

# Syria & Iraq: July 2016

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## Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 32 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 That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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 (17 U.S.C. §107) That is why I do not quote most of an article by a news agency or newspaper.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, no summer time.

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.

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### **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. On 28 July 2016, Nusra voluntarily ended its affiliation with Al-Qaeda, but Nusra remains Al-Qaeda inspired. After July 2016, Nusra is called "Jabhat Fatah al-Sham".
  - 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".

On 28 July 2016, Nusra voluntarily ended its affiliation with Al-Qaeda. [Reuters](#) reported Nusra's leader said the change was made: "to remove the excuse used by the international community — spearheaded by America and Russia — to bombard and displace Muslims in the Levant: that they are targeting the Nusra Front which is associated with al Qaeda". Henceforth, Nusra Front would be called "Jabhat Fatah al-Sham". See also [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 28 July.

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](#).

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## 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](#).

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### **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 with Assad's government in Geneva. 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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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### **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.
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## Deaths in Syria

On 1 August 2016, the the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published a death toll for July.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented death of 4794 persons in the month of July 2016. The casualties are as follows:

- Civilian casualties: 1590 civilians, including 341 children under the age of eighteen, and 213 female citizens over the age of 18, they were killed as follows:
  - 799 citizens including 199 children and 118 citizen women killed in raids by Russian and Syrian warplanes bombing and helicopters barrel bombs,
  - 45 persons including a woman were executed by the Islamic State organization,
  - 106 people including 21 children and 13 citizen women were killed in the shelling by rocket and artillery shells, missiles believed to be ground-to-ground and sniper fire and targeting by the regime forces,
  - [one] man was executed by the fighters of the factions,
  - 32 persons were killed under torture in Syrian security prisons and dungeons of its intelligence branches,
  - 148 including 8 citizen women and 30children were killed in the bombing by warplanes of the international coalition,
  - 163 persons including 28 children and 37 citizen women killed by the fall of shells and targeting by the rebel and Islamic Factions and the Islamic State organization,
  - 14 persons including a child were killed by gunshots of the Turkish and Jordanian border guards,
  - 94 people including 16 children and 17 citizen women were killed in a booby trapped vehicles and explosive belts detonation,
  - [one] citizen killed by the Jordanian border guards,
  - 2 persons — one of them is a child — died due to poor health conditions

- and the bad living conditions and the lack of medication,
- 20 persons including 4 children and a citizen woman were killed in the shelling and the gunshots of the Syrian Democratic Forces in Aleppo province, and
  - 166 including 41 children and 18 citizen woman killed in different circumstances like unidentified gunmen, explosions, landmines, sniper fire and unknown circumstances.
- Syrian nationality fighters from the rebel and Islamic fighters and The Syria Democratic Forces and other organization: 617
  - Defected soldiers and officers: 3
  - The regime forces: 554
  - Members from Popular Committees, NDF and militiamen loyal to the regime of Syrian nationality: 643
  - Militiamen from the Lebanese Hezbollah: 4
  - Non-Syrian Pro-regime mostly Shia militiamen: 90
  - Unidentified casualties: 31
  - Fighters from the rebel and Islamic factions, the Islamic State, Fath al-Sham Front, Jaish al-Mohajereen and al-Ansar and the Islamic Turkistan Party of non-Syrian nationalities: 1262

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 peoples blood shedding and to put more pressure on the countries [who are] 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.

"1590 civilian casualties are among about 4800 killed in July 2016," [SOHR](#), 1 Aug 2016. [Formatting as indented list by Standler. Some typographical errors corrected by Standler.]

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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* 292,854.

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## **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 August 2016, the last news on this topic was the above-cited report on 25 August 2015. 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 13 months to choose a leader for the Free Syrian Army, during an existential war.

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## Turkey is an ally from Hell

### Introduction

In my essay for [July 2015](#), I gave five reasons why "Turkey is an ally from Hell."

My essay for [August 2015](#) mentions that Turkish airstrikes inside Iraq were a sixth reason why "Turkey is an ally from Hell."

My essay for [November 2015](#) said "The arrests of journalists and reckless shooting down a Russian airplane are more reasons why Turkey is an ally from Hell." My essay for November also says Turkey conducted "*only four* airstrikes against ISIL from 24 July to 31 Oct."

My essay for [February 2016](#) mentions the Turks were shelling the Kurds in Syria at a time when the United Nations was trying to arrange a ceasefire in Syria. Also, the U.S. Government continues to urge Turkey to seal their border with Syria.

My essay for [March 2016](#) tersely mentions that the Turkish government seized control of *Today's Zaman* newspaper in Turkey, and also the Turks had failed to seal their border to prevent foreign fighters and munitions from entering Syria to reinforce ISIL and Nusra.

This history that I chronicled shows that Turkey is really an ally from Hell. Erdogan is more interested in exterminating Kurds (ethnic cleansing) than in fighting against ISIL.

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### July 2016

On 15 July 2016, there was a failed military coup in Turkey. Since then, Turkey has cut electric power to the U.S. airbase at Incirlik, *and* closed the Turkish airspace so that the U.S. can no longer fly missions against ISIL in Syria from Incirlik. At 13:00 GMT on 17 July, Turkey reopened its airspace. [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [Pentagon](#); [Voice of America](#).

On 19 July, electric power from Turkey to the Incirlik airbase was still cut. [Associated Press](#). Finally, on 22 July, electric power from Turkey to Incirlik was restored. [Associated Press](#).

In the four-day aftermath of the failed military coup in Turkey, Erdogan has "suspended or detained" more than 50,000 government employees, including judges, teachers, professors, and policemen. [Reuters](#). Erdogan also demanded that the USA extradite a 75 y old Islamic

cleric, Fethullah Gülen, who has lived in the USA since 1999.

On 17 July, the French foreign minister publicly questioned whether Turkey was a "viable" partner in the fight against ISIL. [France24](#).

On 18 July, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry both warned Turkey. [Washington Post](#).

On 19 July, Con Coughlin, the defense editor and chief foreign affairs columnist for *The Telegraph* newspaper in London, wrote a commentary titled "Erdogan's purge may give NATO no choice but to expel Turkey from the alliance". [Telegraph](#).

