....

QUESTION: Suppose these groups, the New Syria Force — we're talking about the New Syria Force. Suppose they take the initiative and attack Syrian forces, regime forces. Would you still give them air cover in that event? Is that — is that included under the —

MR TONER: This is — no, this is their — and we've said this many times about, as I said, the very dynamic situation. These forces that we're working with are fighting ISIL on the ground in northern Syria.

QUESTION: Right.

MR TONER: That's their focus. That's the focus of the forces that we've trained, and that's where we want the focus to remain.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept](#), 4 Aug 2015.

Mr. Toner evaded the hypothetical question of what the U.S. would do if the New Syrian Forces took the initiative and attacked Assad's army. And the journalist failed to follow-up and get an answer.

There was no mention of legal authority for airstrikes on Assad at the U.S. State Department Daily Press Briefings for 5-6 August. On the night of 6 August, I searched Google News for the query "U.S. airstrikes Assad 'legal authority' ", but I found nothing after reports of Toner's disastrous press briefing. Apparently, neither the U.S. Congress nor journalists are concerned about legal authority. Instead, the USA relies on "might makes right". As an attorney, I believe that obeying law is the hallmark of civilization.

On 5 August, Mr. Toner reiterated that the *only* mission of the New Syrian Forces was to fight against ISIL:

QUESTION: So is — are you also bringing the fight now to al-Nusra Front? Is that part of —

MR TONER: I said we're — insofar as — insofar as they're under threat — these anti-ISIL Syrian forces are under threat by al-Nusra, we're going to — and we said this — we're going to take steps to protect them.

QUESTION: So the New Syrian Forces will not be taking — well, they, themselves, will not be attacking al-Nusra Front. That's not part of their mission.

MR TONER: No.

QUESTION: It's exclusively to fight ISIL.

MR TONER: Correct.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept](#), 5 Aug 2015.

In summary the U.S. will provide airstrikes to support the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels in two situations:

1. offensive against ISIL, and
2. defensive against *any* attacker, including Assad's military.

My comment: This new policy is a major escalation by the U.S. Government. *If* the airstrikes were limited to a so-called "safe zone" in Syria along the Turkish border, then the policy would be less confrontational, because Assad's military has abandoned that part of Syria. But the new airstrikes are *not* limited to the safe zone, so U.S. airplanes could strike

Assad's army or its allies, and U.S. airplanes could engage Assad's air force in combat. Such an engagement of Assad's military by the U.S. would be a direct invention in the Syrian civil war. Previously, the U.S. airstrikes in Syria nearly always targeted ISIL, but rarely targeted other terrorist groups (e.g., Khorasan Group about seven times in ten months).

Originally — as explained in my previous essays, beginning in [May 2015](#) — the Pentagon intended that the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels would *only* fight against ISIL, specifically *not* fight against Assad. But then the Pentagon was able to vet and train only 60 rebels. This new airstrike policy *may* be the beginning of allowing U.S.-trained Syrian rebels to fight against *both* Assad *and* ISIL in Syria. I say "may" because I do not know how Obama will escalate the U.S. involvement in the Syrian civil war.

The new policy effectively converts the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels into agents of the U.S. Government, who are backed by U.S. airstrikes. This could cause the tail to wag the dog: if a few rebels engage Assad's forces, would U.S. airstrikes blast Assad's forces? The answer seems to be yes, and that would really pull the USA into the Syrian civil war.

My comment about the Pentagon's secret rules of engagement, is that if we are going to bomb Assad's military for violating those rules, shouldn't Assad at least be able to know those rules in advance? The U.S.-led coalition has been bombing inside Syria, beginning in Sep 2014, without the permission of Assad. Now the U.S. increases its violation of Assad's sovereignty by threatening to bomb Assad's military if they attack Syrian rebels who were trained by the U.S.

Earlier this year, when Admiral John Kirby was spokesman for the Pentagon, there were transcripts at the Pentagon website of press briefings several times each week and daily press releases at the Pentagon website on substantive topics. Then Ashton Carter became Secretary of Defense in Feb 2015, Kirby retired from the Navy, and in May 2015 Kirby became spokesman for the U.S. State Department. The flow of information at the Pentagon website dramatically decreased under Carter. (See my remarks in my essay for [April 2015](#).) So one must now rely on reports of (sometimes anonymous) government officials who are cited by journalists in news media. I would prefer to rely on an original source, e.g., transcript of a press briefing or press release from the government.

On 6 August, Mr. Toner — somewhat inarticulately and awkwardly — said that U.S. airstrikes would support *all* anti-ISIL fighters in northern Syria:

QUESTION: Yeah, on Syria. I think you've seen the reports on different media in U.S. and Europe. They're talking about the U.S. betrayal of the Kurds. They are referring to the Syrian Kurds, of course. So do you have any comment on that?

....

MR TONER: Okay, okay. I apologize. I just didn't hear that word [betrayal]. How so? Because what we're — I mean, we're actually in support of — I mean, there's forces that are anti-ISIL forces, including Syrian Kurds, Syrian Arabs, in fact even Syrian Turkoman, who are fighting ISIL in northern Syria. And so once we establish ourselves and are able to conduct airstrikes out of Turkey, then frankly, the air support that we'll

be able to bring to these groups in their fight against ISIL will be quicker, faster, better.

In terms of what you're thinking about, a betrayal, I mean, we've been very clear to the Turks about — the Turkish Government about these forces — not the Kurdish forces, not the — now, I'm being very clear here — not — I'm not talking about PKK, which is a designated foreign terrorist organization. But these forces shouldn't be harassed or fired upon.

Toner's rambling second paragraph seems to say that the U.S. has told Turkey to neither harass nor fire on Syrian Kurds. But this restriction does not apply to the PKK, who are Turkish terrorists.

QUESTION: Yeah, but this is — I mean, like, there are arguments to support these claims. That is something going on there, because there are reports that United States air campaign is not supporting the YPG fighters to advance toward Jarabulus, which — where the Turkey — Turkish Government wants to establish a safe zone, whatever name is — ISIS-free zone. And also, there are other reports — and actually, not the reports, a response from the Pentagon to me when I ask them about the train and equip program. I asked John also on this podium. The YPG, they are not in a train and equip program, and they are not part of this program supported by Pentagon. And the reason is that one of the host country, which is Turkey, they are sensitive about their participation, and they have a role in this program. So this is also two other things that can support this argument that there are — there are other stuff going on, that the YPG's being undermined; you are helping them in Hasakah and other area, but not in Jarabulus. Do you have a response for that?

MR TONER: Only to say that in terms of the train and equip program, I really would refer you to the Pentagon for specifics about that, but we certainly are appreciative of Turkey agreeing to host that train and equip program. As we've discussed numerous times, we're still working through the kinks and trying to — and that includes a very serious vetting process and trying to choose the best candidates for this train and equip program, but we're hoping to boost those numbers considerably going forward.

In terms of the YPG, I don't want to speak to operational details. A lot of that is still being worked out. Again, we're just — we just reached the agreement with Turkey. Our discussions are ongoing. We talked about this, that we're still looking to how we're going to operationalize this agreement going forward, but we've been very clear our goal is to support those anti-ISIL forces fighting in northern Syria.

....

MR TONER: I would say, more broadly, we're seeking to support all the anti-ISIL forces taking the fight to ISIL in northern Syria, but I'm not going to speak to that specific case [about the YPG].

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept](#), 6 Aug 2015.

See reports by journalists, e.g., [Anadolu Agency](#).

U.S.-trained Rebels Dissipated

On 12 July 2015, the first group of U.S.-trained rebels — 54 of them — arrived in Syria. [Daily Sabah](#); [McClatchy](#). On 31 July, one of those rebels was killed in a battle with Nusra Front, the first death amongst the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels. [Reuters](#), 3 Aug.

On 4 August, the Pentagon admitted that approximately five of the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels had been captured by Nusra Front on either 1 or 2 August. The Associated Press says "details are sketchy". CBS News is more explicit: the Pentagon "has lost track of some of the fighters who apparently have scattered". [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Stars & Stripes](#); [CNN](#); [CBS News](#).

My comment is that, in two weeks of battle, the U.S. has already lost 10% of its trained rebels. That high rate of loss shows the futility of attacking a large, experienced enemy (e.g., ISIL or Nusra) with a piddling group of 54 rebels.

Well, it gets worse. *<sigh>* On 5 August, *The Telegraph* in London reports: US-trained rebels in Syria have defied their Pentagon-funded programme by pledging to fight against Assad regime troops.

Division 30, the first rebel faction to incorporate graduates of a US-led training programme, released a statement on Tuesday [4 Aug] in which it promised to fight Syrian president Bashar al-Assad — something Washington had tried to prevent.

....

Washington's hesitance to take on Syrian forces stems from fears that extremist groups will rise to power in the advent of a regime collapse. The Assad government also tolerates US-led airstrikes over Syria on the basis that the coalition is not targeting government troops.

....

The latest development may sound the death knell for the Train and Equip program, which aims to create a 5400-strong force capable of fighting ISIL.

Many rebels, however, were rejected from the training due to a vetting process that filtered out fighters with links to hardline groups. Others refused to participate after being told they could not engage Mr Assad's troops and instead would focus only on ISIL.

Only 54 rebels completed the training and were deployed in Syrian territory in July. Those members of Division 30 not kidnapped or killed by Jabhat al-Nusra have now escaped to the Kurdish-majority enclave of Afrin.

Nabih Bulos & Louisa Loveluck, "US-trained Syrian rebels say they won't fight al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra," [The Telegraph](#), 18:26 GMT, 5 Aug 2015.

Note the 5400 goal mentioned by *The Telegraph* was for the end of the first year of training (i.e., June 2016). The final goal was at least 15,000 rebels. See [above](#).

On 7 August, *The Telegraph's* 5 August report was summarized by [Al-Arabiya](#).

My comment: The original Syrian civil war in 2011 was a pro-democracy revolt that sought to topple Assad's rule. Then jihadists, Nusra (Al-Qaeda in Syria), and ISIL hijacked the Syrian civil war to establish their interpretation of an Islamic government on Syrians. Earlier this year, the U.S. Government — in a stupid and unrealistic move — sought to hijack the moderate rebels into a fight *only* against ISIL, and *not* against Assad. I say it was a stupid and unrealistic move, because the original intent of the rebels was to overthrow Assad's government. A few weeks of training might teach rebels to use modern weapons, but it will *not* alter their personal goals.

So the U.S. Government wasted tens of millions of dollars, and wasted many months of time, in planning and executing a stupid scheme that failed within a few weeks of training the first batch of rebels.

The U.S. Military is correct that ground forces are needed inside Syria, to defeat ISIL. There are three obvious choices:

1. train and equip the Syrian Kurds to establish an ISIL-free zone in northern Syria, as mentioned [below](#).
2. have the Turkish army invade the planned "safe zone" in northern Syria that is west of the Euphrates river (the Syrian Kurds control northern Syria east of the Euphrates).
3. give aid to Assad's military, so they can defeat the terrorists.

The Turks would strongly object to the first choice. The second choice is a significant escalation of the war in Syria and the deaths of Turkish soldiers in combat would probably be unacceptable to Turkey. The third choice would be unpalatable to Obama, Western Europe, Turkey, Saudi Arabia; and further, Assad currently has a manpower shortage. Because the obvious choices are all unacceptable, the Pentagon chose to train and arm some Syrian rebels to fight only against ISIL.

On 6 August, the [Jerusalem Post](#) quoted a Middle-East researcher: “No one in the Arab world takes this [train-and-equip] program seriously; I mean you would need around 50 to 60 people to play paintball but definitely not to fight Islamic State.”

On 7 August, the Associated Press reported:

The murky aftermath of the attack on Syrian rebels last week by al-Qaida-linked militants has raised questions about how the small, ragtag group of U.S.-trained forces was sent into battle and whether the military needs to make adjustments to the program.

Amid reports that some of the newly trained Syrian rebels were captured, one was killed and others are still unaccounted for, U.S. officials acknowledged they may need to rethink how they put what they are calling the New Syrian Forces back into battle.

....

So far, only 54 Syrian rebels have completed the U.S. training. Of those, at least one was killed last week and as many as five were captured by the Nusra Front militants who attacked the New Syrian Forces' compound. U.S. officials have also acknowledged that after the fight, which they said the Nusra Front lost, some of the New Syrian Forces left the area and not all have been accounted for.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Asked if any of the 54 had returned to battle, [Col. Pat Ryder, Central Command spokesman] said he would not divulge details on where individuals may be. He said the New Syrian Forces are not under U.S. command and control. Instead, once they are trained they return to the Syrian rebel groups that the U.S. has been working with.

Lolita C. Baldor, "Attack on Syrian rebels raises questions about training," [Associated Press](#), 18:11 EDT, 7 Aug 2015.

The Associated Press confirms the 5 August report by *The Telegraph* that U.S.-trained rebels fled ("left the area") and are no longer in contact with the U.S. Military. On 7 August, the U.S.-trained rebels have been missing for approximately one week.

Nine hours later, the Associated Press reiterated the above quoted story:
Lolita C. Baldor, "US military rethinking how to put Syrian soldiers into fight," [Associated Press](#), 02:58 EDT, 8 Aug 2015.

On 7 August 2015, the *McClatchy* newspapers reported:

[Air Force Col. Patrick Ryder, a U.S. Central Command spokesman,] refused to say what has become of the initial 54 trainees who entered Syria last month and were embedded with a Syrian rebel unit know as Division 30. But McClatchy learned from other officials who asked to remain anonymous that about one-third have returned to Turkey, another third remain with Division 30, that 10 or so are missing and that a handful were killed in combat with Nusra.

James Rosen, "Syrian training program no longer seen as only way to fight Islamic State," [McClatchy](#) 7 Aug 2015.

According to *McClatchy* on 7 August, approximately 18 U.S.-trained rebels are continuing to fight in Syria, approximately 10 are missing, and approximately 8 are dead. Apparently, none of the U.S.-trained rebels engaged ISIL, which was their sole purpose.

On the morning of 10 August and thereafter, there was no further information from either the Pentagon or CENTCOM on this embarrassing debacle with the U.S.-trained Syrian rebels. The U.S. Government simply turned off the flow of information.

On 10 August, Nusra Front announced it was withdrawing from the proposed "safe zone" near the Turkish border. [Associated Press](#). My comment is that this withdrawal may be an attempt to avoid deaths of Nusra fighters from U.S. airstrikes.

On 11 August, ISIL launched new attacks on Syrian rebels near the Turkish border, including four suicide car bombs. It is *not* mentioned whether U.S.-trained rebels were included in the attacks. [Reuters](#).

On 16 August, Agence France-Press reported that Nusra Front had released 7 of 13 U.S.-trained rebels who had been captured on 31 July.

Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Al-Nusra Front has freed several members of a US-trained rebel force that it kidnapped two weeks ago, the Western-backed unit said in a statement.

In a statement circulating on social media, Division 30 said seven of its members had been freed by Al-Nusra after being captured in late July.

....

[Division 30] did not specify where the releases took place. All the kidnaps occurred in northern Syria.

....

... after the first 54 members of the force entered Syria in July, 13 were kidnapped by Al-Nusra, including a commander, and at least three more were killed in clashes with the jihadist group.

Al-Nusra accused the captured fighters of serving U.S. interests and claimed responsibility for the kidnap in a video purporting to show some of the detained forces. "Nusra front frees several U.S.-trained Syrian rebels," [Al-Arabiya](#), 12:01 GMT, 16 Aug 2015.

On 18 August, [CNN](#) reported that the U.S. Military spent US\$ 41 million to train and equip 54 rebels. This is an exorbitant cost: \$760,000 per rebel.

