

Syria & Iraq: June 2016

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Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 31 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 That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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 (17 U.S.C. §107) That is why I do not quote most of an article by a news agency or newspaper.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 Standard Time in Boston is -5 hours from GMT. Beginning 13 March, the USA was on Daylight Savings Time, which makes Boston -4 hours from GMT. The U.K. went on summer time on 27 March. Damascus is +3 hours from GMT (summer time). Baghdad and Moscow are each +3 hours from GMT.

Every day, I checked the websites of

- the Associated Press,
- Reuters in the United Kingdom,
- [Al-Arabiya](#) middle east section,
- the Pentagon and the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM),
- and *The Washington Post*

for news to summarize in this essay. When I found significant news, I attempted to find and cite the original source.

Beginning 23 Sep 2015, *All Iraq News* suddenly reduced the number of new news stories each day at its English-language website. This website *was* the best source of information about the dysfunctional Iraqi parliament, so it is a serious loss of information.

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.). The U.S. Government National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) has a history of many international terrorist [groups](#).

On 29 June 2014, ISIL changed its name to "Islamic State" (IS), 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. Presumably, these jihadists, Nusra, and ISIL will fight against *any* secular government in Syria, so removal of Assad will *not* end their battle to establish their religious government 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 [review](#).

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 at the United Nations Security Council.

Chemical Weapons in Syria History

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 2015, ISIL apparently used mortar shells to deliver a chemical weapon (mustard gas?) to civilians in the village of Marea, north of Aleppo in Syria. My essay for [August 2015](#) cited 6 news articles about this use of chemical weapons by ISIL.

OPCW Fact-Finding Missions in Syria

OPCW commissioned "fact-finding reports" to answer the question: were chemical weapons used in Syria? These reports were specifically limited to that one question and did *not* say who used the chemical weapons. The first report was issued in June 2014. A terse summary of the OPCW fact-finding reports, with links to the reports is at my [webpage](#).

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 2015, 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. U.N. Secretary General Ban waited until the deadline (27 Aug) specified in Resolution 2235 to suggest a three-man committee. For details, see my essay for [August 2015](#).

On 10 September 2015, the U.N. Security Council approved the Secretary General's recommendations for a Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) composed of three diplomats plus experts, with the supposed freedom to travel anywhere in Syria. On 15 September, the United Nations announced the names of the three members of the JIM. For details, see my essay for [September 2015](#).

On 13 November, the [United Nations](#) announced that the JIM is "fully operational". Well, *not* "fully", because the JIM does not yet have permission to visit sites in Syria.

On 2 December, the United Nations announced that the JIM would make its first visit to Syria sometime "very soon". [Associated Press](#).

On 11 December 2015, the Status of Mission Agreement was signed in New York City. The three leaders of the JIM were in Damascus on 17 December. [U.N. Press](#); [U.N. Geneva](#). The JIM has no website and the United Nations is being miserly with information on the JIM.

On 12 February 2016, the JIM issued its first report, which says they will investigate the following cases:

1. Kafr Zita on 11 and 18 April 2014, involving chlorine
2. Talmenes on 21 April 2014, involving chlorine
3. Qmenas and Sarmin on 16 March 2015, involving chlorine
4. Marea on 21 Aug 2015, involving mustard gas (allegedly used by ISIL).

The JIM may also investigate two other cases:

5. Daraya on 15 Feb 2015, involving Sarin nerve gas
6. Binnish in Idlib province on 23 March 2015, involving chlorine.

[Associated Press](#); [U.N. News](#); [U.N. SecGen](#).

The first report of the JIM is U.N. Security Council document [S/2016/142](#), which became publicly available on 24 Feb 2016, almost two weeks after journalists reported its content. The first report, at ¶42, lists 23 incidents in which OPCW had "confirmed with utmost confidence exposure to a chemical substance." The JIM decided to investigate the incidents listed in the previous paragraph, see ¶¶46, 43, and 47 of their report.

On 22 February 2016, the JIM also considered investigating alleged use of chemical weapons at Al Tamanah, Idlib province, on 29-30 April 2014 and 25-26 May 2014. [Associated Press](#).

I comment that when the USA proposed the JIM in July 2015, apparently no one realized that reports from the JIM would arrive during delicate peace negotiations in Geneva with Assad's government. If the reports anger Assad, then Assad could delay negotiations, and the Syrian civil war would continue. A continuation of the civil war for just one month would kill more than 4000 people, *many* times the total number of people who were allegedly killed in *all* of the alleged uses of toxic gases in Syria. But in April 2016, the negotiations in Geneva collapsed, making negotiations an irrelevant concern.

In forensic investigations, police *know* that it is essential to begin collecting and preserving evidence immediately after a crime occurs. But the JIM will be investigating crimes that occurred more than six months ago, and, in the case of Kafr Zita, two years ago. This delay by the United Nations reduces the credibility of the findings by the JIM.

Finally, I comment that these OPCW investigations *may* be useful to war crimes prosecutors, ten or twenty years in the future. Assad appears to have stopped dropping cylinders of chlorine gas in Syria after May 2015.

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.

**Introduction:
ISIL used mustard in Iraq
on 11 August 2015**

On 11 August 2015, ISIL allegedly fired mortar shells containing mustard against the Kurdish Peshmerga in Makhmur, Iraq. My essay for [August 2015](#) cited 12 news articles on that incident. My essay for [September 2015](#) mentions speculation that either (1) ISIL manufactured the mustard (at the University of Mosul?), (2) ISIL stole the mustard from Assad's warehouses in Syria, or (3) ISIL stole the mustard from old Iraqi stockpiles produced under Saddam Hussein's rule.

From 31 July to 4 Sep 2015, General Kevin J. Killea — chief of staff, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve — gave a few press briefings at the Pentagon. In his [21 Aug 2015](#) briefing, General Killea said: "[we] were able to take the fragments from some of those mortar rounds and do a field test, a presumptive field test on those [mortar shell] fragments and they showed the presence of HD, or what is known as sulfur mustard."

In Killea's next — and final — briefing, on [4 Sep 2015](#) Laurent Barthelemy from Agence France Presse (AFP) asked General Killea about the alleged use of mustard gas at Makhmur, Iraq, and specifically what were the results of laboratory tests. General Killea responded that there had been a "field test" of evidence collected at the site, and "those materials have now been packaged up, and they have been shipped to what we call a gold-level laboratory. It's an internationally recognized laboratory for complete and thorough analysis so that we can ultimately get to conclusive results on what — what that material was." The results were supposed to be available in "a couple of more weeks" after the 4 Sep press briefing. But General Killea did no further briefings, and when Col. Warren resumed the briefings on 1 Oct, journalists failed to ask about the results of the laboratory tests on the evidence from Makhmur.

My 10 November 2015 search of press releases and briefing transcripts at the Pentagon website for the query "Mustard Makhmur" found only the two briefings by General Killea that were cited above.

On 20 October 2015, [Reuters](#) reported: "A team of inspectors from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will go to Iraq next week to help determine if the blistering agent sulphur mustard was used in the battlefield, three sources told Reuters. The OPCW team's mandate will be limited to the single allegation of use in August against the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, which was allegedly fired using mortar rounds."

On 15 February 2016, [Reuters](#) reports that OPCW had concluded that mustard gas was used by ISIL in Iraq during August 2015. This one news story ends four months of silence by journalists on this topic.

More chemical weapons in Iraq

On 8 and 12 March 2016, ISIL launched attacks with chemical weapons in the village of Taza, south of Kirkuk. The chemicals were delivered with mortar shells and rockets.

Numerous civilians were injured, although different sources report different numbers. One 2-year old girl died from exposure to the chemicals. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#)(12March); [Rudaw](#).

My comment is that new incidents of chemical weapons use are accumulating in Iraq faster than OPCW can investigate them.

Syria

Futile Peace Negotiations in Syria

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 ten* 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 2014, 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 2014, the Ukraine government and pro-Russian separatists were again fighting a civil war. On 17 July 2014, someone in eastern Ukraine shot down a civilian airliner. On 28 Aug 2014, Russia sent troops into eastern Ukraine to aid rebels. On 5 Sep 2014, 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 2014, 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 2014, 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 2014, 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 2014, 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 14 Jan 2016 was only 11,300.
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](#).
10. On 6 January 2016, **North Korea** detonated a fourth nuclear weapon, in another blatant violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions. On 7 February 2016, North

Korea apparently launched a nonfunctioning satellite into orbit in a forbidden test of ballistic missile technology.

Deaths in Syria

On the night of 1 July 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published a death toll for the month of June 2016.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented death of 4823 persons in the month of June 2016. The casualties are as follows:

- Civilians: 1208, including 266 boys and girls under the age of eighteen, and 164 female citizens over the age of 18, they were killed as follows:
 - 680 citizens including 156 children and 91 citizen women killed in raids by Russian and Syrian warplanes' bombing and helicopters' barrel bombs,
 - 43 civilians including 3 citizen women executed by the "Islamic state",
 - 125 civilians including 28 children and 18 citizen women were killed in the shelling and sniper fire of the regime forces,
 - [1] lady executed by Jabhat Al-Nusra (al-Qaeda in Levant) in the countryside of Idlib,
 - 26 civilians including a child were killed under torture in Syrian security prisons and dungeons of its intelligence branches,
 - 45 civilians including 20 children and 12 citizen women were killed in bombing by warplanes of the international coalition,
 - 150 including 31 children and 27 citizen women killed by the mortar shells and sniper fire of the rebel and Islamic Factions and Jabhat Al-Nusra (al-Qaeda in Levant),
 - 16 including 5 children and 3 citizen women killed by the Turkish border guards,
 - 30 including 2 children were killed in the bombing by booby trapped vehicles and explosive belts,
 - 4 including 2 children and a citizen women died due to poor health conditions and the bad living conditions and the lack of medication,
 - 13 civilians including 2 children and a citizen woman killed by mortar shells and shooting by the Syria Democratic Forces in Aleppo province, and
 - 75 including 19 child and 8 citizen women killed by unidentified gunmen and mines explosions and unknown circumstances.
- Rebel and Islamic fighters: 1151
- Defected soldiers and officers: 2
- Regime soldiers and officers: 640
- Members from Popular Committees, NDF and regime's loyalists: 656
- Militiamen from the Lebanese Hezbollah: 29
- Non-Syrian Pro-regime mostly Shia militiamen: 110
- Unidentified casualties: 41
- Fighters from the rebel and Islamic factions, the "Islamic State", Jabhat Al-

Nusra (al-Qaeda in Levant) and Jaish al-Mohajereen and al-Ansar of non-Syrian nationalities: 986

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights renews its call to all international sides — despite the horrifying silence by the international community — to work more seriously for immediate stop of the Syrian people's blood shedding and to put more pressure on the countries members of the members of the UN Security Council so these war crimes and the crimes against humanity are handled by the International Criminal Court. We in the Syrian Observatory demand the punishment of all perpetrators, instigators, collaborators and all individuals and sides who used the Syrian blood as a political card and as means to carry out their personal agendas, as well as those who transformed a revolution for dignity to a sectarian and ethnic civil war.

"About 4900 including 1200 civilians killed in June 2016," [SOHR](#), 1 July 2016. [Formatting as indented list by Standler.]

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a [table](#) of death tolls announced by SOHR, beginning 31 Aug 2013. The total number of people who have died during the Syria civil war that began in March 2011 is now *more than* 288,000.

Free Syrian Army is Leaderless since June 2015

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 2015, the SNC extended the task to create a new FSA High Military Command for "another two months". [SNC](#) On 25 August 2015, the SNC announced it "is finalizing new plans for forming a new FSA High Military Command." [SNC](#).

On 1 July 2016, a search of the SNC website for the query `High Military` found the above-cited report on 25 August as the most recent report, while a search for the query `Supreme Military` found the above-cited report on 20 July 2015 as the most recent report. This series of events since June 2015 shows that the FSA continues to be disorganized and fragmented. It is astounding that the SNC — which purports to be the legitimate government of Syria that will replace Assad — takes more than 12 months to choose a leader for the Free Syrian Army, during an existential war.

Corrupt Arabs Steal Weapons Stolen Weapons Sold to Arms Bazaars

The CIA and Saudi Arabia purchased weapons for U.S-supported rebels in Syria. The weapons were shipped to Jordan for transport into Syria. Then "Jordanian intelligence

operatives" stole the weapons and sold them for personal profit. "The theft, involving millions of dollars of weapons," enabled the thieves "to buy expensive SUVs, iPhones and other luxury items". Aside from the corruption, the sale flooded the black market with "Kalashnikov assault rifles, mortars, and rocket-propelled grenades" that kill people.

After complaints from the U.S. and Saudi Governments, Jordan retired "several dozen" officers. They were "allowed to keep their pensions and money they gained from the scheme". That is obviously *not* an appropriate punishment for a multi-million dollar theft, in addition to selling stolen weapons that endangered security.

On 26 June 2016, the [NY Times](#) and [Al-Jazeera](#) revealed this theft and corruption by employees of the Jordanian government. Later, [Reuters](#) distributed the news in the *New York Times/Al-Jazeera* articles.

My comment is that if corrupt Arabs feel the need to steal from their government and sell the stolen property, then those Arabs should steal office furniture, instead of dangerous weapons. By selling weapons to black-market weapons bazaars, the thieves have worsened international security, and possibly helped supply Islamic terrorists with weapons.

On 27 June, the president's press secretary referred journalists to the U.S. State Department for comments on the criminal activity in Jordan.

QUESTION: There were reports over the weekend that millions of dollars' worth of CIA weapons were sold by Jordanian intelligence officials — they were intended for the rebels in Syria. I'm wondering if you could talk about that situation, but also whether it sort of undercuts your guys' claims that the people that these weapons were going to were carefully vetted and what the impact on the relationship with Jordan might be.

MR. SCHULTZ: In terms of the relationship with Jordan, obviously we remain committed to Jordan's security and stability. We're proud to stand side by side with Jordan in the global coalition to counter ISIL. Jordan has been a valuable partner in that effort, and we appreciate all of their contributions.

For questions regarding this particular episode, I would say a couple of things. One is, there's an ongoing investigation into that particular shooting, so I would have to refer you to the FBI on the latest on that. In terms of the International Police Training Center, that is a center that has been stood up to promote training for the Jordanians and international security forces. That's a center that's supported by our State Department, so if you have questions about that center, that State Department would be point for you on that.

"Press Briefing by Principal Deputy Press Secretary Eric Schultz, 6/27/16," [White House](#), 27 June 2016.

But then the U.S. State Department refused to comment on the report of theft by employees of Jordan, a so-called member of the global counter-ISIL coalition. During questioning by journalists, there are also mentions that U.S.-supplied weapons continue to appear in the hands of terrorists, like Nusra Front in Syria.

QUESTION: Hi. There was a joint Al Jazeera/New York Times report — rather, I

should say *New York Times/Al Jazeera* report — alleging that some members of the Jordanian intelligence structure may have taken weapons intended for rebels fighting against the Assad regime and sold those weapons on the black market. What is this building's reaction? What conversations has it had with the Jordanian Government? We all know that weapons turn up on the black market all the time, but given the complexity of the situation in Syria, it does raise some alarm bells.

MS TRUDEAU: Okay, so thanks for the question. We have no comment on that report. There is an ongoing investigation. The United States remains committed to Jordan's security and stability, and we're proud to stand side by side with Jordan in the global counter-ISIL coalition. But on that particular report, there's an ongoing investigation. I just can't speak to it, Ros.

QUESTION: The CIA does not comment either on its covert transfers of weapons, and yet, it is a U.S. Government policy. Who else should we ask about this?

MS TRUDEAU: As I said, I have no comment on that.

QUESTION: More of a policy — these weapons potentially ending up in the hands of extremists — is it a consequence that the U.S. is willing to accept in order to prop up rebel forces in Syria?

MS TRUDEAU: As it's an ongoing investigation, I just don't have a comment on that report.

QUESTION: It's a policy. It's not the only red flag out there. For example, last September, the Pentagon acknowledged that the Syrian rebels that it trained gave at least a quarter of their weapons cache to al-Nusra. How many red flags do there have to be for the U.S. to stop arming rebels?

MS TRUDEAU: So we're going to leave it where I left it.

....

QUESTION: Is there any reason why the U.S. Government should be in the business of providing weapons to anyone who is not a part of a nation-state's military? Because it seems every time that some rebel group gets its hands on U.S.-provided weapons, they end up in the wrong hands, they end up being sold for whatever on the black market. Is this something that U.S. foreign policy and military policy really should even be considering?

MS TRUDEAU: I know you'd like a comment on it, Ros. I just can't at this point. If we have more that I can offer it, we certainly will.

Elizabeth Trudeau, "Daily Press Briefing," [U.S. State Dept](#), 27 June 2016.

My comment is that journalists are asking good questions. But the U.S. Government is refusing to answer those questions. The U.S. Government is hypocritical to call for "transparency" and "accountability" of third-world nations, while being opaque and

unresponsive when the U.S. Government is caught in an embarrassing situation. One question that is *not* being asked is *why* the CIA program to provide weapons and training to rebels in Syria is secret. Another issue that has been neglected is why the U.S. Government — like other nations — ignored the United Nations Secretary General's call for nations to stop sending weapons to Syria (see my essay for [May 2016](#)).

U.S. troops in Syria

My essay for [October 2015](#) mentions that on 30 October Obama decided to send 50 U.S. special operations forces into Syria to advise Kurds and Arabs who were fighting against ISIL. The first U.S. soldiers arrived in Syria sometime around 27 Nov 2015.

On 24 April 2016, an anonymous U.S. government official leaked Obama's decision to send an additional 250 U.S. troops into Syria. [Wall Street Journal](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Pentagon](#).

On 25 April 2016, Obama stood in Hannover, Germany and gave a speech "to the people of Europe". Obama said: "I've approved the deployment of up to 250 additional U.S. personnel in Syria, including Special Forces," [White House](#).

On 28 April, Syria claimed that 150 U.S. soldiers entered Syria on 27 April. The Syrian Foreign Ministry called the U.S. troops a "blatant act of aggression that constitutes a dangerous intervention and a gross violation of the Syrian sovereignty." [SANA](#); [RIA-Novosti](#). On 29 April, Russian deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov agreed that the U.S. troops violate the sovereignty of Syria. [TASS](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that Obama's deployment of U.S. troops is not only a violation of Syria's sovereignty, but also a violation of U.S. law, because the U.S. Congress has *not* passed an authorization of force that specifically allows Obama to fight ISIL.

On 6 June, it was revealed that U.K. special forces are operating inside Syria. Those forces are normally based in Jordan, but cross the border into Syria. [The Times](#). The U.K. government routinely refuses to comment on its special forces operations. [The Guardian](#).

On 9 June, it was revealed that approximately 150 French special forces soldiers are inside Syria, advising Kurdish and Arab rebels in the fight against ISIL. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

In contrast to the U.S. special forces in Syria, the British and French operate quietly, with almost zero recognition by journalists.

Recognition that Assad is 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". Further, in a rare speech on 26 July 2015, Assad admitted a shortage of soldiers in the Syrian army. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

From December 2014 through September 2015, I no longer believed 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.

My essay for [November 2015](#) explains that the massive Russian airstrikes in Syria that began on 30 Sep 2015 was a game changer, which swung the balance of power in favor of Assad.

On 16 December 2015, Zeina Karam, the Associated Press bureau chief in Beirut, wrote:
Weeks of Russian airstrikes in Syria appear to have restored enough momentum to the government side to convince President Bashar Assad's foes and the world community that even if he doesn't win the war he cannot quickly be removed by force. That realization, combined with the growing sense that the world's No. 1 priority is the destruction of the Islamic State group, has led many to acknowledge that however unpalatable his conduct of the war, Assad will have to be tolerated for at least some time further.

Zeina Karam, "Russian airstrikes restore Syrian military balance of power," [Associated Press](#), 17:10 EST, 16 Dec 2015.

My essay for [January 2016](#) explained that Assad's recent successes on the battlefield made Assad unlikely to compromise during peace negotiations in Geneva.

On 27 March 2016, Assad liberated Palmyra from ISIL, as described in my essay for [March 2016](#). On 29-30 March, Assad seems confident after his victory in Palmyra. [Associated Press](#).

On 3 April 2016, it was announced that Assad had liberated the town of Qaryatain from ISIL. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [RIA-Novosti](#). Qaryatain is known to Westerners as the place

where ISIL kidnapped approximately 230 hostages — including dozens of Christians — in August 2015 and where ISIL destroyed the ancient Saint Eliane Monastery.

On 8 April 2016, Reuters reported:

As the Syria peace talks resume next week, President Bashar al-Assad, backed militarily by Iran and Russia, shows no willingness to compromise, much less step aside to allow a transition Western powers claim is the solution to the conflict.

Threatened by rebel advances last year, Assad is now pumped up with confidence after Russian air strikes reversed the tide and enabled his army to recover lost ground from Sunni insurgents as well as the jihadis of Islamic State.

While Syria experts doubt he can recapture the whole country without an unlikely full-scale ground intervention by Russia and Iran, they also doubt President Vladimir Putin will force him out — unless there is a clear path to stability, which could take years. "Syria's Assad shows no willingness to compromise," [Reuters](#), 20:52 GMT, 8 April 2016.

Let us recognize reality. Assad is firmly in command of the Syrian government. The rebels and jihadists have attempted for more than five years to depose Assad, but the rebels and jihadists have failed. It is time to end the Syrian civil war, by having the rebels and jihadists surrender and be re-integrated into Syria. Despite what commentators say about Assad not compromising, Assad is willing to have a national unity government that includes the former rebels and jihadists. (See my essay for [March 2016](#), in the section titled "Assad rejects transitional governing body".)

Despite all of the predictions in 2011 and 2012 about Assad relinquishing power, Assad outlasted U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. In January 2017, Assad will have outlasted Obama and John Kerry.

June 2016

On 7 June 2016, the first full day of Ramadan, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad gave a defiant speech to the Syrian parliament, in which Assad promised to defeat terrorists everywhere in Syria. [SANA](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#).

The New York Times commented on Assad's 7 June speech:

The speech by President Bashar al-Assad was his first major address since the effort to mediate an end to the civil war broke down in Geneva in April. It reflected his sense that Russian intervention in the war has bolstered his position — and his ability to remain in power for the foreseeable future — as the war enters its sixth year.

Mr. Assad's defiance was notable partly because of efforts in recent months by Secretary of State John F. Kerry and other leaders of a 17-nation collaboration, known as the International Syria Support Group, to set a series of deadlines and limits that Syria could not violate.

Every one of the directives has been broken. A cease-fire designed in Munich in February collapsed. Mr. Kerry's demand at that time — that humanitarian access had to

begin within weeks — was briefly observed in a few towns before access was again largely blocked.

....

Mr. Kerry, administration officials said, submitted to the White House months ago a “Plan B” that called for escalated military action if Mr. Assad continued his defiance. Mr. Obama has not acted on it, telling aides he was not convinced the plan could make a significant difference in the outcome in Syria, especially since Arab neighbors and European powers have not offered more than token support. With only seven months left in office, Mr. Obama seems unlikely to change his mind.

....

Mr. Assad was clear on Tuesday [7 June] that he had no intention of compromising with his adversaries, and seemed to reject the next deadline: An Aug. 1 target for developing a “transition plan” that Mr. Obama and Mr. Kerry have said must ultimately result in someone else running what is left of Syria.

....

Mr. Assad seems unlikely to be able to make good on his boast to retake his country. His strength is largely limited to areas where there is a strong presence of his minority Alawite sect.

But bolstered by Russia’s intervention nine months ago to help prop him up, Mr. Assad is stronger than he has been in years, many experts say, and he has rejected the idea that any new government would have to exclude him.

David E. Sanger & Rick Gladstone, "Defiant Bashar al-Assad Vows to Retake ‘Every Inch’ of Syria," [NY Times](#), 7 June 2016.

My comment is that the *Times* article is correct, and contains important insight about Obama keeping Kerry's Plan B on a short leash.

On 7 June, Liz Sly, *The Washington Post* bureau chief in Beirut, wrote about Assad's speech and concurrent Russian statements.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad signaled Tuesday [7 June] that his government intends to escalate military efforts to crush the five-year-old uprising against his rule, saying the bloodshed will not end until he has regained control over all areas of Syria lost to the rebellion.

His tough words came amid indications that Russia is preparing to reengage in the war in support of Assad, almost three months after it threw its support behind a U.S.-backed cease-fire and announced it was withdrawing most of its military from Syria.

....

Assad’s comments, made in an address to a newly installed parliament in Damascus,

suggested that he and his Russian allies are preparing for a full-scale resumption of the war, with Aleppo as their first target.

....

A peace process launched in Geneva earlier this year has failed, Assad said, blaming the West and its allies. The talks have deadlocked mainly because of disagreements over whether he should remain in power.

Liz Sly, "Assad pledges more bloodshed in Syria, says the peace process has failed," [Washington Post](#), 16:41 GMT, 7 June 2016.

The reason that the talks in Geneva have "deadlocked" is much more complicated than a dispute over the continued role of Assad in the Syrian government. However, the continued role of Assad is a major element in the discussion of the transitional governing body that is mentioned in the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. My comment on the suspension of the Geneva negotiations is [below](#).

Impending collapse of Syrian money system?

On 10 May 2016, a new problem appeared for Assad: the possible collapse of the Syrian money system. My essay for [May 2016](#) explains how the Syrian pound has rapidly declined in value since 18 March 2016. On 10 May, the Syrian government began adjusting the exchange rate daily.

On 10 June 2016, I looked at the historical rates at the [Xenon Labs](#) website and prepared the following table to show the decline of the Syrian pound during the Syrian civil war. These are official exchange rates, *not* the rate from money changers in Syria.

Date	US\$/SYP	% of value on 1 Mar 2011
1 Mar 2011	\$0.0215	100%
1 Dec 2011	\$0.0200	93%
1 Dec 2012	\$0.0141	65%
1 Dec 2013	\$0.00885	41%
1 Dec 2014	\$0.00574	27%
1 Dec 2015	\$0.00530	25%
1 Mar 2016	\$0.00530	25%
1 Apr 2016	\$0.00530	25%
1 May 2016	\$0.00457	21%

1 June 2016	\$0.00459	21%
1 July 2016	\$0.00462	21%

These data show that, relative to 1 March 2011, the Syrian pound had lost half of its official value sometime in 2013, and had lost 3/4 of its official value in 2015. So this collapse of the Syrian money system is *not* a recent problem, despite what journalists said in May 2016.

Peace Negotiations for Syria

Future of Assad must be decided by Syrians *not* by foreign meddlers

On 31 October 2015, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, indirectly criticized the obsession of Obama — and also indirectly criticized leaders of Western Europe, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, etc. — about the removal of Assad. Ban in Geneva said: “I believe that the future of Syria, or the future of all these peace talks, the Syrian-led negotiation, should not be held up by an issue of the future of one man. Basically I believe that it is up to the Syrian people who have to decide the future of President Assad.” [Reuters](#). Agence France-Presse reported that Ban in Madrid said: “It is totally unfair and unreasonable that the fate of one person takes the whole political negotiation process hostage. It is unacceptable. The future of Assad must be decided by the Syrian people.” [Al-Arabiya](#). See also [Voice of America](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

On 16 December 2015, Ban Ki-moon reiterated what he said on 31 October: “It is unacceptable that the whole Syrian crisis and the solution to the crisis has to be dependent on the fate of one man.” [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, at §1, says the Council "... stresses that the Syrian people will decide the future of Syria".

On 12 May 2016, Dr. Philip Gordon — a former U.S. National Security Council adviser to Obama, and now a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations — publicly called for the U.S. Government to stop demanding that Assad resign as president of Syria. [McClatchy](#); [The Hill](#).

Here I notice a little detail. The Vienna Communiqué of 30 Oct 2015 (at ¶2, item 7) calls for elections in Syria "with all Syrians, including the diaspora, eligible to participate." This inclusion of the diaspora was copied into the ISSG Statement of 14 Nov 2015 at ¶10. This inclusion of the diaspora was copied into United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 at §4. The little detail was included by John Kerry, in an attempt to influence the result of the election — assuming that the majority of the diaspora would vote against Assad. (See [NY Times](#): "... Mr. Kerry, who is betting that if Syrians around the world can participate in the vote, Mr. Assad will not be able to win.") I agree with Kerry — but for different reasons

— that Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey should be able to vote in Syrian elections, because those refugees are only temporarily outside of Syria. However, some of the Syrian refugees in Europe will apply for citizenship in an European nation, which effectively renounces their Syrian citizenship. Other Syrian refugees in Europe may lack a Syrian document that conclusively proves they are Syrian citizens.

Planning for Peace Conference in Geneva

Introduction

My essays for [December 2015](#) and [January 2016](#) chronicled the creation and history of High Negotiations Committee (HNC), the opposition delegation that was supposed to negotiate in Geneva. (The HNC is also translated as the "Supreme Commission", which translation I used in my earlier essays.) But the HNC refused to negotiate until all of the following pre-conditions (i.e., demands) had been satisfied:

- release of Assad's political prisoners,
- stopping bombardment of towns by Russian airplanes and by Assad's airplanes, also by Assad's artillery, and
- lifting sieges on rebel-held towns.

The HNC arrived in Geneva on 30 Jan 2016, the day *after* the negotiations were scheduled to begin. There was *only one* meeting with the opposition during the first three days of the Geneva negotiations, and that was a "short informal meeting" when de Mistura went to the opposition's hotel for a "courtesy visit". I concluded that the opposition was obstructing and delaying the peace negotiations.

My essay for [February 2016](#) chronicled the suspension of negotiations in Geneva, and the attempts by de Mistura and ISSG to arrange both a ceasefire in Syria and delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria. I also gave my opinion for who was to blame for the suspension of negotiations.

My essay for [March 2016](#) chronicled the second round of negotiations in Geneva.

My essay for [April 2016](#) chronicled the departure of the HNC on 18 April, leaving the negotiations limping along with alternative Syrian opposition delegations.

My essay for [May 2016](#) chronicled the ISSG meeting on 17 May, the resignation of the chief negotiator of HNC (Mohammad Alloush) on 29 May, and why there were *no* negotiations during May.