During the cold-war (e.g., 1950 to 1990), Turkey occupied a strategic location for airstrikes on the Soviet Union and containment of the Russian Naval fleet in the Black Sea. Now, there are at least three reasons why Turkey is an essential partner for Europe and the USA in the Syrian civil war:

1. Turkey can control the flow of refugees from Syria to Europe, which makes cooperation with Turkey essential to Europe. 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.
2. Turkey shares a border along Syria — the main route for foreign fighters and munitions to supply ISIL and Nusra in Syria — so Turkey occupies a strategic location.
3. The airbase at Incirlik in Turkey makes U.S. airstrikes on targets in Syria more convenient than longer flight times from airports farther from Syria.

For these three reasons, neither Europe nor the USA wants to antagonize Turkey.

On 20 July, [Reuters](#) repeats that *Le Figaro* newspaper in France reported approximately 100 fighters/week were crossing from Turkey to join ISIL in Syria. Obviously, Turkey has not closed its border with Syria.

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## 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 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.

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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.

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## 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, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, and U.K. prime minister David Cameron. In January 2017, Assad will have outlasted Obama and John Kerry.

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## 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.

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## 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.

My essay for [June 2016](#) explains why there were *no* negotiations during June, and mentions the failure of the HNC to select a new negotiating team.

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### HNC faltering?

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 all of June and continuing up to 14 July, the HNC failed to meet, despite their announcement on 31 May. 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.

On 8 July, [RIA-Novosti](#) reports that the HNC will meet in Riyadh on Friday, 15 July, to discuss the suspended negotiations in Geneva. But my search of Google News on 20 July found *no* report of any meeting. On 15 July, the Syrian National Coalition website posted a [news release](#) that mentions the spokesman for the HNC, Riad Nassan Agha, said: "the HNC is waiting for the appropriate conditions to define its position on the possibility of the resumption of negotiations."

On the evening of 21 July, the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) posted a news release at the SNC website that describes the conclusions of the HNC meeting during 15-18 July.

In a statement released on Wednesday [20 July], the HNC made it clear that the outlining its vision for a political transition in Syria demonstrates it is committed to a political process. It stressed that the enforcement of the humanitarian provisions set out in the UN Security Council resolutions is the first step towards the eradication of extremism. The HNC insisted that these provisions, therefore, must not be subject to negotiations, calling for the immediate and unconditional implementation of these provisions.

The HNC said its members discussed ways of reaching out to various components of the Syrian society during its last meeting that took place in the Saudi capital Riyadh between 15-18 July. The meeting also discussed prospects for the political process in Syria in light of the local, regional and international developments.

The HNC stressed the need for overcoming the obstacles that hindered the last negotiations by setting out a clear timetable for political transition in accordance with the Geneva Communique of 2012 and the relevant international resolutions. This transition can only be achieved through the formation of a transitional governing body with full executive powers following the departure of Bashar al-Assad and those of his clique whose hands are stained with the blood of the Syrian people.

....

[The HNC General Coordinator Riad] Hijab stressed that political transition will allow the Syrian people to build a new Syria without exclusion of any of its components and

will pave the way for the return of all refugees and those who have been displaced by Assad and his allies to their homes.

"HNC Outlines Broad Vision for Transition, British FM Reiterates Assad Must Go," [SNC](#), 21 July 2016.

### **My comments:**

- The HNC demands that "humanitarian provisions set out in the UN Security Council resolutions .... must not be subject to negotiations, calling for the immediate and unconditional implementation of these provisions." That pre-condition by the HNC has prevented negotiations in Geneva, beginning in January 2016 and will continue to prevent negotiations for the foreseeable future. Negotiations might end the besieging of cities and might lead to delivery of humanitarian aid.
- The HNC insists that "this transition can only be achieved" by the departure of Assad and the formation of the political transition specified in the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. First, the HNC's position is too rigid. Saying "only" denies the possibilities of alternatives and compromises that might end the Syrian civil war. Second, the Geneva Communiqué is a flawed and obsolete plan, as I have explained in my previous essays and in my [review](#). Third, a new government for Syria needs to exclude the SNC and HNC, because they failed to negotiate an end to the Syrian civil war. The new Syrian government should be formed from people who currently or recently lived in Syria, unlike the expatriates in the SNC and HNC.
- Hijab has a sentence about "allow the Syrian people to build a new Syria" and "pave the way for the return of all refugees ... to their homes." First, *who* is going to pay for the Syrian people to "build a new Syria"? The government is nearly bankrupt, and industry in Syria has been destroyed by war, so Syria will be a beggar for the foreseeable future. Second, many of the homes in Syria were demolished or severely damaged by more than five years of civil war, so there are now *no* homes for many refugees and internally displaced persons to return. Hijab's statement is propaganda, *not* based on reality. Thanks to Assad and insurgents — and thanks to the failure of the SNC and Hijab's HNC to negotiate — Syria has been ruined.
- The HNC seems to have forgotten about their other pre-conditions (i.e., demands): end to airstrikes by Assad and Russia, and Assad releases all political prisoners.
- On 25 July 2016, I can *not* find the HNC's 20 July statement on the Internet. The HNC is operating like an organization in the 1980s or earlier, failing to communicate via the Internet. Taking two days after the end of a meeting to release a statement is unacceptably slow. There is no way that the HNC is competent to operate the government of Syria.

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. I suggest a new opposition delegation consisting of people who currently live in Syria, and who are willing to compromise in negotiations, in order to end the civil war in Syria.

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### Change in U.S. foreign policy in January 2017

On 5 July 2016, Donald Trump — the presumptive Republican party candidate for U.S. president in the November 2016 election — again endorsed dictators in Arab nations (e.g., Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Gaddafi in Libya, Assad in Syria) as strong leaders who suppress terrorism. [Washington Post](#)(5July); [Associated Press](#)(6July); [Washington Post](#) (commentary by Philip Bump). Trump's speech gives us a hint of new U.S. foreign policy after January 2017, *if* Trump is elected president. That ought to scare Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and Western Europe into making an all-out effort to see de Mistura's negotiations succeed in 2016. Because I agree with Ryan C. Crocker, who said in December 2013 that Assad was the "least-worst" leader for Syria, let me say that I find Trump repugnant. The problems in Syria are much more complicated than Trump can understand.