For comparison, the cost of one year at Harvard University undergraduate college for the 2015-2016 academic year is US\$ 65,000, including tuition, dormitory room, meals, \$1000 for books, and \$3300 for personal expenses. A four-year bachelor's degree at Harvard would cost about \$260,000 — about 1/3 the cost of one U.S.-trained Syrian rebel. On the other hand, Harvard would not train students to shoot a rifle or throw a grenade, but someone with a chemistry degree should be able to design and build a really spectacular truck bomb.

On the night of 20 August, columnist David Ignatius wrote in *The Washington Post* about the fate of 54 U.S.-trained rebels who entered Syria on 12 July 2015, as part of the Free Syrian Army Division 30.

The Jabhat al-Nusra extremists regarded Division 30 fighters as "American agents," according to their Web postings. They kidnapped seven Division 30 fighters on July 29 and attacked its headquarters at Azaz on July 31. Jabhat al-Nusra kidnapped at least five more fighters a few days later. The United States launched airstrikes July 31, but they had little effect.

A Jabhat al-Nusra fighter named Ahamed Shaheed boasted online Thursday [20 Aug]: "Just got a bran new M16 taken as ganimah [war spoils] from Division 30 haha," according to monitoring by Site Intelligence Group.

David Ignatius, "Lessons from the Bay of Pigs in the Syrian 'Division 30' debacle," [Washington Post](#), 19:48 EDT, 20 Aug 2015.

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. On the other hand, Erdogan would have his knickers in a twist if the Kurds controlled *all* of the land contiguous to Turkey's southern border. Erdogan is already nervous that the Syrian Kurds control northern Syria east of the Euphrates river and Iraqi Kurds control most of northern Iraq.

On 7 August 2015, the [McClatchy](#) newspapers reported that the U.S. Government is now realizing that supporting the Syrian Kurds could be an alternative to the unrealistic plan to train-and-equip 15,000 moderate Syrian rebels. James Rosen, writing in *McClatchy*, said: "When the Obama administration first announced the so-called train and equip program, it said it wanted to train and field 5,000 Syrians in the first year. That figure is now considered unrealistic." On the other hand, the Syrian Kurdish militia (YPG) "number between 17,000 and 20,000 fighters and require little U.S. training."

Turkey begins to fight against ISIL

My essay for [July 2015](#) chronicled the announcement around 23 July that Turkey had given the U.S. permission to use the Ircirlik Air Base for airstrikes in Syria against ISIL. Turkey also wants to create a "safe zone" inside Syria, parallel to the Turkish border, that is free of ISIL terrorists.

On 1 August, the [Washington Post](#) reported that Turkey had already decreased the flow of fighters and supplies to ISIL in Syria, by tightening border controls.

On 3 August, the [Associated Press](#) reported that on 1 or 2 Aug, the U.S. began flying armed

drones from the Incirlik Air Base. However, none of the drones have launched missiles. See also [Washington Post](#). Previously, only reconnaissance drones flew from Incirlik Air Base.

On 4 August, the [Daily Sabah](#) reported that "nearly 300 troops, military supplies, 30 fighter jets including F-16s and F-15s along with several tanker aircraft will be deployed at Incirlik Air Base over the course of this week [3-9 Aug]."

On 5 August, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, said "we will soon launch the comprehensive fight against Daesh". The *Daily Sabah* says "we" means Turkey and the U.S.-led Coalition. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#); [Associated Press](#); [Today's Zaman](#).

[Hurriyet](#) in Turkey said: "Ankara has so far concentrated an almost two-week 'anti-terror' campaign in Iraq on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), widely seen as the most effective fighters against the jihadists, with only sporadic strikes against ISIL. Washington has long been pushing its historic ally Turkey to step up the fight against ISIL amid rumblings that Ankara has either aided the jihadists or, at best, failed to arrest its rise." I comment that the Kurds in Syria and Iraq have been the most effective ground forces against ISIL, but the PKK has played only a minor role against ISIL. However, the PKK is part of the Kurdish ethnic group.

On 5 August, it was announced that a U.S. drone launched from Incirlik Air Base in Turkey had fired a missile at a target near Raqqa in Syria. This airstrike was the first U.S. airstrike from Incirlik. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#); [Hurriyet](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 9 August, it was announced that six F-16 fighter airplanes had arrived at Incirlik Air Base, along with 300 U.S. personnel. [Pentagon](#) with copy at [CENTCOM](#); [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#); [Hurriyet](#).

On 10 August, Fox News announced that Turkey had bombed the PKK in Kurdish Iraq on 24 July near where the U.S. Military was training Kurdish peshmerga.

Just hours after a deal last month allowing the U.S. to use Turkey's air bases to launch sorties against ISIS, Turkey pulled a move that left American military leaders surprised and outraged, and raised questions about the two nations' alliance in the war on the jihadist army.

With only 10 minutes notice to their American partners, Turkey launched a massive air strike of its own July 24 against a Kurdish militant group in the northern mountains of Iraq. The U.S. had barely enough warning to make sure its own forces were out of the way, according to a military source with knowledge of the tension Turkey's attack caused in the Combined Air and Space Operations Center, the allied headquarters in the air war against ISIS.

"A Turkish officer came into the CAOC, and announced that the strike would begin in 10 minutes and he needed all allied jets flying above Iraq to move south of Mosul immediately," said the military source, describing events that took place in the center, in a secret location in the Middle East. "We were outraged."

In addition to targeting forces engaged in the fight against ISIS, U.S. officials believed

the Turkish military's sudden move raised the risk of friendly-fire casualties.

"We had U.S. Special Forces not far from where the Turks were bombing, training Kurdish Peshmerga fighters," the source said. "We had no idea who the Turkish fighters were, their call signs, what frequencies they were using, their altitude or what they were squawking [to identify the jets on radar]."

....

Critics of the new agreement between the U.S. and Turkey say the deal gives Ankara cover to carry out strike missions against Kurdish fighters in Iraq and even Syria, where Kurds have won hard-fought gains against ISIS. While the Kurdish fighters have been remarkably effective fighting the terrorist army, Turkey remains their nemesis and fears the recent expansion of Kurdish control along the border could provide Kurds more incentive to form their own country in the future.

....

The Turkish government has been concerned that the U.S. fight against ISIS would embolden the Kurds, who now control most of Turkey's 560-mile border with Syria except for a small 68-mile corridor between the Syrian border towns of Kobani and Azaz, west of the Euphrates River. Should the Kurds gain control of this section of the border they would have unfettered access from Iraq through Syria all the way to the Mediterranean.

....

"The 'safezone' was Turkey's way of preventing a complete takeover of the [Turkish-Syrian] border," said the official. "Turkey doesn't want to eliminate ISIS, they want to prevent the Kurds from a complete takeover of the border. They need U.S. help to do this."

Lucas Tomlinson & Jennifer Griffin, "Turkey's strikes on Kurds could drag US into new front, military sources fear," [Fox News](#), 10 Aug 2015.

Summarized at [Rudaw](#).

In my essay for [July 2015](#) (see end of section "U.S. Reaction to Turkey"), I said "Turkey is an ally from Hell." and then listed five reasons. The above revelation by Fox News is a sixth reason.

On 12 August, the U.S. Air Force began manned aircraft missions from Incirlik Air Base to Syria. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 13 August, U.S. State Department Spokesman, John Kirby, explained why Turkey is not doing airstrikes against ISIL:

QUESTION: There was an article in *The Wall Street Journal* that says basically the United States doesn't want Turkey to strike ISIS until the agreement that you have with Turkey is fully written out, basically. Is that true?

MR KIRBY: Yeah, what I'd say is we have requested Turkey not to undertake independent counter-ISIL strikes in Syria until Turkey is fully integrated in coalition operations, to ensure safe air operations for the coalition in very dense airspace. And the Turks have agreed to that.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept](#), 13 Aug 2015.

Mr. Kirby was kind to the Turkish government. The airspace in northern Syria is surely not as congested as, for example, Chicago or New York City. I have the impression that the Turkish government really wants to do some ethnic cleansing against the Kurds (i.e., PKK), instead of bomb ISIL in Syria.

I looked every day for news from Turkey, but there were apparently no reports by journalists during 14-19 August.

On 20 August, the U.S. Secretary of Defense publicly said three times that Turkey needed to "do more" in the fight against ISIL, specifically including control their border with Syria and Iraq. [Pentagon](#) (transcript); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Anadolu Agency](#).

On 25 August, it was announced that the U.S. Military and Turkey had reached agreement about Turkey's participation in airstrikes in Syria, but there was still *no* agreement about Turkey controlling its border with Syria. It will take "a few days" before Turkey actually begins airstrikes inside Syria. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).

On Friday evening, 28 August, Turkey launched its first airstrikes against ISIL in Syria as part of the U.S.-led Coalition. Back on 24 July, Turkish air force airplanes bombed ISIL in Syria, but that initial strike was *not* part of the Coalition effort. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Hurriyet](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [Daily Sabah](#) ("Turkish jets struck seven ISIS targets in northern Aleppo in Syria on Friday, and two jets pulverized four ISIS targets on Saturday."); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Between the initial airstrike on 24 July and the airstrike on 28 August were 34 days of discussions, but *no* further airstrikes by Turkey against ISIL.

Overreaction by Turkey

Because the subjects of this essay are the use of chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq, futile peace negotiations in the Syrian civil war, the war against ISIL, and the dysfunctional Iraqi government, I am *not* chronicling every assault against the PKK by the Turkish government. However, I am mentioning — with citations to news sources — some of the more significant assaults against the PKK, because these assaults may adversely affect cooperation from the Kurds, and because these assaults tarnish the reputation of the USA, which is an ally of Turkey.

On 3 August, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Turkish "military helicopters swooped in over the Kurdish heartland and dropped white incendiary powder on a raging brush fire — igniting a massive conflagration that raced through the mountains, devouring orchards and livestock." The destroyed orchards will take many years to replace. This is literally a

"scorched earth" policy by the Turkish government.

On 9 August, the Turkish government said that 390 PKK members had been killed in retaliation for the PKK killing "at least 20" Turkish soldiers and policemen.

[Anadolu Agency](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [Rudaw](#).

On 24 August, the Turkish government claimed to have killed "at least 814 suspected PKK militants" since 22 July 2015, while the PKK had killed approximately 57 policemen and soldiers. [Anadolu Agency](#); [BAS News](#) (PKK killed 57). In my opinion, this is a gross overreaction by the Turkish government that will perpetuate violence by the PKK.

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](#).

On 5 August, the Deputy Spokesperson for the U.S. State Department said there was "no zone" in response to a question about an "ISIL-free zone". Mr. Toner said "Our goal is to take the fight to ISIL, defeat them, and destroy them ultimately...." [State Dept](#).

On 10 August, the Spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, John Kirby, said "we're not referring to it has a zone we're not calling it a zone of any kind" in response to a question about an "ISIL-free zone". [State Dept](#) (last question in the press briefing).

On 11 August, Turkish news media reported that Turkish Foreign Ministry Undersecretary, Feridun Sinirlioglu, said Turkey and the USA had reached an agreement on creating a safe zone in northern Syria. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#). But Mark Toner at the U.S. State Department was adamant that there was *no* agreement about a so-called "safe zone". [State Dept](#); [Reuters](#).

On 12 August, Turkish diplomatic sources said that Syrian Kurds will be prevented from entering the "safe zone" west of the Euphrates River in northern Syria. [Anadolu Agency](#); [Hurriyet](#); [Daily Sabah](#). This seems to confirm what Fox News reported on 10 Aug (quoted above): Turkey's real intent in the "safe zone" or "ISIL-free zone" is to prevent Kurds from controlling the *entire* northern border of Syria.

On 12 August, the Deputy Spokesman for the U.S. State Department was asked about news reports that the Syrian Kurds would not be allowed in the proposed ISIL-free zone. Mr. Toner tersely [said](#) "I can't confirm that." At the U.S. State Department Press [Briefing](#) on 13 August, the word "zone" did *not* appear in the contexts of either Syria or Turkey. There

was no briefing on 14 August, in accordance with U.S. State Department tradition on Fridays in August.

On 25 August, the Spokesman for U.S. State Department reiterated at the Daily Press Briefing that there would be *no* “safe zone” in Syria.

MR KIRBY: ... I'll say it again because we've talked about this many times. I mean, there's — we're not talking about preparations or plans for a zone of any kind. What we said is where ISIL goes, the coalition's going to go. And right now, they tend to be up in that stretch along the northern border of Syria, southern border of Turkey, roughly west of the Euphrates. That's where they're operating — one of the places they're operating — and we're going to continue to focus on them where they are, but no different than before. I mean, there's no plans right now in the books for a buffer zone of sorts or a no-fly zone of sorts.

Daily Press Briefing by John Kirby, [State Dept](#), 25 Aug 2015.

On 30 August, the Anadolu Agency in Turkey published a news article about the safe zone. This article summarized the position of the Turkish government.

One of the most important goals of the joint air campaign against Daesh, as part of a deal between Turkey and the U.S., is to push the terror group away from Turkey's border with Syria.

The creation of a safety zone in northern Syria will give refugees fleeing the fighting instigated by Daesh and forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad a haven and allow aid agencies to operate unhindered.

Removing Daesh from the land bordering Turkey will also bolster national security.

....

The U.S. prefers to avoid the term safety zone as the Obama administration fears it could bring political, military and legal responsibilities.

However, in a recent news briefing, Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook did not reiterate the previous denial of plans for a safety zone despite being pressed on the issue.

As Daesh is forced south by the coalition air campaign, a safety zone will be protected by air power and on the ground through moderate opposition fighters such as the Free Syrian Army.

The depth of the zone into Syrian territory will be determined by military planners as events unfold on the ground.

....

Clearing the region adjacent to Turkey between Jarabulus and Azaz and establishing a protected area is designed to provide a home for displaced Syrians.

Vital to the success of the scheme will be the standard of living conditions for Syrians

within the zone. A high standard of accommodation and access to food, water and other services will be an important incentive for Syrian migrants currently living in Turkey under temporary protected status to return to their homeland.

The presence of moderate opposition forces will make it easier to provide essential public services and distribute humanitarian aid.

PYD forces barred entry

The anticipated safety zone is also an objective of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish-Syrian group whose forces recently seized Tell Abyad, a border city approximately 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Daesh's de facto capital Raqqa, allowing the Kurds to link two areas they already controlled — Kobani and Hasakah.

The PYD — linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is deemed a terror organization by Turkey, the U.S. and EU — would link the isolated area they control around Afrin in northwestern Syria to Kobani if they were able to seize the territory being considered for the safe zone.

This would give the group control over the entire Turkish-Syrian border. Other opposition forces, such as the Free Syrian Army and Ahrar ash-Sham, are opposed to the PYD moving west of the Euphrates River to occupy the area as this would cut off their access to the Turkish border.

Turkey, while noting that PYD positions would not be targeted during the anti-Daesh campaign, has repeated its warning for the group not to force non-Kurdish ethnic groups such as Turkmen and Arabs from the regions it controls.

Turkish diplomatic sources say U.S. officials agree that PYD forces should not enter the safe zone once it is free of Daesh militants.

"Syrian safe zone to provide refuge on Turkey's border," [Anadolu](#), 30 Aug 2015.

My comment is that Turkey has two big reasons for creating the safe zone.

1. Solve the Syrian refugee problem:
 - A. Relocate Syrian refugees currently in Turkey to the safe zone.
 - B. Future Syrian refugees would live in the safe zone, instead of entering Turkey.
2. Prevent Kurds from controlling the southern border of Turkey in the zone.