HNC disappears?

On 31 May, [Reuters](#) reported that the HNC would meet on 10 June and decide on a new negotiating team for Geneva. An anonymous source in the HNC told Reuters: "The idea was

that the chief negotiator and head of the delegation should be a specialist, someone with experience in diplomacy and international law". [Asharq Al-Awsat](#) reported an anonymous source in the HNC indicated "the existence of a trend to expand the circle of representatives in the negotiating team to include new parties from 'the Cairo Platform' and 'the Moscow platform' ".

During 10-30 June, I repeatedly searched Google News for the query `HNC meeting`, but found nothing relevant. My daily searches of Reuters and Associated Press websites for the query `Syria` also found nothing about a meeting of the HNC.

The obvious explanation for why the HNC failed to select a new negotiating team is that the HNC does *not* expect to return to negotiations soon.

It appears that the HNC is like a flat tire on a bicycle. Maybe the HNC can be patched and then puffed up again. Or maybe the HNC will be tossed in the trash bin and replaced with a new opposition delegation.

On 23 June, the HNC was briefly in the news, when the head of the HNC, Riad Hijab, sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary General. Hijab alleged that the Russians were dropping incendiary bombs on civilians. [Reuters](#). This letter shows that the HNC is still alive. On 24 June the United Nations said "we're not in a position to verify these reports" of the use of incendiary weapons in Aleppo. [U.N. DPB](#).

7 June 2016

On 7 June, Assad gave a defiant speech that is mentioned [above](#). Liz Sly wrote an insightful article that is quoted [above](#), in which she suggests that the negotiations in Geneva are finished, and Assad and Russia will now pursue a military solution.

Remember that the HNC walked out of the Geneva negotiations on 18 April and issued four pre-conditions (i.e., demands) that must be satisfied before they return. The loss of the HNC is not necessarily fatal to the Geneva negotiations, because de Mistura *could* continue negotiations with other opposition parties. But de Mistura has chosen to attempt to satisfy the HNC's demands (e.g., ceasefire, delivery of humanitarian aid) and wait until the HNC's demands are satisfied before resuming negotiations. De Mistura has not publicly explained his reasons, but the following three reasons occur to me:

1. The HNC issued their demands to obstruct the negotiations and to justify their departure from negotiations. But the HNC's demands are *also* contained in several United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Obviously, it would be good to have a ceasefire, deliver humanitarian aid, stop attacking civilians and hospitals, stop besieging cities, and release political prisoners.
2. The HNC contains representatives of rebels (i.e., Free Syrian Army) and jihadist groups, which gives the HNC credibility in ending the civil war that other opposition delegations do not have.

3. Some of the members of the ISSG (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, possibly the USA) would have their knickers in a twist if de Mistura were to continue the negotiations for the long term without the HNC. Those nations could point to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (at page 2) that says "noting in particular the usefulness of the meeting in Riyadh on 9-11 December 2015" — a reference to the meeting that created the HNC.

However, as mentioned in my previous essays, *both* Assad *and* the insurgents are violating these U.N. Resolutions. There currently appears to be *no* realistic hope of implementing the requirements of these U.N. Resolutions in Syria. Waiting for the parties to implement these Resolutions before resuming negotiations in Geneva, effectively means that the negotiations are suspended for the foreseeable future.

Further, it is *not* known whether insurgents in Syria would obey a ceasefire negotiated in Geneva by the HNC. We do *not* know how much influence the HNC really has with the insurgents who are fighting, because the insurgents are disorganized and fragmented. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement that exists was imposed by Russia and the USA — and endorsed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2268. That Agreement lasted between 30 and 60 days, before unraveling. As chronicled in my previous essays, the death toll in Syria during March and April was much less than before the Cessation of Hostilities began.

A major problem is that the Syrian civil war is a proxy war supported by numerous foreign nations, each with their own agenda. Convincing these foreign meddlers to stop supporting the Syrian civil war currently appears impossible. My essay for [May 2016](#) cites repeated calls during 2013 and 2014 by the United Nations Secretary General for nations to stop the flow of weapons to Syria, but those calls were ignored by *all* of foreign meddlers.

I continue to believe that de Mistura should ban the HNC and create a new opposition delegation that will negotiate in good-faith, without demands and preconditions. (See my essay for [April 2016](#), in the section titled "My suggestions for ending futility of talks in Geneva".) Note that the HNC was self-appointed at a meeting in Saudi Arabia, *not* elected by the people of Syria. The HNC is mostly comprised of expatriates from Syria and members of the Free Syrian Army — all of whom want to fight until Assad is defeated. Many of the expatriates in the HNC departed from Syria *before* the civil war began in 2011, and they have little contact with people currently living in Syria.

9 June 2016

On 9 June at 12:20 EDT, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon says while the time is not yet right for new peace talks in Syria, failing to get a serious agreement soon will make a further escalation all too likely." This Associated Press news article was published in the [Washington Post](#) and [NY Times](#), amongst many other newspapers.

The Secretary General's exact words were:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me say a few words about some situations which are taking

place now.

In Syria, as my Special Envoy said this morning in Geneva, the time is not yet mature for a third round of talks. We don't want to have talks for the sake of talks. At the same time, I want to underline the great urgency of the deadline of early August set by the co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group — ISSG. We have to have at least the beginnings of a serious agreement by then. Without a political horizon and discussions on the transition, a further escalation is all too likely. We need unhindered humanitarian access and increased protection of civilians; that is the law, and must not be a bargaining chip. Withholding humanitarian assistance to civilians in desperate need is a war crime. I also call for the release of prisoners and detainees, thousands of whom are held in utterly inhumane conditions.

Hundreds of Syrians and other refugees and migrants continue to die in the Mediterranean while making perilous journeys out of war and persecution.

I have listened to the stories, hopes and fears of many refugees in recent months, to understand this challenge based on their first-hand experience.

Today I am announcing that I will visit the Greek island of Lesbos next week, to assess the situation and to show my solidarity.

Ban Ki-moon, "Opening remarks at press encounter," [U.N.](#), 9 June 2016

My reaction is that the Secretary General on 9 June is responding to a problem that has existed since the previous negotiations ended on 27 April. In my essay for [May 2016](#) I said: "In my opinion, de Mistura should have scheduled a resumption of the negotiations in Geneva on 11 May, two weeks after the previous round ended on 27 April." While the United Nations failed to resume negotiations in May, the situation in Syria deteriorated: in May the monthly death toll returned to values before the Cessation of Hostilities began, the United Nations was increasingly frustrated at delivering humanitarian aid, and Assad/Russia increased bombing of Aleppo. The "further escalation" that Ban Ki-moon now fears already occurred more than one week ago.

There is not much the Secretary General can do about the "hundreds of Syrians" who are dying each month in their illegal attempt to enter Europe. And it appears that the Secretary General is absolutely powerless to either end the civil war in Syria, deliver humanitarian aid in Syria, or release political prisoners in Syria. But the Secretary General could pick up the telephone, call de Mistura, and negotiations would be immediately scheduled, with the hope that the Syrians can solve their own problems. The Syrians do *not* need a symbolic gesture (e.g., Ban's visit to Lesbos, "to show my solidarity"), they need an end to the proxy war that is sponsored by foreign meddlers.

De Mistura has been silent from 27 May to 8 June. In the quotation above, the U.N. Secretary General referred to a statement by "my Special Envoy ... this morning [9 June] in Geneva." Most of what de Mistura said on 9 June concerned delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria. Here is all of what de Mistura said on 9 June about negotiations:

Now talks. I have informed the Security Council just a few days ago, it was an internal meeting but that was something that I can reveal, that time is not yet mature for official

third round of the Intra-Syrian talks. We are intending and we want to do it as soon as possible. No doubt about that. The stressing word is “as soon as possible” but particularly the word “possible.” Why? Because we are aware that a third round needs to be a concrete one. I have been told by my own predecessors that anything we should do, we should do avoid the Geneva 3 with no concluding points.

We want to give maximum chances for a concrete outcome. And what is concrete outcome? A beginning of a political transition. That means to have this type of critical mass, which has been discussed, is being prepared, in terms of discussion, not only by us, but by major countries. But in my opinion, based on my assessment, this is not yet the moment.

So what do we do? Well, we continue preparing for that. And how to do that? By having instead a further type of approach, which is what we call “technical meetings.” Technical meetings, which are not going to take place in Geneva [so you can take your leave, at least during these coming very few days], because we want to keep them low profile. We want to have them at a very technical level. I will not be involved. It will be members of my team who will be actually moving to various locations in order to be able to have those technical discussions with anyone who has been mentioned in the resolution 2254 or anyone who we feel are usefully contributing to preparing the talks.

Meanwhile, we will be also waiting for more progress on other type of discussions that are taking place and the aim is still and I maintain this word: first of August. First of August is attainable. Should be attainable, and we should be aiming at that one because at the end of the day, that's a date which has been put as a target date, but not just for anything but for beginning of a serious concrete message in terms of political transition.

I have not raised with you the issue of air drops, air lifts, and I think I owe it to you. So let me qualify something because it was discussed. [On] the fifth of June there was an official request to the government for air bridges, air drops and air lifts. Each of them are meant to be responding to one form or the other of access when land access is not possible. To give an example, air lifts for Qamishli. Air drops are taking place to Deir ez-Zor, we already had several, and air lifts were requested. By air lifts we mean helicopters landing, because you can't do it elsewhere, to Darayya, Mouadhimiyeh, and Al-Waer, just to mention some. The UN has not backtracked, I heard some reports about it and that's really unfair.

The UN and myself, and I said it to the Security Council, have not backtracked on any of those options. We heard today, Ertharin Cousin the Executive Director of the World Food Programme. She was very clear in indicating that they have a plan and they have prepared a plan for all three options: air bridges, air drops and air lifts. She reminded everyone that of course in order to do that safely and properly, you need government permission. But that is obvious. We need it for land transport. You think the trucks don't need government permission? We just go like that? So it is clear. But what you need to know and I want to state, that what we are seeing is, at the moment, that through this strong and clear option based on the Vienna decision, we have seen approval of land access, 19 of them [see clarification above]. And that the issue of air

lifts, air bridges and air drops is still an option, remains an option, must remain an option because all options must be on the table in order to make sure that one way or the other of course we prefer land, cheaper, quicker, faster — Darayya is 10 kilometers — but it remains on the table. So, we do not have any interpretation about backtracking.

I am ready for some questions.

....

QUESTION: Thank you very much. You talked about “technical talks” when are going to start, and you mentioned in various places, could you could also tell us where are these places, and I also wonder are those for both sides, the government and the opposition and some other parties will join those technical talks, as you mentioned at a lower level. Thank you.

Special Envoy: Well the advantage, as you know, of proximity talks is that you have proximity opportunities. The advantage that they can start later, earlier and we don't have a catastrophe in Geneva with suddenly the conference is failing. And the advantage of technical talks is that they are much lower level, they are not really official, so there is a lot more flexibility but it will go into substantive aspects that may be not the core of the issue, that can only be discussed at the official talks, but going to more technical details. What could happen with the Syrian army one day if and when we hope we would be having a peaceful solution? What will happen with the local institutions, which we do not want them to end up like in Libya or Iraq? This type of technical discussions.

They will be taking place not in Geneva. They will be moving in locations where we will be finding those technicians on the other side. And they are, you can guess, some are probably in Riyadh, some others are most likely also in Damascus, the government, and perhaps some people in Cairo, Moscow or elsewhere. The good thing about technical teams is that they can meet anywhere and that doesn't give any political signal or any political conclusion.

QUESTION: I just wondered if you could clarify a little bit the threshold you are setting for bringing talks here in August. You are asking specifically for a commitment to what? And to the extent that people participated in the proximity talks on the basis of discussion of a political solution, what are you doing to make this a more concrete prospect?

Special Envoy: I will not go too much into details I hope you will understand that. What I can tell you is that the parameters for making sure that the next round of talks, which needs to take place, which I want them to take place as soon as possible, but in order to be effective, need to also give me the perception that there is some concrete intentions and critical mass for producing this time political transition steps. Second, the atmospherics in order to have successful talks need to be as you know, accompanied by an improvement on the security environment and on the humanitarian environment because now it is recognized by everyone including Vienna, which not by

accident addressed those two points first, that if we are having further deterioration of the cessation of hostilities and we have a non-improvement or even worse going backwards on the humanitarian side, that will not contribute for the talks to be successful.

Thank you and good bye.

"Note to Correspondents: Near-verbatim transcript of press stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura," [U.N. SecGen](#), 9 June 2016. [brackets in U.N. transcript]

My comment on what de Mistura said on 9 June:

1. "Technical meetings" is a phrase that means the negotiations will continue in a weak form, but we can not call them negotiations, because that would offend both the HNC and the foreign meddlers who support the HNC.

De Mistura said: "I will not be involved." De Mistura's absence adds to the illusion that these "technical meetings" are *not* negotiations.

2. "The first of August is attainable" is a delusion. The agreement on a political transition was supposed to take six months, but there are now only 52 days remaining before the deadline, including weekends. The 1 Aug 2016 deadline is in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254 at §4 ("target of six months" from when the Geneva negotiations began in early February 2016) and specifically reiterated as 1 Aug in the ISSG Statement of 17 May 2016 at ¶15.

Notice the slight-of-hand here. The 1 Aug deadline in U.N. Resolution 2254 is for the goal to "establishes credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance". The 1 Aug deadline in the ISSG Statement is "for the parties to reach agreement on a framework for a genuine political transition". But de Mistura now says it is a deadline for "beginning of a serious concrete message in terms of political transition." The [NY Times](#) interpreted de Mistura's statement to mean "Aug. 1 was the target date for resuming negotiations."

3. The meetings will be held in various cities, because hotels in Geneva are too expensive, and because few Arab participants want to bother traveling to futile meetings in Europe. But some participants might meet with de Mistura's team, if the U.N. comes to their city and offers free donuts. <smile>

[Reuters](#) began their news article: "The United Nations will not hold another round of Syria peace talks in Geneva until officials on all sides agree the parameters for a political transition deal, which has an Aug. 1 deadline, the U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura said on Thursday [9 June]." I do *not* see in the transcript where de Mistura said that, although that is a possible interpretation. In my opinion, there can be *no* agreement on the political transition. It is impossible for the HNC and Assad's government to agree on the future role of Assad in the government, because the HNC rigidly demands that Assad resign, while Assad insists on remaining as president until the next election.

Incidentally, how many "sides" are there? There were 17 different nations (i.e., foreign

meddlers) at the first ISSG meeting. That suggests a total of at least 18 sides, including Assad's government. The actual number of sides is more than one hundred, because rebel and jihadist groups are fragmented and disorganized.

The United Nations — and de Mistura in particular — are refusing to publicly recognize that the Cessation of Hostilities is *no* longer effective in several major provinces of Syria (e.g., Aleppo, Damascus, Idlib, Latakia), owing to repeated violations by Assad and jihadist groups. And that means that the negotiations with the HNC in Geneva will *not* occur in the foreseeable future — the negotiations are dead.

Just to be clear, the failure of the negotiations in Geneva is *not* the fault of de Mistura — the blame should be on the HNC, who obstructed the negotiations from the beginning, and who caused the negotiations to be either suspended or postponed for most of the days since 29 Jan 2016.

It is *not* necessary to have a ceasefire in Syria before peace negotiations can begin. Indeed, negotiations could lead to a ceasefire. But de Mistura has decided to require both a ceasefire *and* delivery of humanitarian aid, before he resumes negotiations. Again, the failure of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Syria is *not* the fault of de Mistura — the blame should be on:

1. Assad, for repeated violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement;
2. jihadist groups (e.g., Ahrar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam), for repeated violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement; and
3. the foreign meddlers (e.g., Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, USA), who failed to control their proxy armies in Syria.
4. the USA and Russia, as co-chairs of the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, for failing to recommend frequent violators for punishment, including exclusion from the Agreement.

Sad to say, but the Geneva negotiations about Syria appear to be dead. Meanwhile Kerry and Lavrov talk on the telephone several times each week. Kerry urges Lavrov to use his influence to get Assad to obey the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Lavrov urges Kerry to use his influence to get the U.S. to bomb Nusra Front, and stop the flow of weapons from Turkey into Syria. And then nothing happens. [U.S. State](#)(23 May); [RIA-Novosti](#)(23 May); [RBTH](#)(29 May); [RIA-Novosti](#)(6 June); [U.S. State Dept.](#)(13 June).

I recall that in February 2014, when the previous negotiations in Geneva collapsed, the mainstream news media published articles with commentary about the collapse. But since the negotiations in Geneva ended on 27 April 2016, the mainstream news media has ignored the collapse of negotiations in Geneva. Meanwhile, de Mistura and Ban Ki-moon pretend that the negotiations will resume sometime soon, maybe in July 2016.

21-23 June 2016

On 21 June, de Mistura briefed the United Nations General Assembly on the Syrian civil war. Here is part of what he said:

... we have had a four-month long cessation of hostilities, of which the first two months were almost 90 percent. They were co-sponsored by the ISSG and in particular by the two ISSG co-chairs, the Russian Federation and the US. And that saved many lives. We have been counting how many are dying or used to die every day, and how many, luckily, were spared during that period. We have had two ISSG Taskforces now functioning in Geneva, where the international community is in a position, if they want it, when they want it (they have been doing it quite often), to push forward on improved access and preserving the cessation of hostilities, or limiting when the cessation of hostilities was in major danger.

....

There has been progress on building a more cohesive opposition. As you know, many of us have been complaining and worried about the fact that the opposition was excessively divided or certainly not on the same page. There has been the High Negotiating Commission, and there has also been an understanding by everyone that the instructions I got from Security Council resolution 2254 is for a broadly inclusive, I repeat, inclusive, and representative political process; and progress, even if timid, in trying to reach some kind of common understanding or commonalities. That's what we have been doing during the last two rounds — depending on how many we want to count them but we count them as two — of intra-Syrian talks, which resumed in Geneva under the UN auspices in January.

....

Yet, despite what I've been telling you, we are now facing a difficult moment. The cessation of hostilities, which started very well and quite impressively, almost within hours, 72 hours, you could see a radical change in the level of violence, and which was particularly effective during the first two months, which led to a drastic reduction of casualties, has been now heavily challenged, especially in and around Aleppo, Idlib, Latakia and some of the areas surrounding in the neighbourhood of Damascus. But it has been holding in many other areas. We are not in a place where the cessation of hostilities has broken down, but it is in danger of becoming worse and therefore reaching that. So far, that's not the case but we are concerned. Access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas has definitely improved, but of course this is not near the pace and the volume required to address the needs of all Syrians. Plus, there is one area where we are concerned and we have been saying it ourselves at the ISSG. There has been a trend in the last weeks that the very areas where there has been a breakthrough of delivering humanitarian aid to besieged areas have been then shelled before or after the convoys have reached or departed, and that has been a bad news.

In adopting resolution 2254, coupled with 2268, the Security Council has made it clear, abundantly clear, that only a negotiated political solution can bring an end to this conflict, not a military victory or a military defeat, which is clearly not possible, for anyone. Five years, almost six years, have proven that this is impossible and unreachable by anyone. The resolution further acknowledged the close link between a nationwide ceasefire and a parallel political process. Let me clarify and I know you all feel the same. There is a connection between the confidence-building measure of a

cessation of hostilities, which then favours and helps the access of humanitarian aid and the feeling among those who come to Geneva to discuss a political process, that they can justify to their own people, to the Syrian people, that sitting in Geneva for a month, three weeks, and talking about a political process is immediately, at the same time, bringing some benefit for the Syrian people. Progress therefore on the cessation of hostilities, will drastically improve the conditions on the ground, leading to significant scaling up of humanitarian delivery. When there is less fighting, humanitarian delivery has more access. More access means more confidence. More confidence means also for the people who want to look at the political process, to believe in it. This important inter-linkage has been constantly very present in our minds. That is why it is important for the two ISSG taskforces to progress — because they are conducive to making our intra-Syrian talks meaningful and credible.

....

So let's talk about the talks for a moment. The last round concluded on 27 April. During that period of two weeks, both the Government of Syria and the opposition spelled out their own respective visions for a political transition in greater detail. Now the good news, most encouragingly, at this stage, is that for the first time all sides, I repeat, all sides, accepted the need for a "political transition". Yet, while common grounds exist particularly on what Syria would look like with some shared principles, disagreements do remain stark on the question over the devolution of any type of Presidential authority. While the opposition insists on the creation of a Transitional Governing Body with full executive powers, as indicated, as you know, in the Geneva Communique, the Government of Syria envisages the formation of a broad-based government of national unity. Whatever the name and whatever the shape, it is ultimately decided by the Syrians. It needs to reflect a commitment to a real political transition, and that's where the challenge is with us as the UN and as governments in order to try to see whether we can find a formula by which we can respect both the Geneva Communique and the (SC) resolution 2254.

.... So I have been identifying a group of core issues to be identified in great detail at the next round when — I know the question will come up — well, I'll consider that in July. Not yet, not now because it is premature with the current discussions and the current situation.

....

Mr. President, Having said that, political talks cannot proceed effectively while hostilities are escalating and civilians are starving. In April, we have seen a marked deterioration in the situation on the ground, both in terms of fighting and humanitarian access. [What about in May?]

....

Unfortunately, and despite sustained efforts by the two co-chairs, I cannot say the same as regards to the cessation of hostilities. [can not say: "we have recently seen substantial progress"] While the overall level of fighting continues to be below — I

repeat below — the level prior to the ceasefire in January [the ceasefire began 27 February], there has been a worrying escalation of fighting in several areas.

.....

The window of opportunity is quickly coming to a close unless we keep alive the cessation of hostilities, we increase humanitarian aid and come to some kind of understanding about political transition. This way, hopefully in July we can have intra-Syrian talks, not about principles but about concrete steps towards political transition.

This is what we aimed at and what we hope we will be able to reach.

"Statement by Staffan De Mistura, UN Special Envoy for Syria, at informal briefing to the General Assembly," [U.N. Geneva](#), 22 June 2016. [Brackets added by Standler.]

It seems that de Mistura is hoping to resume the negotiations in Geneva sometime in July — *assuming* the violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement decrease, *and also assuming* there are more deliveries of humanitarian aid. But there is *no* reason to expect the nationwide ceasefire to be restored.

On 23 June at 12:03 GMT, [Reuters](#) reported: "The prospects for a new round of Syria peace talks should be clearer after the U.N. Security Council discusses the various options on June 29, U.N. Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura said on Thursday [23 June]."

Later on 23 June, the United Nations Office in Geneva posted a transcript of what de Mistura told journalists:

So I am on my way now to New York and Washington. We will have a Security Council meeting on the 29th and prior to that I will have consultations in New York and also in Washington.

All that because we have to continue preparing for various options regarding the Intra-Syrian talks. You do know that meanwhile we are having what we call technical talks taking place and they have been taking place both in Cairo, already and in Moscow and the next one will be in Riyadh and other locations if and when required. These technical talks have been and are very useful. They are under the radar. They are calm and quiet and discrete, but they have been providing us with quite a lot of substantive points that will be, can be, useful when the Intra-Syrian talks will take place.

So the question is: when are we going to have the Intra-Syrian talks? Well, it will also depend on the discussions I will be having in New York and Washington and in particular the debate at the Security Council where I will definitely ask their own guidance not only about the urgent need of having a renewed Intra-Syrian talks but also what are the best conditions for holding them in the best possible chances.

As you know they are linked to the humanitarian process. They are linked to improvement on the cessation of hostilities but frankly they are particularly linked to finding a minimum critical mass particularly based on the discussion between the two co-chairs, which we are stimulating and facilitating but needs to get more concrete, so by the time we then decide to call for the new talks, we know that this time at least a

critical mass around which this can be developed.

I will be able to elaborate a little bit more once I have I have ended up these discussions and probably after also having my own discussion and consultations at the Security Council and therefore will revert on that.

The aim is still July remember, because August is not a fictional but is a real timetable we are having in our own radar screen for many reasons that we already elaborated.

That is my update on that. I can take one question but then not more than one because I will like you to focus on the opportunity of having both Jan Egeland and Yacoub El Hillo here.

QUESTION: Mr. de Mistura, if you look now to the fight between al-Nusra and the Syrian forces and the situation on the ground, what could be your evaluation for the coming round held, to have a really successful new round between the Syrians? Or how do you feel for the coming period?

SdM: Well it is linked to what you will be hearing. On the humanitarian side, again, I will leave the details, and substantial details to both Jan and Yacoub.

June had been by far a better month than many so based on that we have seen a substantial improvement, is that enough? No, for feeling comfortable, Will that be enough for making sure that that aspect is being addressed better in order to facilitate a good chance of Intra-Syrian talks? Probably, but then look at the cessation of hostilities, Aleppo, Idlib and other places, we are not getting at the moment good news.

But the most important aspect is, don't forget that the cessation of hostilities took place when the Russian Federation and the US agreed on something, and that produced a critical mass. We are looking for the same type of critical mass on the beginning of the political transition and we can help, we are helping but we need that one.

Thank you. I will now leave the floor to both of you, and I really want to say again, once publicly how much we are all grateful to Yacoub El Hillo and his team for what they are doing. These are the people, the friends, the colleagues who are going at night and over very difficult places and they make us proud so I am very pleased to see you here and to be able to be present in person to explain and elaborate.

....

QUESTION: What is the reason that the Syrian regime bombs the areas before and after you deliver aid?

Yacoub El Hillo: It's a terrible thing that when we are allowed to go and deliver to a place — and I believe you are referring to Darayya in particular — that immediately after, we get reports of shelling and strikes and attacks. It is terrible and we do register our objection to this repeatedly. It is also something that is taken up at many other levels at the United Nations, including with the Special Adviser but also with the

Special Envoy. It is also something that we must continue to call for its stoppage. People cannot be punished simply because they have been given the opportunity to receive humanitarian assistance. It's very clear.

QUESTION: Tom Miles from Reuters. Similar question about people seeming to go back on agreements very quickly. The Russians announced a ceasefire in Aleppo — was it last week for 48 hours? And then it seems that within minutes or an hour of announcing it at this meeting last week, they had already broken it with airstrikes. There have also been allegations about Russia using cluster munitions in Syria and I don't know who is investigating this. Whether it's the Humanitarian Task Force's job to investigate these sort of claims. But it's difficult to see Russia as an honest broker when its role in Syria is so questioned and when it's ready to break its own ceasefire very shortly after announcing it. I may be wrong but please correct me. Thanks.

Jan Egeland: We are indeed very, very disappointed as humanitarians that the cessation of hostilities, including the one in Aleppo, did not lead to much. The fighting is also one of the reasons we are not able to deliver to the four towns: Fouah, Kefraya, Madaya and Zabadani. And these are areas that are long overdue. Starvation will start in those areas if no cessation of hostilities starts there.

"Near verbatim transcript of joint press stakeout by Staffan de Mistura, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Jan Egeland, Senior Special Advisor, and Yacoub El Hillo, UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syrian Arab Republic," [U.N. Geneva](#), 23 June 2016.

De Mistura's remarks about "critical mass" are difficult to understand. (In nuclear physics, a critical mass is the minimum amount of some radioactive material necessary for exponentially increasing rate of nuclear fission.) Reuters described the collapse of the cessation of hostilities, and explained de Mistura's remark:

A "cessation of hostilities" that had brought peace to much of Syria for two months largely broke down, and the war has resumed in many areas.

De Mistura told reporters he was aiming for a July date for a new round of talks to meet an August deadline for a deal, but first he wanted the United States and Russia to make a "critical mass" of progress on a deal for political transition in Syria.

Tom Miles & Stephanie Nebehay, "U.N. to clarify Syria talks outlook on June 29," [Reuters](#), 15:31 GMT, 23 June 2016.

Instead of forming a consensus at the negotiations in Geneva, de Mistura seems to want Russia to influence Assad, and the USA to influence the HNC, to form a consensus about the political transition *before* the next meeting in Geneva. One problem is that the HNC seems to have [expired](#) after its chief negotiator resigned on 29 May. Another problem is that the USA has little real influence with any of the Syrian opposition.

29 June 2016

At night on 28 June, the Associated Press reported a threat by two dozen opposition organizations to stop participating in peace negotiations in Geneva.

Two dozen Syrian civilian organizations and humanitarian aid groups are threatening to end their participation in peace talks unless the international community takes major steps to protect civilians and enforce a cessation of hostilities in the country.

The groups said in a letter sent to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday [28 June], and obtained by The Associated Press, that many of their representatives have participated in the Geneva talks, but three rounds of talks have offered the Syrian people "neither peace nor protection."

"Instead, while we were asked to talk peace in Geneva, the civilians we represent were bombed in Syria," they said.

....

The groups urged the secretary-general to call on U.N. member states to take measures to stop airstrikes and indiscriminate violence, including establishing "a no-bombing zone for all of Syria." The idea of a no-fly zone in Syria has been floated for years but never seriously considered.

The organizations also called on Ban to break sieges in towns across Syria by air-dropping aid to civilians in need, "irrespective of Syrian regime consent," which the U.N. says is essential.

....

The signatories included Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets; the Syrian Network for Human Rights; the Violations Documentation Center; Syria Justice and Accountability Center; Independent Doctors Association and Mayday Rescue.

The groups said they sent copies of the letter to U.N. Special Envoy for Syria Staffan De Mistura, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and the British and French foreign ministers because they are "the powers that have the means to implement a policy aimed at protecting Syrian lives."

Edith M. Lederer, "Syrian civilian groups threaten to pull out of peace talks," [Associated Press](#), 22:40 EDT, 28 June 2016.

Then Agence France-Presse reported the same news and wrote:

Twenty-four Syrian civil society groups enlisted by the United Nations to support peace talks threatened to quit Tuesday [28 June] over the failure to halt fighting in the five-year war.

....

While the groups are not hugely influential in the peace talks, the threat to walk out underscored growing frustration with unraveling diplomatic efforts.

"Syria civil society groups threaten to quit Geneva talks," [Al-Arabiya](#), 06:11 GMT, 29 June 2016.