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### 11 July 2016: grim outlook

On 11 July 2016, the situation in Syria appears significantly worse than at the end of June 2016. While Assad announced a so-called [truce](#) that began on 6 July, Assad's military repeatedly violated their own ceasefire in the provinces of Aleppo and Damascus. Worse, Assad appears to be attempting to isolate and besiege the insurgent-controlled part of the city of Aleppo. Creating another besieged city is a huge step backwards for Syria.

De Mistura has been publicly silent since 29 June, except for one terse press release on 7 July. Of course, de Mistura has *not* announced a date for a resumption of negotiations in Geneva. On 11 July, there are only 14 weekdays remaining before the 1 August deadline for forming a Transitional Governing Body mentioned in the June 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

On 11 July, de Mistura was in Rome, where he met with the Italian foreign minister and the head of the HNC, Riad Hijab. The Italian news agency tersely reported:

UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura on Monday [11 July] said the country is in a critical moment with regards to its political future, speaking at a press conference following a meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

"Between now and September we have a window for finding a strategy that combines the fight against terrorism with a political transition," De Mistura said.

"We need to fight Daesh (ISIS) and therefore al-Nusra, but you can't defeat Daesh without a political transition," he said, adding that the key is an agreement between Russia and the United States.

"De Mistura says Syria in 'crucial moment' for transition," [ANSamed](#), 11 July 2016.

When de Mistura says "the fight against terrorism", he refers to Assad's characterization of the Syrian civil war. When de Mistura says "political transition", he refers to the ISSG statements and various United Nations Security Council Resolutions. And when de Mistura says "Between now and September", he seems to extend the 1 August deadline to 1 September.

Reuters reported:

The Saudi-backed main Syrian opposition body, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), told U.N. special envoy Staffan de Mistura in Rome that it was premature to set a date for fresh peace talks he was seeking ahead of an August deadline for the warring parties to present outlines of a political deal.

"There is a need to adopt a new strategy to push the peace process by adopting a tougher policy against the regime's violations against the Syrian people ... before calling for a new round of negotiations," the HNC statement said.

De Mistura urged no let-up in peace efforts. "More than ever, the key is a possible deal between Russia and America, because they are the ones who ... pulled off the miracle of the two-month truce," he said, referring to the "cessation of hostilities" deal that calmed much of Syria before collapsing.

John Davison & Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Rebels attack government lines in Syria's Aleppo after supply road cut," [Reuters](#), 21:12 GMT, 11 July 2016.

The United Nations Office in Geneva posted neither a transcript nor summary of de Mistura's remarks in Rome.

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**12 July 2016: Lavrov criticizes de Mistura**  
**14-15 July: Kerry in Moscow**

On 12 July, RIA-Novosti reported a statement by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov: We are concerned that the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura has been shying away from his duties recently, not calling another round of intra-Syrian talks, and starting to make public statements on the need for Russia and the United States to agree on how to proceed with the political settlement in Syria, and then the UN will convene a new round of intra-Syrian talks. This is the wrong approach. Replacing the intra-Syrian dialogue with a Russia-US duet is impossible and I believe this is a very harmful signal that is being sent to the irreconcilable opposition in the so-called High Negotiations Committee, which just keeps voicing ultimatums on [Syrian President Bashar] Assad's resignation and some sort of deadlines. This is not helping the case.

"Russia Concerned UN's Syria Envoy Shying Away From Responsibilities," [RIA-Novosti](#), 07:32 GMT, 12 July 2016.

On 12 July, the Associated Press reported that Lavrov had lashed out at de Mistura:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meanwhile expressed concern that the U.N.'s Syria envoy was "shirking his responsibilities" to reconvene stalled peace talks.

Lavrov said U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura was apparently waiting for Washington and Moscow to agree on a political transition before reconvening indirect talks between the Syrian government and the opposition that last broke down in April.

"This is not the right approach," Lavrov said during a visit to Azerbaijan.

Lavrov said he was hoping to work out a common approach with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry during his visit to Moscow later this week based on a U.N. Security Council resolution aimed at ending the five-year war. "On this basis we will then work with Staffan de Mistura so that he conscientiously fulfills his obligations," Lavrov said.

....

De Mistura's office declined to comment. He has set a target date of Aug. 1 to restart talks, but said conditions need to be ripe for progress toward political transition in Syria — what he has called the "mother of all issues." He has said that behind-the-scenes diplomacy has been continuing.

Jamey Keaten, "UN: Syria fighting cuts off passage to rebel part of Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 19:32 GMT, 12 July 2016.

**My comments:** I said in my essay for June 2016: "With hindsight, de Mistura missed his last chance when he failed to convene negotiations in Geneva no later than 11 May." It was supposed to take six months to establish the new government by the 1 August target date, but on 12 July de Mistura has only 13 weekdays remaining.

But a disagreement between Lavrov and de Mistura does *not* imply that de Mistura is "shirking his responsibilities". De Mistura apparently wants the parties in Syria to fulfill their responsibilities under various United Nations Security Council Resolutions *before* resuming negotiations in Geneva. Such progress on the ground would also fulfill some of the HNC's demands, which might allow the HNC to return to negotiations. But Assad and jihadists have been repeatedly violating the ceasefire and, beginning 7 July, Assad has besieged Aleppo.

The Associated Press reports that the Geneva negotiations "broke down" in April. What actually happened was that the HNC refused to negotiate, and then the HNC delegation walked out on 18 April. Incidentally, Lavrov might prefer that the negotiations resume and then fail because of the HNC, so that Russia and Assad can blame the HNC for the failure. But the real goal here is to make the negotiations successful and end the Syria civil war — *not* to find a party to blame for failure. As I say in the [conclusion](#) of this essay, there is blame for everyone, including the foreign meddlers.

The Associated Press says de Mistura "has set a target date of Aug. 1 to restart talks". **If** de Mistura said that, then he is wrong. The 1 August target date is to "establishes credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance and sets a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution" (i.e., create a Transitional Governing Body to replace Assad's government). See U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254 at §4 and the ISSG Statement of 17 May 2016 at ¶15.