It is important that both the Pentagon and State Department spokesmen deny the safe zone at every press conference, to prevent the Turkish government from interpreting silence as agreement to create a safe zone.

Initially, at the end of July 2015, the zone had a depth (north-south) of 30 km. But at the end of August 2015: "The depth of the zone into Syrian territory will be determined by military planners as events unfold on the ground." In other words, the so-called safe zone could expand into Syria and become both an ISIL-free and an Assad-free zone. That would allow Turkey to control some of former Syrian territory.

Foreign Reaction to Turkey

On 4 August, the European Union Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, told Turkish EU Minister Volkan Bozkir:

[Hahn] acknowledged the commitment of the Turkish authorities to stepping up the fight against ISIL and re-affirmed the EU's strong support for these efforts. [Hahn] confirmed also that the EU is looking into ways to further increase its support for the unprecedented humanitarian help offered by Turkey to the Syrian and Iraqi refugees, fleeing atrocities in their home countries.

At the same time, the Commissioner expressed the EU's deep concern about recent developments which have a negative impact on the Kurdish-Turkish settlement process. The EU acknowledges that Turkey has the right to prevent and react to any form of terrorism, which must be unequivocally condemned. The response, however, must be proportionate, targeted and by no means endanger the democratic political dialogue in the country.

....

In a telephone conversation with HDP Co-chair Selahattin Demirtas last Friday [31 July], the Commissioner stressed that all parties should re-commit to the peace process and work now on a broad and inclusive political solution. The ceasefire should be re-instated for the benefit of all Turkish citizens.

"Commissioner Hahn on recent events in Turkey," [EU](#), 3 Aug 2015.

Reported by Agence France-Presse, "EU urges 'proportionate' Turkish response to Kurdish rebel attacks," [Daily Star](#), 4 Aug 2015.

The HDP is a pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey. The HDP received 13% of the votes in the 7 June election, thereby depriving Erdogan's AK Party of a majority.

Note that Hahn did *not* mention the PKK explicitly, and he did not say that the PKK were terrorists. Turkey applied for EU membership in 1987, but negotiations stalled over Cyprus. [EU](#).

On 4 August 2015, the Arab League — with Qatar the sole dissenter — condemned Turkey's bombing of the PKK in northern Iraq. The Arab League English-language website has not been updated since July 2014, so I can not quote the text of the condemnation.

[Associated Press](#); [Anadolu Agency](#); [Today's Zaman](#).

U.S. Reaction to Turkey

On Monday, 3 August, the Deputy Spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, Mark C. Toner, answered a question about Turkish airstrikes on the PKK in Iraq.

We want to see the PKK stop its attacks against Turkey and then for the Turkish

Government to respond proportionately. We want to see all that violence end, and we want to see the efforts of Turkey but also the coalition's efforts as well as the anti-ISIL groups fighting in northern Syria focus on combatting ISIL.

....

These attacks [by the PKK] are only exacerbating the continuation and the cycle of violence here. We want to see these attacks cease. We want to see the PKK to renounce violence and re-engage in talks with the Government of Turkey. And as I said, we want to see the Turkish Government respond proportionately.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept](#), 3 Aug 2015.

On 5 August, *The New York Times* published an article that was highly critical of Erdogan's government in Turkey. [NYT](#).

On 5 August, Obama spoke to a group of ten journalists, including *The Huffington Post*. One topic was that Obama had told the Turkish government to focus on ISIL, *not* the PKK. Here is some of what *The Huffington Post* reported:

The White House has warned the Turkish government that the war against the Islamic State in Syria must be “carefully bound” so as not to go on the offensive against Kurdish fighters, President Barack Obama said Wednesday [5 Aug].

The Kurds have been effective allies of the U.S. as the only fighters to claim major and sustained victories against the Islamic State militant group. But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a hard-line nationalist, considers Kurds in both Turkey and Syria to be enemies of the state.

More importantly, Erdogan has suffered a political setback at the hands of the People's Democratic Party, a Kurdish-Turkish alliance that won 80 seats in recent parliamentary elections. Going to war against the Kurds could be a way for Erdogan to split the opposition coalition.

....

The Huffington Post asked Obama if he was concerned that Erdogan would use the campaign against the Islamic State as an excuse to target the PKK — the Kurdish separatist movement that has allied fighters in Syria.

“Well, we’ve discussed with the Turks our strong view that ISIL” — the name the White House uses for the Islamic State — “poses the largest threat to the region and we have to stay focused, [and our view] that to the extent the PKK engages in attacks against Turkish targets, it is legitimate for the Turks to try to defend themselves,” he said. “But the agreement that we are working on is carefully bound around: How do we close off that border to foreign fighters entering into Syria? And everything we do will be based on that issue.”

Ryan Grim, "Obama To Turks: Don't Use The War On ISIS To Bomb The Kurds," [Huffington Post](#), 16:27 EDT, 6 Aug 2015.

This *Huffington Post* article was reported in Turkey: [Hurriyet](#); [Today's Zaman](#); [BGN News](#); [Daily Sabah](#).

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.

August 2015

On 13 August 2015, *McClatchy* newspapers published an article about the early history of U.S. Government support for the rebels, and exposes the "ignorance" and "miscalculation" of the Obama administration.

After a month of interagency emails, intelligence assessments and legal reviews, the White House settled on a written statement that President Barack Obama would issue on Aug. 18, 2011. There was a preamble hailing the peaceful demonstrators who stood up to the regime's "ferocious brutality," and then the money line:

"For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside."

Senior aides referred to them as the "magic words." But rather than nudge Syria closer to what the administration's Middle East specialists assured was a fait accompli — Assad's quick exit from power — the statement tethered the United States to one side of what's become a merciless civil war.

....

The unchecked violence in Syria also opened space for Islamist extremists, who came to dominate the anti-Assad movement. The Islamic State now controls a third of Syria; al Qaida's Nusra Front is a key military driver in roughly another third. Other Islamist factions, from relative moderates to militant jihadists, make up much of the remainder of the anti-Assad movement, while rebel groups espousing democratic ideals have been reduced to bit players.

....

Privately, American diplomats say they don't really want Assad to fall, at least not overnight, not when they know that abrupt regime change almost certainly would result in a free-for-all among militants for control of Damascus. But they can't say that publicly because they're stuck with a policy that might as well have been cast in concrete the moment Obama called for Assad to go.

....

"It's an ISIS-first war," agreed one former senior U.S. official who was closely involved in Syria planning for the first two years of the conflict. "Of course, there's nothing second, but they just don't say that."

....

Based on what would turn out to be flawed and incorrect assessments that Assad's fall was imminent, the planners said, they dismissed naysayers among them who pointed out that the words could be construed as an implicit pledge of U.S. help and, worse, that there was no backup strategy should Assad remain.

....

Frederic Hof, who led the State Department's response to the Syrian uprising, [said] "This [presidential statement] was done entirely backwards, in this rush to get the president on 'the right side of history' based on a faulty and thoroughly unsupported, unsubstantiated assumption that this guy [Assad] was going to be gone in 20 minutes."

Ryan Crocker, a former career diplomat and noted Arabist who's served as ambassador to Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, called the president's statement "an uh-oh moment, based, I think, on a fundamental misunderstanding of the basic history and dynamics inside Syria."

....

.... That sense of betrayal is pervasive among opposition activists and armed rebels who say they wasted months on halfhearted, abortive projects and forged bonds with

U.S. officials who turned out to be powerless or unwilling to help them. Hannah Allam, "The 'magic words:' How a simple phrase enmeshed the U.S. in Syria's crisis," [McClatchy](#), 17:16 EDT, 13 Aug 2015. Also at [Miami Herald](#); [Sacramento Bee](#).

I think Hannah Allam has written an excellent news article that reveals *how* the Obama administration made some serious mistakes. As cited in my [document](#), Hillary Clinton said on 11 July 2011 that Assad had "lost legitimacy" as ruler of Syria. There was a long crescendo by Clinton and Obama up to the 18 Aug 2011 statement by Obama, which dogma continues to the present time.

This is a good place to remind ourselves that, in January 2014, Obama referred to ISIL as "junior varsity" terrorists. Obama's remark first appeared in an interview with *The New Yorker* magazine:

I pointed out that the flag of Al Qaeda is now flying in Falluja, in Iraq, and among various rebel factions in Syria; Al Qaeda has asserted a presence in parts of Africa, too.

“The analogy we use around here sometimes, and I think is accurate, is if a jayvee team puts on Lakers uniforms that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant,” Obama said, resorting to an uncharacteristically flip analogy. “I think there is a distinction between the capacity and reach of a bin Laden and a network that is actively planning major terrorist plots against the homeland versus jihadists who are engaged in various local power struggles and disputes, often sectarian.”

David Remnick, "Going the Distance: On and Off the Road with Barrack Obama," [New Yorker](#), 27 Jan 2014.

When Obama dismissed ISIL as "junior varsity" (i.e., "jayvee"), ISIL had already captured Fallujah, and ISIL was beginning to capture 1/3 of Iraq. Five months later, ISIL had captured Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq. From the perspective of history, Obama *seriously underestimated* ISIL.

When a scientist realizes he is pursuing a false hypothesis, he stops the futile work and pursues a different hypothesis. But politicians seem to want to continue a obviously bad policy, accepting the continually accumulating casualties and costs, because the arrogance of politicians makes them loath to admit their mistake.

Looking back at the Vietnam war (approximately 1965 to April 1975), the U.S. spent more money than it could afford and sent more than 58,000 U.S. citizens to their death in a futile attempt to stop the communist invasion of South Vietnam and the feared communist conquest of all of Southeast Asia (i.e., Domino Theory).

In 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq because of a false belief about weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. spent more money than it could afford and sent more than 4,400 U.S. citizens to their death. In the end, the Iraqi people were better off under the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein, than under the anarchy that followed, the corrupt rule of Maliki, and the current infestation of Iraq by ISIL.

My comment is perhaps that U.S. Constitution needs an amendment to prohibit the U.S.

Government or U.S. Military from intervening in any foreign civil war. Such a policy of nonintervention would lead to reduced U.S. Government expenditures (i.e., reduced waste) and fewer deaths of U.S. citizens. Isolationism is heaps better than wasting a trillion dollars of U.S. taxpayers' money, wrecking a foreign nation, and causing hundreds of thousands of foreigners to die in a protracted civil war.

On 28 August 2015, the U.S. State Department posted a Media Note about the U.S. Government's current policy on Syria. The entire note is:

U.S. Special Envoy for Syria Michael Ratney visited Moscow today, August 28, for consultations with Russian officials on the ongoing conflict in Syria. These meetings in Moscow are part of consultations to follow up on Secretary Kerry's recent discussions with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in Doha and Kuala Lumpur, as well as ongoing efforts to support the Syrian opposition and to work toward greater convergence of views among both foreign governments and the Syrians themselves on a political transition in Syria and the defeat of extremists.

The United States remains strongly committed to achieving a genuine, negotiated political transition away from Bashar al-Assad that brings an end to the violence and leads to a future that fulfills Syrians' aspirations for freedom and dignity. The United States supports the Syrian people's aspirations for a democratic, inclusive, and unified Syria. The regime of Bashar al-Assad has violently suppressed what began as a peaceful protest movement in 2011. Assad has proven through his brutal and repressive tactics that he has lost all legitimacy, and he must go as part of a genuine political transition.

The United States continues to lead international efforts to defeat ISIL in both Syria and Iraq. We are cognizant that Assad's continued tenure fuels extremism and inflames tensions in the region. That is why a political transition is not only necessary for the good of the people of Syria, but an important part of the fight to defeat the extremists. The Special Envoy's visit to Moscow provided an opportunity to discuss these issues with Russian officials.

"Readout of U.S. Special Envoy for Syria Michael Ratney's Trip to Moscow," [State Dept](#), 28 Aug 2015.

My comments: The second paragraph reflects the U.S. Government's consistent position since June 2011 that Assad has lost legitimacy as a leader and Assad must be removed from power. (See my [document](#).) That was an idealistic, pro-democracy position in 2011 and 2012. But after Islamic terrorists (e.g., Nusra Front and ISIL) became prominent in Syria in mid-2013, Syria desperately needs a strong, experienced leader (i.e., Assad) to prevent anarchy in Syria, and avoid indecision, hesitation, and vacillation in the Syrian government.

The U.S. Government continues to assert — without explanation — that "Assad's continued tenure fuels extremism" in Syria. This is pure propaganda. It is a conclusion without any rational reasons. An honest look at the three major insurgent groups shows that:

- ISIL will fight against *any* government in Syria, because ISIL wants to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda in Syria) will fight against *any* government in Syria, because Nusra wants to establish an Al-Qaeda emirate in Syria.

- The various jihadist groups will also fight against *any* secular government in Syria, because the jihadists want to establish a Sunni Muslim theocracy in Syria.

When Assad's government is toppled, these three groups will continue their civil war in support of their goals. And without Assad's strong, experienced leadership, these three groups will likely quickly dominate the civil war in Syria. Soon after Assad is deposed, moderate Syrians and the London11 nations will all wish that Assad was still in power, because Assad is better for Syria than these three leading insurgent groups.

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 Working Groups

In response to public marching orders from Ban, on 14 April 2015 Mistura proposed one-on-one talks between himself and both 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 were expected by the U.N. to revive the peace negotiations. But the peace negotiations are still in the distant future when Mistura's talks ended in July. My essay for [July 2015](#) explains that de Mistura will establish four or five Working Groups inside Syria to specify details of a political solution. During August 2015, there was no public announcements from de Mistura about these Working Groups.

On 25 August, there was a report by a Lebanese journalist about an anonymous source in the Syrian government:

A high-ranking Syrian official told Al-Monitor that Damascus authorities found little to praise in a report by Staffan de Mistura, the UN special envoy to Syria, aimed at leading to peace talks to end the country's civil war.

The official, who asked that his name be withheld, said the report of about 50 pages includes several points that any country keen on its sovereignty and eager to preserve and protect its nation might express reservations about. Some of the proposals in de Mistura's report may clearly derogate Syrian sovereignty if misinterpreted or misapplied. This leads to the conclusion that the UN envoy's report is inapplicable.

De Mistura's report mainly stipulates the formation of four working groups that would include representatives of the government and Syrian opposition groups. The groups' focus would be on four fields: [1] safety and protection, including ending the blockade and ensuring the arrival of medical aid; [2] political and constitutional issues, such as establishing an interim government board and holding elections; [3] military and security issues, including the fight against terrorism and a cease-fire; and [4] public institutions and development, with a focus on reconstruction of the country. The groups would examine political reforms and form a fully powerful transitional authority.

The UN Security Council on Aug. 17 endorsed de Mistura's plan to form the work groups.

The same high-ranking Syrian source said in an interview with Al-Monitor that his country's authorities will continue to positively deal and seriously cooperate with the UN envoy in full coordination with Syria's allies, especially after the constant and careful consultation with both Moscow and Tehran. Both the Russian and Iranian authorities are constantly giving Damascus authorities advice to show goodwill toward any international or UN proposal.

Jean Aziz, "Syrian official slams UN envoy's report," [Al-Monitor](#), 25 Aug 2015.

My comment is that it is *not* surprising that Assad's government would be concerned about "Syrian sovereignty", given that de Mistura is attempting to replace Assad's government with a transitional governing body, according to the Geneva1 Communiqué. One wonders whether Assad's government will allow de Mistura's Working Groups to meet inside Syria.

On 31 August, TASS news agency in Russia reported reaction from two leaders of internal Syrian opposition. The TASS article is *not* clear about the occasion of the reaction, but a later [TASS](#) article mentions that representatives of four internal Syrian groups met with the Russian foreign ministry in Moscow.