My comments: These Syrian organizations are asking Ban Ki-moon for things he can *not* deliver. Specifically, the United Nations can *not* provide:

1. a nationwide ceasefire in Syria, including "a no-bombing zone for all of Syria"
2. delivery of humanitarian to all who need it in Syria
3. prosecution of war crimes committed by Assad and others
4. release of all political prisoners in Assad's prisons

In fact, the United Nations has attempted to do each of these things, beginning in February 2014, but failed to accomplish any of these desirable goals. The United Nations is obviously *not* going to send their nonexistent military force into Syria to accomplish these goals, including fighting Assad, Russia, and Iran.

Note that the four demands of these opposition groups are almost identical to the four demands of the HNC on 19 April 2016. The HNC specifically mentioned ending sieges. The 28 June demands include prosecution of war crimes.

It has been obvious during May and June 2016 that the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement has failed to stop attacks by Assad, jihadist groups, and Russia. Additionally, Nusra Front, which is excluded from the Cessation, continues to attack towns in western Syria.

While progress has recently been made in delivering humanitarian aid to towns in Syria, the United Nations openly admits that there needs to be significant improvements in approvals by Assad's government for delivery of aid.

The failure of the Cessation and the lack of delivery of humanitarian aid to everyone who needs it will prevent the HNC from returning to negotiations in Geneva. As long as de Mistura recognizes the HNC as the main opposition group, the negotiations in Geneva are dead. My essay for [May 2016](#) quotes Riad Hijab, the head of the HNC, as saying on 4 May the negotiations in Geneva "had reached a dead end." Hijab is correct, but only because his delegation had walked out of negotiations on 18 April.

Now other opposition groups are also withdrawing from negotiations over the failure of the Cessation and the lack of deliveries of humanitarian aid. This is a significant worsening of the situation for negotiations in Geneva.

With hindsight, de Mistura missed his last chance when he failed to convene negotiations in Geneva no later than 11 May.

Finally, releasing this letter to Ban on the eve of de Mistura's meeting with the U.N. Security Council suddenly pulls the rug from under de Mistura — it was a nasty way for Syrians to treat de Mistura. De Mistura *no* longer has an opposition delegation for negotiations.

On 29 June, de Mistura was in New York City where he briefed the United Nations Security Council on the debacle in Syria. After that briefing, de Mistura spoke to journalists. Reuters reported:

The United Nations envoy to Syria told the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday [29 June] that it remains unclear when the next round of U.N.-brokered peace talks will take place, adding that there was no point in talking without some assurance of progress.

....

"I have not ... indicated a fixed date in July," Staffan de Mistura told reporters after briefing the 15-nation Security Council on his work to secure a negotiated solution to the five-year-old Syrian civil war. "I'm still aiming within July, but not at any cost and not without some guarantees."

....

A "cessation of hostilities" that had brought peace to much of Syria for two months [i.e., March & April] has largely broken down, and the war has resumed in many areas.

....

British Ambassador Matthew Rycroft told reporters that the conditions were not there for a new round of U.N.-brokered talks between the Syrian government and opposition.

"There continues to be such a breach of the cessation of hostilities, such a lack of humanitarian access, that it's very hard to see how the conditions can be arrived at for political talks to resume," he said. "That is such a tragedy, above all for the people of Syria."

De Mistura suggested he has not given up on an August deadline for the Syrian parties to present the outlines of a political deal, though Security Council diplomats say it is a deadline that will almost certainly be missed.

Louis Charbonneau, "U.N. envoy says unclear when Syria peace talks to reconvene," [Reuters](#), 15:54 EDT, 19:54 GMT, 29 June 2016.

The United Nations press release said:

The United Nations envoy mediating a resolution to the crisis in Syria today [29 June] said that the next round of the intra-Syrian talks must be well prepared to ensure the possibility of moving forward with the decisive outcome of a political transition in August.

"Bottom line, I'm still aiming — we are aiming at — within July, but not at any cost and not without guarantees," Staffan de Mistura, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, told the press at the conclusion of closed consultations with the Security Council in New York.

"Syria: UN envoy urges 'well prepared' peace talks for concrete political transition," [U.N. News](#), 29 June 2016.

Finally, on the morning of 30 June, the United Nations Office in Geneva posted a transcript

of de Mistura's 29 June remarks to journalists. I have added boldface of de Mistura's important points. The brackets are in the original transcript. Here is the entire transcript:
Good afternoon.

You already heard [from] the Chairman of the Council, the Ambassador of France. Let me first summarize what we did and then of course I will take questions.

The first point was that we all remembered with sadness and horror the terrorist attack in Istanbul. It was a reminder to everyone in the Council that fighting terrorism is a priority and should be considered constantly a priority. We should not forget that aspect. However, winning — not only fighting — terrorism in Syria and Iraq too, but particularly in Syria, would require a political transition because that's the way through which we take away the water from those who are swimming in the terrorist environment.

The second point that came up marginally but it's an important point was the fact that today 18 towns have been reached amongst the besieged cities. And for those of you who have been following up all the different attempts to reach all the besieged areas [will know] it's quite a landmark. It's not enough. We're not reaching them as much as we want. We are not reaching everywhere but if you think about what was last year [compared to] today, 18 of the 18 towns besieged were reached.

And now we come to the political issue — the political transition. Some of you — and I recognize the faces of many of you — have been following up the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. You know very well that one of the strengths — there aren't many strengths but the UN has some strengths and they need to be used very effectively — is the convening power. In other words, we learned that when you convene a conference or talks or intra-Syrian talks, you want to make sure that it has good chances of success. Having just a conference for the sake of a conference, we can do that any time but that's not the purpose.

The second point, we already went through two intra-Syrian talks, which did produce some astonishing outcomes — because when you think that we could get some commonality among people and groups that don't agree, it's quite an outcome. **But this time, the third one needs to be particularly well prepared.** Do I need to remind you what is going to happen between now and September? The next General Assembly will be the last where the Secretary-General will be there. The last General Assembly where President Obama will be there. We will have a G20 in September when perhaps it will be the last occasion for President Obama and President Putin to meet. And [from journalist: *is it the last for you? Mr. de Mistura responded: "Well you should first of all ask my wife because she has a strong say on my personal plans. Secondly, it the Secretary-General and the Security Council and my own conscience. So you have many to ask, not only me."*]

Now let me finish with one point because it's a point that you wanted to have. So, bottom line is **I have not** — as the French Ambassador told you already — **indicated a fixed date in July** because I'm holding this to make sure that the consultations amongst the co-chairs and others [and] to make sure that there is sufficient critical

mass so that when we call the talks there is a possibility of moving forward on political transition by August is still an option. **Bottom line, I'm still aiming — we are aiming at -- within July but not at any cost and not without guarantees.** And aiming at August as the period where we should be seeing something concrete. So that in September we take stock.

Questions and Answers

Question: You have just said that August is still your target. One month and one day to re-start political talks, to deal with that mother of all issues — political transition. Surely that August deadline is completely unrealistic now.

SdM: We should talk in August because when we look at the different aspects of what we are talking about — political transition — first off all, everyone agrees that political transition is a priority and no one is denying it. And secondly, allow me to say that while we are talking about the talks there is a lot of discrete diplomacy taking place. I've been in St. Petersburg. I'm going to Washington tomorrow. We consulted the Security Council so let's talk about it in August.

Question: You said that you could have a conference at any time but you would like to have something substantive to move you forward. What needs to happen to move this forward to get the process going?

SdM: This is very close to what James was saying when he said it looks impossible. But do you remember when the cessation of hostilities took place? Did that not look totally impossible? Even I was wondering 'will it really take place within a week'? But it was enough that the two co-chairs came up with critical mass and we were able — through the ISSG — and together we were able to cover it with a proper mantle. It did take place. It did not last perfectly for over two months but what a miracle. So what we need is for the stakeholders to come with a feeling of urgency and work on some ideas on how to bridge their differences by what everyone means by political transition.

Question: [inaudible] For instance, we know that the Syrian government is there. They have the Russians and the Iranians leverage their power on them. Who can leverage the opposition to bring it together?

SdM: Well, the opposition has many friends and supporters and if they feel as the case of the cessation of hostilities, it is in their interest and the two co-chairs have a common line I think we can see that happening. But of course there is a lot of work to be done but the beginning is to see whether we have the critical mass then I say we are ready for the talks. Or I will tell you why we are finding it difficult to have them.

Question: I want to ask you about the participation of the Kurds. Is there any effort while you are trying to re-start the talks before August 1st? Is there any effort by your office or any member state to finally include the Kurds in the talks?

SdM: This issue is coming up regularly and rightly so, by the way, because the Kurds, as you know, represent at least five percent of the Syrian population and the Syrian Kurds are Syrian. They have a voice and they need to be heard. Now the issue is that — first of all - everyone seems to be talking to them — the Americans, the Russians. Many of them are fighting against Daesh/ISIS in connection with member countries.

But there are some difficulties in ensuring that they could be part of the talks. One of them is that they have been announcing that they are in favor of federalism — just to mention one. That is an issue that is provoking on all sides in Syria a reaction. We will be finding a way to have their voice heard. To give you another example, there are informal discussions with them all the time. But inviting them to the intra-Syrian talks will require some homework.

Question: Your point about the last term for President Obama, last term for the Secretary-General, the last moment they can meet with Putin. Is the idea that if it's not August, it's off? If it doesn't happen by August that you have to start anew? And is that a point on putting pressure on any of the parties?

SdM: The short answer is yes. I am putting pressure on all parties because I think that the main parties that can make this happen need to feel like they have a historic responsibility. The UN can help but it needs to be done like it was done with the cessation of hostilities by the main stakeholders. Now, why September/August? There is an issue of legacy. There is an issue of history. And there's the issue about the UN wanting to know that they have done all that they can with Ban Ki-moon who was the Secretary-General during this period to make sure that every chance for solving this horrible conflict has been attempted.

"Near verbatim transcript of the press stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura following the Security Council meeting," [U.N. Geneva](#), 29 June 2016. [Brackets in original transcript, boldface added by Standler.]

My comments: It is essential that de Mistura be optimistic. Without optimism, the difficult negotiations are more likely to fail. But de Mistura is being unrealistic when he says that the negotiations will resume in July and the 1 August deadline can still be met. There is *no* reason to expect the parties to suddenly honor the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, especially in Aleppo and Damascus provinces, where territory has been contested for years.

De Mistura mentioned he needed "guarantees". I do not know who would "guarantee" anything in the messy Syrian civil war. Is guarantee the right word? A guarantee normally applies to the sale of a product: if the purchaser is not satisfied, the purchaser can return the product and the seller will refund the purchase price. If the product is defective, it will be repaired or replaced at no cost to the purchaser. Another use of the word guarantee is in the context of a loan: the guarantor agrees to repay the loan if the debtor fails to repay the loan. The concept of a guarantee does *not* apply to enforcing the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement or delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria.

Notice that de Mistura has no criticism of the HNC for walking out of the negotiations on 18 April and demanding pre-conditions before the HNC will return. There was also no mention of the 28 June threat by other Syrian opposition groups to quit the negotiations. Recognize that de Mistura now has *no* opposition delegation for the negotiations, which makes it more difficult to convene negotiations in Geneva.

A journalist asked de Mistura about the Kurds. On 29 June, Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of Russia, publicly [suggested](#) that de Mistura invite the Kurds to negotiations. But, as de Mistura noted, inviting the Kurds would cause problems with the HNC, because (1) the Kurds are fighting against ISIL and *not* against Assad, and (2) the Kurds recently endorsed

federalism. The antagonism that the HNC shows towards the Kurds is another indication that the HNC is unfit to lead Syria. A group must *not* be excluded just because of disagreements over policy — the Kurds are citizens of Syria and the Kurds belong in the Geneva negotiations.

De Mistura hinted that negotiations might end sometime after September 2016, as Ban Ki-moon and Obama both retire. Although he did *not* say it explicitly, the USA has a presidential election on 8 Nov 2016. Hillary Clinton is well known to have favored more military aid to rebels in 2012. Donald Trump has experience in neither government nor foreign policy, and he is impulsive and uninformed, which makes him dangerous. So, beginning in January 2017, the U.S. Government may be less willing to support negotiations in Geneva, and more willing to support military aid to rebels.

30 June 2016

On 29 June, de Mistura gave an exclusive interview to al-Hadath, the sister channel of Al Arabiya News:

The UN's special envoy to Syria told al-Hadath, the sister channel of Al Arabiya News, that he had found a "solution for [Syrian President Bashar] Assad knot," without elaborating on his newly found answer over the Syrian leader's iron hold on power.

"Assad knot" is a term used by mediators who are trying to find a solution between the Syrian regime, which is insisting that Assad must stay, versus the country's opposition which stipulates that the leader must go for any real political solution to take place.

....

Here are some of the main points Mistura discussed in the interview:

- "I do intend to have the intra Syrian talks in July — but I want them well prepared. Only then I announce them."
- "Ideally, the cessation of hostilities should have been holding much longer but in those two months many lives were saved and we were able to prove it can be done. The most dangerous thing in this conflict is when people say 'it cannot be done; it is impossible' It was done, and it needs to be repeated."
- "The ceasefire is failing but it has not totally failed. I feel that with sufficient moral pressure on both sides there is a possibility of recalling it."

Talal al-Haj, "UN envoy to Syria: 'I found a solution for Assad knot'," [Al-Arabiya](#), 14:07 GMT, 30 June 2016. [In the indented list, I included only three of nine quotations, to limit the amount of the copyrighted article that I copied and to avoid duplicating what de Mistura said in his remarks to journalists on 29 June.]

De Mistura's remarks on when the Geneva negotiations can be convened are important for the progress of the peace negotiations for Syria. So I am amazed at the lack of coverage by

mainstream news media on 29-30 June. Perhaps journalists have concluded that the Geneva negotiations are futile. But these negotiations are our only hope of ending the civil war in Syria. That civil war has now continued for long enough to make clear that there is little hope of a military victory for anyone. Continuing the civil war will kill more people, destroy more buildings (i.e., increase the cost of reconstruction), and create more refugees.

The independent *Security Council Report* summarized the situation in Syria at the end of June 2016:

The possibilities for the resumption of talks [in Geneva] and the formation of a transitional government by 1 August are quickly dissipating, in light of escalating violence and steady government offensives around Aleppo, Idlib and the suburbs of Damascus.

....

In a 7 June broadcast on state television, Assad said that he would win back every inch of Syria, and highlighted the “liberation” of Aleppo as a major objective. On 22 June, Assad replaced the prime minister and requested that a new government be formed. Both of these developments signal that Assad hardening his position towards a military solution and moving away from any negotiations that would dilute his presidential powers.

....

Many Council members are of the view that the government’s offensives, particularly around Aleppo and the suburbs of Damascus, confirm the regime’s preference for prolonged armed conflict over a negotiated settlement. There is also broad recognition that if fighting in Syria cannot be controlled, it will be difficult for UN mediation between the government and the opposition to resume with any chance of success.

"July 2016 Monthly Forecast for Syria," [SCR](#), 1 July 2016.

The conventional view in Western Europe and the USA is that the failure of the Geneva negotiations is *solely* the fault of Assad. But history shows that, since the HNC was created in December 2015, the HNC has consistently demanded pre-conditions be satisfied before they would negotiate. The HNC walked out of negotiations on 18 April 2016, and simultaneously the jihadist group Ahrar al-Sham began a military offensive in Latakia province. In June 2016, Jaysh al-Islam, another jihadist group, conducted a military offensive in Damascus province. The monthly reports by the United Nations Secretary General show there is ample misconduct — possibly some war crimes — by jihadists. It appears that *neither* the HNC *nor* Assad wants to negotiate. The same lack of desire scuttled Geneva negotiations in February 2014, as chronicled in my previous essays.

Part of the problem is that neither the HNC nor Assad are accountable to the citizens of Syria. The HNC is a bunch of self-appointed expatriates who want to control Syria. Assad wants to continue to control Syria. So neither the HNC nor Assad really care what the people of Syria want, although they issue propaganda that mentions the will of the people. Furthermore, the HNC sees the Geneva negotiations as a way to achieve what the rebels/jihadists failed to accomplish in five years of civil war: remove Assad from office and

install the HNC as leaders of Syria.

No Geneva Negotiations in June

If negotiations resume in Geneva on 1 August 2016, that would be the 27th day of negotiations on the 214th day of the year 2016. In other words, there were negotiations on fewer than 13% of the available days (i.e., 27/214). Since negotiations began on 29 Jan 2016, the negotiations in Geneva have mostly been suspended, waiting for the HNC's pre-conditions (i.e., demands) to be met.

De Mistura has a problem similar to "Which came first: the chicken or the egg?" De Mistura and the HNC want to wait for progress on the ground in Syria *before* resuming negotiations. But progress on the ground in Syria could come from successful negotiations.

During 18-19 June, members of de Mistura's team met in Cairo with the Cairo group of Syrian opposition. [RIA-Novosti](#).

During 16-19 June, members of de Mistura's team met in Moscow with the Moscow group of Syrian opposition. [RIA-Novosti](#)(17 June); [RIA-Novosti](#)(19 June).

On 1 July 2016, my searches of Google News found no mentions of "technical meetings" in either Riyadh or Damascus during June.

June 2016 Cessation of Hostilities

Full-text of agreements on a "cessation of hostilities" in Syria is posted at [rbs0.com](#)

Only a few of the more than 1000 rebel and jihadist groups in Syria formally agreed to the "cessation of hostilities". So I was surprised to learn that the truce was being observed in most of Syria on 27 Feb. Perhaps this means that the rebels and jihadists are really tired of battle, despite their belligerent rhetoric.

My essay for [February 2016](#) chronicled the cessation of hostilities on 27-29 February. My essay for [March 2016](#) chronicled more violations of the cessation of hostilities, although the ceasefire was generally respected. It was amazing that the ceasefire generally held, given that there was *no* investigation of violations, and *no* punishment of violators.

My essay for [April 2016](#) chronicled the daily reports of violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement, including alarmist reports by journalists about the alleged "unraveling" of the agreement. The facts are that the cessation of hostilities was holding in *most* of Syria, but there were violations near the city of Aleppo, and attacks by jihadist groups in Latakia and Damascus provinces.

My essay for [May 2016](#) chronicled the collapse of the cessation of hostilities, despite

promises by the ISSG to restore the ceasefire. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported a death toll in May that was similar to months before the ceasefire began.

The last paragraph of the cessation of hostilities agreement states that "the cessation of hostilities will be monitored in an impartial and transparent manner and with broad media coverage." Russia created a [website](#) with daily reports of violations of the agreement, beginning 28 Feb 2016. The USA has failed to publish daily reports of violations that the U.S. received at its center in Jordan. The Russians are *not* reporting alleged violations by Assad and his allies (e.g., Hezbollah, Russia), so the world *needs* to hear the U.S. view of violations in Syria.

To distinguish the centered headings for the daily reports elsewhere in this essay from the centered headings below for the cessation of hostilities, I have added "of ceasefire" to each heading below. Technically, "cessation of hostilities" is the correct phrase, but that phrase is too long for a heading.

The daily reports from the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic are divided into four sections:

1. Total number of towns where leaders had signed reconciliation agreements, and total number of leaders of armed groupings who have agreed to the cessation of hostilities. I ignored this section.
2. **Results of ceasefire monitoring** I quoted *all* of this section, except the standard sentence: "Russian Aerospace Forces and Syrian Air Force did not make strikes on opposition armed formations, which follow ceasefire regime and informed the Russian or American Centres for reconciliation about their location."
3. I ignored the section on delivery of humanitarian aid to people in Syria.
4. **Additional information** I sometimes quoted part of this section, about fighting by Nusra or ISIL, which are excluded from the cessation of hostilities agreement.

The ellipses in my quotations separate the second and fourth sections of the original.

Each Russian daily bulletin is issued at approximately 23:00 Moscow time, which is 20:00 GMT.

To see the effect of the reaffirmation on 9 May, and the ISSG meeting on 17 May, I computed the average numbers of daily violations of the cessation of hostilities in Syria, as reported by the Russians. See the [table](#) at the end of the section on daily reports.

1 June 2016: 96th day of ceasefire

On Wednesday, 1 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling against positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil,

Duma, Jaur al-Basha inhabited areas and in Jaubar for two times.

....

“Silence regime” has been established at 12 p.m. on June 1 for 48 hours in Darayya (Damascus province) on the initiative of the Russian party in order to decrease the level of violence, stabilize the situation and provide security for delivering humanitarian aid to the population.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization continue performing provocative actions aimed at breaking the ceasefire down. Within last 24 hours, shelling with MLRS and mortars has been performed against Handrat inhabited area, Sheikh Maqsood, Amriyah, al-Zagra, and Meidan sectors of Aleppo.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 1, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 1 June 2016.

Reuters reported:

The Russian Defence Ministry said on Wednesday [1 June] that a temporary ceasefire, which it called a "regime of calm", had taken effect from June 1 for 48 hours in the Damascus suburb of Daraya to allow for the distribution of humanitarian aid to civilians.

"Russia - Temporary ceasefire takes effect in Damascus suburb," [Reuters](#), 12:46 GMT, 1 June 2016.

Previously, the "silence regime" or "regime of calm" had been intended to preserve the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Now the "silence regime" is intended to facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid. Is this change in motivation a tacit admission by Russia that the Cessation of Hostilities has been terminated?

Later, [Reuters](#) and [Associated Press](#) reported that Assad allowed trucks to deliver humanitarian aid to the town of Daraya for the first time since 2012. Reuters said: "The aid to Daraya contained medical supplies, vaccines, baby milk and nutrition items [for children], but no food."

On 1 June, the HNC proposed a nationwide truce during the month of Ramadan, which begins on 6 June. The proposal was in a letter from Riad Hijab to Ban Ki-moon. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). On 2 June, Assad's government rejected the proposed ceasefire. [NY Times](#).

On 1 June, the spokesman for the U.S. State Department, John Kirby, spoke at his daily press briefing about the proposed ceasefire during Ramadan and the Russian "regimes of silence":

MR KIRBY: Well, what we have said is that we need to move beyond temporary, ephemeral placements of cessations so that we're not looking at the clock. We need to be looking at the whole country over a sustained period of time. That's what we want. We want to get beyond these temporary truces, if you will, that are fixed in time and fixed in location, and get to a point — and this was communicated after the last meeting in Vienna — this specific idea was talked about — transforming what has been temporary and local cessations into a nationwide ceasefire throughout the country.

That's what we want.

....

We think, again, local and temporary ceasefires have a purpose, and to the degree they reduce violence, again, those are good things. But what we'd like to see is the — that they become nationwide and become enduring and that we get beyond these local, temporary truces. I'm not suggesting that we're not giving a full-throated endorsement of [a Ramadan ceasefire] because we're worried about last-minute gamesmanship on either side beforehand. What I'm saying is if there were to be one put in place over Ramadan that could be successful, obviously that's a good thing for the Syrian people but in the end what we really want to see happen — the best thing that can happen for the Syrian people is an enduring nationwide cessation of hostilities.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 1 June 2016.

2 June 2016: 97th day of ceasefire

On Thursday, 2 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling against positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Duma, and Jaur al-Basha (Damascus province).

....

Agreement on prolonging "silence regime" near Darayya since 12 p.m. on June 3 has been achieved on the initiative of the Russian party in order to provide security for delivering of the UN humanitarian assistance to the population of the Damascus province.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization continue performing provocative actions aimed at breaking the ceasefire down.

Within last 24 hours, shelling with improvised artillery and mortars has been performed against Meidan, Amriyah, al-Muhafaza, al-Zagra sectors of Aleppo, al-Nairab airport, and Handrat village.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 2, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 2 June 2016.

On 17 May, the ISSG declared that humanitarian aid would be delivered by airdrop to towns where Assad would not allow trucks to delivery aid. In a 2 June briefing at U.N. Geneva offices, Jan Egeland said that air deliveries to dense urban areas would need to use helicopters, "and for that the World Food Programme would need air clearance from the government because they will use commercial companies." Later in the U.N. briefing Egeland said: "If we have to go by air delivery, World Food Programme an unarmed

humanitarian organization would need clearance by the government." Finally, Egeland explained more clearly: "World Food Programme is a humanitarian organization guided by humanitarian principles. It is ordering commercial planes and helicopters. It wouldn't even get insurance for this unless it had government approval. The member states of the ISSG may of course do what they want to." The Associated Press interpreted Egeland's remarks as indicating that the Syrian government must approve all deliveries of aid, including deliveries by airdrop. However, it is still possible that member nations of the ISSG could provide cargo airplanes for airdrops inside Syria without the approval of the Syrian government.

[U.N. Geneva](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

3 June 2016: 98th day of ceasefire

On Friday, 3 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling against positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil and Harasta, and twice in Jaubar sector of Damascus.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization continue performing provocative actions aimed at breaking the ceasefire down. Within last 24 hours, shelling with improvised artillery and mortars has been performed against Sheikh Maqsood, al-Muhafaza, al-Zagra sectors of Aleppo, al-Nairab airport, and Handrat village.

....

More than 200 terrorists of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization have illegally passed Syrian-Turkey border near Beisun and attacked positions of the Syrian Armed Forces.

Near Binnish (Idlib province), significant concentration of Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists (about 1,000 men) is observed. Terrorist formations are armed with automobiles with large-caliber machine guns and up to 25 air defence systems. According to civilians, terrorists are taking away food products and are moving to the region of Khan Tuman (Aleppo province).

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 3, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 3 June 2016.

On 3 June, Agence France-Presse reported:

Regime bombing raids in and around the northern Syrian city of Aleppo killed 31 civilians Friday [3 June], including 10 when their bus was hit, the civil defense said.

"As well as the 10 civilians killed in strikes on the bus... 21 others died in intense

strikes on several neighborhoods in the east of the city since dawn," the organization known as the White Helmets said.

An AFP correspondent in Aleppo said Friday's bombing raids were the most intense in more than a week, with dozens of barrel bombs — crude, unguided explosive devices — hitting several eastern quarters of the city.

"Syria regime strikes kill 31 in and near Aleppo," [Al-Arabiya](#), 10:06 GMT, 3 June 2016.

4 June 2016: 99th day of ceasefire

On Saturday, 4 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 10 ceasefire violations have been registered (Aleppo — 8, Damascus — 2).

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed two shellings with mortars and multiple rocket launch systems against al-Asad, Meidan, Halidiya, and Old Aleppo sectors of Aleppo city.

In the Damascus province, Masakid Barza city sector and Ard al-Sahiya inhabited area have been shelled.

.....

Jabhat al-Nusra has regrouped its forces, replenished armament and ammunitions storages, and launched active warfare having exploited opportunities of the ceasefire regime and locations of "moderate opposition" formations, which had been located in the same regions.

Within last 24 hours, massive shelling with MLRS and mortars has been performed against Handrat, region of al-Nairab airport, and sectors of Aleppo: al-Muhafaza, Meidan, Sheikh Maqsood, and al-Zagra.

.....

After intensive artillery shelling, Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists and armed formations of Ahrar al-Sham have attacked positions of Kurdish militia and volunteers in Sheikh Maqsood (northern Aleppo). The shelling caused destruction of the police office and several bordering living buildings. More than 40 civilians, policemen and military servicemen were killed, about 100 people were injured.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 4, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 4 June 2016.

Reuters expanded on the last paragraph quoted above from the Russian bulletin:

More than 40 people have been killed and around a hundred injured by Al Nusra militants shelling in the Syrian city of Aleppo, Russian news agencies cited the Russian ceasefire monitoring center in Syria as saying on Saturday [4 June]. "There was

continuous bombardment by rocket launchers, canon artillery, mortars and anti-aircraft installations. The terrorists shelled several areas of the city inhabited not only by government forces and Kurdish troops but also civilians," TASS news agency quoted a monitoring center official as saying.

"Russia says more than 40 killed by Al Nusra shelling in Syria's Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 12:02 GMT, 4 June 2016.

5 June 2016: 100th day of ceasefire

On Sunday, 5 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 9 ceasefire violations have been registered (Aleppo — 4, Damascus — 5).

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed shelling with mortars and improvised artillery against al-Asad, Meidan, Halidiya, and Old Aleppo sectors of Aleppo city.

In the Damascus province, terrorists have performed shelling against Harasta, Jaubar, Ard al-Sahiya, and twice against Masakid Barza.

....

Agreement on prolonging "silence regime" near Darayya for 72 hours until 12 p.m. on June 7 has been achieved on the initiative of the Russian party in order to provide security for delivering of the UN humanitarian assistance to the population of the Damascus province.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization continue performing provocative actions aimed at breaking the ceasefire down.

Within last 24 hours, units of the Syrian Armed Forces continued defensive warfare at different directions around Aleppo.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 5, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 5 June 2016.

Reuters reported grim news from Aleppo, plus a paragraph about Idlib:

Nearly 50 air strikes hit rebel-held areas in and around the Syrian city of Aleppo on Sunday [5 June] in some of the heaviest recent raids by Russian and Syrian government aircraft, residents and a monitoring group said. The group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, also said an unidentified war plane had crashed in countryside south of Aleppo, in an area where Islamist rebel fighters are battling the Syrian army and Iranian-backed forces. It had no information on what caused the crash.

A civil defense worker said at least 32 people were killed in the rebel-held parts of the city during the air strikes, with 18 bodies pulled from flattened buildings in the Qatrji

neighborhood, the worst hit.

The monitor said dozens of barrel bombs — oil drums or cylinders packed with explosives and shrapnel — were dropped by helicopter on densely populated districts.

"This week-long campaign of bombing is very intense and day by day it's getting worse ... it is the worst we have seen in a while," said Bebars Mishal, a civil defense official in rebel-held Aleppo.

For their part, rebels hit government-held areas of Aleppo in what Syrian media said was an escalation of mortar attacks on the western districts.

....

In the northwestern province of Idlib, meanwhile, residents said Syrian and Russian jets bombed the rebel-held provincial capital, setting fire to a bustling market in the heart of the city. More than 30 people were injured, at least three killed and dozens were unaccounted for, according to an activist contacted in the city.

Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Syrian and Russian aircraft step up bombing of Aleppo city — monitor," [Reuters](#), 04:14 GMT, 6 June 2016.