De Mistura prefers to operate in secret, with only occasional press briefings, and even at those press briefings he is reticent about giving reasons for his decisions. So we do *not* know why de Mistura wants Russia and the USA to agree on the parameters for the political transition, and then force Assad and the HNC to agree to that decision. Having Russia and the USA impose a solution on Syria violates the specific command in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 at §1 that there will be "a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned

political transition".

On 11 July, it was announced that Kerry would be in Moscow on 14-15 July, for talks with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov. Kerry's trip is especially convenient given the crisis on 12 July.

On 12 July, the spokesman for the U.S. State Department, John Kirby, said at his daily press briefing:

QUESTION: .... Today, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, Sergey Lavrov, said in Baku that — he basically gave a scathing criticism of UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura. He accused him of not carrying on with his responsibilities in organizing a meeting among Syrian — basically, he was very critical of Mr. de Mistura's statement that he's waiting for American-Russian agreement. Do you have any comment on — have you seen those comments, and do you have any comment?

MR KIRBY: I have not seen the foreign minister's comments, but — so without addressing — without addressing comments I haven't seen, I do think that it's incumbent upon me to restate what the Secretary has said many times in applauding the UN Special Envoy de Mistura's efforts to try to get the political process back on track. And he has tried mightily, and it has been extraordinarily difficult. And you know one of the reasons why it's been so difficult for him? Because when you try to bring the opposition together, try to get them to start having even proximity talks with the regime, and their people are still being bombed; and innocent civilians are still being bombed; hospitals are being bombed; and there are continued ground offenses by the regime that are still happening, like places in and around Aleppo; and millions of Syrians are still starving, not getting the medicine they need, not getting food and water — makes it real difficult for the opposition to move forward with meaningful talks or to believe that there's even a hope for that.

So what would make Staffan de Mistura's job enormously easier would be for the Russians to use the influence that we know they can have on the Assad regime to get the violence to stop, to cease with the temporary regimes of calms, and let's get to something that's real — which, oh by the way, Moscow signed up to in three communiqués and a UN Security Council resolution when they said that they supported a nationwide cessation of hostilities. So what would be, again, helpful to Mr. de Mistura is for Russia to use that influence to that end and to press the regime to allow the humanitarian access to continue unimpeded and unfettered to the still millions of Syrians that are in need. I think that would go a long way to helping the political process get back on track and to seeing Staffan de Mistura achieve the kind of success that the Secretary believes that he still can achieve.

....

QUESTION: And my final [question] on this one [topic] — the Secretary a couple months ago, or a month and a half ago [it was on 15 June], spoke about his patience running out or the United States' patience running out. Will that be the message he's driving home, especially in the aftermath of the meeting with the Saudi foreign

minister Adel Jubeir last week, where they talked about sending ground troops to Syria and maybe becoming even more involved in the effort to bring down the Assad regime?

MR KIRBY: I think if you're asking me is the Secretary still frustrated by what's going on in Syria, the answer is yes. In fact, I'd say he's extremely frustrated, and we want to see real change in what's been going on. And that's one of the reasons why we're going to Moscow, to see if that change is actually going to be possible — if the Russians are going to do what they've said that they were going to do. So, again, he looks forward to having these conversations. He's convinced that there can be progress. He's convinced that the Russians can contribute to real political and peaceful solutions in Syria. We've seen in the past where, when they choose to exert their leadership and their influence, the positive effect that it can have. And so, again, we — he's going to once again probe the sincerity of their own stated commitments to those outcomes.

But I believe he meant every molecule of what he said when said that his patience was growing thin. I think the patience of the international community is growing thin with respect to what's going on in Syria. Still too many people are being innocently killed and injured; still too many people are being driven from their homes; still too many people are without basic food, water, and medicine, and the basic necessities of life; and still we have a regime in power that refuses any effort to try to move this political process forward in a way that gets to an end state where we have a government in Syria which is responsible for and responsive to the Syrian people.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 12 July 2016.

On the night of 13 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports that "if Syria's Russian-backed president Bashar Assad upholds a ceasefire with U.S.-supported rebel groups and starts a political transition", then the U.S. will provide increased military cooperation with the Russians in Syria in the fight against ISIL and Nusra Front. The [Washington Post](#) reports more details. [Reuters](#) reports that the U.S. Military and U.S. Intelligence communities are aghast at Kerry offering to cooperate with the Russians, after the Russians have bombed U.S.-supported rebels in Syria for nine months.

Kerry's plan would have the U.S. bomb Nusra Front, which *The New York Times* calls "one of the most effective groups fighting the Assad forces". That means the effect of Kerry's plan would help Assad defeat terrorists in Syria. [NY Times](#). See also [NPR](#).

On the evening of 15 July, Kerry held a press briefing with Lavrov in Moscow, after their day-long meeting. Here are some of Kerry's rambling comments:

SECRETARY KERRY: .... .. as everyone knows, the cessation of hostilities has come under huge stress in recent months and still in Syria too many innocent people are dying. Too many terrorists are waging war against civilization itself.

On the first hand, the Assad regime has relentlessly continued indiscriminate attacks contrary to the agreements of the ISSG and the UN Security Council. But on the other side, the terrorist group Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaida branch in Syria, has also launched its own offensives, sometimes with members of different oppositions joining



with them.

And the result has been a cycle of excuses for continuing to fight each other, with a steady deterioration of a hard-fought-for cessation of hostilities in the process. And that has resulted in the killing of civilians, more refugees, more displaced persons, more radicalization, more terrorism, and ultimately an increasing sense of hopelessness among the people of Syria.

....

And so we came together here and we have agreed to steps that, if implemented in good faith, can address two serious problems that I've just described about the cessation. It is possible to help restore the cessation of hostilities, significantly reduce the violence, and help create the space for a genuine and credible political transition.

Now, the concrete steps that we've agreed on are not going to be laid out in public in some long list because we want them to work and because they need more work in order to work. I want to emphasize, though, they are not based on trust. They defined specific, sequential responsibilities all parties to the conflict must assume with the intent of stopping altogether the indiscriminate bombing of the Assad regime and stepping up our efforts against al-Nusra.

Now, there are further steps that we need to work on. We both accepted that responsibility. In order to implement this approach, our teams will need to meet and work through some details. Each of us know exactly what we have to do. And I know and Sergey knows that there are spoilers who will make every effort to try to disrupt this initiative, and we also know — and this is important — the results will not be tomorrow or the next day. They will not be immediate.