The Geneva III conference on Syria may convene after November 15, leader of the Popular Front for Change and Liberation Qadri Jamil said on Monday [31& Aug].

"The working groups on Syria initiated by [UN Special Envoy for Syria] Staffan de Mistura should start working in mid-September and finish their work by November 15. After that, we will think about Geneva III," Jamil said.

General coordinator of the National coordination Body for Democratic Change Hassan Abdul Azim said the Syrian opposition is thankful to Russia for its efforts to promote the process of peaceful settlement in this Middle Eastern country.

"Geneva III conference may convene after November 15 — Syrian opposition," [TASS](#), 31 Aug 2015.

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."

On 11 August, [TASS](#) reported that the Russian foreign ministry was preparing a third conference in Moscow, but no date was publicly mentioned.

Also on 11 August, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported that the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said: "We do not plan any broad meeting of the Syrian opposition. We held two meetings in February and April, and now we continue contacts on an individual basis." Lavrov incorrectly remembered the month of February, the first conference was on 26-29 January 2015.

It is not clear on 1 Sep 2015 whether there will be a third meeting on Syria in Moscow, as the TASS and RIA-Novosti articles are contradictory and there have been no further news articles on this topic.

On 5 August, the Russian Foreign Ministry invited the Syrian National Coalition to Moscow for talks during 12-13 Aug, and the SNC accepted. [Associated Press](#), 13:14 GMT; [Reuters](#).

This invitation is *not* a continuation of the consultations in January 2015 and April 2015 that involved both the internal Syrian opposition and the Assad government. Reuters reported that the Russians will urge the SNC to attend a future third conference in Moscow, after the SNC refused to attend the first two conferences in Moscow.

On 14 August, the Associated Press reported on remarks by Khoja, the president of the SNC, at the end of his visit to Moscow:

Speaking a day after meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Syrian National Coalition president Khaled Khoja said that "the Russian leadership isn't clinging to Bashar Assad" and is focusing on the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Khoja's statement signaled a shift in Russia's stance, or merely reflected Moscow's attempt to rally Syrian opposition support for its new push to help mediate the conflict.

....

Khoja reaffirmed Friday [14 Aug] that Assad and his top lieutenants couldn't be part of a transitional government. He said he and the Russians didn't discuss any candidates for the future interim authority, adding that his group and Moscow will continue consultations.

Khoja said Russia's main focus was the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and avoid the collapse of the country's state structures, adding that [Khoja] offered assurances that the National Coalition stands for preserving state institutions.

Vladimir Isachenkov, "Syrian opposition leader: 'Russia isn't clinging to Assad'," [Associated Press](#), 08:48 EDT, 14 Aug 2015.

On 15 August, the Syrian National Coalition posted a press release that said:

Speaking a day after meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, President Khaled Khoja said that "the Russian leadership isn't clinging to Bashar Assad" and is focusing on the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity. He also stresses that the Syrian conflict should be resolved in accordance with the Geneva declaration in 2012 which called for the formation of a transitional governing body, affirming that it should not include any of the regime's elements, chiefly President Bashar Al-Assad.

Coalition News, "Political Committee Meeting Discusses Military and Political Developments," [SNC](#), 15 Aug 2015.

Syrian National Coalition fading?

In 2013 and continuing through mid-2014, the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) was the political opposition to Assad's government. For example, the SNC represented the opposition at the U.N.-sponsored negotiations in Geneva, during January 2014 and February 2014. As another example, see the [statements](#) during 2013-2014 from the foreign ministers in the group of nations called the Friends of the Syrian People.

But recently there have been hints that the SNC was being ignored, and the opposition politicians inside Syria were gaining prominence in the peace process. The U.S. State Department has *not* mentioned any meetings with the Coalition since 30 April 2015. ([State](#)) At that April meeting, Kerry did *not* refer to the Coalition as the legitimate government of Syria, although the president of the Coalition did boast that the U.S. Government "stood by the Syrian coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people."

My essay for [July 2015](#) mentions de Mistura's private briefing on 29 July to the United Nations Security Council. The [U.N.](#) press release mentions working groups of Syrians, but has no mention of the Syrian National Coalition. It is the same for the Associated Press and Reuters articles cited in my July essay. On 1 Aug, the [SNC](#) posted their reaction to de Mistura's plan, in which the SNC vaguely demands "talks ... must include representatives of the revolutionary forces and the opposition."

On 1 August, the Local Coordination Committees withdrew from the SNC because of "internal conflict and manipul[ation] by foreign powers [e.g. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey]." [Al-Arabiya](#). The Local Coordination Committees in Syria is a network of 70 groups inside Syria. The network was formed in March 2011.

If the Syrian National Coalition fades into obscurity, I would be happy. As I chronicled in my [second](#) and [third](#) essays on Syria, and summarized in another [essay](#), the Coalition is a bunch of Syrian expatriates who have never been elected by anyone in Syria, and the Coalition is unable to make difficult decisions. The Coalition was responsible for delaying the Geneva negotiations from May 2013 until January 2014.

My essays for [May 2015](#) and [June 2015](#) tersely mention that the head of the Syrian National Coalition refused to meet with de Mistura, although the head of the legal committee, and later the political committee, did meet with de Mistura. This snub by the head of the Coalition may have helped de Mistura conclude that the Coalition was an impediment without any influence in Syria.

On 22 August, the Syrian National Coalition issued a press release:

The political committee received the team of the UN envoy to Syrian Mr. Staffan de Mistura. The team explained the course of the implementation of the points contained in the report de Mistura presented to the UN Security Council on July 29, and also explained the presidential statement issued by the UN Security Council on August 17. Many questions and inquiries were raised during the meeting, but the answers fell short of dispelling our concerns about many of the outstanding issues.

The political committee has reservation about Mr. de Mistura's plan, summarized in the following points:

1. First, it is clear that the proposed course of action will take a long time, so it cannot be adopted in light of the bloodshed and destruction caused by the Assad regime. He will benefit from this time to float itself and consolidate its gains on the ground, as was the case in the previous experiences.

2. Second, the draft of the plan lets go of the objective of the Geneva I communique and the UN Security Council resolution 2118 which calls for the formation of a transitional governing body with full powers that is supposed to expedite the adoption of an executive plan for the Geneva I communique and to unify the teams that will complete all the details.

The international community continues to evade facing the core of the problem, namely how to achieve a radical and comprehensive political transition without the presence of Bashar al-Assad and his inner circle in the transitional period and beyond.

3. Third, while there are no longer any doubts about the legitimacy of the forces that represent the revolution and the opposition, there have been attempts to distort the will of the Syrian people through selectivity in choosing its representatives, like what happened during the consultation meetings in Geneva in May. Indeed, a political process cannot be successful unless it demonstrates integrity, impartiality and credibility with regard to the issue of representation of the Syrian people and stays away from any outside dictations or pre-fabricated outcomes.

The majority of documents laid out by forces of the revolution and the opposition agree on a unified vision for a political solution and on the need to achieve a radical and comprehensive political transition that shuts the door in front of the continuity of or the return to tyranny.

The Syrian Coalition's political committee maintains contact with the United Nations to clarify the outstanding issues. It will adhere to the letter and spirit of the decisions approved by the Syrian Coalition's General Assembly as they reflect the aspirations of the various components of the Syrian people. Moreover, the political committee will refer the results of its meetings and its assessment of the political situation to the General Assembly's upcoming meeting in order to approve future decisions.

And while it reaffirms its adherence to the United Nations' role in bringing about a political solution in Syria, it emphasizes the need for this international organization to play its natural role in bringing war criminals and perpetrators of crimes against humanity to account.

Political Committee, "On de Mistura's Plan," [SNC](#), 22 Aug 2015.

My comment is that the SNC is focused primarily on removing Assad (see second sentence of second point in above press release), and secondarily on punishing Assad and his cronies for war crimes (see last paragraph in above press release). The SNC says *nothing* about ending the civil war, defeating terrorism, or what the SNC would do differently than Assad. The SNC mentions "The majority of documents laid out by forces of the revolution and the opposition agree on a unified vision", but those documents are *not* available at the SNC website. In short, the SNC has *no plan*.

The SNC's third point above is fiction: de Mistura invited the president of the SNC to Geneva, but the record is clear that the president snubbed de Mistura. The third point

mentions "the will of the Syrian people" and the penultimate paragraph mentions "the aspirations of the various components of the Syrian people", but note that no one in Syria has elected the SNC. The alleged "will" is pure propaganda.

On 26 August, the SNC called an emergency three-day meeting of its "General Assembly" to discuss de Mistura's plan. The news release by the [SNC](#) specifically says the SNC is concerned that de Mistura will "bypass the legitimate representative of the revolution and the Syrian opposition." I think the "legitimate representative" is code for the SNC. In other words, the SNC is terrified that de Mistura will ignore the SNC.

On 31 August, the SNC issued a [press release](#) that asserted that de Mistura's plan "puts restrictions on the representation of the Syrian people and imposes selective coercive standards that will weaken the Syrian opposition's representation". The SNC also again declared that "a political solution entails excluding Assad and his clique from the transitional phase or the future of Syria."

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.

August 2015

On 5 August, one bomb in a minibus in Sadr City, Baghdad killed at least 7 people. [Daily Star](#)(AP). [Reuters](#) reports at least 10 dead after two car bombs in Baghdad. [Rudaw](#) reports that at least 40 people were either wounded or killed by three bombs in Baghdad on 5 August.

On 1-2 August, ISIL executed 19 women in Mosul for refusing to have sex with ISIL fighters. [Iraqi News](#), 3 Aug; [Daily Mail](#) in London.

On 10 August, two bombs in Diyala province killed at least 42 people. [Associated Press](#). Later, [Reuters](#) reports at least 58 dead and ISIL claimed credit for the attacks.

On the morning of 13 August, an ISIL truck bomb at a food market in the Shiite Sadr City district of Baghdad killed at least 67 people. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) says 76 dead at noon GMT.

On 15 August, an ISIL car bomb at used-car dealer in Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad killed 13 people. Three other car bombs in or near Baghdad killed another 9 people. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) reports a total of 15 dead at the used-car dealer, and 9 dead elsewhere.

On 31 August, it was reported that ISIL had burned alive four captured members of a Shiite militia in Iraq. [Al-Arabiya](#); [Rudaw](#); [Ahlul Bayt News](#).

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

The English-language news websites in Iraq appear to either ignore or minimize these terrorist attacks. *All Iraq News* typically ignores terrorists attacks in Iraq, but when they do report an attack, they report only a small fraction of the actual deaths. *Iraqi News* 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 readers.

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.

August 2015

On 9 August, the head of religious affairs in Turkey made a public statement that ISIL "has done the most damage to Islam." [Anadolu Agency](#); [Daily Sabah](#).

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](#).
- On 18 August 2015, a U.S. drone strike near Mosul killed the Nr. 2 leader of ISIL,

Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali, also known as "Hajji Mutazz" and "Abu Muslim al-Turkmani". [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#).

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.

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

Report on Fall of Mosul

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](#). As explained below, parliament waited until 17 August to act on this Report.

On 1 August, it was announced that the committee of parliament that investigated the rout at Mosul will present its final report sometime before 10 Aug 2015. [All Iraq News](#). The committee will recommend that the military leaders in Mosul be sacked. [All Iraq News](#).

It was announced that the 120-page final report on Mosul will be delivered to parliament on 17 August. [Rudaw](#), 14 Aug; [All Iraq News](#), 16 Aug. Apparently, the delivery was postponed a week, owing to urgent reforms proposed by Abadi on 9 August.

On 17 August, the Iraqi parliament convened and quickly approved the Mosul Report, then referred the Report to the Judiciary, for investigation and criminal trial of 36 people. The Report recommends criminal prosecution of:

1. the former Iraqi prime minister (Nouri al-Maliki),
2. the former defense minister (Sadoun al-Dulaimi),
3. the former governor of Nineveh province (Atheel al-Nujaifi),
4. four top Iraqi army officers
 - A. chief of staff: Babakir Zebari,
 - B. assistant chief of staff: Obud Qanber,
 - C. ground forces commander: Ali Ghidan,
 - D. commander of Nineveh: Mahdi al-Gharrawi,
5. and 29 other people.

Sources:

- "Former PM Maliki found guilty of Mosul fall to ISIL hand," [All Iraq News](#), 15 Aug.
- "Former Nineveh governor found guilty of Mosul fall to ISIL hand," [All Iraq News](#), 15 Aug.
- "Top military commanders found guilty of Mosul fall to ISIL hand," [All Iraq News](#), 15 Aug.
- "Former DM Dulaimi found guilty of Mosul fall to ISIL hand," [All Iraq News](#), 15 Aug.
- "Iraqi parliament's report blames Maliki, other top officials, for losing Mosul," [Rudaw](#), 16 Aug.
- "Parliament session starts," [All Iraq News](#), 11:05 on 17 Aug (convened).
- "Parliament approves Mosul fall report which includes former PM Maliki's name," [All Iraq News](#), 11:14 on 17 Aug (approval).
- "Parliament sends Mosul fall report to Judiciary," [All Iraq News](#), 11:23 on 17 Aug (referral to Judiciary).
- "Iraqi parliament refers Mosul report to prosecutor, Abadi," [Reuters](#), 09:09 and 17:36 GMT, 17 Aug.
- "Iraqi parliament refers Mosul report to courts," [Gulf News](#)(AFP), 17 Aug.
- "Iraq lawmakers refer report on fall of Mosul to judiciary," [Middle East Eye](#), 17 Aug.

The [Associated Press](#) reported this significant story in 6 sentences at the end of a story on a different topic.

The Iraqi parliament quickly disposed of this controversial Report. The vote to refer the Report to the Judiciary was concluded less than 20 minutes after parliament convened on 17 Aug (see timestamps on *All Iraq News* stories cited above). There was no reading of the Report in parliament, and the final Report was submitted to the Speaker of parliament on 16 Aug, so many members of parliament may *not* have known the details of the Report on which they voted.

On 19 August, Agence France-Presse obtained a copy of the unpublished Report and said: "Top Iraqi officials ignored ample warnings of an impending attack on the second city of Mosul and grossly mismanaged the ensuing crisis that saw Daesh terrorists seize it, a

parliamentary report obtained by AFP says." [Gulf News](#)

On 27 August, *The Washington Post* reported on the contents of the Iraqi parliament report on the fall of Mosul.

The top Iraqi army officer for Mosul [Lt. Gen. Mahdi Gharawi, head of the Nineveh Operations Command,] remained on vacation last summer despite repeated warnings that Islamic State militants were planning to seize the city, and his units had less than a third of the soldiers they were supposed to have on the day of the battle.

Those were some of the findings outlined in a 114-page Iraqi parliamentary report on why security forces in northern Iraq's largest city collapsed so rapidly as militants attacked in June 2014. The report, based on the testimony of at least 92 officials, has not been made public, but *The Washington Post* obtained a copy.

The account of the attack and the events leading up to it sheds light on a poorly run, underequipped army that the United States spent \$25 billion to train and equip. It describes armed forces plagued by rivalries and desertions, which officers covered up in order to pocket the salaries and living expenses of the absent soldiers.

The Islamic State, meanwhile, had been running a highly organized, mafia-style operation in the city in the months and years before the attack, extending its grip and boosting its finances. By the time Mosul fell, the group was earning \$11 million a month in extortion and racketeering, the report said.

"It was an event that surprised the world," the report said of the fall of Mosul. "But those who were informed about the security situation in the province realized this was going to happen eventually."

....