Airstrikes had previously blasted the city of Idlib late at night on 30 May 2016. My comment is that the so-called cessation of hostilities does *not* appear to be observed in Aleppo and Idlib. Also there have been many recent violations in the province of Damascus. Worse, civilians appear to be targeted in many of the violations. The situation in Syria was supposed to become more peaceful after the 17 May meeting of the ISSG, but that promise has *not* been fulfilled. Today is the 100th day of the cessation of hostilities, but instead of celebrating a birthday, the cessation of hostilities appears to be dead in at least three important provinces of Syria.

6 June 2016: 101th day of ceasefire

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan began at sundown on 6 June 2016. Back on 1 June 2016, the HNC proposed a nationwide ceasefire during Ramadan. Before discussing the 2016 ceasefire, I want to recall a previous ceasefire in Syria during Ramadan in 2012 (19 July to 18 August 2012).

In 2012, Kofi Annan, then the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, arranged a series of ceasefires. Each of the ceasefires were quickly violated and then collapsed. For example, the Free Syrian Army abandoned a ceasefire on 4 June 2012, after violations of the ceasefire by Assad. [VOA](#). For example, during Ramadan in 2012 there was what the [Times of Israel](#) called "the non-existent ceasefire" as Assad attacked Aleppo. On 15 August 2012, the [Washington Post](#) reported on United Nations observers in Syria who were "sent to monitor a U.N.-backed cease-fire that never took hold." On 20 August 2012, the United Nations observers fled from Syria — and never returned — after recognizing it was futile to have a ceasefire in Syria. [The Telegraph](#); [VOA](#). A frustrated Kofi Annan resigned on 2 August 2012, during Ramadan.

Four years later — now with a large group of diplomats in the ISSG and United Nations supporting the ceasefire, as part of peace negotiations — the ability to have a ceasefire in Syria is only marginally better than in 2012. The fact is that diplomats can *not* convince barbarians to stop fighting.

On 6 June 2016, as I read the news from Reuters, the Associated Press, *Al-Arabiya*, and other sources, the HNC's offer of a nationwide ceasefire in Syria during Ramadan seems to have been forgotten. At 10:25 GMT on 7 June, I searched Google News for the query `Ramadan Syria ceasefire` but I found *no* news after 1 June.

On Monday, 6 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar and MLRS shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Ain Terma, Jaur al-Basha, Mazraat Mahmud inhabited areas and twice — against the Harasta village.

....

Violations of the “silence regime” prolonged till 24:00 of June 7, 2016 have not been registered in Darayya inhabited area (Damascus province).

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 6, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 6 June 2016.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights ([SOHR](#)) reported a total of 502 civilians had been killed in the city of Aleppo beginning on 22 April 2016 and ending at 16:00 on 5 June 2016. At least 2600 people were wounded in the fighting.

RIA-Novosti reported Lavrov said Russia would no longer postpone airstrikes on Nusra. Syrian opposition groups had enough time to leave territories controlled by terrorist groups and those who failed to do so can only blame themselves, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday [6 June].

He said that the United States asked to postpone anti-terror airstrikes in Syria because the positions of terrorists and opposition members were intermixed.

"We believe that ‘normal’ opposition had more than enough time to leave the territories controlled by al-Nusra Front and Daesh since this February. We think that those who failed to leave the terrorists can now only blame themselves," Lavrov said.

On Friday [3 June], Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov urged the US to convince those rebel groups which they support in Syria to leave areas where al-Nusra Front militants are present.

"Syrian Rebels Should Take Blame for Staying in Terrorist-Controlled Areas," [RIA-Novosti](#), 14:28 GMT, 6 June 2016.

Russia's new attack on Nusra is apparently part of the Russian announcement on 20 May.

Reuters tersely reported the Russians openly declared their support for Assad in fighting terrorists (i.e., Nusra Front) in the city of Aleppo:

"What is happening in and around Aleppo now is what we had warned the Americans about beforehand — and they know it: that we will in the most active way support the Syrian army from the air not to allow the seizure of this territory by terrorists," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news briefing.

"Russia vows 'most active' air support for Syrian army in and around Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 16:05 GMT, 6 June 2016.

On 6 June, the spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, Elizabeth Trudeau, gave the daily press briefing. She attempted to explain why the U.S. Government believed that Russia should not target Nusra, when Nusra was commingled with jihadist group(s) who were parties to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

QUESTION: Okay. And I just also wanted to ask you — you said that the regime continues to — I'm sorry, that the regime has a right to defend itself.

MS TRUDEAU: Yeah.

QUESTION: Okay. Now, but then you — with the caveat that they have to spare whatever groups that may be intermingled with al-Nusrah.

MS TRUDEAU: Yeah, we've been very clear on that.

QUESTION: How would they do that? I mean, this is an issue that is really nagging.

MS TRUDEAU: Yeah, and I know we've spoken about this.

QUESTION: How do we — yeah, we have, but you keep saying the same thing. But there's always that caveat. So in essence, they don't really have the right to defend themselves.

MS TRUDEAU: So we have called on the Assad regime to carefully distinguish between terrorists and parties to the cessation of hostilities — Russia as well. We all agree that ISIL, the Nusrah Front, and other UN-designated terrorist groups pose a real threat to regional and international security in Syria. But the regime and Russia cannot use the claimed presence of Nusrah to undertake offensive activities against other groups. We've been clear about this. We'd also point out the regime continues to strike civilians. This only drives more support to the terrorists that they purport to fight. So I understand this. We've talked about this. We've talked about the need for groups to disengage, but we also call on those parties to also understand that this is a situation.

....

QUESTION: Just before we came in here, Foreign Minister Lavrov said he was aware of these requests. He continued to distinguish between the HNC and the — and Jabhat

al-Nusrah. But he rejected them. He said you've had enough time to get the so-called moderates away from the terrorists, and he said that the Russian Air Force would now be actively and directly supporting a Syrian army offensive around Aleppo.

MS TRUDEAU: Okay. So we've seen that. And again, we would reiterate that Russia and the Assad regime need to distinguish between the terrorists and parties to the cessation of hostilities. We've said this all along.

QUESTION: But he says that you haven't succeeded in persuading the rebels to distinguish themselves or to space themselves appropriately. And he says he's briefed Kerry on this and that Kerry's aware of —

MS TRUDEAU: No. We have had those conversations. We would just reiterate our point.

QUESTION: Well, his argument is that this has been — it is now June. For months now, since February, you guys have been making this case to them, to the moderate — the opposition that you support, and they don't seem to have taken the message to heart, or at least done anything about it. So his argument is that it's taking too much time and that they've had more than enough time already to do this, and that —

MS TRUDEAU: We continue to have conversations with those groups on the ground.

QUESTION: Well, I know you do. But you —

MS TRUDEAU: We've spoken about this.

QUESTION: Do you think that they should — do you think he has a point?

MS TRUDEAU: We think that, frankly, the situation, as we've said before in here, that the situation writ large in Syria has gone on too long. But Russia has an obligation. The Syrian regime has an obligation. We have spoken out against them hitting civilians — against hitting parties to the cessation.

....

QUESTION: I have a few more. For weeks now we've been hearing just that, that the U.S. is working on it, that it's a challenge to getting — to get rebels groups in Syria to separate themselves from terrorists. What we don't hear is what the result of those efforts is.

MS TRUDEAU: Yeah.

QUESTION: But we are seeing reports of their joint attacks. This weekend al-Nusrah and Ahrar al-Sham have together attacked a Kurdish neighborhood in Aleppo; over 40 people died. Does the U.S. still insist that because those groups are intermingled, they shouldn't be targeted?

MS TRUDEAU: Our view is that the UN-identified terrorist groups are not parties to the cessation of hostilities. We've spoken about that. We've also spoken extensively about the needs for those groups on the ground to separate themselves, to distinguish themselves. The responsibility, though, also lies with the Russians as well as the Syrian regime to not target parties to the cessation of hostilities.

We're going to move on. Michel.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 6 June 2016. [Some minor editing by Standler to eliminate interruptions and spluttering. No words added.]

It appears from this press briefing that the U.S. Government is unable to convince jihadists to separate from Nusra Front. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement is clear that the Agreement does *not* apply to Nusra Front. If jihadists are commingled with Nusra, it seems to me that the jihadists become legitimate targets. Parties to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement should *not* be cooperating with — or commingled with — terrorist organizations (e.g., Nusra).

Back in February 2016, it *may* have been reasonable to protect jihadist organizations (e.g., Ahrar al-Sham and Jaish al-Islam) with the hope that those jihadis would *not* ally with Nusra Front, a terrorist organization. But the U.S. policy of protecting jihadists became unreasonable after 6 May 2016, when jihadist groups joined Nusra Front in capturing Khan Touman (also transliterated as Khan Tuman), a village 6 km south of the city of Aleppo. And on 12 May, jihadist groups joined Nusra Front in capturing the Alawite village of al-Zara, where the attackers massacred innocent civilians. Now that it is a fact that jihadist groups are cooperating with Nusra Front, those jihadist groups *should* be condemned as terrorist organizations.

7 June 2016: 102th day of ceasefire

On 7 June 2016, the first full day of Ramadan, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad gave a defiant speech to the Syrian parliament, in which Assad promised to defeat terrorists everywhere in Syria. [SANA](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#).

On Tuesday, 7 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Mayda'a and Arbil inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization continue performing provocative actions aimed at breaking the ceasefire down.

Despite the Ramadan month, which had started on Monday [6 June], terrorist groupings

continued shelling residential areas of towns and villages as well as positions of the government troops and Kurdish militia. Number of civilian casualties is increasing. "Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 7, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 7 June 2016.

Last week (e.g., 30 May to 3 June), Assad's government agreed to allow truck convoys to deliver humanitarian aid to several besieged towns. But on 7 June, the United Nations said that Assad's government had *not* yet given approval for the deliveries. [Reuters](#). The 17 April statement of the ISSG mentioned airdrops of humanitarian aid to besieged cities, beginning on 1 June. But the fact is that airdrops are extremely expensive *and* deliver less supplies than a convoy of large trucks. Also, if the ISSG conducts airdrops in Syria without Assad's permission, then Assad *could* shoot down those airplanes, which would be an escalation of an already out-of-control civil war.

On 7 June, the Beirut bureau chief for *The Washington Post* summarized:

The violence has already been ticking up, with government and Russian warplanes conducting air raids over northern Syria in the past week and rebels launching an offensive to recapture territory south of the city of Aleppo. According to the Institute for the Study of War, Russia tripled the number of its airstrikes over a four-day period last week, to levels not seen since before the imposition of the cessation of hostilities in late February.

Liz Sly, "Assad pledges more bloodshed in Syria, says the peace process has failed," [Washington Post](#), 16:41 GMT, 7 June 2016.

On 6 June, there was a similar news article at the Voice of America website:

"The escalation marks a dangerous shift in the Russian airstrike pattern to levels only seen prior to the brokering of the cessation of hostilities agreement in late February," said Genevieve Casagrande, an analyst with the Institute for the Study of War.

....

"Russia is clearly demonstrating its freedom of action in Syria," according to an assessment by Casagrande. "It has pivoted its air operations towards mainstream elements of the armed opposition across Western Syria. Russian air operations against the Syrian opposition expanded beyond the targeting of critical front lines in Aleppo and once again began to target deep within opposition-held terrain in Idlib Province from May 30 to June 2," she added.

Jamie Dettmer, "Russia Triples its Airstrikes in Syria in Past Few Days," [Voice of America](#), 10:41 GMT, 6 June 2016.

At the U.S. State Department Daily Press Briefing for 7 June, deputy spokesman Mark Toner said: "... we still believe that Russia, that Iran can at least appeal to those in the regime who still have influence on [Assad] to refrain from letting this political process, this cessation of hostilities, fall completely apart." [U.S. State Dept.](#)

8 June 2016: 103th day of ceasefire

On Wednesday, 8 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:
The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 7 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Ain Terma, Harasta al-Basal, Modiara and Zamalka inhabited areas. Masakid Barza, Jaubar city quarters and Ibn al-Walid have been shelled with mortars.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 8, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 8 June 2016.

Wednesday, 8 June was a good day for barbarians in Syria, as either Assad or Russia bombed *three* different hospitals in Aleppo. [NY Times](#); [BBC](#). Reuters did *not* report this bombing of three hospitals. The [Associated Press](#) mentioned the bombing of three hospitals in a few sentences contained in a news story about civilians fleeing from Manbij, which will soon be liberated from ISIL.

Assad's government continues to deny permission for delivery of humanitarian aid by truck. On 5 June, United Nations presented Assad's government with a plan for airlift of food into four besieged cities: Daraya, Douma, Mouadamiya, and Al-Waer. However, Assad's government has *not* responded to the airlift request. [Reuters](#). On 8 June, the U.S. State Department suggested Russia use its military cargo airplanes to deliver humanitarian aid in Syria. [U.S. State Dept.](#)

9 June 2016: 104th day of ceasefire

On Thursday, 9 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:
The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil, Duma and Harasta inhabited areas.

....

“Silence regime” has been established for 72 hours starting from 12 p.m. June 9 in Fuah and Kafr Khaya (Idlib province), Zebedani and Madaya (Damascus province) on the initiative of the Russian party.

Within last 24 hours, groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization have shelled civilian objects and positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Fuah (Idlib province), Ard al-Wata, Rasha, Karamanli and Qellaz (Latakia province), al-Ghanto (Homs province), Marj Sultan (Damascus province), near Rasm al-Tahabiya, Tabaret al-Hamra and Rasm Afandi (Hama province), eastern region of al-Manshiya quarter of Daraa.

In the Aleppo province, terrorists continued shelling with mortars and MLRS against Handrat, al-Hamra, Ansar, Brije al-Rih inhabited areas as well as Sheikh Maqsood, Meidan, al-Muhafaza, al-Zagra, Makani al-Duwairi quarters, and al-Nairab airport.

Shellings were nonselective. Shellings were aimed not only at positions of the government troops but also residential areas. As a result of shellings, 54 civilians were killed and 93 ones were wounded.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 9, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 9 June 2016.

On 9 June, *The Daily Beast* news website posted a provocative article about the response of the U.S. Government to Russian attacks on rebels who are supported by the U.S.

Government:

U.S.-backed opposition forces in Syria's largest city [Aleppo] are facing a ferocious Russian-led assault, raising fears that the rebels could be eliminated in a matter of weeks. So how are the Pentagon and the intelligence community responding? By catfighting among themselves.

Two Department of Defense officials told *The Daily Beast* that they are not eager to support the rebels in the city of Aleppo because they're seen as being affiliated with al Qaeda in Syria, or Jabhat al Nusra. The CIA, which supports those rebel groups, rejects that claim, saying alliances of convenience in the face of a mounting Russian-led offensive have created marriages of battlefield necessity, not ideology.

....

But even if the rebels were completely separated from Nusra, there would still be something of a strategic conflict with U.S. military goals. The rebels in Aleppo, these Pentagon officials note, are fighting the Bashar al-Assad regime; the American military effort, on the other hand, is primarily about defeating the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

Nancy A. Youssef, "CIA and Pentagon Bicker While Russia Wipes Out U.S.-Backed Rebels," [Daily Beast](#), 01:00 EDT, 9 June 2016.

As discussed in my previous essays, the CIA has supported the Free Syrian Army and other "moderate" insurgent groups since 2012, in support of Obama's [dogma](#) that Assad has lost his legitimacy to lead Syria. The Pentagon effort to defeat ISIL began in August 2014, part of a different U.S. policy.

10 June 2016: 105th day of ceasefire

On Friday, 10 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed in Arbil inhabited area and twice against the Harasta al-Bansal village.

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established until 12 p.m. June 11 in Fuah and Kafr Khaya (Idlib province), Zebedani and Madaya (Damascus province), has been continued.

Within last 24 hours, terrorists have shelled Rasha and Qellaz (Latakia province), Maharda (Hama province), Blelije, Haush Harabu, and Marj Sultan (Damascus province), and positions of the Syrian Armed Forces near Ashrafiya and Ard al-Jaburin (Homs province).

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 10, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 10 June 2016.

Back on 1 June, there was the first delivery of humanitarian aid — but *no* food for adults — delivered to Daraya since 2012. Food was supposed to be delivered to Daraya on 3 June, but the delivery was postponed until 10 June. On 10 June, not only was there inadequate food for all of the adults in Daraya, but also Assad's helicopters dropped barrel bombs on people receiving the humanitarian aid. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [SOHR](#); [NY Times](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

11 June 2016: 106th day of ceasefire

On Saturday, 11 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed in Harasta al-Basal inhabited area three times and once in Arbil inhabited area.

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established until 12 p.m. June 11 in Fuah and Kafr Khaya (Idlib province), Zebedani and Madaya (Damascus province), and until 12 p.m. June 12 near Darayya village, has been continued.

Within last 24 hours, terrorists have shelled Fuah (Idlib province), Rasha (Latakia province), al-Salamiyah (Hama province), Blelije village and positions of the government troops near Marj Sultan (Damascus province).

Near Aleppo, terrorists have shelled Sheikh Maqsood, Meidan, al-Hamadiya, al-Syrianis, Amriyah quarters, al-Nairab airport, and Handrat inhabited area with mortars and improvised artillery.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 11, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 11 June 2016.

Two ISIL terrorists detonated near the Sayeda Zeinab shrine, a Shiite mosque, in a suburb of Damascus on 11 June, killing at least 20 people. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

12 June 2016: 107th day of ceasefire

On Sunday, 12 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed in Arbil inhabited area and three shellings of Harasta al-Basal inhabited area.

.....

The "Silence regime" has been prolonged since 00:01 of June 12 for 72 hours in Darayya inhabited area (Damascus province).

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 12, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 12 June 2016.

On 12 June, airstrikes on a market in the city of Idlib killed at least 21 civilians, SOHR later says 34 dead. Airstrikes on an apartment building the town of Maaret al-Numan (in Idlib province) killed another 6 or 7 civilians. [SOHR](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Back on 19 April 2016, Assad bombed a marketplace in Maaret al-Numan. There were more airstrikes in Maaret al-Numan on 9 May 2016. Nusra Front controls the town of Maaret al-Numan. While Nusra is excluded from the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, it is still forbidden to target civilians.

On 13 June, the spokesman for the United Nations Secretary General condemned the attack on the vegetable market in the city of Idlib, which destroyed "the only bakery in the area". [U.N. SecGen](#); [U.N. News](#).

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on 12 June that 577 civilians had been killed in Aleppo since 22 April 2016. [SOHR](#).

13 June 2016: 108th day of ceasefire

On Monday, 13 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil inhabited

area twice and Harasta al-Bansal village for three times.

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established until 12 p.m. June 14 in Darayya inhabited area (Damascus province), has been continued.

Within last 24 hours, Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists have performed shelling with improvised artillery systems against Ard al-Wata and Rasha (Latakia province), Blelije and Marj Sultan villages (Damascus province).

In the Aleppo province, Handrat and al-Ramusy inhabited areas, Sheikh Maqsood, al-Hamadiya, al-Khalidiah and Meidan quarters of Aleppo have been shelled with MLRS and mortars.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 13, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 13 June 2016.

Sunset on Monday, 13 June, is the end of the first week of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on what they called the first week of Ramadan, 6-12 June:

The sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan did not prevent the killers from carrying out their crimes by all means against the Syrian civilians, which targeted children and women before targeting men and boys, where the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights was able to document the death of 224 civilian citizens, including 67 children under the age of eighteen, and 28 citizen woman above the age of eighteen during the first week of Ramadan month, since the 1st of Ramadan (which is the 6th of June 2016) and until the 7th of Ramadan (the 12th of June),

"No sanctity for the holy month in Syria — 224 civilian casualties are the victims of the first Ramadan week's massacres," [SOHR](#), 13 June 2016.

We do *not* know how many soldiers, rebels, and jihadists were killed. But 224 civilians/7 day is only 32/day or 960/month, relatively few compared to death tolls before the Cessation of Hostilities began at the end of February 2016. The SOHR has a good point about the irony of Muslims slaughtering each other during the so-called holy month of Ramadan.

On 13 June, the deputy spokesman for the U.S. State Department, Mark Toner, said at the daily press briefing:

QUESTION: So it's been three and a half months now since the cessation of hostilities was first put into effect, to the extent that it has been, and, I mean, how much longer are you willing to let it roll like this with such repeated and flagrant violations? And second, what's your alternative? I mean, because most people on the outside think that the alternative to a complete unraveling of the cessation of hostilities is just accelerated violence with more arms flowing in, notably from — probably from some of your allies.

MR TONER: Well, you're right. If this falls apart, the prospects are bleak, which is why we've always said there's no military solution to what is happening in Syria. It's why we have invested so much in this diplomatic effort and this political process. I

mean, I'm not going to sugarcoat the stakes. You're absolutely right in that — and the reason I'm not is (a) I don't like to sugarcoat things too much, but also, it's important that both sides — and by "both sides" I mean the opposition as well as the regime — understand the stakes. And certainly, they should. They've lived — the opposition, the Syrian people have lived through more than five years of this bloodletting.

But there's no easy, clean way out of this other than what we've laid out, which is a cessation of hostilities concurrent with a peace process or political negotiation, according to the Geneva communique, taking place in Geneva. We need to get them back to Geneva to get those talks going again, but it's hard to do that given the current climate.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 13 June 2016.

My comment is that it was a good question at the above-quoted State Department Daily Press Briefing. Mr. Toner's response was weak, because the U.S. policy is irrational and nonsensical.

14 June 2016: 109th day of ceasefire

On Tuesday, 14 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered (Damascus province — 4, Idlib province — 1).

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in al-Sakhiyah, Jaubar, Harasta al-Basal and Arbil inhabited areas (Damascus province).

In the Idlib province, armed formations of Jaysh al-Fath and Jund al-Aqsa groupings have performed mortar and artillery shelling against the positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Fuah village.

....

"Silence regime", which had been established until 12 p.m. June 15 in Darayya inhabited area (Damascus province), has been continued. No violations have been registered.

Within last 24 hours, armed formations of Jabhat al-Nusra grouping have performed shelling against Rasha, Ikko and Bsharfa (Latakia province), Blelije and Marj Sultan (Damascus province), Salamiyah village (Hama province).

Terrorists have performed shelling with artillery and mortars against Handrat inhabited area, al-Khalidiyah, Sheikh Maqsood, al-Ramusy, Salah al-Din, al-Maidan quarters and al-Nayrab airport in Aleppo.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 14, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 14 June 2016.

On 13-14 June, the Associated Press and Reuters were focused on Islamic terrorism in Orlando, Florida and Paris, France. The problems with the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria were generally ignored by journalists after 13 June.

15 June 2016: 110th day of ceasefire

On Wednesday, 15 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:
The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered (Damascus province — 4, al-Quneitra province — 1).

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Haush al-Hayat, Harasta al-Basal and Arbil inhabited areas (Damascus province). Al-Hamadiya village (al-Quneitra province) has been shelled with MLRS and mortars.

....

On the initiative of the Russian party, "silence regime" has been established in Aleppo for 48 hours starting from 12 p.m. June 16 in order to reduce the level of armed violence and stabilize the situation.

"Silence regime", which had been established until 12 p.m. June 15 in Darayya inhabited area (Damascus province), has been continued. No violations have been registered.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime in the Aleppo province.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 15, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 15 June 2016.

The "silence regime" in Aleppo began at midnight on 15 June, which is "12 a.m." on 16 June. Russia should use 24-hour clock to avoid these am/pm errors.

On 15 June, John Kerry held a press briefing in Norway, where he said:
Just a quick word about Syria, because I just met briefly — I met for about an hour with [Iranian] Foreign Minister Zarif. It is very clear that the cessation of hostilities is frayed and at risk, and that it is critical for a genuine cessation to be put in place. We know that, we have no illusions. **And Russia needs to understand that our patience is not infinite.** In fact, it is very limited now with respect to whether or not Assad is going to be held accountable. And meanwhile, we also are prepared to hold accountable members of the opposition who have both been playing off each other to continue the violence and break the cessation.

So, this is a critical moment, and we are working very, very hard to see if we can in the next, literally, week or two come to an agreement that has the capacity to more fully implement a cease-fire across the country and deliver humanitarian access in a

way that then provides for a genuine opportunity to bring people to the table and start talking about a transition. Not going to make any promises that can't be delivered on, but I do believe the conversation I had with Zarif indicates to me possibilities for how this could be achieved. And my hope is that we will open up some political space to try to resolve what really, I think, is genuinely one of the most complex international challenges the community has faced in at least a generation.

There are so many different pieces of this: Kurd, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Shia, Sunni, Assad, and opposition, proxy components, that it is challenging. But again, if we can get a cease-fire which the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 calls for, and actually hold it, we have a prayer to try to actually get to a place where we can talk about compromise. So, my friends, time and again all of you have seen what's possible when we focus.

John Kerry, "Remarks at the Oslo Forum," [U.S. State Dept.](#), 15 June 2016. [Boldface added by Standler.]

On 15 June, the State Department spokesman, John Kirby, [said](#) "I think I'd let the Secretary's comments speak for themselves. He said, 'Our patience isn't infinite here.' The Secretary was simply expressing his frustration with the fact that the Russians have not used their influence in a manner which we know they can and have in the past to have the right effect."

My comment is that Kerry was unprofessional to say the U.S. Government's "patience is not infinite". Kerry sounds like an angry parent who is talking to a disobedient child, which is the *wrong* tone for a diplomat. Suppose Russia continues to protect Assad from war crimes prosecution, what can the U.S. Government realistically do? Suppose Russia continues to assist Assad with the bombing of Aleppo, what can the U.S. Government realistically do? The answer to these questions is that the U.S. Government will do nothing.

16 June 2016: 111th day of ceasefire

On Thursday, 16 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Haush al-Hayat inhabited areas as well as twice — in Harasta al-Basal village (Damascus province).

....

“Silence regime” which had been established for 48 hours starting from 00.01 June 16, 2016 in the Aleppo city has been continued.

The “Silence regime” in Darayya inhabited area (Damascus province) has been prolonged until 24.00 June 18, 2016.

Within last 24 hours, Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists have performed shelling with MLRS and mortars against Hakur-Tahtani, Rasha, Kinsibba and Nehshebba (Latakia province), al-Hamra (Hama province), Marj Sultan and Haush-Harabu (Damascus province), Habar and Jaba (al-Quneitra province).

The terrorists also opened fire against the Handrat inhabited area (Aleppo province), Sheikh Maqsood, al-Khalidiyah, al-Zagra quarters and al-Nayrab airport in the Aleppo city.

The terrorists also fired mortars against positions of the Syrian Armed Forces near Baharea locality (Damascus province) from the positions in the Nashabia village. "Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 16, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 16 June 2016.

On 16 June at 12:21 GMT, the Associated Press reported:

The Russian Defense Ministry said a 48-hour cessation of hostilities has been declared in the divided northern Syrian city of Aleppo and activists reported a relative calm in Syria's largest city on Thursday [16 June].

....

Russia said the truce went into effect after midnight Wednesday [15 June]. Several similar truces have been declared in the city in recent months.

....

"However, a scant 48 hours is not enough time to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people in east Aleppo have the food and other essentials they need," [said Xavier Tissier, North Syria director for Mercy Corps]. "Incredibly short, one-off windows cannot be considered a serious attempt at permitting humanitarian access. We need permanent, sustained, unfettered access that the people of Aleppo can depend on." Bassem Mroue, "Russia says 48-hour truce reached in Syria's Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), updated 14:05 GMT, 16 June 2016.

Reuters reported that airstrikes had violated the "silence regime" in the city of Aleppo:

Air strikes hit rebel-held parts of Syria's Aleppo city on Thursday [16 June] just hours into a 48-hour ceasefire announced by Russia to try to curb weeks of intense fighting, as government forces battle for control of the whole city.

....

However the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said aerial strikes hit neighbourhoods in the opposition-held sector and that there were reports of one death and some injuries.

Rebels had also fired rockets into government-held territory in Aleppo, the Observatory said, and fighting and air strikes continued in the surrounding countryside.

Moscow said fighters from the Nusra Front, al Qaeda's Syrian branch, opened fire on several Aleppo districts in the last 24 hours.

....

But the separate hope of foreign powers — that the wider civil war could also be resolved — has broken down.

Lisa Barrington & Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Air strikes shatter Russian attempt at Syria Aleppo truce," [Reuters](#), 21:02 GMT, 16 June 2016.

On 16 June, the spokesman for the U.S. State Department, John Kirby, said at his daily press briefing:

MR KIRBY: And [Secretary Kerry] made very clear — I can't say it better than he did — that his patience is wearing thin. He was very clear about that. Look, the cessation of hostilities continues to be too fragile, and there's really two main reasons for that — one, first and foremost of course, are [Assad] regime violations, and secondly are the threats continued being — to be posed to the Syrian people and to the opposition by al-Nusra, which in the way it operates and it resources itself places the Syrian people and opposition groups increasingly at risk.

We've discussed this many times with the Russians. There's nothing new there. And as we've also said many times privately and publicly, we need Russia to use the influence that we know it has with the regime to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is adhered to, to ensure that full and unimpeded humanitarian access can be had to the millions of Syrians that are in need throughout the country, and to ensure that we can get the political process back on track.

....

MR KIRBY: ... I didn't do a good enough job yesterday, I don't think, talking about this, but I mean the [Assad] regime here is really who's responsible for the bulk of the cessation violations and certainly for the privation suffered by the Syrian people and for not allowing the aid, which is within their power to let in, to let that aid go. And we have seen reports not only of them blocking access but of stealing from aid shipments and particularly, most reprehensibly, taking out medicine.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 16 June 2016.

My comment: The patience of U.S. taxpayers should be wearing thin at reading the biased, one-sided statements of *both* Russia *and* the U.S. State Department. The U.S. Government has *failed*:

- to use its influence with rebels and jihadists, to stop their commingling with Nusra Front.
- to use its influence with Turkey, to seal the border between Turkey and Syria and prevent supplies from reaching ISIL and Nusra.
- to cooperate with Russia in punishing frequent violators of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in Syria (e.g., Ahrar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam).
- to convince the HNC to return to negotiations in Geneva.

Kerry has plenty of things he should be doing in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states, instead of his current visit to Norway and Greenland about climate change.