But our patience also is not limitless. International efforts have failed the Syrian people for far too long. We know that. After five years of war, the people of Syria don't want words. They want action and they deeply want to be able to live in peace. We, of course, took every effort over the course of the last hours — many hours — focusing on how to try to make this real. And we believe the best way to make it real is to go about a quiet business which is the prerequisite of being able to implement the things that we think should be implemented.

....

QUESTION [by Gardiner Harris, *The New York Times*]: .... Second, critics say this deal is a huge boon to the Assad regime by concentrating American firepower against the most effective anti-Assad forces and that you're basically selling out the rebels. Can you respond to that criticism, and what happens to this deal if, like every other one, the Syrian and Russian forces violate its terms?

SECRETARY KERRY: .... With respect to the critics who may or may not be making judgments about what may or may not have been agreed upon, first of all, they

don't know the details of what we have or haven't agreed on. And number two, we have homework to do, and I said that very clearly. Number three, the United Nations Security Council has labeled both Daesh — or ISIL, as some call it — and al-Nusra, which is al-Qaida — they are labeled as terrorist organizations. And the United States has no clouds over our — there's nothing standing in the way of our judgment about the need to be standing up against and fighting against terrorism. And both are terrorists.

So if some critic is criticizing the United States or Russia for going after al-Nusra, which is a terrorist organization, because they're good fighters against Assad, they have their priorities completely screwed up. The fact is that Nusra is plotting against countries in the world. What happened in Nice [France] last night could just as well have come from Nusra or wherever it came from as any other entity, because that's what they do. And so I have no illusions about what we need to do. I also have confidence in the people of Syria and confidence in the opposition — the non-terrorist organization opposition, the legitimate opposition, the opposition we have supported — to continue to fight for their freedom and for their principles and their values within Syria. And there is nothing that we are doing that is going to undermine the particular fundamentals between them and the Assad regime.

We have always said — and nothing that we're talking about doing here will change the fact — that there is no military solution to the problem of Syria. It requires a diplomatic, political solution. And that political solution requires going to the table and having a negotiation in Geneva according to the terms of the Geneva accord.

Now, as I said a moment ago, there are two principal violators that have been persistently violating what is going on with respect to the ceasefire. And one is, as I said, the Assad regime with its indiscriminate bombing, and the second is obviously the question of al-Nusra — which, as you just said, is fighting against Assad and which is providing no peace and security and which, regrettably, some opposition have occasionally chosen to fight with because they are fighting against Assad. But that doesn't excuse it, and it will not excuse it in our eyes. We saw what happened when people said the same thing about ISIL for a period of time — oh, don't worry, they're just a force against Assad, and down the road we can take them on. Well, they became more than just a force. And so I think that it is important for the United States, Russia, the entire coalition of ISSG to stand up against terrorism, and that is what we intend to continue to do.

Now, we continue — not one iota of our policy has changed with respect to the Assad regime. We still believe that Syria can't have peace while Assad is there. We believe that. We have a difference with Russia on that. But notwithstanding that difference, we both believe it is important for us to try to reestablish the cessation of hostilities.

And when we first came to the table in Vienna and I proposed a ceasefire, put it on the table, it was not Russia or Iran that said no. Both of them said yes, we should have a ceasefire. But there were others at the table who opposed proceeding forward with a ceasefire, and some of them, unfortunately, I think, may regret that today. But the point

is simply that we have consistently been working towards the full implementation of a ceasefire.

Now, final comment. It gets very confusing, obviously, on the ground with respect to who's who and who's where, and that's part of the homework we're going to do in order to absolutely be able to be clearer to people about who is supported by whom and who needs to change their behavior in order to adhere to the ceasefire itself.

And we had a long conversation about that today. I'm not going to share all the details of it because it won't work unless certain things, conditions which we agree have to be met, are put in place. So we're not here promising the world, not here tonight to suggest to you that overnight this is going to change. But I am here with confidence that if the things we talked about and agreed ought to be implemented are, in fact, implemented, then this has the opportunity to change the playing field significantly. And let the proof be in the pudding, not in our words.

"Joint Press Availability With Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov," [U.S. State Dept.](#), 15 July 2016.

#### **My comments:**

1. The U.S. Military will apparently begin airstrikes against Nusra Front in Syria.
2. Kerry *may* have accomplished something in Moscow, but he refuses to say what he accomplished.
3. Even if Kerry accomplished something, "the results will not be tomorrow or the next day. They will not be immediate." Someone should remind Kerry that de Mistura *needed* results on the ground in Syria since early April 2016. Now it is 15 July and Kerry seems to be hoping for results in August.
4. After making verbose remarks to journalists, Kerry reminds us that "let the proof be in the pudding, not in our words." The proof of the pudding is in the eating, *not* in the pudding itself. Kerry can't quote a cliché correctly.

#### **14 July: De Mistura**

On 14 July, while Kerry was in Moscow, de Mistura held a press briefing in Geneva.

**de Mistura:** Good evening, bon apr s midi. I will make some overall comments of the situation and then I will take some questions and then after that I will definitely make sure and hope that you will make use of what Jan Egeland has to tell us about this humanitarian meeting. We also have the privilege of having some colleagues from Damascus so that could be an additional opportunity for your own questions and more information.

So let me give you a little bit on where we are, at least where we are here from this angle. As you know I was in New York for the Security Council, and there the briefing was an informal briefing so I cannot go in deep details and then I was in Washington

and then in Rome. I will elaborate a little bit more. For the Security Council the main point and main focus, and frankly as also the case in Washington was to ensure that we have enough sufficient critical mass in order to give sufficient or concrete and effective start for the third round of Intra-Syrian talks, which as you know has a target date of August and that means coming soon up.

That is meant to be, these talks, this third round, I remind you and me, are meant to be a credible beginning of a road map towards a political transition, so that needs to be well prepared.

And in Rome, I had the opportunity of doing what I am planning to do in other capitals in Europe and elsewhere during the next few days, in order to brief them and consult them, they are members of the ISSG, and there I had the opportunity and it was a coincidence, I didn't really plan it, that also the Coordinator of the HNC was present, for consultations with the Italian authorities. That gave me the opportunity of listening privately to his ideas on how they are preparing themselves for the talks, when the talks will start.