An inspection before the assault found that half the soldiers did not exist, and that half of those who did were on leave at any given time. That led to "exhaustion in the ranks" and low morale. Officers did not report desertions but [stole](#) the salaries of the absent soldiers, the inquiry found. [Link to 30 Nov 2014 article on "ghost soldiers".]

Loveday Morris, "Mosul commander was on vacation despite warnings of attack, report says," [Washington Post](#), 14:19 EDT, 27 Aug 2015.

My comment is that the fall of Mosul appears to be caused by corruption in the Iraqi army. Prime minister Maliki appointed Gharawi to head the Iraqi army in Nineveh Province, when Gharawi's qualification was personal loyalty to Maliki, *not* military competence.

Maliki's reaction to Report

Members of parliament from Maliki's political party were on the committee that investigated and wrote the Report, so Maliki knew on 9 June — and probably earlier — that he would be blamed for the fall of Mosul. When the Report was approved by parliament on 17 Aug,

Maliki was visiting Iran. Here is a sample of what Maliki said on 17 August:

- [IRNA](#) ("Voices heard on need for disintegration of Iraq are serving the interests of the Zionist regime of Israel.")
- [PressTV](#) ("Maliki blamed Turkey and Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for the fall of Mosul.")
- [PressTV](#) (Shiite militias "helped [Iraq] become invincible in the face of the threats" by Daesh.)
- [Ahlul Bayt News Agency](#) (Maliki: "Saudi Arabia is the main reason behind all the sedition in Iraq and their hostile activities has continued to plague Iraq ever since the downfall of Saddam's regime.")
- [Today's Zaman](#) (Maliki: "What happened in Mosul was a conspiracy planned in Ankara, then the conspiracy moved to Arbil.")

Looking at these five news stories, we see that Maliki has delusions about foreign conspiracies — Israeli Zionism, Saudi Wahhabism, or a conspiracy by Turkey and Kurds — as responsible for Iraq's problems, instead of blaming genuine Iraqi incompetence, corruption, and cowardice. These five news stories also present a snapshot of Maliki's sectarianism, as he views the Middle East in terms of his Shiite religion, plus a variety of takfiri infidels whose only function is to vex Shiites.

Why was Maliki in Iran? Looking at Iranian news sites, I found that Maliki had delivered a speech on 16 August at "the opening ceremony of the 6th General Assembly of Ahl Al Bait World Assembly in Tehran's Summit Conference Hall." The *Islamic Republic News Agency* reported an advance copy of Maliki's speech:

"Israel targets Muslims and particularly the Shi'a Muslims, and I believe the Zionists' war against Shi'as is not limited to the war fronts as they fight in various fields," said the Iraqi vice president in the opening ceremony of the 6th General Assembly of Ahl Al Bait World Assembly in Tehran's Summit Conference Hall.

He said that the Iraqi Shi'a Muslims has been suffering from Takfiri terrorists and since the fall of Saddam's regime the colonialists' agents have been busy hatching plots against the people of Iraq.

"Saudi Arabia and Israel take advantage of local mercenaries in their efforts to disintegrate Iraq," added Maliki.

He said that life cannot go on so long as the Zionist regime exists, because the Zionists are expansionist and just as fight against Wahhabism is necessary, fight against Zionism, too, is inevitable.

"Today we are witnesses to the coalition of Zionism and Wahhabism against the resistance axis and this is a civil war, as they use local facilities in the Islamic countries. Therefore, in order to defeat it we need to use all our state facilities, legal apparatus, and mass media," he said.

"Al Maliki: Shi'a Muslims suffering from Zionism, Wahhabism," [IRNA](#), 15 Aug 2015.

In my opinion, this is an extraordinary piece of bigotry. The current big problem in Iraq —

since January 2014 — is ISIL, which is strongly opposed by *both* Saudi Wahhabism *and* Jewish Zionism. ISIL has an extremist Sunni Muslim theology. Maliki should focus on the real problem, ISIL, and stop spreading religious hatred.

On 17 August, [Reuters](#) said: "It was not clear when — or if — Maliki would return to Baghdad, and his office refused to comment." On 18 August, [Reuters](#) reported that Maliki has been in Iran since 14 August and "It was not clear whether or when Maliki would return from Iran," On 19 August, Maliki returned to Baghdad, ending speculation that he might seek asylum in Iran, to avoid prosecution in Iraq. [STRATFOR](#); [MiddleEastEye](#); [Asharq Al-Awsat](#).

On 17 August, [Reuters](#) says the Report "alleges that Maliki had an inaccurate picture of the threat to the northern city [Mosul] because he chose commanders who engaged in corruption and failed to hold them accountable."

My comment is that Maliki set the stage for the fall of Mosul by appointing al-Gharrawi as commander of the army in Nineveh province. Maliki may have committed other acts of malfeasance, but the facts are *not* publicly known and parliament's Report is not publicly available. However, trying Maliki in a court would be very divisive, as Maliki still has significant popular support amongst some Shiites. One can make an analogy to U.S. president Nixon, who resigned in 1974, to prevent an almost certain impeachment. President Ford then pardoned Nixon for all federal crimes, before Nixon could be indicted by prosecutors. My opinion is that Ford's pardon of Nixon was a mistake, and similarly I hope the Iraqi government tries Maliki. "No one is above the law" should be more than a slogan, it should be an operating principle.

Investigation of Rout at Ramadi

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 16 August 2015, Abadi ordered the Iraqi army commanders in Ramadi on 17 May to face court martial for abandoning their positions. [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#). Also on 16 August, [All Iraq News](#) reports that Abadi approved an investigative report on the rout at Ramadi.

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, and on vacation again from 6 July to 25 July 2015.

August 2015

On 27 July 2015, the United Nations shut down 184 "front-line health" clinics in Iraq because of a lack of funding. "More than 80 per cent of general health programmes supported by humanitarian partners are now shut, directly impacting one million people." [UNAMI](#). See also [Reuters](#). Apparently, donors are fatigued by supporting failed nations, with chronic beggars.

During Friday prayers, 7 August, Shiite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani called on the Iraqi government to make numerous reforms and end corruption. [Reuters](#). On 7-8 August, several thousand people in Iraq demonstrated against corruption in government and unreliable electric power. [All Iraq News](#); [Washington Post](#).

Reforms of 11 August 2015

On 9 August, Abadi met with his cabinet, then decreed several reforms:

- abolish three deputy prime ministers
- abolish three vice-presidents
- reduce the number of bodyguards of high government officials
- form committee to investigate both old corruption and current corruption
- reduce the number of members of provincial councils
- a scheme to make government appointments independent of politics (BAS News: "The prime minister will form a committee to oversee the sacking of unqualified personnel, and their replacement on the basis of merit.")

[Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#); [BAS News](#); [Washington Post](#).

Abadi's proposal would end Nouri al-Maliki's tenure as a vice-president. Strangely, Maliki supported the reforms. [All Iraq News](#); [Rudaw](#).

On 9 August, Abadi posted a statement of his proposed reforms at the prime minister's website. This is the definitive statement of the proposed reforms.

1. A comprehensive and immediate reduction in the number of PSDs for all senior officials including; the three presidential authorities, ministers, MPs, special graded posts, director generals, governors, members of the provincial councils and their corresponding officials. PSD surplus will be moved to the defense and interior ministries to be trained and qualified to perform the national duties in

defense of the homeland and protection of citizens.

2. Withdraw the special benefits allocated for each presidential authority, state organizations and institutions and retired officials thereof, according to instructions to be issued by the Prime Minister that will take into account justice, professionalism and competence.
3. Disregard partisan and sectarian quotas in determining the senior positions of the independent bodies as well as deputy ministers, advisers and director generals. A proficient committee to be formed by the Prime Minister which will take advantage of national and international experience in this field will select candidates in the light of standards of competence and integrity and exempt the senior officials who lack such requirements.
4. Curtail ministerial staff and that of state organizations to increase efficiency in government work and reduce costs.
5. Cancel the posts of Vice President and the Deputy Prime Minister immediately.
6. Re-consider past and current records of corruption under the supervision of a supreme committee of specialists to combat corruption and work on the principle (Where did you get this), calling the judiciary to employ a number of well-known professional judges of full integrity to investigate and prosecute the corrupted.
7. Demand the Council of Ministers to adopt the decisions above and call on the Council of Representatives to ratify them to enable the Prime Minister of the reforms called for by the supreme religious authority and demanded by the citizens in the fight against corruption and realization of social justice.

Press Release, [Abadi](#), 9 Aug 2015.

My comments: Under the old system, the three deputy prime ministers were chosen so that one was a Shiite, one was a Sunni, and one was a Kurd. That allocation meant that the Sunni and Kurdish minorities were represented amongst the high level of government. Under the Abadi's proposed reforms the three deputy prime ministers are abolished, and power is concentrated in the prime minister. Presumably, the prime minister will always be a Shiite, because the Shiites constitute about 65% of the population of Iraq. In this way, the proposed reforms could be *more* sectarian than the old system.

The [Iraqi Constitution](#), adopted in 2005, mentions "vice president" in Articles 69, 75, and 138. That Constitution does *not* mention "deputy prime minister". So it would appear that the Constitution needs to be amended before the vice-president can be abolished.

On 10 August, the speaker of the Iraqi parliament announced his intention to dismiss members of parliament who missed more than 1/3 of the parliament sessions without an acceptable excuse. [All Iraq News](#).

On 11 August, parliament convened with 297 members (90% attendance) ([All Iraq News](#)) and quickly voted for Abadi's reforms and the Speaker's reforms, including:

1. authorize prime minister to dismiss provincial council members and governors "if there is a defect in the administration, or a violation of the rules, or corruption." ([All Iraq News](#))
2. abolish the three deputy prime ministers and three vice-presidents ([All Iraq News](#))
3. investigate past corruption and current corruption ([All Iraq News](#))
4. limit the three presidents, speaker of parliament, and prime minister to two terms ([All Iraq News](#))

When I say "quickly", the time stamps on the above news stories show all of these major reforms happened during less than 5.5 hours, including a 90-minute lunch break.

Both [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#) report that the vote was unanimous and without debate. There seems to be widespread agreement that the Iraqi government was dysfunctional. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani was influential in convincing Abadi and parliament to act quickly.

On 13 August, the first meeting of the Iraqi parliament after the reforms were approved on 11 Aug, only 240 members (73%) attended. [All Iraq News](#).

Partition Iraq?

On 12 August, U.S. Army General Raymond Odierno gave a press conference on his retirement. (General Odierno was a senior U.S. military officer in Iraq from Dec 2006 until Feb 2008, and the top U.S. military officer in Iraq from Sep 2008 until Sep 2010.)

QUESTION: General, given your experience in Iraq, and you talked earlier about the growing conflict between Shia and Sunni, and the increased influence now of Iran inside Iraq, even militarily, do you see any possibility that there can be any reconciliation in Iraq between the Sunni and Shia?

GEN. ODIERNO: I think it's becoming more difficult by the day. And I think there might be some alternative solutions that might have to come into this sometime in the future, where Iraq might not look like it did in the past. But we have to wait and see how that plays out.

I think we have to deal with ISIL first, and then we have to decide what it will look like afterwards.

QUESTION: Are you talking about the possibility of partitioning?

GEN. ODIERNO: Well, I mean, I think that is for the region and politicians to kind of figure out, diplomats to figure out how we want to work this, but that is something that could happen. It might be the only solution, but I'm not ready to say that yet.

"Department of Defense Press Briefing with Gen. Odierno on the State of the Army in the Pentagon Press Briefing Room," [Pentagon](#), 12 Aug 2015.

The Iraqi prime minister's office got their knickers in a twist over General Odierno's remarks. The Iraqi prime minister's office issued the following press release:

The Prime Minister's media office expresses its wonder about the statements of the Chief of Staff of the US army who considers division as the only solution for Iraq. This is regarded an irresponsible statement and expresses ignorance about the reality of Iraq. Iraqis are sacrificing themselves to promote unity and defend their country and they are about to have major reforms which will return Iraq to its glory and defeat Da'esh.

"PM Media Office Wonders about the Statements of U.S. Chief of Staff," [Abadi](#), 13 Aug 2015.

The truth is that the Iraqis are unable to liberate Fallujah, Mosul, and Ramadi — "defeat Da'esh" is a dream. Instead of "defend their country", in June 2014 the Iraqi army fled from Mosul, and again in May 2015 the Iraqi army fled from Ramadi. Many of the Iraqi military officers, as well as civilian government politicians, are corrupt. Prime minister Abadi has publicly recognized the corruption problem. General Odierno is neither "irresponsible" nor "expresses ignorance", he is simply stating the obvious reality that Iraq is a failed nation. Notice that General Odierno actually said that partitioning Iraq "might" be the only solution, but it was premature to decide that now. The Iraqi prime minister's office misquoted Odierno. Instead of insulting General Odierno, the Iraqi prime minister's office should be working to put corrupt government officials in prison, put the Shiite militias firmly under control of the government in Baghdad (*not* Tehran), and reform the Iraqi army.

The inflammatory response of Abadi's office to General Odierno's honest remark was widely reported in the news media, e.g., [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon; [Daily Sabah](#) in Turkey.

The Iranians spewed propaganda about how the U.S. Government was attempting to partition Iraq. [PressTV](#) 14 Aug; [Tehran Times](#) 17 Aug; [BAS News](#) 17 Aug; [PressTV](#), 17 Aug; [Tasnim](#) 17 Aug. The Iranians have their facts wrong. If Iraq is partitioned it will be because of the sectarianism of the Shiite majority in the Iraqi government, which discriminated against the Kurds and Sunnis.

On Thursday, 20 August, Agence France Presse reported: "Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, warned on Thursday [20 Aug] that [Iraq] faces dire consequences including possible 'partition' if real reform is not carried out." [Al-Arabiya](#); [Yahoo News](#). (Plagiarized by [All Iraq News](#).) Ayatollah al-Sistani seems to agree with General Odierno.

Reforms of 16 August 2015

On 16 August, Abadi reduced the number of ministers by one-third, from 33 to 22, by consolidating some ministries and abolishing 4 or 5 ministries. [All Iraq News](#); [Rudaw](#); [Associated Press](#).

Reports by journalists on Abadi's changes in ministries lacked detail and were conflicting. On 17 August, the prime minister's website had a definitive statement of the changes:

Based on the public interest, according to Article 78 of the Constitution and upon delegation of the Council of Representatives, we have decided, on behalf of the people, to:

Reduce the number of cabinet members to become 22 in addition to the Prime Minister instead of 33 members, according to the following:

1. Cancel the posts of Vice Prime Minister.
2. Cancel ministerial positions for the following ministries:
 - A. Ministry of Human Rights.
 - B. Ministry of State for Women's Affairs.
 - C. Ministry of State for Provincial and Parliamentary Affairs.
 - D. Ministry of State.
3. Restructure the following ministries by:
 - A. Integration of the Ministry of Science and Technology with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
 - B. Integration of the Ministry of Environment with the Ministry of Health.
 - C. Integration of the Ministry of Municipalities and the Ministry of Construction and Housing.
 - D. Integration of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities with the Ministry of Culture.
4. The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers takes the necessary measures to implement the provisions of the above order.
5. This order becomes valid as from the date of issuance.

Prime Minister's Media Office, "Prime Minister Orders Decrease in the COM Members," [Abadi](#), 16 Aug 2015.

Abadi abolished 3 Vice Prime Ministers in (¶1), abolished 4 ministers in (¶2), and consolidated 8 ministries in (¶3) thereby eliminating another 4 ministers, for a total reduction of 11 ministers.