17 June 2016: 112th day of ceasefire

On Friday, 17 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Haush al-Farah, and Zamalka inhabited areas as well as twice — in Jaur al-Basha (Damascus province).

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established until 00.00 June 17 in the Aleppo city and near Darayya (Damascus province) until 00.00 June 18, has been continued.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 17, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 17 June 2016.

18 June 2016: 113th day of ceasefire

On Saturday, 18 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Harasta al-Basal, Haush al-Fara and Jaur al-Basha inhabited areas.

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established until 24.00 June 18, 2016 near Darayya (Damascus province) has been continued.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 18, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 18 June 2016.

19 June 2016: 114th day of ceasefire

On Sunday, 19 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaur al-Basha, Haush al-Fara, and Harasta al-Basal inhabited areas (Damascus province).

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 19, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 19 June 2016.

Russia again criticized the U.S. Government for failing to provide the location of U.S.-supported rebels, so that Russia could avoid airstrikes on those rebels. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

20 June 2016: 115th day of ceasefire

On Monday, 20 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Haush al-Hayat, Arbil inhabited areas as well as twice — in Harasta al-Basal (Damascus province).

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

“Silence regime”, which had been established on June 19 at 00.01 for 24 hours near Aleppo, has been broken down by massive strikes of terrorists of Jabhat al-Nusra on north-western, north-eastern, and southern suburbs of the city.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 20, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 20 June 2016.

After two years of haggling with Assad, the United Nations was finally able to deliver humanitarian aid to 16 of 18 besieged towns in Syria since the end of February 2016. [U.N. Geneva](#); [Associated Press](#).

21 June 2016: 116th day of ceasefire

On Tuesday, 21 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in al-Qasa, Duma, Arbil, Harasta al-Basal and Huteita al-Jarash inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 21, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 21 June 2016.

22 June 2016: 117th day of ceasefire

On Wednesday, 22 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 7 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil, Haush Harabu, Huteita al-Jarash as well as twice — in Harasta and Blelije inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 22, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 22 June 2016.

On 22 June, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on the death toll in Aleppo: 667 dead civilians in Aleppo from 22 April through 21 June, including 134 children. Assad is using airstrikes and artillery shelling in eastern Aleppo, while the rebels and jihadists are shelling western Aleppo. [SOHR](#).

23 June 2016: 118th day of ceasefire

On Thursday, 23 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed near Huteita al-Jarash, Harasta and al-Qasa inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 23, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 23 June 2016.

24 June 2016: 119th day of ceasefire

On Friday, 24 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in al-Qasa, Arbil, Harasta, Haush-al-Hayat and Huteita al-Jarash inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 24, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 24 June 2016.

25 June 2016: 120th day of ceasefire

On Saturday, 25 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil, Harasta, al-Qasa, Haush-al-Hayat inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 25, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 25 June 2016.

The website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights displayed only an Arabic-language homepage on 25 June. Their English-language homepage had disappeared.

Reuters reported:

Air strikes carried out by Syrian or Russian warplanes killed dozens of people in eastern Syria on Saturday [25 June], the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group reported. It said the strikes hit the village of al-Quria in the eastern countryside of Deir al-Zor province, killing 47 people, including 31 civilians.

"Syrian or Russian air strikes kill dozens in eastern Syria — monitoring group," [Reuters](#), 14:58 GMT, 25 June 2016.

26 June 2016: 121th day of ceasefire

On Sunday, 26 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil, Jaubar, Haush al-Hayat, and Harasta inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 26, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 26 June 2016.

On 26 June, the the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights increased the death toll in airstrikes on Al-Quriyah, southeast of Deir Ezzor city, from 47 dead to 82 dead. The 82 dead includes 58 civilians.

[Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

27 June 2016: 122th day of ceasefire

On Monday, 27 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces near Jaubar, Arbil, and Haush al-Hayat.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 27, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 27 June 2016.

The English-language homepage of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights disappeared on

25 June and continues to be unavailable.

28 June 2016: 123th day of ceasefire

On Tuesday, 28 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:
The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Within last 24 hours, 4 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province. Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Jaubar, Harasta, Haush al-Hayat, and Huteita al-Jarash inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 28, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 28 June 2016.

29 June 2016: 124th day of ceasefire

On Wednesday, 29 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:
The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 5 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil, Harasta, Haush al-Hayat, al-Qasa, and Huteita al-Jarash inhabited areas.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 29, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 29 June 2016.

Reuters reported:

Trucks carrying medical and food aid entered two blockaded towns near Damascus on Wednesday, meaning that humanitarian agencies have now reached all besieged areas of Syria this year, the United Nations said.

The 38-truck convoy carried aid for some 20,000 people the U.N. estimates are living in the rebel-held towns of Zamalka and Irbin, which are being besieged by the government side.

"Today is the first time we are able to move a joint convoy of the United Nations, the

Red Cross and Syrian Red Crescent ... to these two towns since November 2012, nearly four years ago," the U.N. resident and humanitarian coordinator Yacoub El Hillo told reporters before the trucks headed in.

....

Aid agencies have repeatedly called for regular access to areas under siege, saying that one-off deliveries quickly run out and that those in need remain blockaded.

"Aid reaches all besieged areas of Syria with latest delivery — U.N.," [Reuters](#), 13:11 GMT, 29 June 2016.

The English-language homepage of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which disappeared on 25 June, reappeared on 29 June. Their most recent news story is dated 23 June.

30 June 2016: 125th day of ceasefire

On Thursday, 30 June, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense says:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 3 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed mortar shelling of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces in Arbil inhabited area as well as twice — near Jaubar inhabited area.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra international terrorist organization do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime.

....

Insurgents of Jaysh al-Islam grouping, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, carried out shellings of the UN humanitarian convoy in Eastern Harasta (Damascus province). Driver of a vehicle, which had been rented for delivering humanitarian aid, has been wounded hardly. [sic]

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (June 30, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 30 June 2016.

Summary of Violations

The following table summarizes violations of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement, as reported by Russia — the only publicly available data on violations.

Event	dates	total violations/days	average violations/day
-------	-------	-----------------------	------------------------

	18-25 March	43/8 days	5.4/day
	1-17 April	98/17 days	5.8/day
18 April: HNC walks out	18-29 April	94/12days	7.8/day
"silence regime"	1-8 May	64/8 days	8.0/day
9 May Reaffirmation			
	10-16 May	46/7 days	6.6/day
17 May ISSG meeting			
	18-23 May	46/6 days	7.7/day
"silence regime"	24-31 May	28/8 days	3.5/day
	1-6 June	36/6 days	6.0/day
Ramadan	7-30 June	102/24 days	4.2/day

For comparison, I include violations during 18-25 March, a period with relatively few violations, when people were pleased with the ceasefire. This average from March may represent a minimum number of violations by the insurgents in Syria.

The number of violations per day reported by Russia does *not* tell the whole story, because Russia does *not* include violations by Assad and his allies, and because some violations are more atrocious than others. Note that the average number of violations/day reported by Russia during 1-17 April, when journalists were screaming about the ceasefire unraveling, is essentially the same as during 18-25 March, when everyone was pleased.

Note the increase in the average number of violations/day beginning on 18 April, when the HNC walked out of negotiations in Geneva and when Ahrar al-Sham began attacks in Latakia province. On 22 April, Jaysh al-Islam began attacks in Damascus province.

The number of violations per day declined during 24-31 May, when Russia imposed the "silence regime".

The increase in violations during June does *not* include a large number of violations by Assad and Russia. As I reflect during June 2016 on this omission, I decided to discontinue in July my quoting of the Russian statistics on ceasefire violations, because they are incomplete and misleading.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the deaths of 4823 people in Syria during [June 2016](#). The monthly death tolls during May and June are essentially the same as — or slightly greater than — before the beginning of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement

on 27 Feb 2016, as shown in my [table](#).

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 Ki-moon, issued monthly Reports on the situation in Syria, beginning March 2014.

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.

Prosecution for War Crimes ?

My essay for [March 2016](#) collected quotations from four monthly reports (Oct 2015 to Jan 2016) by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in which he called for referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). All of his calls were ignored by the United Nations Security Council. The last time the Security Council attempted to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court was in May 2014 — two years ago — when Russia and China both vetoed the referral.

My essay for [May 2016](#) revised my discussion in March and added some new material.

In his monthly report for June 2016, Ban Ki-moon reviewed "... increased reports of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks by all parties to the conflict, including designated terrorist groups, in particular the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas. Medical facilities, markets and other public infrastructure continue to be attacked, Continuing violations and abuses of international human rights law by all the parties to the conflict...." (S/2016/546 at ¶¶67-¶68.) Ban again said "There must be accountability for those and other violations. I repeat my call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court." (S/2016/546 at ¶68.)

In my opinion, the call for referral to the International Criminal Court is unlikely to solve any current problem, because it is likely to take at least ten years to investigate and prosecute. Moreover, Russia and China are likely to continue to veto any referral to the ICC.

On 21 June 2016, there was a panel discussion at the United Nations headquarters in New York City in which several nations — Sweden, Germany, France, Finland, Qatar — announced that their courts had jurisdiction for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed *anywhere* in the world. [Associated Press](#). Even if one of those individual nations attempts to prosecute Syrian war criminals, there is still the huge problem of arresting the accused criminals and transporting them to the city where the trial will be held.

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.

I am no longer listing the Iraqi death toll on my HTML webpage, because the statistics from the Iraqi government are seriously incomplete and *not* credible. But, for what it is worth, the United Nations reported 662 Iraqis killed in terrorism, violence, and armed conflict during June 2016. This number does *not* include casualties from the liberation of Fallujah or other combat in Anbar province. [UNAMI](#).

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.
-

June 2016: Islamic Terrorism in Iraq

On 7 June, Agence France-Presse reported that an ISIL car bomb in Karbala killed "at least three people" and wounded 33 people. [Al-Arabiya](#). Later, the [Associated Press](#) reported 10 dead in Karbala. As an afterthought, the Associated Press tersely mentions "separate bombings in and around Baghdad killed another seven civilians".

On 9 June, the [Associated Press](#) reported two ISIL suicide car bombings killed a total of 31 people. One car bomb was in Baghdad; the other in the town of Taji, 20 km north of Baghdad.

On the night of 27 June, a suicide bomber detonated in a Sunni mosque in the town of Abu Ghraib, about 25 km west of Baghdad. At least 12 people were killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 30 June, three terrorist attacks in Baghdad killed a total of at least 12 civilians. [Associated Press](#). These attacks are noteworthy, because the liberation of Fallujah from ISIL was supposed to stop suicide bombings in the Baghdad region.

Conclusion to Atrocities in Iraq

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.

In each of these Islamic terrorist attacks in Iraq, the Islamic bombers not only kill innocent people, but also ISIL *boasts* of the atrocity that they perpetrated. It is the same in Israel, with attacks by Islamic terrorists. For example, on 7 June 2016, two palestinian gunmen entered the Saron market in Tel Aviv and sprayed bullets, killing 4 innocent people and wounding another 6 people. That was a terrorist act. But what really gets my attention is that both Hamas and Fatah, the two major palestinian political organizations, praised and endorsed the attack. And then Hamas promised more terrorism against Jews during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [CNN](#); [Times of Israel](#) (blog at 23:07-23:15, 00:27); [Haaretz](#); [Arutz Sheva](#). The United Nations Secretary General said he "is shocked that the leaders of Hamas have chosen to welcome this attack and some have chosen to celebrate it." [U.N. SecGen](#), also at: [U.N.](#)

That endorsement by Hamas and Fatah tarnishes the image of the Muslim religion, after Muslim political groups again endorse killing innocent people in terrorist acts. Note that Yusuf al-Qardawi, a Sunni cleric in Qatar, said the two palestinian terrorists were "defending" against Israeli "evil and mischief" — which is factually wrong: the victims were innocently in a market, and the victims were *no* threat to any palestinian. [Jerusalem Post](#).

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](#).

There is another problem that is *not* mentioned by journalists. Abadi may be short on well-trained, experienced officers to lead the Iraqi army. When the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, *all* of the Sunni military officers in Saddam Hussein's army became unemployable by the new Iraqi government, under the U.S. "de-Baathification" policy. This ban led to those experienced army officers joining Sunni insurgent groups, and later joining Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which became ISIL. As a result, ISIL now appears to have better military leadership than the Iraqi army. See e.g., [Washington Post](#), 4 April 2015; [Reuters](#), 18 June 2015; [Associated Press](#), 8 Aug 2015; [Daily Star](#), 10 Aug 2015. Further, in Abadi's first year in office, as mentioned above, Abadi forced more than 336 Iraqi army officers into retirement. This may have removed some incompetent and/or corrupt officers appointed by Maliki, but it also depleted the army of experienced officers. So, after the U.S. purge in 2003 and after Abadi's purge, the Iraqi army may now have a shortage of well-trained, experienced officers.

No Prosecution for Fall of Mosul

My essay for [August 2015](#) explained that on 17 Aug 2015, the Iraqi parliament 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.

On ___ 2016, I searched Google News for the query "Iraq prosecution Mosul" after 21 August 2015, but I found no news about the investigation and prosecution of these suspects. I am concerned that the Iraqi Judiciary will "forget" to investigate and prosecute those who ordered the Iraqi army to flee from Mosul in June 2014.

No Prosecution for 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.

On ___ 2016, I searched Google News for the query "Iraq prosecution Ramadi" after 21 August 2015, but I found no news about the prosecution of the Iraqi army commanders who ordered the army to flee from 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.

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.

See also [Wall Street Journal](#) for 7 June 2015, which says "The ghost soldier problem was a factor in the Ramadi defeat, said Tariq Asal, a former Anbar police chief...."

Note that the ghost soldier problem was uncovered in November 2014, but the problem continued in the fall of Ramadi in May 2015. Apparently, Abadi was *not* able to end the "ghost soldier" problem in six months from November 2014 to May 2015. As the following quotation from *The Guardian*, makes clear, the "ghost soldier" problem still existed in February 2016, more than 14 months after it was first publicly revealed.

On 19 February 2016, *The Guardian* newspaper in England reported on corruption in Iraq's government and noted the "ghost soldier" problem:

Iraq has one of the biggest per capita public payrolls in the world, roughly 7 million people from a population of just over 21 million, and it is here that Zebari believes much of the systemic corruption is hidden. "Our biggest issue is ghost soldiers," he

said. "There are maybe \$500-\$600m in salaries being paid to soldiers who don't exist. There are so many outlets for this money to go without any accountability."

In such cases, the salaries are instead collected by officers. In other cases, soldiers pay officers half their salaries so they don't have to show up for duty.

....

Hoshyar Zebari estimates that there as many as 30,000 ghost soldiers in Iraq's military and that corrupt officers are pocketing their salaries. The impact is even more significant than the bottom line. The fall of Mosul, Iraq's second city, in mid-2014 was in part blamed on there being far fewer soldiers in position to defend the city than there were on the books. Generals and other senior officers accused of running the scam have yet to be brought to account.

Martin Chulov, "Post-war Iraq: 'Everybody is corrupt, from top to bottom. Including me'," [Guardian](#), 15:10 GMT, 19 Feb 2016.

I search Google every month, but I have seen no reports of criminal prosecutions of any of these corrupt army officers.

Iraq is a Failed Nation

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. My essay for [July 2015](#) mentions that the Iraqi parliament was on vacation again from 6 July to 25 July 2015.

My essay for [September 2015](#) mentions the Iraqi government is planning to sell unsecured junk bonds to obtain money to operate its government, the slow progress of the draft National Guard Law, and a cholera epidemic in Iraq.

My essay for [October 2015](#) mentions Iraq cancelled its bond issue, because potential investors demanded a high interest rate. That essay also mentions arrest warrants were issued for one former and one current Iraqi ministers who were accused of corruption, but both ministers have disappeared. Also, Abadi's reforms proposed in August 2015 stalled in October 2015.

My essay for [January 2016](#) mentions that Iraq was eighth from the bottom of an international survey of 168 nations for corruption.

My essay for [April 2016](#) chronicled Abadi's attempt to reformulate the ministers in Iraq to reduce corruption. But Abadi's new ministers need to be approved by the Iraqi parliament, which does *not* want to disrupt their personal enrichment and power. The Iraqi parliament refused to vote on Abadi's proposals during April.

My essay for [May 2016](#) mentioned that, on 30 April 2016, Iraqi protesters from cleric al-Sadr stormed the Iraqi parliament building. In response, the Iraqi parliament did *not* meet during May. On 20 May, Iraqi security forces violently repelled demonstrators, killing at least four.

June 2016

Back on 19 February 2016, *The Guardian* newspaper in England reported on corruption in Iraq's government:

One of Iraq's anti-corruption leaders sat in his office, waving his hands in exasperation. "There is no solution," he said. "Everybody is corrupt, from the top of society to the bottom. Everyone. Including me."

Coming at the start of a conversation about Iraq's ailing governance, and what was being done to turn things around, Mishan al-Jabouri's admission was jarring. "At least I am honest about it," he shrugged. "I was offered \$5m by someone to stop investigating him. I took it, and continued prosecuting him anyway."

Jabouri is a member of one of two anti-graft bodies, a parliamentary committee, tasked with protecting public monies in post-war Iraq. Both have more work than they can ever hope to deal with — even if they wanted to.

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If, as projected, global oil prices remain at historic lows, Iraq will be unable to pay some of its civil servants, or honour pledges to build roads and power stations in the next financial year. The gravity of the crisis has created uncomfortable reckonings for Iraq's political class, military leaders and some senior religious figures, who have led a staggering 13-year pillage that has left Iraq consistently rated as one of the top five least transparent and most corrupt countries in the world.

....

[Text on "ghost soldier" problem quoted [above](#).]

And what of the self-declared corrupt anti-corruption chief, Jabour? "I did it because I am daring people to come after me," he said. "No one will dare to. I have files on them all."

Martin Chulov, "Post-war Iraq: 'Everybody is corrupt, from top to bottom. Including me'," [Guardian](#), 15:10 GMT, 19 Feb 2016.

On 4 June, Reuters reported on the failure of the Iraqi army to improve since 2013.

A 17-month U.S. effort to retrain and reunify Iraq's regular army has failed to create a large number of effective Iraqi combat units or limit the power of sectarian militias, according to current and former U.S. military and civilian officials.

....

Critics agree that there have been some military successes, citing the continued victories of American-trained Iraqi Special Forces, who have been fighting Islamic State for two years. But the presence of 4,000 American troops has failed to change the underlying Iraqi political dynamics that fuel the rise and growing power of sectarian militias.

Retired U.S. Lieutenant General Mick Bednarek, who commanded the U.S. military training effort in Iraq from 2013 to 2015, said the Iraqi army has not improved dramatically in the past eight months. He blamed a variety of problems, from a lack of Iraqis wanting to join the military to the resistance of some lower-level Iraqi officers to sending units to American training.

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And after Iraqi Special Forces, aided by U.S. air strikes, captured a strategic oil refinery in the town of Baiji in October, Shi'ite militias looted all of its salvageable equipment, according to a senior U.S. military official and three Iraqi government officials.

Over the past year, U.S. military officers have struggled to ensure that militias do not seize American weaponry delivered to the main Iraqi army supply depot in Taji and to a brigade in the Saqlawiya region.

"We would transfer arms to units in those areas — and either because of corrupt commanders or outright robbery — they would end up in the hands of the militia groups," said one U.S. officer. The officer noted, however, that controls have been tightened and the number of cases was small. "You can't eliminate it entirely. It's just not realistic."

Ned Parker & Jonathan Landay, "Exclusive: U.S. falters in campaign to revive Iraqi army, officials say," [Reuters](#), 05:07 GMT, 4 June 2016.

On 28 June, [Reuters](#) reports that the Iraqi parliament is expected to convene again in mid-July 2016, after a vacation for the entire month of Ramadan (in addition to a "vacation" during the entire month of May). Also, "A top Iraqi court on Tuesday [28 June] declared unconstitutional a parliament session [on 26 April] in which deputies had approved a partial cabinet reshuffle, scrapping Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's clearest gain in a months-long political crisis."

U.S. combat troops in Iraq

On 1 December 2015, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, told the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee that the U.S. would send more "special operations forces" to Iraq, to engage ISIL in combat in both Iraq and Syria. My essay for [December 2015](#) reported that the Iraqis quickly objected to foreign combat troops in Iraq, and the U.S. program stalled.

On 13 January 2016, the [Pentagon](#) paraphrased what the U.S. Secretary of Defense told troops: "A specialized expeditionary targeting force announced in December is in place, preparing to work with the Iraqis to begin going after ISIL fighters and commanders". [Reuters](#) reports approximately 200 special operations troops have arrived in Iraq.

The Pentagon does *not* want publicity for the U.S. Special Forces in Iraq, partly because the Iraqi government is very sensitive about foreign combat troops in Iraq, and partly to keep secret operational details to deprive ISIL of information.

On 21 March, the U.S. military revealed that it had created Fire Base Bell sometime around 7 March, to protect U.S. troops at an Iraqi military base near Makhmour. Fire Base Bell has approximately 150 Marines and four 155mm howitzers. Although Obama has limited the number of U.S. troops in Iraq to 3870, the Marines at Fire Base Bell are *not* included in this limit. [Pentagon](#) press briefing; [Associated Press](#); [Associated Press](#)(24 Aug). ISIL learned of Fire Base Bell before the U.S. taxpayers learned of this combat mission. On Saturday, 19 March, ISIL fired two rockets into the outpost, killing one U.S. Marine. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#). On the morning of 21 March, ISIL again attacked Fire Base Bell, this time with rifle fire.

In my opinion, the failure to include the Marines at Fire Base Bell in the limited number of U.S. troops in Iraq is a deliberate evasion of Obama's limit. Further, Fire Base Bell is *not* considered a combat mission, because it is behind the front lines, despite the fact that ISIL has attacked Fire Base Bell twice in three days.

On 21 March 2016, the [Washington Post](#) published an article with the headline: "The U.S. military has a lot more people in Iraq than it has been saying". Obama's official upper limit is 3870 personnel, but there are now approximately 5000 personnel in Iraq.

On 18 April 2016, it was announced that the number of U.S. troops in Iraq would be increased by 217, and also that 8 Apache helicopters operated by the U.S. Army would be available to support the Iraqi army. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Reuters reported: "The increase raises the authorized troop level in Iraq to 4,087, not including special operations personnel, some logistics workers and troops on temporary rotations."

On 3 May, U.S. Navy Petty Officer First Class Charles Keating IV was killed by ISIL during a firefight. Keating was part of a quick reaction force who was called in to assist U.S. Military personnel who were advising the Peshmerga near Erbil. Keating was the third U.S. Military man to be killed by ISIL in Iraq during the past seven months. [Pentagon](#);

[Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#). On 4 May, Col. Warren described the circumstances in which Keating was killed. [Pentagon](#).

Fallujah liberated on 26 June 2016

ISIL captured Fallujah on 4 Jan 2014, the first major city in Iraq to be captured by ISIL. Amongst other reasons, Fallujah is important because it is only 70 km from Baghdad, the capital of Iraq.

On 12 June 2015, the Iraqis decided to liberate Fallujah, *before* liberating Ramadi. My essay for [June 2015](#) notes that there was no explanation of *why* liberating Fallujah would cause ISIL to flee from Ramadi. This plan was later abandoned by the Iraqis. In September 2015, it was obvious that the liberation of Fallujah is beyond the capability of the current Iraqi army and Shiite militias.

Col. Steve Warren — Operation Inherent Resolve Spokesman in Baghdad — gives weekly briefings to journalists. His briefings for 1, 13, 21, 28 October 2015 do *not* mention progress in liberating Fallujah. (There was *no* briefing around 7-8 October 2015.) His briefings for 4, 13, 18, 24 November 2015 also do *not* mention progress in liberating Fallujah. This gives me the impression that the liberation of Fallujah is *not* important to the U.S.-led Coalition. That may be because most of the forces surrounding Fallujah are Shiite militias, who are advised by Iran, and who generally refuse airstrikes from the U.S.-led Coalition.

On 10 December 2015, Col. Warren defined the mission in Fallujah: "To prevent Fallujah from being able to reinforce ISIL fighters in Ramadi. That has been successful." [Pentagon](#). However, in June and July 2015 the Iraqis were promising to *liberate* Fallujah, which was a complete failure in 2015.

Beginning in January 2016, the Iraqi army and Shiite militias have surrounded and besieged Fallujah, starving ISIL (and innocent civilians) in Fallujah. [Reuters](#)(2 Feb 2016); [Voice of America](#)(Reuters 8 Mar); [Human Rights Watch](#)(7 Apr); [Reuters](#)(7 Apr); [Reuters](#)(11 Apr); [Associated Press](#)(29 April); [BBC](#)(10 May); [Reuters](#)(27 May).

My comment: when Assad besieges a city, he is accused of a war crime. But, when the Iraqi government — aided by U.S. airstrikes — besieges a city, Obama does the three-monkey routine (i.e., see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil).

On 23 May 2016, Iraqi security forces finally began an assault on Fallujah.

The 29-month delay in liberating Fallujah allowed ISIL ample time to entrench in Fallujah, including plant mines, install roadside bombs, dig tunnels, and booby trap buildings — which made the liberation of Fallujah more difficult. (See, e.g., [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).)

June 2016: Fallujah

The Iraqi army assault to liberate Fallujah began on 23 May, and stalled on 1 June. [Reuters](#) reports: "Iraq has delayed its assault on the city of Falluja because of fears for the safety of civilians, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Wednesday [1 June], as his forces halted at the city's edge in the face of ferocious resistance from Islamic State fighters." See also [Associated Press](#). My comment is that the civilians are an excuse: the Iraqi army has always known about civilians in Fallujah, but that did *not* stop the Iraqi army from beginning an assault on 23 May. More likely, the four-hour battle with ISIL on 31 May caused the Iraqi army to stall.

If civilians stay in Fallujah, they will starve to death *and* be shelled and bombed by the Iraqi army. If civilians attempt to leave Fallujah, then ISIL will shoot them. [Reuters](#) reports the Iraqi army is concerned that ISIL fighters may disguise themselves as civilians and attempt to flee from Fallujah. There may also be ISIL "sympathizers" amongst the fleeing civilians.

On 3 June, Agence France-Presse [reported](#) that 1119 Iraqi troops had been wounded in recent battles with ISIL in Fallujah.

On 3 June, the [Washington Post](#) reported: "Iraq's government has ordered the militias to stay away from the fighting inside the city. And the U.S. military says it refuses to give them air support, fearing that their involvement could help the Islamic State rally besieged residents to its cause." The *Post* cites Michael Pregent, an Iraq expert at the Hudson Institute: the Shiite militias "appear to be itching to exact revenge on Fallujah for the Islamic State bombings in the capital [Baghdad]".

On 5 June, the [Associated Press](#) reports that the Iraqi army captured "the southern edge" of Fallujah.

On 7 June, the [Associated Press](#) reported that "disagreements about battlefield strategy" amongst the Iraqi army and Shiite militias prevented any fighting against ISIL in Fallujah during 6 and 7 June. [Reuters](#) reported the same "bickering".

On 8 June, the [Associated Press](#) reported that the Iraqi army pushed a little deeper into Fallujah.

On 17 June, the Iraqi army pushed into the center of Fallujah, but encountered surprisingly little resistance from ISIL. The [Associated Press](#) reported: "By evening, the special forces commander Brig. Haider al-Obedi told the Associated Press that his troops controlled 80 percent of the city, with IS fighters now concentrated in four districts on its northern edge." The AP reported "intense fighting" early in the morning, but then ISIL's "defenses in much of the city collapsed abruptly." [Reuters](#) also reported the entry of Iraqi security forces into the center of Fallujah. The Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, — prematurely — declared victory in Fallujah.

On 18 June, the Iraqi army liberated the main hospital in Fallujah, which hospital was previously occupied by ISIL. [Associated Press](#).

When the Iraqi army invades a city held by ISIL, many (most?) of the ISIL fighters flee, perhaps by disguising themselves as civilians. That raises the question: to where do they flee?

Sometime in the future, these ISIL fighters will need to be killed.

On 19-20 June, the [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#) reported that more than 80,000 civilians had fled from Fallujah since the offensive began on 23 May. The Iraqi government was totally unprepared for this large number of refugees, and there is now an urgent need for water, food, and shelter for the refugees. This was incredibly bad planning by the incompetent Iraqi government. The Norwegian Refugee Council and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees are attempting to save these Iraqi citizens, who were abandoned by the Iraqi government. On 21 June, the [Washington Post](#) reported this continuing story.

On 21 June, U.S. Army Col. Christopher Garver — the Baghdad-based spokesman for U.S.-led coalition to defeat ISIL — told journalists that the Iraqi army had cleared ISIL from only 1/3 of Fallujah, disputing the 80% number given by the Iraqi army on 17 June. The Iraqi army will now push outward from the center of Fallujah to clear ISIL fighters who are hiding in the periphery of Fallujah. Also, the U.N. reports that more than 85,000 civilians have fled from Fallujah since the offensive began on 23 May. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Pentagon](#).

Note that Col. Garver's predecessor, Col. Warren, returned to Washington, DC a few days after his final briefing on 27 May 2016. [Pentagon](#).

On 21 June, the U.S. Government provided US\$ 20 million in emergency humanitarian aid to Iraq, so the corrupt and incompetent Iraqi government could provide for its own citizens, who are refugees from Fallujah. [U.S. State Dept.](#)

On 23 June, the Iraqi army is now focusing on defeating ISIL in northern and western suburbs of Fallujah. [Associated Press](#).

On 26 June, Lieutenant General Abdul Wahab al-Saidi, who commanded the liberation of Fallujah, said that Fallujah was now "fully liberated" from ISIL. AFP and Reuters reported that "at least 1,800 ISIS fighters had been killed" and the remaining ISIL fighters had fled from Fallujah. Now the Iraqi army will remove ISIL explosives and booby-traps from Fallujah. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

Also on 26 June, the Fallujah Local Council announced that 30% of Fallujah had been destroyed by the liberation from ISIL. [All Iraq News](#).

On 27 June, the Iraqi army liberated the highway that connects Fallujah to Baghdad. [All Iraq News](#).