Now there is currently a lot of informal diplomacy taking place, and particularly among the two co-chairs, and I think the next few days are crucial in order to make sure that we know where they stand. When the two co-chairs agree on something, as you know, that helps a lot the political process and even the humanitarian process.

If we do get a critical mass regarding, one: the non-constructive ambiguity which has been existing so far on the issue of al-Nusra, let me be clear on that, that is one of the main problems for the sustainability of the cessation of hostilities. We knew it from the beginning but it has become more and more recurrent.

And if we get some clarity or some critical mass on how to reduce or stop the indiscriminate aerial bombing taking place and at the same time some ideas for bridging the formula or some formulas for a political transition, we do have a critical mass for feeling that the Intra-Syrian talks' third round will not only be effective, but perhaps the beginning of a concrete outcome on all those areas but in particular, political transition.

That's where we are at the moment, that's why it is so important to remind ourselves that it is definitely crucial to wish the best to those in informal or lateral discussions taking place between the two co-chairs. Obviously everyone else is important, and particularly the Syrian people and the Syrian interlocutors but that's where we will be able to do so if we see the feeling of critical mass taking place and therefore the opportunity for the Intra-Syrian talks to involve, engage the Syrian in what are definitely their own decisions on their own future.

That's basically a short summary on where we are today. Three questions to me and then definitely the floor is yours, and definitely questions to you Jan, and our excellent colleague from Damascus.

**QUESTION:** You often talk about the two co-chairs. At the beginning, if I understood well, you decided to organize proximity talks in order to be able to listen to the Syrian people, the different groups of Syrian representatives, and since a while you often talk about the fact that an agreement should exist between the two co-chairs, meaning Russia and the US. Does it mean that today, in fact the future of Syria is in the hands of the two co-chairs?

**de Mistura:** Well let's put it into the real context. Do you remember the cessation of hostilities on the 26th of February this year? That was thanks to a remarkable, unexpected and quite effective understanding between the two co-chairs. Of course everyone else particularly the Syrian sides, did have to be involved, did get involved, but they also actually respected that type of arrangement. That proved to us that in fact there is a need, particularly from the two co-chairs, who have been heavily involved through the ISSG, Vienna, that existed because of them, have a key role in helping everyone else to know in what direction we could all together go. That doesn't mean, on the contrary, that we are giving up at all on, first, engaging and involving the regional players, that's why the ISSG is there, and the Syrian part, that's why the Intra-Syrian talks do not include the co-chairs or the foreigners or anyone else, that's the time we can pick up the broad picture and we bring it into the detailed aspect of ownership but the critical mass, we have learned by experience, particularly now, can and should start with some type of understanding of the co-chairs. There is a responsibility that they feel they have and there is an expectation from all of us that that can be fulfilled. It is difficult, it is important but that's why countries like the Russian Federation and the US are what they are. That will be my answer to your point.

**QUESTION:** I am sure you have seen the article in the Washington Post today about the proposed deal between Washington and Russia about targeting al-Nusra and other aspects. Would that be enough to give you satisfaction if this proposal bears fruit? And I also saw remarks from [Russian Federation Foreign Minister] Sergey Lavrov saying that you are neglecting your duties, it seems that he has lost confidence in you, and I just wonder, as one of the co-sponsors if he has no confidence in you, can you continue? Can you retain your position?

**de Mistura:** That's a lot of conclusions there. First of all let me address the second part. I take the message which was sent to me by Sergey Lavrov very seriously because I understand his impatience and frankly I share it. And I think it is a message saying — look, we need to make sure not to lose the fact that there must be a momentum regarding Intra-Syrian talks. Well I think that the interpretation that you might be given that is we are not lazy at all about it, we are constantly working on it through the technical talks and through many other discussions. But it is also true and I am sure that that would apply both to Sergey Lavrov and John Kerry and anyone else who cares about a political solution to this conflict that the third round my friends, the third round cannot not be at least successful in launching what has been a target item called: political transition and therefore requires preparation, and if the preparations take place in a proper way, we could call for the talks anytime. So I take that as a stimulation of not forgetting the importance of not missing the third round in terms of timing, but I

also share it as a message back saying we are ready, we want to do it, but to get something effective, we need help from the co-chairs because that will give a huge change for these talks to not be just another Geneva 2 which I am determined to avoid with the blessing I am sure of everyone else.

Regarding the article on the Washington Post, I will not make any comments on that. This is a newspaper analysis, let's see what happens in Moscow in the next few hours and let's hope that there is clearly some kind of general understanding or progress on it because it is important. One thing I already said and I think you must have noticed it, the ambiguity, the non-constructive ambiguity regarding the issue of al-Nusra was from the very beginning of the cessation of hostilities a clear indication that we will be having problems between those who claim to be part of Al-Qaeda and therefore Al-Qaeda is the one who bombed the twin towers, and at the same time happens to be very much involved in Syria. This ambiguity has to be clarified, otherwise it will not be helpful in any form of cessation of hostilities. But I know everyone is aware of it and we need to address that, while also addressing the issue about indiscriminate barrel bombing and aerial bombing on the civilian areas which has been continuing and cannot continue if we want to have serious constructive talks.

**QUESTION:** The technical talks, have you had any hint from any of the parties, and particularly from Damascus, that they are indeed moving either sides towards a real political transition?

**de Mistura:** I think you will acknowledge the fact that I tend to be very accurate in trying not to mislead you. And frankly the technical talks have been a form to gain time and gain information while waiting for the real moment of the Intra-Syrian talks. So I was not expecting and I am not expecting that the technical talks will then produce or are producing a breakthrough information or formula, that clearly needs to be done at the formal Intra-Syrian talks. But it is quite useful in getting into deeper details on issues which may not be controversial, and are required to be addressed, such as how to ensure the continuity of a state during a political transition, just to give an example. We do not want, at any cost, another Libya.

Thank you we now give the floor to Jan Egeland. ....

"Near verbatim transcript of joint press stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, UN Senior Advisor Jan Egeland and WHO Representative in Syria Elizabeth Hoff," [U.N. Geneva](#), 14 July 2016.