On 17 August, the Iraqi parliament adjourned until 25 August, a 7-day holiday. [All Iraq News](#). This holiday follows a vacation during all of June and most of July, when parliament *needed* to work.

On 18 August, [All Iraq News](#) reported: "Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Tuesday [18 Aug] he was cancelling the positions of advisers hired as contractors in ministries and limiting the number of advisers for himself, the president, and the parliamentary speaker to five each".

Back on 21 July 2015, the cabinet cut the salaries of all ministers by 45%. [All Iraq News](#). On 20 August 2015, the salaries of all members of parliament will be reduced by 45%, beginning in August. Staff in parliament will see their salaries cut by 30 to 40%. [Iraqi News](#).

(I have some doubts about the truth of these two reports, because this important news is *not* reported by other sources.) My comment is I doubt the legality of cutting salaries in the middle of a term, because the government would be violating a contract with employees. Further, drastic reductions in salaries could inspire employees to either take bribes, steal, or

commit fraud, to increase their income. Finally, drastically reducing salaries is sure to motivate parliament and government employees to oppose Abadi, which will make Abadi's difficult job more difficult.

On 21 August, *The Washington Post* reports that "corruption permeates every facet of society" in Iraq.

After five years of trying to get a job as a public school teacher, Saleh Ali paid a bribe of \$4,300 to an official in Iraq's Education Ministry to secure one. He says it was the only way.

The 29-year-old's experience is a common one in Iraq, where corruption permeates every facet of society. But Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi is pledging to change that, with the biggest [shake-up](#) [on 11 Aug] in Iraq's political system since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

....

Officials estimate that \$300 billion to \$350 billion has gone missing from government coffers since 2003 because of graft. Iraq ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world last year, placing 170th out of 175 countries in Transparency International's corruption [index](#).

....

The extent of the problem makes it unlikely that Abadi can achieve meaningful change, said Ali Khedery, who was a special assistant to five U.S. ambassadors in Iraq. "Virtually every national-level politician and virtually every political party is complicit," he said.

But addressing the issue has taken on a new urgency. Iraq can no longer afford to have billions of dollars disappear from its budget as it attempts to combat Islamic State militants while under a financial squeeze because of falling oil prices.

....

Talal al-Zubai, head of parliament's integrity committee, said the body has recommended 500 cases for investigation in the past year. But he said few have been followed up by the courts and a supposedly independent Integrity Commission, which is mandated to investigate such cases. "We need independent judges away from political pressure," he said. "Speaking frankly, if there's no reform in the judicial system or the Integrity Commission, nothing is going to get fixed."

Loveday Morris, "Beyond terrorism, Iraq's leader is struggling to fight corruption," [Washington Post](#), 21 Aug 2015.

On 25 August, Abadi proposed to merge the Oil and Electricity Ministries. [All Iraq News](#). An hour later, Parliament rejected this proposal. [All Iraq News](#). The economy of Iraq is heavily dependent on income from the sale of oil. The electricity supply has been notoriously unreliable in Iraq for years and is the subject of protest demonstrations by citizens.

ISIL is *not* defeated

Politicians love to give speeches claiming that the enemy is being defeated. In response to Obama's speech on 6 July 2015, I wrote a rebuttal that documents that ISIL is not only functional, 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 30 Aug 2015, only approximately 46 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.
13. On 6 August 2015, ISIL captured the town of Qaryatain in Syria. [Associated Press](#); [SOHR](#). Also on 6 August, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated at a mosque used by

Saudi Arabian police, killing at least 15 people. [Associated Press](#); [Arab News](#).

14. On 12 August 2015, ISIL in Egypt beheaded a hostage from Croatia, who was an oil and gas surveyor and who was kidnapped by ISIL on 22 July. It was the first time ISIL in Egypt had killed a foreigner. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

15.

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 2018. In June 2015, a total of zero rebels have completed their training.

In my essay for [June 2015](#), in the section titled "U.S. Propaganda", I was critical of citing body counts to show success in a military campaign. There I noted that "it may be that ISIL can recruit new fighters at a higher rate than ISIL fighters are being killed."

[Above](#), beginning in my essay for June 2015, I suggest that instead of focusing on killing leaders of Islamic terrorist organizations, we focus on killing their ideology.

On 31 July 2015, the Associated Press reported:

After billions of dollars spent and more than 10,000 extremist fighters killed, the Islamic State group is fundamentally no weaker than it was when the U.S.-led bombing campaign began a year ago, American intelligence agencies have concluded.

....

But U.S. intelligence agencies see the overall situation as a strategic stalemate: The Islamic State remains a well-funded extremist army able to replenish its ranks with foreign jihadis as quickly as the U.S. can eliminate them. Meanwhile, the group has expanded to other countries, including Libya, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Afghanistan.

The assessments by the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and others appear to contradict the optimistic line taken by the Obama administration's special envoy, retired Gen. John Allen, who told a forum in Aspen, Colorado, last week that "ISIS is losing" in Iraq and Syria. The intelligence was described by officials who would not be named because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

"We've seen no meaningful degradation in their numbers," a defense official said, citing intelligence estimates that put the group's total strength at between 20,000 and 30,000, the same estimate as last August, when the airstrikes began.

Ken Dilanian, Zeina Karam, & Bassem Mroue, "Despite bombing, Islamic State is no weaker than a year ago," [Associated Press](#), 13:36 EDT, 31 July 2015.

My comment is that, instead of focusing on bombs and bullets, we ought to focus on ideological warfare, as explained [above](#).

On 5 August 2015, [Anadolu Agency](#) in Turkey informs us that ISIL now "plagues half of the Arab world ... and threatens the other half." There are 22 Arab nations. ISIL controls territory in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. ISIL is active in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. (ISIL is also active in Afghanistan, but that is not an Arab nation.)

Cost of War Against ISIL

On 7 August, the Associated Press reported the cost of the war against ISIL:

... the Pentagon on Friday [7 Aug] released updated cost figures for the military operations against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. As of the end of July, the U.S. has spent \$3.5 billion, or nearly \$10 million per day[,] since operations began a year ago. The bulk of the costs are for Air Force operations, mainly airstrikes.

Lolita C. Baldor, "Attack on Syrian rebels raises questions about training," [Associated Press](#), 18:11 EDT, 7 Aug 2015.

Note that these numbers do *not* include the clandestine CIA program to train and equip rebels in Syria. On 12 June 2015, the [Washington Post](#) reported that the CIA program had cost about one billion dollars a year to support approximately 10,000 rebels.

Daily News About Iraq & Syria

ISIL kidnaps Christians

Assyrians on 23 February 2015

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.

On 7 August, the [Associated Press](#) reports that "since [Feb 2015], only a few [kidnapped Assyrian Christians] have been released and the fate of the others remains unknown."

On 11 August, ISIL released approximately 22 Assyrian Christians who had been held for more than five months. The Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) says 205 hostages remain in ISIL captivity, while *Al-Arabiya* says 187 hostages remain. [AINA](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

Qaryatain on 7 August 2015

On 6 August, ISIL captured Qaryatain in the Homs Province of Syria, after a long battle with Assad's army. [SOHR](#).

On 7 August, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that ISIL had kidnapped 230 people from Qaryatain, "including dozens of Christians". In addition, SOHR says that "hundreds" of people are missing. Agence France-Presse reported the head of SOHR "said those abducted were wanted by ISIS for 'collaborating with the regime' ".
Sources:

- "Unknown destiny pursues hundreds of missing and 230 citizens kidnapped by "Islamic State", including children and women," [SOHR](#), 7 Aug.
- "Islamic State abducts dozens of Christians from Syrian town - monitor," [Reuters](#), 08:46 EDT, 7 Aug.
- "After capturing Syrian town, IS abducts dozens of Christians," [Associated Press](#), 11:36 EDT, 7 Aug.
- "More than 200 feared kidnapped by Islamic State in Syria town," [Los Angeles Times](#), 18:14 EDT, 7 Aug.
- "Dozens of Syrian Christians Missing From Town Attacked by ISIS," [New York Times](#), 7 Aug ("But about 250 Christians had been missing since Wednesday [5 Aug], with no news of their whereabouts.").
- Agence France-Presse, "ISIS abducts 230 civilians in central Syria," [Al-Arabiya](#), 7 Aug.
- "Syrian Bishop: on kidnapping of Christians from Qaryatain," [Vatican Radio](#), 7 Aug.
- "ISIS abducts dozens of Christians after seizing Syrian key town," [ARA News](#) in Kurdish Syria, 8 Aug (local activists: "Daesh (IS) kidnapped 160 Sunnis and more than 60 Christians in the al-Qaryatain town in Homs province on charges of having links with the Syrian regime.").

The U.S. State Department "strongly condemns" the kidnapping and then the U.S. Government "demand[s] the immediate and unconditional release of the civilians taken captive this week and of all those held by ISIL." [U.S. State Dept.](#)

On 7 August, [Reuters](#) tells us that ISIL has executed 2070 people in Mosul, Iraq, most during the past six months. ISIL is eager to execute anyone who fails to cooperate with it.

On 8 August, the [Associated Press](#) reports that "hundreds of families" of Christians fled from Sadad, Syria, as ISIL advances toward that town. The Christians traveled to Homs or

Damascus, each of which is controlled by Assad. Obviously, the Christians fear living under the control of ISIL.

On 13 August, I searched Google News and determined that journalists' reports about the abduction from Qaryatain quickly ended after 7 August.

On 20 August, [SOHR](#) reported that ISIL had released 48 hostages and transported 110 hostages to "to farms near the city of al-Raqqah". ISIL kidnapped 230 hostages on 7 Aug, the fate of the remaining 72 hostages is unknown.

Conclusion About Hostages

It may be necessary to maintain silence about the remaining 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.

Destruction of Antiquities by ISIL

On 21 August, it was reported that ISIL used bulldozers to destroy the St. Elian Monastery in Qaryatain. The monastery was founded in the year 432, and lasted 1580 years, until it was destroyed by ISIL. The monastery is part of the Assyrian Catholic church. [SOHR](#), [AINA](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Al-Jazeera](#); [Vatican Radio](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

My comment is that ISIL is not content to kidnap and execute people, ISIL also destroys unique antiquities that represent a cultural or religious heritage. Islamic terrorists have been destroying unique historical sites since the Taliban destroyed stone statues of Buddha in the Bamyán valley of Afghanistan in March 2001 — 14 years ago.

Back on 18 July 2014, the United Nations Mission in Iraq condemned ISIL for, amongst other things, "attacks on places of cultural significance and places of religious worship". On 26 July 2014, ISIL blew up the Shiite shrine of Prophet Seth in Mosul. (See my essay for [July 2014](#).)

The destruction of historic old buildings by ISIL in 2014 makes continuing destruction foreseeable. Indeed, ISIL destroyed numerous antiquities in Iraq, as chronicled in my essays for [March 2015](#) and [April 2015](#).

On 21 August 2015, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "Islamic State extremists in Syria and Iraq are engaged in the "most brutal, systematic" destruction of ancient sites since World War II, the head of the U.N. cultural agency [UNESCO] said...." Then the AP reports: "There is very little the world can do to stop the extremists from inflicting more damage, [UNESCO chief Irina Bokova] said" My comment is that it is pathetically weak to stand around and whine, when Western Civilization has a consensus that the lives of ISIL barbarians are *more important* than continued existence of historic buildings and antiquities. For example, chemical weapons would allow a military to kill or incapacitate barbarians without damaging the buildings or antiquities, but the consensus is that chemical weapons must *never* be used.

ISIL destroys antiquities because the alleged idolatry is offensive to the theology of Islamic

terrorists, and because Islamic terrorists have *no respect* for other religions. In short, ISIL destroys antiquities because ISIL is a horde of barbarians, who operate outside civilization. What reason(s) do archaeologists and religious groups have for failing to protect unique resources that are under attack by ISIL?

A U.S. military officer told me once that the only things one really has are those that one is willing to fight for. In civilization, we expect others (e.g., police) to fight for us. But out in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq there is *no* rule of law. And so the Taliban and ISIL are free to destroy historic buildings and antiquities, because archeologists, religious groups, and humanitarians are *not* willing to fight for what they value.

As I wrote this section on 23-24 August, news came that ISIL used explosives to destroy the Baalshamin Temple, near Palmyra in Syria. The Temple was constructed 2000 years ago and had endured until the arrival of Islamic terrorists. [Associated Press](#) on 23 Aug; [Associated Press](#) on 24 Aug; [Al-Arabiya](#); [Reuters](#).

United Nations officials have been threatening to prosecute ISIL leaders for "war crimes" since 16 Jan 2014. (See my essay for [January 2014](#).) On 21 Aug 2015, the UNESCO chief, Irina Bokova, denounced the destruction of a Catholic monastery by ISIL as a "war crime". (See [UNESCO](#).) Three days later, on 24 Aug 2015, the UNESCO chief denounced the destruction of the Baalshamin Temple by ISIL as a "war crime". (See [UNESCO](#).) The United Nations Secretary General condemned the destruction of the Baalshamin Temple and declared that "the deliberate destruction of our common cultural heritage is a war crime". [UNSG](#). These threats of prosecution for "war crimes" have *not* deterred ISIL. The leaders of ISIL have already committed enough atrocities to justify many dozens of consecutive death sentences if trial were held in a country like Saudi Arabia, which actively uses the death penalty. I suggest that the leaders of ISIL probably intend to die in battle, or otherwise live a comfortable life in hiding in Pakistan (e.g., like Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar). What repeated threats of prosecution for "war crimes" really do is expose the United Nations as a pathetically weak organization that can *not* enforce its own laws.

My essay for [April 2015](#) explains problems in jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court for war crimes committed in Syria.

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

August 2015

On 8 August, the Golden Division of the Iraqi army liberated "some towers and a water plant inside Baiji refinery". [All Iraq News](#).

On 14 August, ISIL again attacked the town of Baiji, including exploding 12 car bombs. [Reuters](#).

On 21 August, Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Killea, the chief of staff of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, spoke about recent progress in the fight against ISIL. The transcript says the following about Baiji:

Over to Baiji, the situation there remains hotly contested. While Baiji city remains primarily in the control of the Iraqi army and PMF forces, the ISF continue to position forces in an attempt to gain an advantage in the oil refinery to the north of the city.

The oil refinery area is truly an attack-counterattack situation being played out on a daily basis. Coalition airstrikes combined with timely ISF maneuver have provided positional advantages while denying ISIL momentum during these counterattacks.

About a third of the refinery area is controlled by the ISF forces today, and in the south, ISF and PMF have secured at least 80 percent of the city. They are in the process of securing the remainder of the city while at the same time staying in front of ISIL'S probing attacks and isolation efforts in the south of the city there.

ISIL continues to send reinforcements to this battleground, where coalition airstrikes have been very successful in targeting and eliminating them. As I said, it's a — it's a hotly contested fight.

"Department of Defense Press Briefing with Brigadier General Kevin J. Killea, chief of staff, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve via DVIDS from Southwest Asia on Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 21 August 2015.

On 27 August, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "Government forces retook Baiji late last year, but the IS militants are on the offensive there again and now control about half of the town and the refinery.".

Iraqi Army Intends to Liberate Anbar Province

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

August 2015

On 6 August, Reuters released an insightful article on the slow progress in liberating Anbar province.

After only modest gains in the first few weeks of their drive to retake Anbar province, Iraqi government forces have given up hopes of swift advances against Islamic State militants.

The campaign, launched after the provincial capital Ramadi fell in May, initially aimed at recapturing the city quickly but then shifted east to break the militants' 19-month grip on the city of Falluja and secure supply lines from Baghdad.