Future liberation of Mosul

More Empty Promises

My previous essays — see my monthly essays for [December 2015](#) to [March 2016](#) — list a series of *10 promises* by Iraqi politicians or senior army officers from 25 May 2015 to 8 December 2015 that Ramadi would be liberated within the next few days. All of those

promises were exposed as false. And those false promises have led to greatly diminished confidence in the Iraqi army and Shiite militias. That adds to what U.S. Defense Secretary Carter said on 24 May 2015: the Iraqi army "showed no will to fight."

A similar series of false promises is appearing in connection with the future liberation of Mosul.

1. On 1 June 2015, 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, [U.S. State Department](#), 2 June 2015.

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

2. 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".

Beginning in July 2015, the U.S.-led Coalition continued airstrikes in and near Mosul, but there was no reported military action on the ground.

3. On 24 September 2015, [Reuters](#) reported that the "deadlock" in the battle for Baiji "is calling into question the government's plans to retake the northern city of Mosul from the jihadists." That deadlock may have ended on 24 October, when Iraq declared victory in Baiji.
4. On 25 December 2015, Abadi gave a speech in which he declared that Mosul would be liberated soon after Ramadi was liberated. [Reuters](#).
5. On 28 December 2015, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi delivered a speech He said 2016 would be 'the year of the final victory and the end of the existence of Daesh on Iraqi territory.' " This was *before* Ramadi was completely liberated, and *before* the assaults on Fallujah and Mosul began, yet Abadi was already predicting the defeat of ISIL everywhere in Iraq. Mosul is next on Abadi's list of cities to liberate. See also [Iraqi News](#); [Rudaw](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that Abadi is hysterical.
6. On 24 March 2016, the Iraqi military announced the operation to liberate Mosul had

officially begun. (See my essay for [March 2016](#) and [Wall Street Journal](#).)

June 2016: Mosul

The operation to liberate Mosul officially began on 24 March 2016. About two weeks later, on 6 April, the operation stalled at the village of al-Nasr, near Makhmour, on the road to Mosul. Reuters reports that "The faltering start has cast renewed doubt on the capabilities of the Iraqi army," [Reuters](#); [Wall Street Journal](#).

On 4 June, *The New York Times* reported that the U.S. Army was helping improve the logistics of the Iraqi army, to move supplies 320 km from a depot in Baghdad to the future battle for Mosul. The *Times* also says: "The pace of ground operations is likely to become even slower in the summer's searing heat and during the coming holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims often fast during the day. Much of the Iraqis' equipment needs to be repaired or replaced, and many Iraqi units will require additional training before attacking Mosul."

On 18 June, the Iraqi army began a second front, south of Mosul. [Reuters](#).

Islamic Public Relations Problem

Introduction

Beginning in August 2014, I have included this section in my essays. In the USA and Western Europe, many Christians do *not* personally know any Muslim person, so the only time these Christians encounter Muslims is in reading about atrocities of Islamic terrorists. That is a public relations problem for mainstream Muslims, as the reputation of the Islamic religion is besmirched by Islamic terrorists, who act in the name of their interpretation of Islamic theology.

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.

The same broad public relations campaign could satisfy the three goals of (1) protecting the reputation of mainstream Islam, (2) stopping the flow of foreign fighters into Syria, *and* (3) reducing financial support of Islamic terrorism.

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](#). However, this program was quickly ignored by nearly everyone.

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 — and Islamic opinion leaders — consistently and continually publicly condemn the use of terrorism to impose any Islamic government.

June 2016

On 17 June 2016, the Associated Press reported a speech by Hillary Clinton, who is the presumptive Democratic party nominee to become U.S. President in Jan 2017. I do not want to get into politics here, but because Clinton is the former U.S. Secretary of State, I am mentioning her views here. An Associated Press news article said:

In the wake of the Orlando killings this week, Hillary Clinton had harsh words for America's Gulf allies, criticizing them for funding institutions that radicalize young Muslims.

"It is long past time for the Saudis, the Qataris and the Kuwaitis and others to stop their citizens from funding extremist organizations," the presumptive Democratic Party nominee told an Ohio crowd. "And they should stop supporting radical schools and mosques around the world that have set too many young people on a path toward extremism."

....

Tellingly, the comments were received without protest from most regional leaders who consider the messenger as much as the message. However, Saudi Arabia's Foreign

Minister Adel al-Jubeir said in Washington on Friday [17 June] that his government has tight control over charitable giving and has designated entities and individuals suspected of terror finance. He also said that it's unfair to point a finger at Saudi Arabia if a mosque that it funded years ago begins advocating intolerance and violence.

Jon Gambrell, "AP Analysis: Mideast showed Hillary Clinton US power's limit," [Associated Press](#), 15:23 EDT, 17 June 2016.

Clinton's speech was given in Cleveland, Ohio on 13 June. [Reuters](#).

I found a transcript of Hillary Clinton's speech, so I could quote in context her complete remarks about ending the support for Islamic terrorism:

As we do this, there are three areas that demand attention. First, we and our allies must work hand-in-hand to dismantle the networks that move money, and propaganda, and arms and fighters around the world.

(APPLAUSE)

We have to flow — we have to stem the flow of jihadists from Europe and Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and then back again. The only way to do this is by working closely with our partners, strengthening our alliances, not weakening them or walking away from them.

Second, here at home, we must harden our own defenses. We have to do more to support our first responders, law enforcement and intelligence officers who do incredible work every day at great personal risk to keep our country safe.

(APPLAUSE)

....

Now, the third area that demands attention is preventing radicalization and countering efforts by ISIS and other international terrorist networks to recruit in the United States and Europe.

For starters, it is long past time for the Saudis, the Qataris and the Kuwaitis and others to stop their citizens from funding extremist organizations. And they should stop supporting radical schools and mosques around the world that have set too many young people on a path towards extremism.

We also have to use all our capabilities to counter jihadist propaganda online. This is something that I spend a lot of time on at the State Department.

"Read Hillary Clinton's Speech About the Orlando Shooting," [Time](#), 13 June 2016.

My comment is that Hillary Clinton did *not* mention that she failed to stop the expansion of ISIL, she failed to remove Assad, and she supported more military aid to rebels in Syria. Although she boasted that she spent "a lot of time" countering Islamic terrorism online, she does *not* mention any accomplishment in that area, and her efforts were a failure.

Clinton's speech was generally ignored by journalists in the USA. That's too bad, because her third point — about "preventing radicalization" and Gulf nations supporting Islamic terrorism — is correct, but rarely mentioned by the U.S. Government. On the night of 18 June, I searched the English-language webpages of *Al-Arabiya* and the *Saudi Gazette* in Saudi Arabia and *Gulf Times* in Qatar, but I saw no mention of Hillary's speech.

In part of her second point, Hillary Clinton said: "... as we make sure our security officials get the tools they need to prevent attacks...." That may be a veiled reference to enabling the government to defeat encryption, without mentioning the intrusion on privacy of innocent citizens. It could also refer to warrantless surveillance of e-mail and other online communications, something that the U.S. Government has (illegally) done.

On 20 June 2016, [Voice of America](#) reports that ISIL is indoctrinating "thousands of children in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other places in radical, anti-Western thought and ways of terror". VOA says the goal is "to ensure IS's radical message endures beyond the group itself." If ISIL is defeated, the children would presumably continue Islamic terrorism for one generation, at least 20 years. My comment is that the U.S. Government has plans to defeat ISIL militarily, but there is *no* program to defeat the ideology of Islamic terrorism.

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 2015.) 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", "Abu Muslim al-Turkmani",

or "Abu Mutaz Qurashi". [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#). On 13 October, [Reuters](#) reports ISIL has confirmed his death.

- On 15 October 2015, a U.S. Coalition airstrike in Syria killed Abdul Mohsen Adballah Ibrahim al Charekh — also known as Sanafi al-Nasr — who was the leader of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Khorasan Group. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 12 November 2015, a U.S. drone airstrike in Syria apparently killed Mohamed Emwazi — a U.K. citizen also known as "Jihadi John" — who had executed at least 6 hostages (e.g., Steven Sotloff, James Foley, Abdul-Rahman Kassig, David Haines, Alan Henning, Kenji Goto) beginning in August 2014. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 13 November and 2 December 2015, U.S. airstrikes killed al-Qaida leaders in Libya and Somalia. [Pentagon](#).
- In "late November" 2015, a U.S. airstrike in Iraq killed Abu Salah, the financial minister of ISIL. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 29 December 2015, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S.-led Coalition airstrikes had killed 10 senior ISIL leaders during 7-27 December. Some of the dead leaders were involved in the terrorist attack in Paris on 13 Nov. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 29 Dec; [Reuters](#) on 30 Dec.
- On 25 March 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S. Military had killed Haji Imam, "who was an ISIL senior leader, serving as a finance minister and who is also responsible for some external affairs and plots." Imam is also known as Abdul-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) spells the dead man's name as "Haji Iman — an alias for Abd ar-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli".
- On 4 May 2016, Australia announced that a Cambodian immigrant who had joined ISIL had been killed by a U.S. airstrike in Mosul on 29 April. His name was Neil Prakash, also known as Abu Khaled al-Cambodi. Neil had been featured in ISIL recruiting videos. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [ABC](#); [Sydney Morning Herald](#).
- On 9 May 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that an airstrike on 6 May had killed "Abu Wahib, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's military emir for Iraq's Anbar province". [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 21 May 2016, the leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, was killed by an airstrike from a U.S. drone in Pakistan. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#). [Reuters](#) reported: "The death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour ... could further fracture the Taliban — an outcome that experts cautioned might make the insurgents even less likely to participate in long-stalled peace efforts." And [Reuters](#) reported the Pakistani government is wailing about the U.S. violation of Pakistani sovereignty. [Obama](#) was pleased that Mansour — also spelled Mansur — was killed by the U.S. military. Four days after Mansour was killed, the Taliban elected a new leader. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

The deaths of bin Laden and al-Awlaki had little effect on Al-Qaeda, and it is expected that the deaths of the leaders since 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).

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.

Admittedly, the world is a better place with ISIL terrorists — of any rank — dead. However, killing a few leaders of ISIL will *not* cause ISIL to collapse. Killing leaders of ISIL is a temporary inconvenience to ISIL, *not* a death knell. It is also possible that a new ISIL leader may be more competent or more vicious than the previous leader. Continually attacking the ideology of Islamic terrorism is more detrimental to a terrorist organization than the brief inconvenience of killing a terrorist leader.

Despite the essential importance of countering the ideology of Islamic terrorism, during the first year of the U.S. war against ISIL, the Sawab Center in the UAE was the only organization created and dedicated to countering ideology. (See my essay for [July 2015](#).)

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. After seven months of procrastination and delay, on 27-28 Dec 2015, the Iraqi army captured the government center in downtown 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 launched 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. On 7 September 2015, ISIL captured the final Syrian oilfield. ISIL now controls *all* of the oilfields in Syria. [SOHR](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).
16. On 22 October 2015, IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center reported that the

number of terrorist attacks by ISIL in the Middle East and Africa increased by 42% from the second quarter of 2015 to the third quarter of 2015. [Associated Press](#); [Voice of America](#).

17. On 31 October 2015, ISIL put a bomb aboard a Russian airplane carrying tourists from Sharm el-Sheikh airport in Egypt to St. Petersburg, killing 224 people. [The Guardian](#) (crash); [NY Times](#) (crash); [NY Times](#) (blame ISIL); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#) (bomb in soda can); [Reuters](#) ("Schweppes bomb").
18. On 12 November 2015, ISIL claimed responsibility for a bombing in Beirut that killed at least 43 people. [Telegraph](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).
19. On the night of 13 November 2015, ISIL masterminded multiple attacks in Paris that killed 130 people. See my essay for [November 2015](#).
20. On 19 December 2015, the [Associated Press](#) has a headline: "Islamic State expands Afghan footprint with terror campaign". The previous day [Reuters](#) reported: "U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter warned of the threat from Islamic State in Afghanistan during a surprise visit days after the Pentagon painted a grim picture of worsening security there."
21. On 12 January 2016, a Syrian ISIL suicide bomber exploded in Istanbul, killing 10 tourists. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Anadolu](#); [Hurriyet](#). This was apparently an attack on Turkey's tourist industry. [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).
22. On 29 January 2016, the United Nations Secretary General said there are now 34 terrorist groups who have pledged allegiance to ISIL. Ban Ki-moon said: "it is expected that ISIL affiliates will increase in number and that its membership will grow in 2016." [U.N. Report](#); [Associated Press](#).
23. On 21 February 2016, ISIL detonated two car bombs in Homs, Syria that killed at least 57 people. [Reuters](#). Two ISIL car bombs and two suicide bombers in the Sayeda Zeinab district of Damascus killed at least 87 people. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). At night on 22 Feb, [SOHR](#) claims a total of 190 dead in Homs and Zeinab.
24. On 22 March 2016, three ISIL suicide bombers killed 32 people at the airport and one subway station in Brussels. See my essay for [March 2016](#).
25. On 12 June 2016, an Islamic terrorist perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, killing 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando Florida. The terrorist pledged allegiance to ISIL, although there is *no* evidence that ISIL communicated with him. See [below](#).
26. On 16 June 2016, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John Brennan, testified before a committee of the U.S. Senate that "Unfortunately, despite all our progress against ISIL on the battlefield and in the financial realm, our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach." [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [CNN](#).

27. At night on 28 June, three ISIL suicide bombers attacked an airport in Istanbul, Turkey. At least 42 people were killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

Let us not forget that 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.

As an example of how fighting Islamic terrorism can continue for many years, the U.S. has been fighting against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan since 2001. On 15 October 2015, Obama postponed the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan until sometime after the year 2016. The next U.S. president will inherit 5500 U.S. Military personnel in Afghanistan in January 2017. [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#) (commentary). In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the corrupt and weak governments are unable to defend their nations from Islamic terrorists. Substantial numbers of U.S. Military personnel and many tens of billions of US dollars in both Afghanistan and Iraq also have not defeated the Islamic terrorists. That includes 14 years of continuous U.S. Military involvement in Afghanistan, which hints that the fight against Islamic terrorists will take tens of years. No one is asking the question *why* Islamic terrorists are so successful in their battle, while national armies and police are unable to defeat Islamic terrorists. I suggest the holy concept of jihad resonates with terrorists, while it is difficult for soldiers and policemen to be enthusiastic about working for a corrupt, dysfunctional government.

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." During the Vietnam war in the 1960s, U.S. Government propaganda cited body counts to show we were winning the war against the communists. Now, U.S. Government propaganda cites the number of airstrikes to show we are winning the war against ISIL.

Beginning in August 2014, I stressed the need for Muslim clerics and Islamic opinion leaders to continually condemn Islamic terrorism, see the section [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](#).

Cost of U.S. War Against ISIL

In June 2016, the Pentagon reported the cost of the U.S. war against ISIL:

As of May 15, 2016, the total cost of operations related to ISIL since kinetic operations started on August 8, 2014, is \$7.5 billion and the average daily cost is \$11.7 million for 647 days of operations. A further breakdown of cost associated with the operations is [here](#).

"Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), June 2016.

Note that the number in the previous paragraph 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. The U.S. Government has probably spent a total of about three billion dollars in 2014, 2015, and 2016 to provide clandestine military support to the rebels in Syria (i.e., the U.S. proxy army in Syria).

Furthermore, the U.S. taxpayers pay for humanitarian aid for the people of Syria, who are starving as a result of the civil war that is supported by the USA, Russia, Iran, and Syria's neighbors. On 4 Feb 2016, the U.S. Government has spent a total of \$ 5.1 billion on humanitarian aid for Syria. [State Dept.](#)

U.S.-led Coalition 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.

Since U.S. airstrikes began in Iraq on 9 August 2014, I have copied the CENTCOM or Pentagon press releases into my monthly essays, to chronicle these airstrikes.

1 June 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 1 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On May 31, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 21 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, ground-attack, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil pump jacks.
- Near Manbij, 18 strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units, two ISIL headquarters, two ISIL logistics facilities, an ISIL assembly area, an ISIL weapons cache, and an ISIL training base and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL headquarters, two ISIL vehicles, two ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL cave entrance, two ISIL communication towers, an ISIL artillery system, an ISIL ammunition storage facility, and six ISIL-used bridges and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar system.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, five ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL bunkers, three ISIL weapons caches, and an ISIL IED and suppressed an ISIL tactical unit and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Hit, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL recoilless rifle, and two ISIL boats.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, 14 ISIL assembly areas, five ISIL vehicles, an ISIL command and control node, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) facility, an ISIL VBIED, four ISIL weapons caches, four ISIL rocket rails, and an ISIL mortar system and suppressed a separate ISIL mortar position.
- Near Rawah, one strike struck an ISIL VBIED factory.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL refueling station.

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

[Central Command](#), 1 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 1 June 2016.

The 18 airstrikes near Manbij, Syria — near the Syrian-Turkish border — were part of a major offensive begun by U.S.-supported Kurdish and Arab fighters to liberate Manbij from ISIL. Manbij is important because it is on the road from Raqqa (the ISIL capital city in Syria) to the Turkish border, the route for supplies to ISIL. [Reuters](#) and the [Washington Post](#) reported this news on the night of 1 June, followed by a flood of news articles on 3 June: [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Al-Jazeera](#). Airstrikes near Manbij began on 27 May, although the significance was not known publicly until 1 June.

2 June 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 2 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 1, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes destroyed six ISIL oil pump jacks and an ISIL crane.
- Near Manbij, 12 strikes struck 11 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL-used cave, an ISIL

vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), ISIL-used tunnel systems, and four ISIL vehicles and damaged a separate ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Abu Hayat, one strike struck an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL recoilless rifle, an ISIL heavy machine gun, and an ISIL-used tunnel system and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Haditha, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Hit one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL assembly area and suppressed an ISIL heavy machine gun position.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed three ISIL rocket rails and an ISIL rocket system.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position and suppressed an ISIL heavy machine gun position.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL VBIED factory.

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

[Central Command](#), 2 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 2 June 2016.

3 June 2016: airstrikes

On Friday, 3 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 02, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes using bomber, ground-attack, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL oil pump jack.
- Near Manbij, 10 strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL cave entrances, two ISIL caves, and an ISIL-used bridge.

- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL artillery system.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL recoilless rifles, five ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL weapons caches, and two ISIL staging areas.
- Near Habbaniyah, two strikes struck two separate large ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Hit one strike produced inconclusive results.
- Near Kisik, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL headquarters and destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL mortar system, and an ISIL vehicle and damaged a separate ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory.

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

[Central Command](#), 3 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 3 June 2016.

4 June 2016: airstrikes

On Saturday, 4 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 03, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using ground-attack, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL caves, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised device (VBIED).
- Near Mar'a, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units, an ISIL weapons storage facility, and an ISIL staging area and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL rocket rail.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL supply caches, and six ISIL staging areas and damaged three ISIL fighting positions and denied ISIL access to terrain.

- Near Habbaniyah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun, and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Mosul, five strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL staging area and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes struck an ISIL IED facility and an ISIL VBIED factory.

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

[Central Command](#), 4 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 4 June 2016.

5 June 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 5 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 4, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 10 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, ground-attack, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL-used bridge, five ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL headquarters.
- Near Mar'a, four strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL bed down location and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL mortar system, and an ISIL weapons storage facility.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes destroyed four ISIL rockets rails, an ISIL rocket cache, and an ISIL petroleum, oil, and lubricants facility.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL recoilless rifle, and two ISIL tunnels and damaged two ISIL fighting positions and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL boat, three ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL assembly areas and an ISIL mortar system and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL headquarters and destroyed 17 ISIL

boats.

- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 5 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 5 June 2016.

6 June 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 6 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 5, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike destroyed two ISIL excavators.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike destroyed an ISIL workover rig and an ISIL crane.
- Near Manbij, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL bed down location, and an ISIL anti-air artillery piece.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Abu Hayat, two strikes struck an ISIL training facility and destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle.
- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory, two ISIL VBIEDs, an ISIL warehouse, and an ISIL tunnel entrance and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL artillery piece, an ISIL ammunition cache, and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Mosul, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed three ISIL mortar systems.
- Near Rawah, one strike struck an ISIL staging facility.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an ISIL front-end loader.

Strike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
[Central Command](#), 6 June 2016.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 6 June 2016.

7 June 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 7 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 6, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, 15 strikes struck 13 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL vehicles, an ISIL cave entrance, and an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Mar'a, three strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL command and control node, and an ISIL headquarters and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL weapons cache, three ISIL heavy machine guns, and an ISIL front end loader and damaged an ISIL fighting position and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Haditha, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL weapons caches, two ISIL bed down locations, and an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck an ISIL oil tanker storage area, an ISIL logistics facility, and an ISIL VBIED factory.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed seven ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Rawah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

Strike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
[Central Command](#), 7 June 2016.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 7 June 2016.

8 June 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 8 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 7, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 10 strikes using bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed an ISIL crane and an ISIL front-end loader.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL-used bridge.

Iraq

- Near Fallujah, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL front-end loader, an ISIL weapons cache, and an ISIL heavy machine gun and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, two strikes destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL staging area and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Haditha, two strikes destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL staging area, and an ISIL artillery piece.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL staging area and an ISIL headquarters.
- Near Ramadi, one strike damaged an ISIL tactical vehicle.
- Near Rawah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes struck an ISIL modular oil refinery and destroyed an ISIL supply cache.

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

[Central Command](#), 8 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 8 June 2016.

9 June 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 9 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 8, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using bomber, fighter, attack, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, fighter, ground-attack, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory and destroyed six ISIL oil pump jacks and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck 10 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL mortar system and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.
- Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike struck an ISIL improvised weapons factory.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 23 ISIL fighting positions, eight ISIL light machine guns, six ISIL heavy machine guns, two ISIL recoilless rifles, an ISIL supply cache, and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Haditha, two strikes struck an ISIL staging facility and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL tunnel system.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Qayyarah, five strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL weigh station, an ISIL bed down location, an ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL meeting site and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Ramadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL rocket rail and an ISIL supply cache.

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

[Central Command](#), 9 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 9 June 2016.

10 June 2016: airstrikes

On Friday, 10 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and

Syria:

On June 9, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 10 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using ground-attack, attack, and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil pump jack.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed two ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 16 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, two ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems, an ISIL recoilless rifle, three ISIL light machine guns, four ISIL heavy machine guns, and an ISIL mortar system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL mortar system, two ISIL bunkers, an ISIL staging area, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL improvised weapons factory and destroyed an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Sinjar, one strike produced inconclusive results.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL staging area.

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

[Central Command](#), 10 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 10 June 2016.

On 10 June, [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); and [SOHR](#) reported that the U.S.-backed Kurdish and Arab rebels had cut all roads into Manbij. That town is now surrounded and besieged.

11 June 2016: airstrikes

On Saturday, 11 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 10, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL

targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, five strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL tactical vehicle, and two ISIL vehicles.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes destroyed two ISIL artillery pieces and an ISIL front-end loader.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL recoilless rifles, three ISIL light machine guns, two ISIL heavy machine guns, and an ISIL anti-air artillery piece and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL staging area, an ISIL command and control node, and two ISIL storage areas and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL rocket cache.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL supply cache and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, three ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), and an ISIL heavy machine gun and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Qayyarah, seven strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit, five ISIL communication sites, an ISIL recruitment facility, and an ISIL bed down location and destroyed four ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL vehicle, six ISIL rocket rails, and an ISIL mortar position and suppressed a separate ISIL mortar position.

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

[Central Command](#), 11 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 11 June 2016.

12 June 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 12 June 2016, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

Syria:

Attack, bomber, fighter, ground attack and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 16 strikes in Syria:

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Raqqah, a strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck 11 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three

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

- Near Mara, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL weapons storage facility and an ISIL ammunition storage facility and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq:

Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 20 strikes in Iraq, coordinated with and in support of Iraq's government:

- Near Baghdadi, a strike destroyed two ISIL artillery pieces and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Bashir, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL assembly area and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Fallujah, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units; destroyed five ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL vehicles, two ISIL vehicle bombs, an ISIL heavy machine gun and six ISIL light machine guns; damaged two separate ISIL fighting positions; and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Qayyarah, eight strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL weigh station; destroyed three ISIL mortar systems, 10 ISIL rocket rails, two ISIL vehicle bomb facilities and an ISIL assembly area; damaged an ISIL mortar system; and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, a strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle bomb storage facility and an ISIL anti-air artillery piece.
- Near Sinjar, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL rocket rail, an ISIL tactical vehicle, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL fighting position, and an ISIL storage area.
- Near Tal Afar, a strike suppressed an ISIL bunker.

[Pentagon](#), 12 June 2016.

The 12 June URL at the CENTCOM website links to the 13 June press release, the fourth time since 23 May 2016 that overwriting of a previous webpage has occurred at the CENTCOM website.

13 June 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 13 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 12, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 19 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, ground-attack, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil well heads.

Near Ayn Isa, five strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, five ISIL vehicles, an ISIL command and control node, and an ISIL front-end loader.

- Near Manbij, six strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL cave entrance, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL tactical vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Fallujah, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL anti-air artillery piece, five ISIL light machine guns, three ISIL tunnel systems, and an ISIL recoilless rifle and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Mosul, six strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL oil tanker storage area and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle and suppressed an ISIL machine gun position.
- Near Qayyarah, seven strikes struck two separate large ISIL tactical units, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) facility, and three ISIL-used bridges and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, seven ISIL assembly areas, two ISIL artillery pieces, an ISIL tactical vehicle, three ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL mortar position, an ISIL rocket rail, four ISIL VBIEDs, and 18 ISIL boats and suppressed a separate ISIL tactical unit.

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

[Central Command](#), 13 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 13 June 2016.

The press release on 14 June contains an additional two airstrikes near Manbij.

14 June 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 14 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 13, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using bomber, ground-attack, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, 13 strikes struck 10 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL cave entrances, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL command and control node, two ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL security headquarters.
- Near Mar'a, three strikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL tactical vehicle, and an ISIL mortar system.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike struck an ISIL weapons factory.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed 19 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, four ISIL heavy machine guns, four ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems, eight ISIL light machine guns, three ISIL recoilless rifles, and an ISIL mortar system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Kisik, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL supply cache, and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, four strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL headquarters and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL assembly area, and two ISIL mortar systems and suppressed a separate ISIL tactical unit and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL fighting position.

Additionally, two strikes from June 12 were not included on the June 13 strike release.

Syria

- Near Manbij, two strikes struck two ISIL tactical units.

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

[Central Command](#), 14 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 14 June 2016.

15 June 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 15 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 14, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted six strikes using bomber, ground-attack, attack, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, six strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL home-made explosives cache.
- Near Bashir, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL command and control node and two ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy machine guns, and six ISIL light machine guns and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, six strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and foreign fighter support facilities including an ISIL operations center, two ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL weapons factory and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, six strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL communications facility and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, four ISIL assembly areas, five ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL mortar position, nine ISIL boats, eight ISIL rocket rails, an ISIL rocket system, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL ammunition cache, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised device (VBIED) and suppressed a separate ISIL tactical unit and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL boat.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed three ISIL rocket rails and three ISIL rocket systems and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 15 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 15 June 2016.

16 June 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 16 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 15, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed four ISIL oil well heads.

- Near Manbij, six strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and six ISIL command and control nodes.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes destroyed an ISIL bunker and suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike struck an ISIL oil compound.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Fallujah, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL light machine gun, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), two ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems, and an ISIL recoilless rifle and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Haditha, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL foreign fighter weapons storage facility.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Qayyarah, five strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL VBIED facility and destroyed four ISIL assembly areas, two ISIL mortar systems, five ISIL vehicles, two ISIL tunnel systems, two ISIL bunkers, and an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL staging area, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system, and an ISIL light machine gun.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed eight ISIL rocket systems and an ISIL assembly area and suppressed a separate ISIL tactical unit.

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

[Central Command](#), 16 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 16 June 2016.

17 June 2016: airstrikes

On Friday, 17 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 16, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 10 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, attack, ground-attack, and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, 10 strikes struck nine separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Bashir, two strikes destroyed two ISIL bed down locations, three ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL weapons cache, and three ISIL command and control nodes.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL heavy machine guns, 10 ISIL fighting positions, and an ISIL recoilless rifle and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, one strike destroyed an ISIL assembly area and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and three ISIL fighting positions and suppressed two separate ISIL tactical units.
- Near Sinjar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and an ISIL fighting position and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.

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

[Central Command](#), 17 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 17 June 2016.

18 June 2016: airstrikes

On Saturday, 18 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 17, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed nine ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike struck an ISIL-used logistics route.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck an ISIL-used logistics route and an ISIL-used culvert.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive

device (VBIED).

- Near Mar'a, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL command and control node and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL mortar system.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Al Huwayjah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Bayji, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL VBIED factory, and an ISIL improvised weapons factory and destroyed 15 ISIL fighting positions, eight ISIL heavy machine guns, five ISIL light machine guns, an ISIL recoilless rifle, an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system, and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL weapons storage facility and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL boat and suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.

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

[Central Command](#), 18 June 2016.

Not posted at the Pentagon.

The U.S.-supported rebels have advanced to within "almost" 2 km of Manbij. [Reuters](#).

19 June 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 19 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 18, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed three ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes struck two ISIL-used bridges and an ISIL staging area.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike destroyed two ISIL rocket systems.

- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck nine separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL heavy machine gun.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes struck an ISIL bed down facility and an ISIL staging area and destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Bayji, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL recoilless rifle, and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 22 ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL vehicles, 10 ISIL heavy machine guns, seven ISIL light machine guns, an ISIL recoilless rifle, three ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Mosul, one strike struck an ISIL oil headquarters.
- Near Qayyarah, five strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL assembly area, an ISIL weapons cache, and an ISIL command and control node and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL VBIED, an ISIL boat, and an ISIL light machine gun and damaged a separate ISIL boat.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck two separate ISIL foreign fighter command posts.

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

[Central Command](#), 19 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 19 June 2016.

20 June 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 20 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 19, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, 10 strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five

ISIL fighting positions.

- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL tunnel entrance, an ISIL rocket cache, and two ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 17 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, five ISIL heavy machine guns, eight ISIL light machine guns, and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL weapons and foreign fighter support facility and destroyed an ISIL tunnel, two ISIL assembly areas, and an ISIL command and control node and suppressed an ISIL rocket firing position.
- Near Ramadi, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL boat, an ISIL bed down location, an ISIL weapons cache, and an ISIL staging area.
- Near Rawah, two strikes struck an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory and an ISIL improvised weapons factory.

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

[Central Command](#), 20 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 20 June 2016.

21 June 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 21 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 20, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, attack, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck an ISIL-used bridge and destroyed five ISIL oil pump jacks.
- Near Manbij, 13 strikes struck 12 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL vehicles and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes destroyed an ISIL boat and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Bayji, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, two ISIL vehicles, two ISIL VBIEDs, and an ISIL tunnel system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL heavy machine gun, seven ISIL light machine guns, and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL tunnel.
- Near Qayyarah, six strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL bunkers, two ISIL tunnel entrances, an ISIL command and control node, two ISIL mortar systems, and six ISIL boats and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL boat.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker, four ISIL weapons caches, an ISIL assembly area, and an ISIL bed down location.

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

[Central Command](#), 21 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 21 June 2016.

22 June 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 22 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 21, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ar Raqqa, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL finance center and destroyed two ISIL oil pump jacks.
- Near Manbij, 12 strikes struck 12 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL front-end loader.
- Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL improvised explosive device (IED), an ISIL vehicle borne IED, four ISIL rocket rails, two ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL supply cache, and an ISIL anti-air artillery piece and damaged five ISIL berms.
- Near Fallujah, three strikes struck two separate large ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL heavy machine guns, five ISIL light machine guns, five ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems, and two ISIL mortar systems and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Kisik, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL tunnel, and three ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, six ISIL assembly areas, and an ISIL rocket system.
- Near Qayyarah, three strikes destroyed three ISIL rocket rails and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL light machine gun, an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system, an ISIL boat, and three ISIL weapons caches.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike suppressed an ISIL heavy machine gun position.

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

[Central Command](#), 22 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 22 June 2016.

23 June 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 23 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 22, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 22 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL-used bridge and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL tunnel system.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun position.
- Near Bashir, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL command and control nodes.
- Near Bayji, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL tunnel entrance, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).
- Near Fallujah, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, five ISIL light machine guns, an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system, and an ISIL boat and damaged two separate ISIL fighting positions and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, eight strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units, an ISIL ministry of oil headquarters, and an ISIL VBIED factory and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, two ISIL weapons caches, 10 ISIL assembly areas, two ISIL command and control nodes, and an ISIL tunnel entrance.
- Near Qayyarah, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and eight ISIL boats and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 14 ISIL boats and two ISIL weapons caches.

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

[Central Command](#), 23 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 23 June 2016.

On 23 June, U.S.-supported Kurdish and Arab fighters entered the edge of Manbij. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

24 June 2016: airstrikes

On Friday, 24 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 23, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed three ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mar'a, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL tunnel system and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL tunnel entrance, an ISIL weapons cache, and an ISIL bulldozer.
- Near Abu Hayat, two strikes struck an ISIL logistics facility and an ISIL bed down location.
- Near Bayji, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, five ISIL vehicles, an ISIL tactical vehicle, two ISIL weapons caches, and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Fallujah, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL boats and an ISIL staging area.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Qayyarah, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and an ISIL tunnel and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL staging area, and an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL trench.

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

[Central Command](#), 24 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 24 June 2016.

On 24 June, U.S.-supported Kurdish and Arab fighters seized parts of the periphery of Manbij. [Reuters](#).

25 June 2016: airstrikes

On Saturday, 25 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 24, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck two ISIL logistical routes and an ISIL administration facility.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 11 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed three ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factories, an ISIL VBIED, an ISIL weapons cache, and an ISIL bunker and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Bayji, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL rocket rail, and an ISIL front-end loader.
- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL boat, and two ISIL light machine guns.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed an ISIL weapons cache and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Mosul, six strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL VBIED factory and destroyed four ISIL vehicles and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Qayyarah, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL boat and four ISIL assembly areas and suppressed two separate ISIL tactical units and three separate ISIL mortar positions and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 10 ISIL boats, an ISIL staging area, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL mortar system.

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

[Central Command](#), 25 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 25 June 2016.

26 June 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 26 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 25, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL tactical vehicles.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes struck an ISIL gas and oil separation plant and destroyed two ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed

two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), and an ISIL improvised explosive device (IED) and denied ISIL access to terrain.

- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike struck an ISIL staging facility.
- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike struck two ISIL VBIED facilities.
- Near Fallujah, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL boat, eight ISIL light machine guns, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL staging area, an ISIL VBIED, and two ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL VBIED storage facility and five bed down locations.
- Near Qayyarah, five strikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL boats, an ISIL assembly area, three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL VBIED, and an ISIL front-end loader and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes destroyed two ISIL boats and an ISIL front-end loader and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Sinjar, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL assembly areas and damaged an ISIL vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 26 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 26 June 2016.

27 June 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 27 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 26, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 23 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL tunnels and damaged an ISIL fighting position and denied ISIL access to terrain.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL tunnel entrance and damaged an

- ISIL bunker.
- Near Abu Hayat, one strike struck an ISIL training facility.
 - Near Ar Rutbah, one strike struck an ISIL improvised weapons facility.
 - Near Hit, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL bunker.
 - Near Mosul, six strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL vehicles.
 - Near Qayyarah, nine strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL boat, two ISIL assembly areas, three ISIL vehicles, three ISIL excavators, four ISIL oil tankers, an ISIL tactical vehicle, an ISIL tunnel entrance, and an ISIL front-end loader and denied ISIL access to terrain.
 - Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), and an ISIL fighting position.
 - Near Tal Afar, two strikes destroyed an ISIL tunnel, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL mortar system.

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

[Central Command](#), 27 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 27 June 2016.

28 June 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 28 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 27, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Coalition military forces also conducted one strike in Iraq in support of Coalition operations using fighter aircraft.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL-used bridge.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike struck an ISIL gas and oil separation plant.
- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL fighting positions, and an ISIL anti-tank guided weapon and damaged three ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL

- weapons cache.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL tunnel system.
 - Near Fallujah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle, an ISIL front-end loader, seven ISIL vehicles, two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), and an ISIL staging area and damaged two ISIL fighting positions.
 - Near Hit, one strike destroyed an ISIL anti-aircraft gun and an ISIL weapons cache.
 - Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
 - Near Mosul, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
 - Near Qayyarah, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL vehicle, eight ISIL rocket rails, an ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL weapons cache.
 - Near Tal Afar, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar system.

Coalition military forces conducted one strike in Iraq in support of Coalition operations using fighter aircraft:

- Near Bayji, one strike struck inoperable Coalition equipment denying ISIL access in support of Coalition operations.

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

[Central Command](#), 28 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 28 June 2016.

29 June 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 29 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 28, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes using bomber, attack, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, eight strikes struck two ISIL tactical units, an ISIL intelligence training center, two ISIL-used bridges, an ISIL headquarters, an ISIL training camp, and an ISIL bed down location and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, six strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL anti-air artillery piece.
- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, five strikes struck two ISIL weapons caches, an ISIL finance distribution center, and two ISIL communication facilities.
- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike struck an ISIL VBIED facility.
- Near Fallujah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL VBIED and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Qayyarah, five strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, two ISIL bunkers, four ISIL rocket rails, two ISIL rocket systems, an ISIL excavator, an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system, and ISIL-used engineering equipment.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 29 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 29 June 2016.

30 June 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 30 June 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On June 29, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 19 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using rocket artillery and bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL vehicles, an ISIL tactical vehicle and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Manbij, six strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL mortar system, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes struck an ISIL staging facility and destroyed an ISIL bunker and suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Al Qaim, one strike struck an ISIL VBIED facility.
- Near Bayji, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL VBIED.

- Near Fallujah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 42 ISIL vehicles and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 120 ISIL vehicles, an ISIL tactical vehicle, and three ISIL VBIEDs.
- Near Haditha, one strike struck an ISIL staging facility.
- Near Hit, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 13 ISIL vehicles and damaged another.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed eight ISIL rocket rails and five ISIL rocket systems.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, two ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL mortar system, and an ISIL staging area and damaged two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Waleed, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and two ISIL weapons caches.

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

[Central Command](#), 30 June 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 30 June 2016.

U.S. and Iraqi warplanes spotted convoys of ISIL vehicles fleeing from the Fallujah area on the night of 28 June and again during 29 June. Splatt! Note that the U.S. and Iraqi results are reported separately. The U.S. claims 175 ISIL vehicles were destroyed, while the Iraqis claim an additional 260 vehicles were destroyed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Fox News](#); [Military Times](#); [The National](#) in UAE; [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP). The Iraqi military reported 260 vehicles destroyed and 150 terrorists killed, but that death toll is *not* plausible, because each vehicle has at least one terrorist (i.e., the driver).

Terrorism & Migration in Europe

Islamic Terrorism in Europe

History in my previous essays:

- My [first essay](#) tersely — and incompletely — recounts a history of Islamic terrorism from 1972 to 2013.
- My essay for [June 2014](#) mentions the Islamic terrorist attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 May 2014, and an attack in France on March 2012.
- My essay for [Jan 2015](#) describes the Islamic terrorist attacks in France on 7-9 January.

- My essay for [Feb 2015](#) describes the Islamic terror attack in Copenhagen on 14 Feb.
- My essay for [September 2015](#) mentions a 15 y old girl in Denmark who stabbed her mother to death after repeatedly watching on the Internet (YouTube) videos of ISIL executions with her 29 y old boyfriend who was a so-called "refugee" from Iraq. That essay also mentions an Iraqi terrorist in Berlin who was killed by police in an attack on 17 Sep 2015.
- My essay for [November 2015](#) describes the Islamic terror attack in Paris that killed 130 people on 13 Nov 2015.
- My essay for [December 2015](#) describes an Islamic terror attack in San Bernardino, California on 2 Dec 2015.
- My essay for [January 2016](#) describes Muslim immigrants running amok in Cologne, Hamburg, and at least five other European cities on the night of 31 Dec 2015.
- My essay for [March 2016](#) describes ISIL terror attacks on the airport and subway in Brussels that killed 32 people on 22 March 2016.

Some of these previous essays also mention concerns by governments in Europe and Russia that Islamic terrorists will return from Syria and engage in terrorism in Europe and Russia.

Islamic Migration into Europe numbers

One of the major news stories during September 2015 was the flood of approximately 100,000 migrants into Europe, mostly from Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan.

During the migration crisis in September 2015, accurate numbers were sparse. Instead, politicians and journalists spoke of "thousands" per day, "tens of thousands" per week, and at least a hundred thousand per month. On 7 October, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "An Austrian Interior Ministry official says nearly 200,000 migrants transited Austria" during September 2015. The actual number was higher, because some migrants boarded trains outside of Austria and then traveled through Austria. Also the Associated Press reported: "German authorities say 164,000" migrants arrived in Germany during September 2015.

On 7 December 2015, the German government announced that a total of 965,000 migrants had registered in Germany during the first 11 months of 2015. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 6 January 2016, the German government announced that a total of 1,091,894 migrants had registered in Germany during the 2015 year. Of these, 428,468 (39%) were from Syria. [Associated Press](#).

disenchantment & failure of assimilation

This increase in Muslim population in Europe will likely lead to an increase in Islamic

terrorism in Europe for two reasons:

1. Muslim migrants do *not* speak the local language of their host nation, and the migrants have different religious values from the prevailing local Christian majority values, so the migrants will feel out of place in European society. (What Tej Parikh called a "failure in assimilation", [Reuters](#), 27 Nov 2015.) The migrants will become disenchanted with their new home, and some will become radicalized. The radicalization will most likely occur via the Internet, but could also occur from personal contact with Islamic radicals in Europe.
2. It is possible that some Islamic terrorists will enter Europe along with migrants. These could be terrorists sent to recruit more fighters for ISIL or Al-Qaeda. Or they could be Europeans returning from battle in Syria, but using a new name to avoid criminal prosecution for fighting in Syria.

This is a subject that humanitarians avoid considering, as the humanitarians welcome migrants to Europe.

In mid-September 2015, I wrote that some "migrants will become disenchanted with their new home". This has already happened. On 19 October 2015, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Syrians who arrived in Uruguay in November 2014 have complained, and "many Uruguayans ... have come to see the refugees more as rude, ungrateful guests." And on 29 October 2015, [The Guardian](#) reports that 14 migrants from Syria refused to leave a bus at their destination in Sweden because it was "too cold". On 1 January 2016, the [Washington Post](#) reported that some migrants to Europe were returning home to Iraq, more than 779 Iraqis in November 2015 alone. Reasons for returning include: "disillusioned with the lack of opportunities or homesick, while others were forced to go when their asylum claims were rejected." On 11 January 2016, [Reuters](#) reports the Iraqi embassy in Berlin issued 1400 passports for migrants to return to Iraq since the end of October 2015. On 7 March 2016, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Iraqis were "disappointed" in Europe and were returning to Iraq.

On 1 October 2015, the [Washington Post](#) quoted the director of a migrant camp in Greiz, Germany: "I do not have any skilled workers living here. I know the labor market in this region; it is not so simple to find work here." That foreshadows the migrants being unable to find work in Germany.

On 14 April 2016, Germany demanded that immigrants learn the German language *and* seek employment, or the immigrants would lose welfare benefits. [Reuters](#). Learning the German language is difficult for native speakers of English, and must be harder for native speakers of Arabic that has a different alphabet.

On 18 May 2016, Australian Immigration Minister Peter Dutton raised the issue of poorly educated immigrants:

"They won't be numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English. These people would be taking Australian jobs, there's no question about that," Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said when asked about the proposed increase in the humanitarian intake quota.

"For many of them that would be unemployed, they would languish in unemployment queues ... and the rest of it so there would be huge cost and there's no sense in sugar-coating that, that's the scenario," he told Sky News late on Tuesday [17 May].

Matt Siegel, "Australian minister warns against 'illiterate, innumerate' refugees," [Reuters](#), 03:25 GMT, 18 May 2016.

Also see [Sydney Morning Herald](#); [Australian Broadcasting](#); [Australian Broadcasting](#)(19May).

While Dutton's remarks are controversial, it is obviously more difficult to teach an immigrant the English language and job skills if that immigrant is illiterate in his/her native language. And immigrants do take jobs from local people, unless there are more employees sought than local people available to fill those jobs.

some immigrants are criminals

On 27 Sep 2015, there was a riot by Albanians and Pakistanis in a migrant camp in Calden, Germany. On 30 Sep 2015 there was a brawl between Syrian and Afghans in a migrant camp in Hamburg, Germany.

See:

- "German president warns of limits to number of refugees," [Reuters](#), 28 Sep 2015.
- "Germany quells migrant mass brawl at camp in Calden," [BBC](#), 28 Sep 2015.
- "A refugee riot puts a German town on edge," [Washington Post](#), 1 Oct 2015.
- "Syrians, Afghans clash in German refugee center riot," [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP), 1 Oct 2015.
- "Clash breaks out among refugees in Hamburg," [Deutsche Welle](#), 1 Oct 2015.

If these riots continue, I would expect many Germans to regret allowing these barbarians to enter Germany, because of strong law-and-order values amongst Germans.

On the nights of 8-9-10 November 2015, there were riots in a migrant camp in Calais, France in which more than two dozen policemen were injured. [France24](#); [Globe&Mail](#)(AP). There are approximately 6000 migrants waiting in Calais to illegally enter the United Kingdom via the tunnel under the English Channel.

On New Year's Eve, 31 Dec 2015, Muslim immigrants sexually assaulted more than 100 women in Cologne, Germany. At least six other cities in Europe experienced similar attacks, and journalists spoke of a "rape culture" amongst Islamic men.

On 15 January 2016, after multiple complaints of sexual harassment of women, the town of Bornheim, Germany banned adult Muslim men from the town swimming pool. [Reuters](#); [The Guardian](#).

On 20 January 2016, [Israel National News](#) reported that the German government had been concealing crimes committed by Muslim immigrants since June 2014.

On 7 June 2016, Muslims set fire to housing for refugees in Düsseldorf because the staff

failed to awaken the refugees before sunrise for breakfast on the first morning of Ramadan. The building was home for 280 refugees, but now is totally destroyed. [Daily Mail](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

fraudulent passports

As an example of criminal fraud committed by some of the migrants, on 6 September 2015 the [Associated Press](#) reported that non-Syrian migrants were discarding in Serbia their identity cards, passports, drivers's licenses, and other documents, so they could fraudulently claim to be refugees from Syria. On 23 September, *The Washington Post* has a similar report about fraud by migrants, and also tersely mentions "Islamic State sympathizers" are included in the migrants. On 25 September, the German interior ministry estimated that 30% of migrants in Germany are falsely claiming to be from Syria. [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#). Given that 527,000 migrants arrived in Germany during 2015 (as of 25 Sep), fraud by 30% of the migrants is a *huge* problem.

It is *not* possible to reliably vet the so-called refugees who enter Europe:

1. Some of these migrants have no passport and no identity documents, so their name and past history can *not* be verified, except laboriously through fingerprints.
2. After the attacks in Paris on 13 Nov 2015, it took European police three days to trace *one* Syrian passport issued to Ahmad al-Mohammad and determine that the passport was fraudulent. When there are thousands of migrants each day demanding entry, border guards can not spend three days checking each passport. Moreover, a second fraudulent Syrian passport with the same name was discovered in Serbia, which hints at widespread fraud. [The Guardian](#).
3. It is unlikely that Assad's government will cooperate with European requests for criminal background checks on emigrants from Syria, because European leaders have repeatedly called for the ouster of Assad.
4. Governments in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc. have primitive criminal databases and can *not* do complete criminal background checks on tens of thousands of migrants. Moreover, police in those nations arrest only a few of the terrorists, so most terrorists may be unknown to police.

Additionally, on 18 November 2015, five Syrians were arrested in Honduras for using stolen Greek passports. The five Syrians intended to travel to the USA. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). This incident shows that some so-called refugees from Syrian engage in fraudulent use of passports, and they successfully passed through several borders with the fraudulent passports.

On 10-11 December 2015, [ABC News](#); [CNN](#); and [Reuters](#) reported that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement had determined that ISIL was now able to issue fake Syrian passports, using genuine blank passports and genuine passport printing machines. This means that *all* Syrian passports are now worthless, because border guards can not distinguish a real Syrian passport from a fake Syrian passport. See [Reuters](#) for 20 December.

After politicians assured the public that there were *no* terrorists in the refugees entering Europe, the attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 showed that at least two Islamic terrorists entered Europe with refugees. Then on 26 November, the Associated Press reported:

The Austria Press Agency cited German federal police chief Hans-Georg Maasen as saying that some who blend in with the migrants fought with IS and are planning a "combat mission" once they arrive in Europe. He said Thursday [26 Nov] that his office knows of 7,900 Islamic radicals in Germany who advocate violence to advance their goals, with some trying to win migrants to their cause.

He said German authorities receive one or two "fairly concrete tips" a week of planned terrorist activity. And he described IS extremists as "combat-hardened professionals" more dangerous than those from al-Qaida.

"The Latest: German official says some migrants IS radicals," [Associated Press](#), 15:21 GMT, 26 Nov 2015.

On 22 December 2015, the *Bild* newspaper in Germany reported anonymous German government officials said approximately 12 people entered Germany with fake Syrian passports and then they disappeared in Germany. The presumed terrorists entered sometime before 13 Nov, when the terror attacks in Paris occurred. Two of the attackers in Paris had similar fake Syrian passports. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).

politics

At the middle of the immigration debacle in 2015, the German Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel, famously said that "asylum laws have no upper limit". [Associated Press](#) (5 Sep); [Politico](#) (1 Oct); [Deutsche Welle](#) (21 Nov); Commentators suggested that Dr. Merkel's absolute, "no limits" compassion for refugees had its origins in her moral upbringing as the daughter of a Lutheran pastor. My comment is that the asylum law has *no* limit because legislators forgot to put a limit in the law.

By 6 January 2016, Merkel was willing to reduce the flow of migrants to Europe. The Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) has demanded a limit of 200,000 migrants/year to Germany, which would mean that 80% of the migrants who entered Germany in 2015 would need to be expelled. [Reuters](#).

On 29 November 2015, the European Union and Turkey reached an agreement in which Turkey promised to reduce the number of migrants to Europe and Europe agreed to pay Turkey US\$ 3.2 billion. On 7 January 2016, [Reuters](#) reports that the European Union says it is "a long way from being satisfied" with Turkey's efforts to limit migrants.

The wave of hundreds of sexual assaults and robberies by Islamic immigrants in Cologne, Hamburg, and at least 5 other cities on the night of 31 Dec 2015 was the critical turning point in which many Germans went from welcoming refugees to wanting to expel immigrants. This incident showed that some immigrants were *not* going to conform to German concepts of law-and-order. Furthermore, the police waited 5 days to mention that Islamic immigrants were suspected of the assaults and robberies, a delay that does *not* inspire confidence in the German police.

Three German states (Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt) held elections for their state legislatures on 13 March 2016. The anti-immigrant party, Alternative für Deutschland, came in second place in Saxony-Anhalt, and made a strong showing in the other two states. These results indicate widespread dissatisfaction with Merkel's policy of welcoming Muslim immigrants. [Reuters](#); [tagesschau](#) at ARD; [Der Spiegel](#).

On 18 March 2016, the European Union and Turkey reached a new agreement about Muslim migrants to Europe. The EU will pay Turkey US\$ 6.6 billion for housing of refugees in Turkey during 2016-2018. Turkey promises to end the flow of boat people across the Aegean Sea to Greece. Those boat people who do reach Greece will be returned to Turkey. Europe will accept some refugees from Syria, but *not* from other nations. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); Text of agreement at [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

On 24 March 2016, Poland refused to accept more Islamic migrants, because of the Islamic terrorist attacks in Brussels on 22 March. [Associated Press](#).

Immediately after the Islamic attacks on the office of the *Charlie Hebdo* satirical newspaper in Paris in Jan 2015, there was a slogan "Je Suis Charlie". And immediately after the Islamic attacks in Brussels on 22 March, there was a slogan "Je Suis Bruxelles". Now there is a new slogan: "Je suis sick of this shit". [France24](#); [NY Times](#). But one needs to be extremely careful. Instead of "sick of this shit", if one were to say "sick of Muslims", one might be arrested for having an unapproved thought. Indeed, a man in England was arrested on 23 Mar 2016 for inciting racial hatred. [BBC](#); [Evening Standard](#); [Associated Press](#). (On 25 March, charges were dismissed, although it is possible he will be charged later. [Associated Press](#).) And Dutch anti-immigrant politician Geert Wilders is facing criminal trial on hate speech charges. [BBC](#). Personally, I am an absolutist in matters of freedom of speech: freedom of speech includes the freedom to be offended. Hate speech statutes are an attempt by the majority to force everyone to conform their speech to what pleases the majority, which is a blatant attempt by governments to impose orthodoxy on its citizens.

France and Belgium admitted millions of Muslim immigrants, mostly from Algeria and Morocco. Many of these immigrants failed to assimilate into European culture, and now live in ghettos. The biographies of Islamic terrorists arrested in Europe since 2014 show this common pattern of living in a ghetto and sometimes being arrested for ordinary crimes.

On 22 May 2016, an anti-immigrant candidate was defeated for the position of President of Austria, but he received 49.7% of the vote, in a very strong showing. But on 1 July 2016, the highest court in Austria invalidated that election and ordered a new election.

Massacre in Orlando, FL

At 02:00 EDT on 12 June 2016, Omar Mateen used a Sig Sauer .223 caliber assault rifle and a Glock 9 mm pistol to shoot more than 100 people in the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Three hours after the attack began, police shot Mateen dead and rescued 30 hostages. By noon on 12 June, the attack was recognized as the worst shooting in U.S. history, with

at least 49 dead (excluding Mateen) and 53 wounded. Mateen's rifle is similar to the Colt AR-15, which is a civilian version of the U.S. Military M-16, and many journalists erroneously reported Mateen used an AR-15. A short bibliography of general facts is given [below](#).

Mateen's parents emigrated from Afghanistan to the USA, and Mateen was born in the USA in November 1986. Recently, Mateen attended prayers at a mosque three or four times a week. [Associated Press](#). The [Miami Herald](#) cites the Imam of the mosque in Fort Pierce, Florida that Mateen was a "regular attendee since childhood and came in for worship three or four times a week."

Just before Mateen began his attack, he called the 911 emergency telephone number and pledged loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL. [WFTV](#); [Orlando Sentinel](#); [NBC News](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); Also see the [transcript](#) of the 911 calls. On the night of 15 June, the [Associated Press](#), reported: "As he did in his call to a 911 operator during the massacre, Mateen pledged his allegiance on Facebook to the leader of the Islamic State".

Soon after the attack, the Amaq news agency reported the attack. CNN reported:

A message posted in Arabic on a dark web site associated with the ISIS news agency Amaq said "the armed attack that targeted a gay night club in the city of Orlando in the American state of Florida and that bore more than a 100 killed and wounded was carried out by an Islamic state fighter."

But CNN's Salma Abdelaziz, who translated the message and closely monitors ISIS messaging, cautioned about taking the message at face value. She said the language is inconsistent with previous ISIS announcements and that the Arabic word for gay was used rather than an epithet normally used by ISIS. Also, there was no claim that the attack was directed, just an after-the-fact claim the gunman was an ISIS fighter, she said.

Ralph Ellis, Ashley Fantz, Faith Karimi, & Elliott C. McLaughlin, "Orlando shooting: 49 killed, shooter pledged ISIS allegiance," [CNN](#), 11:05 EDT, 13 June 2016.

[Reuters](#) also reported the Amaq claim.

On the morning of 13 June, Al-Bayan, an ISIL-affiliated radio station, said that Omar Mateen was a "one of the soldiers of the caliphate in America". [Newsweek](#); [The Telegraph](#)(at 10:24 BST); [NY Times](#). But there is *no* indication that ISIL was in contact with Mateen *before* the shooting. It appears that a Muslim perpetrated an atrocity in Orlando and then ISIL fortuitously claimed credit for the atrocity.

I'm *not* sure that I should mention this attack in this section on Islamic terrorism, because — on 12 June — Mateen's obvious motivation seems to be hatred of homosexuals, and he attacked a nightclub for homosexuals. For example, Mateen's father said the Mateen became angry a few months ago when he saw two men kissing each other in public on a Miami street. [NBC News](#); [Palm Beach Post](#); [Miami Herald](#). But Mateen's hatred of homosexuals is actually consistent with ISIL dogma. [Associated Press](#); [Voice of America](#); [Associated Press](#).

Around noon on 13 June, the FBI Director, James Comey talked to journalists about Omar Mateen: "There are strong indications of radicalization by this killer and of potential inspiration by foreign terrorism organizations." [FBI](#). At 12:38 EDT on 13 June, the [Washington Post](#) reported: "FBI Director James B. Comey said investigators are 'highly confident' that the gunman in the Orlando attack was radicalized, at least in part through the Internet. But Comey said there is no sign that the massacre was part of a larger attack or directed from outside of the United States." See also [Associated Press](#).

For the past several years, security officials in Russia, Western Europe, and the USA have feared that local citizens will be trained by ISIL or Al-Qaeda in Syria, and then return home, for attacks in Russia, Europe, and the USA. That direct sponsorship of terrorism continues to be a reasonable fear.

But there is another way that ISIL and Al-Qaeda can contribute to global Islamic terrorism: use their websites to encourage so-called "lone-wolf" attacks. Such lone-wolf attacks will appeal to some disaffected young male Muslims, who are sympathetic to jihad and unhappy with the nation in which they live. Examples in the USA include the Islamic terrorists at the Boston Marathon on 15 April 2013, Chattanooga (see my essay for [July 2015](#)), San Bernardino ([December 2015](#)), and now Orlando.

On 21 May 2016, ISIL posted on the Internet a call for jihadists to attack during Ramadan. I can find only one report of this call in English-language news media: [Daily Star](#) in U.K. However, on 1 May 2016, [PBS](#) reported ISIL was changing to inspiring lone-wolf attacks, instead of recruiting foreigners to come to Syria. By forcing ISIL to use cheaper lone-wolf attacks, the U.S. Government may actually have worsened security in the USA.

Omar Mateen's Motivation

In wondering *why* Mateen would commit such a terrible crime, I am intrigued by five sets of facts reported by journalists.

1. Mateen's ex-wife said he was mentally ill, specifically he was bipolar. Was Mateen having an episode of mania when he committed mass murder?

But the Orlando police chief said Mateen was "cool and calm" during telephone conversations with police during the attack. (See, e.g., [Orlando Sentinel](#); [NBC News](#); [NY Times](#).)

On the evening of 16 June, journalists reported (see citations in bibliography [below](#)), school records that showed frequent fights and disruptive behavior by Mateen from 1992 to 2003. Mateen's fifth grade teacher — when Mateen was approximately 11 y old — wrote that Mateen showed "no remorse" for his misbehavior. Apparently, Mateen was never referred to a psychologist for diagnosis and treatment of Mateen's belligerence and lack of self-control.

2. His co-workers said Mateen was seething with anger at blacks, homosexuals, Jews, and

women. This suggests that Mateen was driven by bigotry.

3. Mateen *wanted* to be a policeman, but he was apparently rejected by the police. Then he became a security guard in Sep 2007, when he was 21 years old. Mateen might have felt that he was a failure at his goal. Perpetrating mass murder might have been Mateen's way of becoming famous, and being remembered.
4. Why would Mateen travel 190 km from his home in Ft. Pierce to the Pulse nightclub in Orlando? Surely, there must have been potential targets closer to home. If investigators can answer that question, it may explain some of Mateen's motivation.
5. Around 23:00 EDT on 13 June, journalists reported that Mateen's former classmates at a community college in 2006 suggested that Mateen was a homosexual. Also, it was revealed that Mateen frequently drank alcohol in nightclubs. (see citations [below](#)) Mateen may have been severely conflicted (i.e., self-loathing) between his personal behavior and Islamic teachings that condemn both alcohol and homosexuality.