In his second paragraph, de Mistura said: "effective start for the third round of Intra-Syrian talks, which as you know has a target date of August". This is *wrong*. The 1 August target date is to "establishes credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance and sets a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution" (i.e., create a Transitional Governing Body to replace Assad's government). See U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254 at §4 and the ISSG Statement of 17 May 2016 at ¶15. The 1 August target date is for a result, *not* a beginning of talks.

De Mistura is remarkably optimistic for a man in charge of a sinking ship. With the besieging of Aleppo in July 2016, the situation on the ground in Syria is significantly worse than when

the negotiations ended in April 2016. In July 2016 it is unknown whether there will be more negotiations in Geneva in 2016.

### **22 July 2016: De Mistura**

On Friday, 22 July 2016, de Mistura was in Berlin Germany for a meeting with the German foreign minister. The Associated Press reported:

The U.N. special envoy to Syria said on Friday [22 July] that he hopes to be able to hold new talks on Syria's conflict in Geneva in August as concerns mount over humanitarian access to the bitterly contested city of Aleppo.

Speaking to reporters in Berlin, Staffan de Mistura said he and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon "are determined to actually look for a proper date in August" for new intra-Syria talks.

Russia and the United States have recently concluded bilateral talks on Syria, and de Mistura said it is important first to see how steps agreed upon there play out.

"We are eagerly waiting to see those steps become concrete and visible," he said, adding that "the next three weeks ... are going to be extremely important."

"UN Syria envoy says he hopes for new peace talks in August," [Associated Press](#), 15:05 GMT, 22 July 2016.

Reuters reported:

"We are determined to actually look for a proper date in August for relaunching the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva," de Mistura told reporters before a meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

The envoy said U.S. Secretary Of State John Kerry and Russian officials had agreed to take some "concrete steps" in addressing the situation in Syria, which could be helpful.

....

"The next three weeks are going to be extremely important to give a chance for not only intra-Syrian talks, but also for some possibility of reducing violence," he said.

De Mistura said progress in U.S.-Russian talks on Syria would get the next round of intra-Syrian talks off to a good start and could help the warring parties take "credible, real steps in the direction of political transition."

He said the situation in Aleppo was critical, with about 300,000 people facing the threat of another siege.

"U.N. envoy eyes new Syrian peace talks in Geneva in August," [Reuters](#), 15:30 GMT, 22 July 2016.

On Monday, 25 July, the United Nations Office in Geneva posted a transcript of de Mistura's remarks on 22 July. Here is a quotation of part of that transcript:

Point number one, the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and, modestly, myself, are determined to actually look for a proper date, in August, for re-launching the Intra-Syrian Talks in Geneva. At the same time, we have been watching very carefully, and you've been able to do it in Washington, I was just now in Ankara, the fact that there have been an important series of meetings in Moscow, between Secretary Kerry and the top Russian Federation leadership. Those talks were intensive and lasted two days, and from what we understand, they came up with some type of understanding on some steps to be taken. While we are taking here, I think that there is some intensive discussions on the "devil is in the details" in order to make sure that those steps take place. Certainly, we are eagerly waiting for those steps to become concrete and visible. If that takes place, I know, and we can say, it would be a great help, to make the Intra-Syrian Talks starting in a good mood, aiming for what they should be, an opportunity for credible, real, steps in the direction of political transition.

[There was *no* point number two.]

[mention of Turkey deleted] Timing is crucial. The next three weeks, believe me or not, are going to be extremely important to give us a chance, not only for the Intra-Syrian Talks, but also for some possibility of reducing violence in Syria.

"Verbatim transcript of remarks delivered by the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, prior to his meeting today with the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in Berlin," [U.N. Geneva](#), 25 July 2015.

My comment is that de Mistura now accepts the obvious and stops talking about meeting the 1 August deadline. On 9 June 2016, less than two months ago, de Mistura said: "First of August is attainable." On 23 June, about one month ago, de Mistura said he was aiming to restart the negotiations in July, "because August is not a fictional but is a real timetable". And on 29 June, de Mistura again said he was planning on negotiations in July and "a possibility of moving forward on political transition by August is still an option." So de Mistura was unrealistic in June and mostly silent in July.

De Mistura says: "the next three weeks ... are going to be extremely important" for re-establishing the Cessation of Hostilities. The next three weeks ends on 12 August, and then the talks *might* begin later in August.

De Mistura seems vague about the existence of a siege of Aleppo. The fact is that rebels in Aleppo have been effectively besieged since 7 July. After Assad's army fought hard for control of Castello road north of Aleppo, Assad is going to be very reluctant to give up Castello road, and thereby lift the siege of Aleppo.

I am tired of hearing de Mistura talk about "concrete steps", making an analogy to constructing solid steps at the entrance to a building. Until de Mistura gets rid of the obstructionist HNC, I predict nothing concrete will come from negotiations in Geneva.

### **26 July 2016: De Mistura**

On 26 July, de Mistura spoke to journalists in Geneva:



Today as you know we had a meeting in Geneva at the UN premises here with both American and Russian senior officials. The subject was related to the urgent need of progress on the cessation of hostilities, on the humanitarian access, on counter-terrorism and indeed political transition.

This meeting coincided, not by accident, with the meeting which took place in Laos, between the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Secretary of State John Kerry, and where they actually discussed, as you know, ways to build on the understanding that they had reached already in Moscow last week, and the steps required to make this understanding concrete.

We have made some progress today frankly, but more details need to be worked out in the next few days, particularly between the American and the Russian side but we are there to support too.

Our aim, and we say it very clearly, is to proceed with the third round of the Intra-Syrian talks towards the end of August. Meanwhile we hope that concrete progress on the Kerry-Lavrov understanding will take physically place. This will indeed create the right atmosphere, both on the ground and for the Intra-Syrian talks. This is not a pre-condition, but we all know, we all agree, that if such steps take place, and we hope so, will have indeed a strong positive effect on the environment surrounding the talks.

In the context of this trilateral meeting today, we, the UN, the facilitator, the mediator, were asked by the co-chairs to continue preparing proposals for addressing difficult issues that are related to talks, and that's what we will be doing during these days while preparing ourselves for the end of August.

That's basically what I can tell you today, of course I am ready to take some questions.

....