Confronted with Anbar's sprawling terrain as well as the reality of a weakened fighting force, the sensitivity of sending Shi'ite militias into Sunni strongholds, and political tensions including an Iranian-Western fight for influence, Baghdad and its allies have had to modify expectations.

....

The wide-open territory creates a challenge for Iraq's thinning security forces, worn down by defeats in Ramadi and the northern city of Mosul as well as grueling battles elsewhere, despite a U.S. program to train Sunni tribal fighters.

Ahmed Rasheed & Stephen Kalin, "Slow gains in Anbar set pace for Iraq's anti-IS offensive," [Reuters](#), 12:53 GMT, 6 Aug 2015.

My essays for May, June, and July 2015 chronicle the reasons summarized by Reuters, and quoted Abadi's promise on 25 May that Ramadi will be liberated in the next few days. The Iraqi government has vacillated about the role of Shiite militia in the liberation of Ramadi. Strangely, journalists do *not* mention the very high air temperatures (e.g., 48 to 52 celsius) as one cause of the slow progress in fighting against ISIL. Those high temperatures would be even more unbearable to someone wearing body armor.

On 22 August, Sabah al-Karhout, president of the Anbar Provincial Council, told [The Associated Press](#) that two ambushes by ISIL had killed approximately fifty Iraqi soldiers on 21 August. The AP says the Iraqi army is "making slow progress" in Anbar because of "roadside bombs and booby-trapped buildings".

On 23 August, the [Associated Press](#) reported that ISIL used suicide bombers and mortar

shells to kill "17 soldiers and 6 Sunni militia fighters" in Anbar. The top commander of Iraqi forces in Anbar was wounded in these attacks. [All Iraq News](#).

On 27 August, ISIL sent one or four suicide bomber(s) in vehicle(s) full of explosives into the advancing Iraqi army in Anbar province. The explosion(s) killed two Iraqi generals. The Associated Press reported: "Maj. Gen. Abdul-Rahman Abu-Regheef, deputy chief of operations in Anbar, and Brig. Gen. Sefeen Abdul-Maguid, commander of the 10th Army Division" were killed. The AP reports that ISIL claims "tens" of Iraqi soldiers were killed, while the Iraqi army says only three other soldiers were killed. [Associated Press](#); [All Iraq News](#); [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. My essay for [July 2015](#) describes minor progress in the vicinity of Ramadi.

On 31 July 2015, Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Kevin J. Killea, the chief of staff of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, spoke about recent progress in the fight against ISIL. The transcript says the following about Ramadi:

GENERAL KILLEA: So, now, let me turn to Ramadi. This operation, in many ways, is going along as planned. ISF are executing a very deliberate attack on a dense urban area housing ISIL forces that have been dug in for months. Moreover, ISIL forces have prepared and created complex obstacles and IED belts, all of them covered by fire, in and around the city.

For these reasons, a deliberate, careful approach to isolate the city is being undertaken to set the conditions for follow-on operations.

As you know, the operation to regain control of Ramadi began on July 12th, and included weeks of shaping operations by coalition air forces and ISF ground forces in and around the Ramadi area.

As I alluded to, ISF are in the isolation phase, which involves preventing ISIL from accessing their lines of communication and, therefore, their ability to reinforce the fighters in the city. The clearing stage is next, and it promises to test the mettle of the ISF.

While I won't go into the details of the ISF's progress, I can say that the ISF have made some considerable gains in the isolation phase. In fact, it's fair to say that their progress is commensurate with Iraqi leadership's expectations for where this stage is — of the operation is.

Coalition forces, of course, are providing continual support to the ISF in this phase of the operation. The coalition has helped prepare ISF ground forces by training and equipping ISF units, as well as providing subject matter expert exchanges through the advise and assist mission.

The advise and assist teams have been especially invaluable in providing their expertise to the ISF headquarters and operation centers. Coalition advisers have assisted ISF leadership in operational planning, with their experienced military subject matter experts working side by side with their Iraqi counterparts.

Two of the ISF brigades participating in ground operations in the vicinity of Ramadi were trained by coalition forces at BPC platforms. Additionally, 500 Sunni tribal fighters who trained with the support of our advise and assist teams at Al Taqaddum are fighting under the ISF.

To date, the coalition has conducted over 100 airstrikes against ISIL in the vicinity of Ramadi since the counterattack began, and over 650 in the broader Anbar province, since the beginning of Operation Inherent Resolve. These airstrikes have bolstered the ability of the ISF to maneuver on the ground, and, in some cases, isolate approaches to Ramadi.

We have struck straight — staging areas and destroyed multiple ISIL armored personnel carriers and other vehicles. Coalition forces have also focused on destroying ISIL IED facilities. As priority targets for ISF ground forces, these strikes degrade the ability of ISIL to tactically maneuver and defend within the vicinity of Ramadi.

I will emphasize that every target is carefully considered by coalition air forces to address and minimize the possibility of collateral damage and civilian casualties.

Supporting the Iraqis' fight to retake Ramadi is a high priority for the coalition at this time, and we will continue to support ISF ground maneuver with airstrikes against ISIL targets in direct support of the government of Iraq objectives.

Overall, the message I would provide to you is that momentum is a better indicator of success than speed, and the ISF have momentum in Ramadi.

....

QUESTION: How far off are clearing operations for Ramadi? Days, weeks, months?

GEN. KILLEA: Yes, I would defer that question to the government of Iraq, who has a better idea of their campaign plan and their operations on the ground. I don't — I couldn't give you a time frame on that. I can tell you, they're still in the isolation phase, and they are making progress.

And as I said, it's a very difficult fight. And so, their deliberate approach there is going to take some time. It's not going to be quickly. But I couldn't give you a real good left

and right limit.

"Department of Defense Press Briefing with Brigadier General Kevin J. Killea, chief of staff, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve via DVIDS from Southwest Asia on Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 31 July 2015.

General Killea's task here is to describe the war against ISIL in terms favorable to the U.S.-led Coalition against ISIL, so he does *not* describe the inadequacies of the Iraqi army, and he does *not* mention the procrastination and delays. For example,

- Killea says that: "the operation to regain control of Ramadi began on July 12th", but reports by journalists — cited in my essay for [May 2015](#) — show that the Iraqi operation first began on 26 May.
- Killea says "it's fair to say that their progress is commensurate with Iraqi leadership's expectations", but the Iraqi prime minister, Abadi, promised on 25 May to liberate Ramadi within a few days, which did *not* happen. Subsequent promises of quick victory in Ramadi were also false.
- Killea blurts out a slogan: "momentum is a better indicator of success than speed". In physics, momentum is the product of mass and velocity. The magnitude of velocity is speed. So, the magnitude of momentum is proportional to speed, making Killea's slogan meaningless. Further, does the Iraqi army really have the "momentum" in Ramadi? The more than three-month delay in liberating Ramadi has allowed ISIL to plant land mines, install roadside bombs, put booby-traps in buildings, ... all of which will slow the liberation of Ramadi. There can be no doubt that ISIL firmly controls Ramadi since 17 May 2015.

This is a good place to mention that journalists revealed on 26 August that the Pentagon's Inspector General was investigating whether CENTCOM had "altered intelligence assessments to exaggerate progress" in the war against ISIL. [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#). No one wants to work on a project that is doomed to fail, and that is especially true for military personnel who often risk their lives in their work. But the military must separate being encouraging and optimistic in motivating their personnel from a duty to be truthful in reports.

On 16 August, it was reported that Iraqi security forces had seized the railroad station in Ramadi. [All Iraq News](#). That achievement seems to be significant progress.

On 22 August, the Iraqi defense minister promised that "victory is very close in Ramadi." [All Iraq News](#).

Iraq attempts to liberate Fallujah

On 12 June 2015, the Iraqis decided to liberate Fallujah, *before* liberating Ramadi.

On 12 August, the Iraqi army destroyed a tunnel with a length of 800 meters in Fallujah.
[All Iraq News](#).

On 16 August, four ISIL suicide car bombs killed 17 Iraqi soldiers near Fallujah.
[Associated Press](#).

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 and Fallujah. 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 2015, [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".

August 2015

During August, the U.S.-led Coalition continued airstrikes in and near Mosul, but there was no reported military action on the ground.

On 27 August, *The Washington Post* tersely reported that "talk of a counteroffensive for

Mosul has long dissipated." [Washington Post](#).

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 August 2015: airstrikes

It has become routine that the U.S. Central Command prepares press releases about airstrikes every day, but those press releases for Saturdays and Sundays are *not* posted at the Central Command website.

On Saturday, 1 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported today [1 Aug]. Coalition forces conducted an airstrike today to successfully destroy an ISIL staging area facility near Mosul, Iraq, officials said. Officials also reported details of strikes that took place yesterday [31 July], noting that assessments of results are based on initial reports.

Fighter-attack, attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 11 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, five airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical unit and three ISIL small tactical units and destroyed four ISIL motorcycles and an ISIL resupply area.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL buildings and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions.

Attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 19 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL sniper position.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Near Mosul, six airstrikes struck five ISIL staging areas and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.

- Near Ramadi, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL mortar system, three ISIL vehicles and ISIL bomb materials.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and two ISIL light machine gun positions and destroyed an ISIL light machine gun and three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL fighting position.

[Pentagon](#), 1 August 2015.

The airstrike(s) near Aleppo are apparently part of the new U.S. [policy](#) to defend U.S.-trained Syrian rebels from attack inside Syria.

2 August 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 2 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported today [2 Aug]. Officials reported details of the latest strikes, which took place yesterday [1 Aug], noting that assessments of results are based on initial reports.

Fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted six airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL guard shack.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and two ISIL small tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL command and control center.

Attack, fighter-attack, and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 18 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL bomb factory.
- Near Fallujah, four airstrikes struck terrain denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and two ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL bridge.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL bomb-making facility and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL weapons storage area and an ISIL staging area and destroyed an ISIL bunker.

Near Ramadi, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL sniper position and destroyed an ISIL cache, an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL homemade explosives cache and an ISIL vehicle.

- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL heavy machine guns and four ISIL fighting positions.

[Pentagon](#), 2 August 2015.

3 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 2, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight airstrikes using fighter, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 21 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, six airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and three ISIL small tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL mortar system, four ISIL bunkers and an ISIL resupply vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar position.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and two ISIL small tactical units and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon and an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL buildings, an ISIL vehicle, three ISIL bunkers and an ISIL bridge.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and an ISIL small tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache and four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL staging area, an ISIL artillery piece and an ISIL vehicle and destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL motorcycle, an ISIL drone, four ISIL vehicles and an ISIL resupply truck.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.

- Near Tal Afar, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, an ISIL mortar position and an ISIL staging area and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL heavy machine gun.

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

[Central Command](#), 3 August 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 3 August 2015.

Note that the new URLs that began on 28 July 2015 were abandoned on 3 Aug after just four URLs. CENTCOM has returned to the old URL that included the day and month. These old URLs are a bad design, because they will soon conflict with URLs created one year ago. A better design is to use a serial number in the URL (e.g., like the Pentagon or U.S. State Department) or to put the year-month-day into the URL (e.g., 20150803), to create a unique URL.

4 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 3, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three airstrikes using fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Coalition's airstrikes continue to destroy and degrade ISIL tactical and combat equipment within the region.

“The Bayji airstrikes are a great example of directly supporting ISF in an urban fight that is hotly contested. In areas like Bayji, it is important to note that coalition forces have implemented significant mitigation measures within the targeting process and during the conduct of operations to reduce the potential of civilian casualties and collateral damage,” said Col. Michael Indovina, CJTF-OIR public affairs spokesman. “Our overall strategy has not changed: coalition airstrikes will provide maximum support to the defeat of Daesh.”

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 four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL checkpoints.

- Near Bayji, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Haditha, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL machine guns.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL rocket launcher, an ISIL tank, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL excavators, an ISIL bunker and an ISIL observation post.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL IEDs and an ISIL supply trailer.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun, three ISIL light machine guns and five ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL bunkers, three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tuz, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 4 August 2015.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 4 August 2015.

And now CENTCOM has returned to the new URLs that began on 28 July 2015.

Tuz is a town in Saladin Province, the town is about 88 km south of Kirkuk. On 20 August, there were 7 airstrikes in Tuz, as the battle intensified.

5 August 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 5 August 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On Aug. 4, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven airstrikes using fighter, fighter-attack, bomber 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.

Coalition's airstrikes continue to destroy and degrade ISIL's tactical and combat equipment within Iraq.

“Coalition forces are achieving debilitating effects against the enemy,” said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR chief of public affairs. “The coalition strikes, in coordination with the ISF, destroy Daesh capabilities and provide the ISF an increased operational capability and freedom of movement.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL bunker, seven ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two airstrikes struck two large ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL container, three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL building.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL structures.
- Near Hit, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL bunker, 15 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL weapons cache, three ISIL fighting positions and six ISIL bunkers.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, eight airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and seven ISIL staging areas and destroyed an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery weapon and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 5 August 2015.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 5 August 2015.

CENTCOM has returned to the old URLs that include a day and month.

6 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 5, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 11 airstrikes using fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Coalition strikes degrade command and control and resupply efforts of Daesh, while Daesh fighters attempt to control populations and lines of communications.

"The coalition and our partners on the ground are continuing to tighten the noose around Daesh in Iraq and Syria," said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, CJTF-OIR chief of staff. "Every member of the coalition plays a vital role in degrading the terrorist organization, and we are all working to dismantle Daesh while limiting their ability to harm civilians."

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 11 ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL motorcycles and two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL building.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL buildings and an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Bayji, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and three ISIL staging areas and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Habbaniyah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL armored personnel carriers, two ISIL structures, an ISIL IED and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Hit, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 17 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL light machine gun.

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

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

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

7 August 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 7 August 2015, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and

Syria:

On Aug. 6, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted six airstrikes using bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter-attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Coalition forces and Iraqi security forces now dictate the pace of operations in the region.

“The coalition, in coordination with the YPG, has conducted 15 airstrikes in the vicinity of Al Hasakah this week,” said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR public affairs officer. “These airstrikes have had a decimating effect on Daesh terrorists and have allowed the YPG to establish greater control of the city.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, one airstrike struck ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area and destroyed two ISIL excavators.
- Near Ayn Isa, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL excavator.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 23 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and two ISIL heavy machine guns.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL rocket system.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL light machine gun.

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

[Central Command](#), 7 August 2015.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 7 August 2015.

8 August 2015: airstrikes

On Saturday, 8 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, attack, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted nine airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, six airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL bunkers, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building, an ISIL motorcycle and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Aleppo, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Raqqah, an airstrike struck an ISIL front end loader.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL crane.

Attack, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 10 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Baghdadi, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Beiji, an airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL vehicles and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Fallujah, an airstrike struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle bomb.
- Near Haditha, three airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ramadi, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL roadside bomb.
- Near Sinjar, an airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.

[Pentagon](#), 8 August 2015.

9 August 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 9 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

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

- Near Hasakah, four airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL recoilless rifle firing position.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and two ISIL anti-aircraft artillery pieces.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tank.

Attack, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 16 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Fallujah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kirkuk, an airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Makhmur, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, five airstrikes destroyed three ISIL excavators and two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL structures, an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position, an ISIL recoilless rifle, an ISIL weapons cache and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL armored vehicle and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, an airstrike struck an ISIL sniper firing position.

[Pentagon](#), 9 August 2015.

Later posted at [Central Command](#).

10 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 9, 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 21 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Our airstrikes against Daesh in northern Syria have resulted in the loss of approximately 17,000 square kilometers by Daesh,” said Col. Wayne Marotto, CJTF-OIR public affairs officer. “Anti-ISIL forces and coalition airstrikes have freed many from the barbarism of Daesh, denied Daesh a safe haven and has provided Iraqi forces the needed time and space to regenerate combat power and go on the offensive.”