Above, I mention that Omar Mateen pledged allegiance to the leader of ISIL in Omar's FaceBook webpage and also in a telephone call to 911 during the attack.

On 14 June, Patience Carter, a survivor of the attack in the Pulse nightclub, said that Mateen talked to 911 on his cell phone and stated his motivation: "he wanted Americans to stop bombing his country [Afghanistan]". [Orlando Sentinel](#); [Palm Beach Post](#); [Associated Press](#) at 13:45; [Washington Post](#); also see the [transcript](#) of the 911 calls. There are two parts to this terse quotation. One is that Mateen apparently supported the Taliban, who the U.S. military is bombing. The other part is a failure of assimilation, in that Mateen — after being born in the USA and after living in the USA for all of his 29 years — sees himself as an Afghani, *not* a U.S. citizen (i.e., "*his* country" is Afghanistan).

On 15 June, the [Orlando Sentinel](#) and [News13](#) reported that Mateen called the local cable television news channel about 45 minutes after he began his attack. Mateen told the journalist: "I did it for ISIS. I did it for the Islamic State."

It is possible that Mateen was an angry and confused young man, who had several reasons for his attack on the nightclub. His ramblings do *not* sound like a person who is focused on *one* goal. Instead of cluelessly saying "I'm angry and confused", it sounds stronger to give a political reason for his mass murder.

Note also that Omar Mateen has a history of making false statements that exaggerate his importance:

- On 11 Sep 2001, Mateen said his uncle was Osama bin Laden. (See e.g., [Sun-Sentinel](#); [Washington Post](#); [Miami Herald](#).)
- Mateen told co-workers in 2013 that he was supporting both Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah. These are conflicting Islamic terror groups (Sunni vs. Shiite). Mateen's statements to co-workers caused the FBI to investigate and clear Mateen. (See, e.g., [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#).)

- Mateen made at least two false statements to police negotiators during the attack: (1) that Mateen had strapped explosives to bodies of four victims, and (2) that Mateen had accomplices at the nightclub. (See, e.g., [NY Times](#); [WESH](#).) The [transcript](#) of Mateen's 911 calls show that he also falsely claimed to have a vehicle full of explosives in the parking lot of the nightclub, and a false assertion that he could detonate those explosives by remote control.

Because of this history of false statements, we can *not* trust what Omar Mateen said. Note that each of these false statements exaggerates Mateen's importance.

On 16 June, it was publicly revealed that, during his attack, Omar Mateen searched FaceBook for the queries `Pulse Orlando` and `shooting`. [Associated Press](#); [Orlando Sentinel](#). Obviously, Omar the terrorist wanted to learn the public impact of his attack. These searches suggest that one of Omar's motives was a desire to become famous.

Profiling Muslims?

On 19 June 2016, Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential candidate, publicly called for law enforcement to profile Muslims.

DICKERSON: Can I ask you just a bottom-line question before we move on? You like to speak plainly. In December, we talked, and you said there possibly should be profiling. Just as a bottom line here, are you talking about increasing profiling of Muslims in America?

TRUMP: Well, I think profiling is something that we're going to have to start thinking about as a country. And other countries do it.

And you look at Israel and you look at others, and they do it. And they do it successfully. And I hate the concept of profiling. But we have to start using common sense, and we have to use — we have to use our heads.

I see people that — and I have seen it recently. We had a case where very much in my case, where we had tremendous numbers of people coming into a speech I was making. And people that obviously had no guns, had no weapons, had no anything, and they were being — they were going through screening.

And they were going through the same scrutiny, the absolute same scrutiny as somebody else that looked like it could have been a possible person. So, we really have to look at profiling. We have to look at it seriously.

And other countries do it. And it's not the worst thing to do. I hate the concept of profiling, but we have to use common sense. We're not using common sense.

John Dickerson interviewing Donald Trump, "Face the Nation transcripts June 19, 2016: Trump, Lynch, LaPierre, Feinstein," [CBS News](#), 12:45 EDT, 19 June 2016.

My comment is that profiling an entire racial, religious, or ethnic group is repugnant. There

needs to be some kind of reasonable suspicion of a particular individual or small group of people before law enforcement can surveil them. Profiling *all* Muslims would sweep an enormous number of innocent people, in an attempt to find perhaps a few hundred potential Islamic terrorists.

Trump's appeal to "common sense" is propaganda, that means ignore the rules of law and also ignore experts. I don't know how Trump can say some of his audience "obviously had no guns, had no weapons," because it is easy to conceal a knife or small pistol.

In responding to criticism that "political correctness" limits FBI investigations, U.S. Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, said on 19 June:

LYNCH: I can tell you how we handle these investigations now.

We handle these investigations by looking into anything, everything, and everyone. But that also includes reaching out to the Muslim community for information that they may have. In many of the investigations that we do involving individuals who have been radicalized here or individuals that we learn of overseas, a lot of the information that we gain is from the Muslim community.

So, what I would say is that, certainly, we investigate these cases aggressively. No stone is left unturned. There is no backing away from an issue, there is no backing away from an interview because of anyone's background, because, for us, the source of information is very, very important.

And what I will say, though, is that it is very important for to us maintain our contacts within the Muslim community, because, often, individuals, if they're from that community and they're being radicalized, their friends and family members will see it first. They will see activity first. And we want that information to come to us.

Also, those communities are targeted as well. They are often swept up in this. And so we want to make sure that every community in the United States knows that they are under our protection.

Dana Bash interviewing Loretta Lynch, "CNN's State of the Union," [CNN](#), 12:01 EDT, 19 June 2016.

See also the [Associated Press](#) article on Trump's proposed profiling of Muslims.

History shows that the family and friends of Islamic terrorists did *not* report the terrorists who attacked the Boston Marathon (April 2013), military offices in Chattanooga (July 2015), and a Christmas party in San Bernardino (December 2015). Co-workers — *neither* family *nor* friends — reported Mateen to the FBI in 2013, but an FBI investigation showed Mateen was not engaging in criminal activity. So family and friends of Islamic terrorists in the USA have been spectacularly unsuccessful in identifying radicalization of terrorists *before* the terrorists kill innocent people.

Lynch is right to say that when potential terrorists are "being radicalized, their friends and family members will see it first." But their friends and family are *not* reporting the radicalization to law enforcement, perhaps because the family does *not* want to believe their

relative is becoming a terrorist. Also, the concept of loyalty prevents family and friends from reporting to law enforcement.

Mohammed Malik, a Muslim who attended the same mosque as Omar Mateen, reported Mateen to the FBI in 2014. [Washington Post](#)(20 June); [CBS News](#). Malik talked to journalists in response to Trump's assertion that Muslims do not report Islamic terrorists to law enforcement.

In May 2016, Mateen attempted to purchase body armor and 1000 cartridges from a gun shop near Mateen's home. The gun shop reported the contact to the FBI, but, because no purchase was made, that gun shop did *not* know Mateen's name. The absence of a name made the report to the FBI worthless. (See, e.g., [Orlando Sentinel](#); [CBS Miami](#); [Palm Beach Post](#); [Associated Press](#).)

Mateen was well-known to school teachers and administrators for his disruptive behavior and fighting, but they apparently did *nothing* except suspend him from school or transfer him to another class or school. In retrospect, Mateen was an angry young man who was a ticking time bomb.

Bibliography on 12-18 June 2016

All times Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), the local time zone in Orlando, Florida. Most of these news articles were frequently updated, I give the time of the last revision. Note that while the attack occurred in Orlando, most of the news about Omar Mateen's history was from newspapers near where Mateen lived (e.g., *Palm Beach Post* and *Miami Herald*).

- "Vero Beach bomber tied to Mateen posted anti-gay video on Facebook," [Palm Beach Post](#), blog from 12:21 to 16:30, 12 June 2016.
- "Former Co-Worker: 'He Talked About Killing People All the Time'" [NY Times](#), 19:37, 12 June 2016. (Interview with Daniel Gilroy, former co-worker of Mateen.)
- "Florida gunman was 'mentally ill' with violent temper, ex-wife says," [Reuters](#), 20:44, 12 June 2016.
- "Omar Mateen: Portrait of America's deadliest mass shooter," [Miami Herald](#), 20:54, 12 June 2016.
Also posted at [McClatchy](#).
- "Omar Mateen pledged allegiance to ISIS, official says," [CNN](#), 21:34, 12 June 2016. (press conference by Mateen's ex-wife)
- "What We Know: Gay nightclub shooting deadliest on US soil," [Associated Press](#), 22:43, 12 June 2016.
- "Shooter was body builder, guard; once wanted to be cop," [Associated Press](#), 22:53,

12 June 2016.

- "Worst mass shooting in US history: 50 slain at gay nightclub," [Associated Press](#), 23:36, 12 June 2016.
- "Gunman in worst U.S. massacre described as 'quiet' but grew hateful," [Reuters](#), 23:43, 12 June 2016.
- "Orlando Shooting: What We Know and Don't Know," [NY Times](#), no time, 12 June 2016.
- "Orlando gunman calls 911 during shooting," [Palm Beach Post](#), 05:08, 13 June.
- "As Orlando mourns[,] families await word on victims," [Orlando Sentinel](#), 08:06, 13 June. (final version of 12 June main article)
- "Orlando shooting: 49 killed, shooter pledged ISIS allegiance," [CNN](#), 11:05, 13 June.
- "Port St. Lucie store owner confirms Orlando shooter purchased from him," [Palm Beach Post](#), 17:09, 13 June.
- "Classmates recall Omar Mateen celebrating 9/11 carnage," [Miami Herald](#), 17:26, 13 June.
- "Gun shop owner: Orlando shooter passed background check," [CBS News](#), 17:42, 13 June. (Mateen used a "a Sig Sauer MCMX rifle, purchased on June 4, and a Glock 17 handgun, purchased on June 5. The weapons were purchased legally, according to the ATF.")
- "Witness: Omar Mateen drank alone at Pulse before attack," [Orlando Sentinel](#), 21:12, 13 June; updated 10:55 on 14 June. ("At least four regular customers at the ... [Pulse] gay nightclub ... said Monday [13 June] that they had seen Omar Mateen there before." Also "Mateen's wife, Noor Zahi Salman, was not cooperating with authorities".)
- "Omar Mateen drifted through marriages, jobs, life," [Miami Herald](#), 22:27, 13 June.
- "Ex-classmate says Orlando shooter Omar Mateen was gay," [NY Daily News](#), 22:41, 13 June.
- "Orlando shooter Omar Mateen was gay, former classmate says," [Palm Beach Post](#), 23:08, 13 June; updated at 19:19 on 14 June. (Anonymous former community college classmate says "he believed Mateen was gay, saying Mateen once tried to pick him up at a bar." The classmate also said: "[Mateen] just wanted to fit in and no one liked him. He was always socially awkward." Further, Mateen visited the Pulse nightclub many times since 2013.) Also posted at [WFTV](#).
- "As young man, gunman worked ordinary jobs and got married," [Associated Press](#), 23:17, 13 June.

- "Former co-worker says Orlando gunman was 'unhinged and unstable', went on racist, misogynistic rants," [Fox News](#), no time, 13 June. (Interview with Daniel Gilroy.)
- "Omar Mateen: Angry, violent 'bigot' who pledged allegiance to ISIS," [CNN](#), 01:44, 14 June.
- "Wife of Omar Mateen, Orlando nightclub shooter, talking with FBI," [Orlando Sentinel](#), 17:36, 14 June. (Amidst rumors from anonymous law enforcement sources that Mateen's wife will be charged as an accomplice, the wife began cooperating with the FBI on 14 June.)
- "LGBT psychologists: Why gunman being gay makes sense," [Palm Beach Post](#), 18:22, 15 June.
- "Shooter claimed police academy rejection was over religion," [Associated Press](#), 20:17, 15 June. ("But a police academy rejected his application [in 2015], prompting Mateen to complain that he was denied because of his Muslim faith." "A number of possible motives and explanations have surfaced, with Mateen calling 911 to profess allegiance to the Islamic State group, his ex-wife saying he was mentally ill and his father suggesting he hated gays.")
- "Orlando shooter posted messages on Facebook pledging allegiance to the leader of ISIS and vowing more attacks," [Washington Post](#), 23:12, 15 June. (Mateen: "America and Russia stop bombing the Islamic state..I pledge my alliance to [Islamic State leader] abu bakr al Baghdadi ..may Allah accept me.")
- "Orlando gunman raged against 'filthy ways of the west'," [Associated Press](#), 23:59, 15 June. (Mateen: "The real muslims will never accept the filthy ways of the west." "America and Russia stop bombing the Islamic state.")
- "Exclusive: Suspensions, other discipline followed Omar Mateen to Martin County schools," [TCPalm](#), 19:23, 16 June.
- "Orlando shooter's early school records note he 'lacked remorse'," [CBS News](#), 19:55, 16 June. ("A guidance counselor in 4th grade writes that Mateen lacks control, and says he is academically behind 'at least two years.' In Mateen's 5th grade school record, a teacher at Mariposa Elementary School writes of Mateen's inability to stay focused, his 'lack of remorse,' and his opposition.")
- "Orlando shooter has history of fistfights, aggression in school, records show," [Sun-Sentinel](#) in Ft. Lauderdale, 20:58, 16 June. ("According to school records and those who knew him, Mateen lacked self-control, got into fistfights, showed no remorse for his misbehavior, struggled to learn English and often was on the brink of failing classes. He also smoked marijuana, was expelled from high school for fighting a student and was charged with battery,...." "By the fourth grade, his teachers said he was already 'at least' two years behind academically.")

- "Orlando nightclub gunman made Facebook posts, texted his wife during standoff," [Orlando Sentinel](#), 23:36, 16 June. ("During Mateen's enrollment in the School District of St. Lucie County from 1992 through 1999, there were 31 documented incidents, including his being disruptive, misbehaving, and even striking a student." "More details emerged Thursday [16 June] about Mateen's work and school life. They show that he was a poor student with a disciplinary record, according to St. Lucie and Martin County school records. They also reveal that he wanted to be a cop but couldn't get admitted to the police academy at Indian River State College, despite applications in 2007 and last year.")
- "Records: Orlando gunman talked about violence in 3rd grade," [Associated Press](#), 18:23, 17 June.
- "Orlando shooting: Prison warden feared mass shooting in 2007," [Palm Beach Post](#) 19:54, 17 June. (In April 2007, Mateen said to a fellow student: "If I bring a gun to school would you tell anybody?" Mateen also slept during classes at least three times. For those reasons, Mateen was terminated from his job as a probationary prison guard in 2007. The prison was paying Mateen's tuition at a police academy at a community college, so Mateen was also expelled from the police academy.)
- "Troubled. Quiet. Macho. Angry. The volatile life of the Orlando shooter." [Washington Post](#), 20:14, 17 June. (summary of some of what is known about Mateen)
- "Making of a Monster: Hints of Omar Mateen's menace started early," [Palm Beach Post](#), 09:00, 18 June.
- "Why Orlando shooter was kicked out of corrections officer training," [Miami Herald](#), 14:43, 18 June.
- "List of police outfits that rejected Omar Mateen grows," [Miami Herald](#), 18:06, 23 June 2016. (Mateen applied for a job with Florida Highway Patrol in 2011, but he flunked the examination.)
- "Officials: No evidence Orlando gunman was gay," [Associated Press](#), 16:06, 24 June 2016. (FBI has found no evidence to corroborate reports in the news media, beginning 13 June, that Mateen was gay.)
- "Orlando nightclub shooting timeline: Three hours of terror unfold," [Orlando Sentinel](#), 14:49, 28 June 2016. (Timeline with information from numerous sources. The *Sentinel* article includes graphics.)

Transcript of Mateen's 911 Conversations

On Monday morning, 20 June 2016, the FBI released a heavily redacted transcript of one of Mateen's conversations with 911 on 12 June that omitted names (e.g., Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) and also omitted the name of a terrorist organization (e.g., "Islamic State"), to avoid giving

them publicity. The Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Paul Ryan, said “Selectively editing this transcript is preposterous. The administration should release the full, unredacted transcript so the public is clear-eyed about who did this, and why.” Ryan mentioned that we already knew that Mateen pledged loyalty to ISIL and that Mateen targeted the LGBT community. On Monday afternoon, after complaints from Ryan and the governor of Florida, the FBI released a more complete transcript. [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Orlando Sentinel](#); [NY Times](#).

Copies of the more complete transcript:

- [DoJ/FBI](#) transcript of first 911 call
- [FBI in Tampa](#) timeline and transcript
- [Washington Post](#)
- [www.rbs0.com](#)

In reading the transcript, there can be *no* doubt that Mateen saw himself as an Islamic terrorist, as he repeatedly mentioned phrases associated with the Islamic religion, as well as pledged allegiance to the leader of ISIL. The FBI timeline says Mateen also “identified himself as an Islamic soldier”.

Islamic terrorist kills policeman near Paris, France

On 13 June 2016 at 20:30 local time, Larossi Abballa fatally stabbed a policeman and his wife at their home in a suburb of Paris, France. The dead policeman was the assistant chief of police in the district of Les Mureaux, a suburb of Paris, France. Abballa shouted “Allahu Akhbar” as he stabbed the policeman nine times in the stomach, a particularly brutal murder. Abballa then entered the policeman's home and stabbed the policeman's wife in the neck. She died in front of their 3 y old son. Three hours after the attack began, French police stormed the policeman's home and shot Abballa dead.

Larossi Abballa was a 25 or 26 y old French citizen who had been convicted of terrorism in 2013. Thirty months in French prison failed to reform Abballa.

The Amaq news agency proclaimed: “Islamic State fighter kills deputy chief of the police station in the city of Les Mureaux and his wife with blade weapons near Paris.”

Later, Reuters reported that Al-Bayan radio said: "God has enabled one of the caliphate's soldiers in city of Les Mureaux near Paris to stab to death the deputy police chief and his wife."

Citations: [The Telegraph](#); [France24](#); [The Guardian](#); [Reuters](#).

Abballa the terrorist recorded video of his stabbing of the policeman and then posted the video to his FaceBook webpage, including livestreaming the video. In a FaceBook post, Abballa also declared his allegiance to the Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL. Although FaceBook promptly removed the video, Amaq posted an edited version at its website. [The Independent](#); [Associated Press](#); [Fox News](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

My comment is that the video not only proves Abballa's guilt, but also should convince the judge to give Abballa the maximum sentence for the savage crime. *Most* criminals plan to escape after their crime and destroy evidence. But Abballa created and preserved evidence (i.e., the video), as if he was proud of his murders, and he wanted to be remembered for killing people.

Conclusions

During September 2013, I began chronicling the history of chemical weapons in Syria and the futile peace negotiations. I now see three distinct intervals:

1. Before 10 June 2014, when removal of Assad was the simplistic solution to the Syrian civil war.
2. 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. Suddenly, the USA and Western Europe focused on defeating ISIL.
3. In March 2016 a "cessation of hostilities" had greatly reduced deaths in Syria, but the opposition delegation to peace negotiations in Geneva was making numerous demands that scuttled the negotiations. Nonetheless, there was finally a glimmer of hope for an end to the Syrian civil war. But the glimmer was extinguished on 18 April 2016 when the main opposition delegation departed from the negotiations in Geneva.

1. Western View of Insurgency in Syria *Before 10 June 2014*

In February 2012, Hillary Clinton created the "Friends of the Syrian People" group of nations to attend meetings and denounce Assad. This group disappeared after November 2014, having accomplished nothing except wasting travel expense money.

Before 10 June 2014, the conventional wisdom in the "Friends of the Syrian People" 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 Hillary Clinton, 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.

The following series of events exposed the futility of the plans of the "Friends of the Syrian

People" group of nations and the Syrian National Coalition at the negotiations in Geneva during Jan/Feb 2014:

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 during Jan/Feb 2014 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.

A more detailed analysis of the failure of the Geneva negotiations is found in my separate [review](#). I suggest that the "Friends of the Syrian People" 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 Geneva negotiations to fail. Not only was much diplomatic effort and expense wasted on Geneva, but also the frustration caused the skilled U.N. negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi, to resign on 13 May 2014.

In January 2014, ISIL invaded Iraq. The Iraqi government begged for help from Obama, but Obama ignored the Iraqi requests, as ISIL quickly captured about 1/3 of Iraq. During an interview published on 27 Jan 2014, Obama made a now famous remark about ISIL being "junior varsity" terrorists. See my essays for [July 2014](#) and [August 2015](#). Clearly, Obama seriously underestimated ISIL in early 2014.

2. 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).

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. However, the USA, Europe, and Arab nations were unable to cooperate with Assad in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

ISIL has had effective fighters in Syria since mid-2013. The Syrian Kurds are the only ground forces in Syria who have defeated ISIL. Obama has been reluctant to cooperate with Syrian Kurds, because the Turkish government considers the Kurds to be terrorists. Instead, Obama planed to train-and-equip the so-called "moderate rebels" in Syria, an effort that *planned* to train 15,000 rebels by January 2018. Meanwhile, effective troops on the ground were needed in Syria in January 2014 to prevent ISIL from capturing cities and infrastructure, and were needed in Syria beginning in September 2014 to complement the U.S. airstrikes. By 26 Sep 2015, fewer than 130 rebels have completed their training, and both batches of U.S.-trained rebels have performed poorly in Syria. On 9 October 2015, the U.S. finally ended the training of moderate rebels to fight against ISIL in Syria. Obama's train-and-equip program was an ignominious failure. This lack of competent ground forces in Syria is a glaring defect in Obama's strategy.

In my essays for [August 2015](#) to [December 2015](#), I observed that the Syrian National Coalition was "fading".

3. Glimmer of Hope for End to Syrian Civil War

On 29 January 2016, peace negotiations began in Geneva.

However, peace negotiations in Geneva were scuttled by an obstructionist opposition delegation. From its creation on 11 December 2015, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) — the main opposition delegation — insisted on pre-conditions (i.e., demands) *before* the HNC would begin negotiations:

1. end to the airstrikes by Assad and Russia,
2. end sieges by Assad's army,
3. delivery of humanitarian aid to rebel-controlled towns,
4. Assad releases all political prisoners, and
5. Assad resign.

At different times, the HNC made slightly different demands, but the above-mentioned five

demands were commonly made. The HNC is attempting to obtain through demands what they could not militarily win during five years of civil war. Obviously, one should *not* go into negotiations with Assad with a demand that Assad resign — the role of Assad in the future of Syria is for *all* the people of Syria to decide in an election.

Because the HNC arrived late, de Mistura first met with the HNC on 31 Jan 2016, two days after the negotiations formally began. The HNC refused to negotiate with the delegation from Assad's government, because none of the HNC's demands had been satisfied. De Mistura suspended the negotiations on 3 Feb 2016. The negotiations were supposed to resume no later than 25 Feb 2016. The negotiations actually resumed on 14 March 2016.

After a heroic effort by diplomats from Russia and the USA, and by de Mistura, on 27 February 2016, a "cessation of hostilities" began in Syria. This diplomatic effort quickly reduced the death rate by about 90%, a remarkable accomplishment. But the HNC was ungrateful for this accomplishment, and instead whined about minor violations of the ceasefire — some of which were caused by insurgents who continued fighting. The HNC also shifted emphasis to their other demands, such as humanitarian aid and release of prisoners.

Note that the [statements](#) by the ISSG and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2249, 2254, and 2268 continue to insist on implementing the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. The [review](#) that I wrote in June 2014 explains why the Geneva Communiqué is flawed. 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. That makes the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012 an obsolete and wrong plan.

In mid-March 2016, I saw a glimmer of hope in the Geneva negotiations. But on 15 April 2016, I again concluded that the negotiations were "futile", because of the refusal of the parties to meet face-to-face, and the HNC's intransigent demand that Assad relinquish power. Then on 18 April 2016, the HNC walked out of negotiations and vowed *not* to return until all four of their demands were met by Assad. The HNC scuttled the negotiations during May and June 2016. Then, on 28 June 2016, many opposition groups who were also participating in the Geneva negotiations threatened to quit the negotiations, unless their four demands were met.

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.

Beginning in 2013, Obama and Kerry, along with the United Nations Secretary General, have

repeatedly uttered the slogan that there is "*no* military solution" in Syria. But what the foreign meddlers (e.g., Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, USA, etc.) have actually done is pour weapons and ammunition into Syria, in support of a military solution. The situation dramatically worsened on 30 Sep 2015, with the beginning of massive Russian airstrikes on the Free Syrian Army and Nusra Front in western Syria. There is an incredible amount of hypocrisy by the foreign meddlers in *talking* about a political solution according to the Geneva Communiqué of 2012, while actively engaging in continuing — and escalating — warfare.

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 288,000 people in Syria,
- the destruction of the Syrian economy and infrastructure — costing Syria approximately US\$ 200 billion [Reuters](#).
- the destruction of a secular Syria government,
- the rise of Islamic terrorists (e.g., ISIL, Nusra Front) in Syria, and
- more than four million refugees from Syria in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, and a flood of one million migrants to Europe in August-December 2015.

The Syrian government — regardless of who leads it — does *not* have the resources to repair buildings, electricity supply, and other infrastructure that was destroyed during the five years of civil war in Syria.

Conclusion for Iraq

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

There are several huge problems in Iraq:

1. The Iraqi government is corrupt. (See my essays for [June 2015](#) and [January 2016](#))
2. The Iraqi government is dysfunctional. During July-October 2014, the Iraqi Parliament *slowly* formed a new government — during an existential crisis. 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](#).)
3. The Iraqi army was unable to stop the ISIL invasion during the first six months of 2014. 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.
4. The criminal justice system in Iraq is apparently incompetent and dysfunctional. The Iraqi government is unable or unwilling to prosecute:
 - A. corrupt politicians or corrupt government officials,
 - B. army officers who hired ghost soldiers (see [above](#)),
 - C. desertion at Mosul on 10 June 2014 (see [above](#)),
 - D. fleeing from Ramadi on 17 May 2015 (see [above](#)), and
 - E. terrorists who kill innocent civilians in frequent bombings in or near Baghdad.
5. Beginning in August 2014, my essays each month have chronicled suicide bombings, car bombs, kidnappings, and other horrible crimes in Iraq. Such attacks have become an almost routine part of life in Iraq since Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003. These continuing attacks are an indication that civilization has collapsed in Iraq.

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.

It will take years to fix the 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. In September 2015, it was obvious that the Iraqi army and Shiite militia in Iraq are unable — or unwilling — to liberate either Fallujah, Mosul, or Ramadi from ISIL. 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.

U.S. War on Terror

Al-Qaeda attacked two U.S. embassies in Africa in August 1998. Then, on 11 Sep 2001, Al-Qaeda flew airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon. The response of the U.S. Government to these unprovoked attacks by Al-Qaeda was to begin a war against Islamic terrorists.

The phrase "war against terrorism" was first used by U.S. President George W. Bush in a [speech](#) to the nation hours after the attacks on 11 Sep 2001. In his speech to the U.S. Congress on 20 Sep 2001, Bush said: "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."

On 7 October 2001, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations notified the U.N. Secretary General that the U.S. would attack Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan, invoking the legal right of "self-defense" after the terror attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 Sep 2001. Note that most of the hijackers on 11 Sep 2001 came from Saudi Arabia and *none* came from Afghanistan. Further, Osama bin Laden, who ordered the attacks on the USA, was in Pakistan, *not* Afghanistan.

On 23 Sep 2014, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations notified the U.N. Secretary General that the U.S. was bombing ISIL in Syria. The U.S. Government invoked the legal right of "self-defense" to justify the U.S. bombing of ISIL in Syria, despite the fact that ISIL had *not* attacked the USA.

The premise behind the U.S. war on terrorism seems to be that if the U.S. Military kills Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, etc., then there will be no Islamic terror attacks inside the USA.

By May 2016, the U.S. airstrikes on ISIL had significantly limited ISIL's finances. In response, ISIL began inviting Muslims to make terror attacks on their local nations in Western Europe, USA, etc. Encouraging local, lone-wolf attacks on the Internet will be cheaper for ISIL than training terrorists in Syria.

Examples of such lone-wolf Islamic terrorist attacks in the USA include:

- the Boston Marathon on 15 April 2013,
- Chattanooga (see my essay for [July 2015](#)),
- San Bernardino ([December 2015](#)), and
- Orlando (12 June 2016).

The recent conventional wisdom is that, as ISIL is defeated in Iraq and Syria, ISIL will sponsor — or encourage — more Islamic terrorist attacks in Europe and the USA. See, e.g.,

- "Commentary: Islamic State may be down, but it's far from out," [Reuters](#), 25 May 2016. ("... Islamic State leaders could instruct would-be jihadists to remain home and launch attacks there.")
- "CIA chief: IS working to send operatives to the West," [Associated Press](#) 15 June 2016. ("CIA Director John Brennan will tell Congress on Thursday [16 June] that Islamic State militants are training and attempting to deploy operatives for further attacks on the West and will rely more on guerrilla-style tactics to compensate for their territorial losses." "Brennan also noted the group's call for followers to conduct so-called lone-wolf attacks in their home countries.")
- "US official says anti-Islamic State forces gaining momentum," [Associated Press](#), 28 June 2016. (Brett McGurk told the U.S. the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "more 'lone wolf' style attacks such as the one in Orlando are possible as the Islamic State loses territory,")
- "Islamic State's 'lone wolf' attacks to persist in West despite territorial losses in

Middle East," [Washington Times](#), 28 June 2016. (Brett McGurk: "Islamic State officials are telling recruits in the West to stay put and conduct attacks at home rather than travel to the Salafist group's base in Syria, where its control is increasingly under threat.")

- "Germany girds for potential spike in Islamic State attacks in Europe," [Reuters](#), 28 June 2016. (German Interior Minister Thomas De Maiziere: "... we fear that Islamic State will externalise, transfer its activities to Europe, especially because of military losses in the region [Syria and Iraq].")

It appears that the U.S. may have spent billions of dollars fighting ISIL, but with the counter-intuitive result that the USA is now *less* secure than previously. The glaring error in U.S. policy was to neglect fighting the *ideology* of Islamic terrorism.

This document is at <http://www.rbs0.com/syria34.pdf>
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The annotated [list](#) of my essays on Syria and links to historical documents.

[my homepage](#)