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL bunkers, two ISIL structures, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL supply truck.
- Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Tal Abyad, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL

bunker.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL homemade explosives factory.
- Near Bayji, four airstrikes struck two large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and two ISIL structures.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL bunker, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Makhmur, four airstrikes struck two ISIL staging areas and destroyed 19 ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL caches and an ISIL building.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building, an ISIL homemade explosives resupply trailer, an ISIL IED and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL tunnel system.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position and an ISIL mortar firing position.

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

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

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 10 August 2015.

11 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 10, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 10 airstrikes using bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 20 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

“Anti-ISIL forces continue to engage ISIL in northern Syria, as ISIL fighters are targeted and killed by coalition airstrikes,” said Brig. Gen. Kevin Killea, chief of staff, CJTF-OIR. “The cumulative effect of the airstrikes is creating a difficult environment for ISIL to conduct operations and expand its influence.”

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 and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL structure and an ISIL armored vehicle.
- Near Aleppo, one airstrike destroyed three ISIL bunkers.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL crude oil collection point.
- Near Kobani, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL mortar system supply point.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, three airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed eight ISIL tractor trailers, four ISIL structures, two ISIL armored vehicles, two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL fuel trucks, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL observation point.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike struck an ISIL river obstruction.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL structure and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL mortar firing positions and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL structures, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tal Afar, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL armored vehicle, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL tunnel system.
- Near Tuz, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

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

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

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

12 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 11, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine airstrikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 10 airstrikes coordinated with the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter and fighter-attack aircraft against ISIL targets.

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

Syria

- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck one large and four small ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL bunkers and an ISIL structure.
- Near Aleppo, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL staging area and destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one airstrike struck an ISIL bridge.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL heavy machine gun firing positions.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL homemade explosives cache.
- Near Makhmur, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL IED.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

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

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

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

13 August 2015: airstrikes

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

On Aug. 12, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 airstrikes using attack, bomber, fighter and fighter-attack aircraft. Separately in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 12 airstrikes coordinated with the government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, 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 Abu Kamal, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL front end loader and an ISIL bridge.
- Near Al Hasakah, five airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Aleppo, three airstrikes struck an ISIL staging facility and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL trench lines and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL motorcycle.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed five ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed 19 ISIL bunkers.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL buildings, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position.

Airstrike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
[Central Command](#), 13 August 2015.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 13 August 2015.

14 August 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 14 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

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

- Near Hasakah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL recoilless rifles, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Raqqah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 23 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Huwayjah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Beiji, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL resupply caches.
- Near Fallujah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery piece and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and terrain features denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed three ISIL buildings.
- Near Kirkuk, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Makhmur, an airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ramadi, six airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and an ISIL fighting position and destroyed three ISIL buildings, two ISIL roadside bombs, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions and four ISIL light machine guns.
- Near Tal Afar, six airstrikes struck four ISIL staging areas and destroyed an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery piece and an ISIL vehicle bomb.
- Near Tuz, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

[Pentagon](#), 14 August 2015.

15 August 2015: airstrikes

During 14-30 August, CENTCOM posted nothing on airstrikes at its website. At midnight on 23 Aug, the most recent news at the CENTCOM website is dated 18 Aug.

On 15 August, the Pentagon launched a new design of its website, with a new format for URLs. As one would expect from government bureaucrats, links to Pentagon press releases on 14 Aug 2015 and earlier *no longer function*. This unnecessary redesign of the Pentagon website created a massive amount of dead links and frustrate U.S.-taxpayers from finding information.

On Saturday, 15 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted five airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed six ISIL excavators, an ISIL heavy machine gun, three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL bulldozer..
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 15 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Al Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed three ISIL rocket rails and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Fallujah, one airstrike had inconclusive results.
- Near Haditha, three airstrikes struck an ISIL command and control facility and two ISIL staging areas.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike destroyed six ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes struck two large and one small ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL buildings, three ISIL IEDs an ISIL truck, an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.

[Pentagon](#), 15 August 2015.

16 August 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 16 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

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

- Near Al Hasakah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL bunkers and two ISIL excavators.
- Near Aleppo, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ayn Isa, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL resupply vehicle.
- Near Kobani, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 15 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Al Qaim, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging facility.
- Near Bayji, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL car bomb.
- Near Fallujah, four airstrikes struck land features denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed two ISIL buildings, an ISIL VBIED, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL obstruction.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kirkuk, one airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar tube and an ISIL vehicle.

Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL excavators, six ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery piece, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.

- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL buildings and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions.

[Pentagon](#), 16 August 2015.

17 August 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 17 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted five airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL anti-tank weapon.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL mortar firing position.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Qaim, an airstrike struck an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed nine ISIL vehicles, seven ISIL buildings and three ISIL vehicle bombs.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL mortar cache.
- Near Makhmur, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL rocket firing position.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL building, an ISIL vehicle bomb and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Tuz, an airstrike destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions.

[Pentagon](#), 17 August 2015.

18 August 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 18 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber and fighter aircraft conducted three airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL berm and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL motorcycle.

Attack, bomber, fighter, and fighter-attack aircraft conducted 17 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Rutbah, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL checkpoint and destroyed an ISIL bulldozer and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL artillery piece, an ISIL building and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Haditha, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Makhmur, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Mosul, an airstrike struck an ISIL tank and destroyed an ISIL trailer.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and destroyed six ISIL buildings, two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Sinjar, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL artillery piece, an ISIL building, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Tuz, an airstrike destroyed 21 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL tunnel system.

[Pentagon](#), 18 August 2015.

19 August 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 19 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Attack, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted eight airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, five airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Raqqah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.

Attack, bomber, fighter and fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 18 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL artillery piece and an ISIL vehicle-borne bomb.
- Near Habbaniyah, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL mortar firing positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Makhmur, five airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units, two ISIL staging areas and an ISIL rocket firing position and destroyed three ISIL tunnels and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Mosul, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, two ISIL buildings and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, an airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position.
- Near Tuz, three airstrikes destroyed 20 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL vehicle.

[Pentagon](#), 19 August 2015.

20 August 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 20 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted eight airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL communications repeater and an ISIL staging area.
- Near Aleppo, four airstrikes struck four ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL fighting position.

Attack, bomber, fighter and fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 21 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Rutbah, three airstrikes struck two ISIL staging areas and an ISIL vehicle bomb facility.
- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck two ISIL large tactical units and two ISIL buildings and destroyed 22 ISIL buildings and nine ISIL vehicles.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck one ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL checkpoints.
- Near Mosul, five airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL tunnel entrance.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed three

- ISIL buildings and an ISIL armored personnel carrier.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tuz, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL rocket rails, an ISIL staging area, an ISIL vehicle storage area an ISIL vehicle bomb.

[Pentagon](#), 20 August 2015.

21 August 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 21 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 10 airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL structures and an ISIL sniper firing position.
- Near Hawl, three airstrikes destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL cache.
- Near Aleppo, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL cannon.
- Near Kobani, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL artillery piece and an ISIL heavy machine gun.

Attack, bomber, fighter and fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 23 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Rutbah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Beiji, four airstrikes struck one large and three small ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL buildings and two ISIL vehicle bombs.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike destroyed two ISIL mortar systems.
- Near Haditha, an airstrike struck an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Kirkuk, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL heavy machine guns.
- Near Kisik, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL rocket firing position.
- Near Mosul, six airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL excavators, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Ramadi, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Sinjar, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tuz, three airstrikes destroyed 17 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL fuel storage facility, an ISIL vehicle storage facility and two ISIL vehicles.

[Pentagon](#), 21 August 2015.

22 August 2015: airstrikes

On Saturday, 22 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Attack and fighter aircraft conducted five airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, an airstrike destroyed four ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Hawl, three airstrikes struck an ISIL bunker and destroyed two ISIL excavators.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 22 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Baghdadi, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Beiji, four airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical units and terrain features denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed five ISIL buildings, two ISIL heavy machine guns and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Haditha, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL boats, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Kisik, two airstrikes struck two ISIL staging areas.
- Near Mosul, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, two ISIL rocket firing positions and an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, an airstrike struck an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL mortar firing positions and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Tuz, three airstrikes destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and ISIL engineering equipment.

[Pentagon](#), 22 August 2015.

23 August 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 23 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

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

- Near Hasakah, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL structures, an ISIL armored truck and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Hawl, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL excavator
- Near Raqqah, two airstrikes destroyed two ISIL excavators.
- Near Ayn Isa, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL bunkers and an ISIL supply truck.
- Near Washiyah, an airstrike had inconclusive results.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 17 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Baghdadi, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL buildings, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Rutbah, an airstrike destroyed two ISIL front-end loaders.
- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL buildings, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL improvised explosive device and an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL vehicle and destroyed two ISIL buildings.
- Near Sinjar, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL staging area and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL light machine guns and an ISIL building.
- Near Tuz, five airstrikes destroyed 27 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL bunker, an ISIL rocket rail and an ISIL weapons cache.

[Pentagon](#), 23 August 2015.

24 August 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 24 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted eight airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, three strikes destroyed three ISIL excavators and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Hawl, two airstrikes struck an ISIL crude oil collection point and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL trench.
- Near Ayn Isa, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL motorcycles and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Washiyah, an airstrike destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL bunkers, two ISIL tunnels and an ISIL front end loader.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted conducted 12 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Beiji, an airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL building and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Kisik, an airstrike struck and suppressed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL buildings and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, an airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL heavy machine guns.
- Near Tuz, three airstrikes destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL weapons cache.

[Pentagon](#), 24 August 2015.

25 August 2015: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 25 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted five airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Hasakah, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL bunker, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL structure.
- Near Hawl, an airstrike destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Raqqah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Washiyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 31 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Baghdadi, three airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed six ISIL rocket rails, an ISIL artillery piece, an ISIL building, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL rocket system, an ISIL weapons cache and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck one large and one small ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL excavator, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL rocket systems.
- Near Kisik, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL sniper firing position and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, five airstrikes struck five ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, four airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL armored vehicle.

- Near Sultan Abdallah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, an airstrike struck and suppressed an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position.
- Near Tuz, 12 airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and six ISIL staging areas and destroyed 57 ISIL fighting positions and three ISIL vehicles.

[Pentagon](#), 25 August 2015.

26 August 2015: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 26 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Remotely piloted aircraft conducted two airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Ayn Isa, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 18 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Beiji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and terrain features denying ISIL a tactical advantage.
- Near Fallujah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL mortar resupply vehicle.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes struck three ISIL tactical units.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL buildings and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Sinjar, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL anti-aircraft artillery piece.
- Near Tuz, seven airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, multiple ISIL fighting positions and terrain features denying ISIL a tactical advantage and destroyed 12 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL weapons cache.

[Pentagon](#), 26 August 2015.

27 August 2015: airstrikes

On Thursday, 27 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted four airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hawl, three airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL bunker complex, three ISIL bunkers and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL

fighting position.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 21 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the government of Iraq:

- Near Beiji, five airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, three ISIL small tactical units, denying ISIL an avenue of approach and destroying 19 ISIL buildings, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Fallujah, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL mortar tube and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kisik, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL checkpoints and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL buildings, two ISIL weapons caches and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL small tactical units and destroyed an ISIL light machine gun and three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tuz, six airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit, two ISIL small tactical units and three ISIL staging areas and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

[Pentagon](#), 27 August 2015.

28 August 2015: airstrikes

On Friday, 28 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted seven airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Aleppo, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Raqqah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Hasakah, an airstrike struck an ISIL ant-aircraft artillery piece.
- Near Kobani, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Washiyah, three airstrikes struck one large and two small ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Beiji, two airstrikes destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL bomb.
- Near Habbaniyah, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL building.
- Near Haditha, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL building and an ISIL motorcycle.
- Near Kirkuk, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL

- fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Kisik, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL excavator and an ISIL fighting position.
 - Near Mosul, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.
 - Near Ramadi, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
 - Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL light machine guns.
 - Near Tuz, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL vehicle bomb.

[Pentagon](#), 28 August 2015.

29 August 2015: airstrikes

The Pentagon did *not* post any press releases on Saturday, 29 August. The press release for 29 Aug was posted on 30 Aug.

On Saturday, 29 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted seven airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hasakah, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL bunkers, an ISIL air defense artillery system, an ISIL mortar position and an ISIL rocket launcher.
- Near Al Hawl, two airstrikes destroyed an ISIL artillery piece and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Washiyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL staging area.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 15 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Al Baghdadi, one airstrike destroyed two ISIL boats and two ISIL IED caches.
- Near Bayji, four airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL building, an ISIL excavator and an ISIL mortar tube.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL resupply vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Makhmur, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL heavy machine guns.
- Near Mosul, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ramadi, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL mortar firing position and destroyed two ISIL light machine guns, an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position.
- Near Tuz, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL armored vehicle.

Part of Operation Inherent Resolve

The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, Syria and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the group's ability to project terror and conduct operations.

Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Iraq include the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Syria include the United States, Bahrain, Canada, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

[Pentagon](#), 29 August 2015.

My quotation includes the final two paragraphs of rarely changing text that the Pentagon — and previously the U.S. Central Command — copies into every press release about airstrikes. What is significant about the final paragraph on 29 August is that the Turkish government announced that it had begun airstrikes in Syria as part of the U.S.-led Coalition on Friday night, 28 August, (see end of [section](#) above). But the Pentagon did *not* credit Turkey in this press release. The omission of Turkey continued on 30 August, but Turkey was included on 31 August.

30 August 2015: airstrikes

On Sunday, 30 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted seven airstrikes in Syria:

- Near Al Hawl, one airstrike struck three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one airstrike struck an ISIL facility.
- Near Kobani, four airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and three ISIL excavators and destroyed five ISIL motorcycles, three ISIL structures, two ISIL guard shacks, two ISIL excavators and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Washiyah, one airstrike had inconclusive results.

Attack, bomber, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:

- Near Bayji, two airstrikes struck an ISIL large tactical unit and an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position and destroyed seven ISIL buildings, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Habbaniyah, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kisik, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Ramadi, five airstrikes struck three ISIL staging areas and destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Sinjar, one airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Tuz, three airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL

vehicles, two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL mortar position.

[Pentagon](#), 30 August 2015.

31 August 2015: airstrikes

On Monday, 31 August 2015, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria: Fighter aircraft conducted an airstrike near Hawl in Syria and destroyed an ISIL excavator. **Attack, fighter, fighter-attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 11 airstrikes in Iraq, coordinated with the Iraqi government:**

- Near Baghdadi, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL explosives cache and an ISIL resupply boat.
- Near Beiji, an airstrike struck an ISIL large tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL barge.
- Near Kisik, an airstrike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL bombs and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, an airstrike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Sinjar, two airstrikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL light machine gun and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy machine guns and an ISIL excavator.
- Near Tal Afar, one airstrike struck an ISIL heavy machine gun firing position.
- Near Tuz, two airstrikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Part of Operation Inherent Resolve

The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, Syria and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the group's ability to project terror and conduct operations.

Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Iraq include the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Syria include the United States, Bahrain, Canada, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

[Pentagon](#), 31 August 2015.

Also posted at [CENTCOM](#).

The Pentagon finally included Turkey in the list of Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Syria, but two days late.

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 August 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 January 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/syria24.pdf>
begun 1 August 2015, last modified 1 Sep 2015.

The annotated [list](#) of my essays on Syria and links to historical documents.

[my homepage](#)