First of all I am already indicating very clearly our intention, our aim to actually hold the Intra-Syrian talks towards the end of August. That's a fact. But I also said that in order to make these talks fruitful and hopeful we are certainly all of us very eager to see what is the outcome of the steps agreed upon in Moscow and I presume that all the meetings which are taking place between now and the next few days and week, will aim at trying to make those steps concrete.

"Near Verbatim transcript of stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Staffan de Mistura," [U.N. Geneva](#), 26 July 2015.

De Mistura wasted all of May, wasted all of June, wasted all of July, and now he proposes to waste most of August, before reconvening the negotiations in Geneva. While de Mistura waits for ideal circumstances to somehow occur, people are actually *dying* at the rate of more than 4000/month in Syria.

The suspended negotiations in Geneva missed the 1 August target date to agree on a Transitional Governing Body for Syria. De Mistura did a slight-of-hand and changed the 1 August date to be for resumption of negotiations in Geneva, but then he also missed that

target date.

### **28 July 2016: De Mistura**

On 28 July, de Mistura had a press briefing. There was little information in the briefing, so I am quoting only a few paragraphs of the transcript.

Let me first of all say that I am asking my deputy to go to Damascus in the next few days in order to discuss with the Syrian authorities some ideas that we have developed in order to facilitate some type of launching of what we intend to be, in August, the Intra-Syrian Talks.

....

On the humanitarian side, the reality on the ground is that, currently, what is actually impeding the access to humanitarian aid is not permissions, is not papers, it is rather fighting. Fighting is the main reason for which this week, we are not able to give you good news about humanitarian access.

....

**QUESTION:** It's a follow-up to the question I've asked you on Tuesday [26 July]. What happens if the Russians and the Americans cannot agree on a military cooperation deal, because you previously said that the future peace talks depend on this, and the formula for the political transition. But if they cannot do this deal, then are you going to cancel the peace talks in August?

**SdeM.** I will not tell you that I am going to cancel peace talks, because the UN is bound to try, and try again, and try again, and when we fail, fail better and try again. That is our philosophy, especially when what is at stake is such a tragic situation for the Syrian people, after five years. What I can tell you is that if those discussions do not produce fruits, they will certainly have a very negative impact on the chances of the talks to become fruitful and successful. They will be anyway, uphill talks but we need to give them the maximum chances.

"Near verbatim transcript of stakeout by Mr. Staffan de Mistura, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, following the humanitarian taskforce meeting," [U.N. Geneva](#), 28 July 2016.

### **28 July 2016: Russia/Assad blindsides U.N. and USA**

On the early morning of 27 July 2016, Reuters reported on the background to Russia blindsiding the USA the following day:

Kerry has defended [his] proposal despite deep skepticism among top American military and intelligence officials, including Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford, over working with Russia.

....

Kerry's State Department and White House allies say the plan is the best chance to

limit the fighting that is driving thousands of Syrian civilians — with some trained Islamic State fighters among them — into exile in Europe, and preventing humanitarian aid from reaching tens of thousands more.

A senior Western diplomat said the lack of transparency of the U.S.-Russia talks was frustrating and — with what the diplomat said was increased targeting of civilians and hospitals on the ground — it was hard to foresee any deal.

"The Americans are risking a lot for a deal that is as unlikely to be honored as previous engagements the Russians have made," the diplomat said.

Another diplomat said it was unlikely De Mistura would meet his new target of resuming talks in August. "In reality it means there will be nothing in August, it means September," the diplomat said.

Lesley Wroughton & Stephanie Nebehay, "Kerry hopes to work with Russia on Syria, U.N. aims to restart talks," [Reuters](#), 01:14 GMT, 27 July 2016.

On 28 July, Russia and the Syrian government suddenly announced a plan to open "humanitarian corridors" for residents and rebels to leave Aleppo. The plan was a surprise to both de Mistura and Kerry. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 29 July, de Mistura suggested that the United Nations operate the "humanitarian corridors" in Aleppo. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Cynics suggested that the so-called "humanitarian corridors" were really a way to get rebels out of Aleppo, to make it easier for Assad to capture Aleppo. On the morning of 29 July, [Reuters](#) issued a news article with the headline "Attempt at U.S.-Russia cooperation in Syria suffers major setbacks". One setback was Assad asking residents to leave Aleppo, which "appeared to be an effort to pre-empt a U.S. demand that Russia and Syria reopen a major road into the divided northern city before talks could begin on creating a joint intelligence center to coordinate air attacks against Islamic State." Reuters quoted an anonymous U.S. government official as saying: "At first glance, that would appear to be a unilateral effort by Moscow and Assad to pre-empt Kerry's demand for ending the siege of Aleppo before starting negotiations on the larger issues. If [Kerry's] proposal isn't dead, it seems to be pretty badly wounded."

On Friday, 29 July, Kerry was still unsure about the intent of the Russian humanitarian corridors in Aleppo. Kerry hinted that if Russia was *not* sincere about humanitarian aid to Aleppo, the U.S. offer of cooperation with Russia would "completely break apart".

QUESTION: Secretary Kerry, do you think that the Russian (inaudible) humanitarian operation for Aleppo is just a ruse? And if it's not a ruse, do you agree with the UN that they should just turn over these corridors they plan to open up to the United Nations, that the UN can take charge of humanitarian assistance?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, we're deeply concerned about the definition, and I have talked to Moscow twice in the last 24 hours. I met with Foreign Minister Lavrov in Laos three days ago. This is very much potentially a challenge, but we have a team that is meeting today working on this and we'll find out whether or not it's real or not.

It has the risk, if it is a ruse, of completely breaking apart the level of cooperation. On the other hand, if we're able to work it out today and have a complete understanding of what is happening and an agreement on the way forward, it could actually open up some possibilities. We just don't know fully until we finish the conversations today.

"Remarks With United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed,"  
[U.S. State Dept](#), 29 July 2016.

On Friday, 29 July, at the U.S. State Department daily press briefing, spokesman John Kirby clarified what was happening.

QUESTION [by Arshad Mohammed of Reuters]: The conversations that Secretary Kerry said are now ongoing in which you're trying to figure out whether or not the Russian humanitarian operation is a ruse, where are they taking place, who's involved in them, and what have you learned so far?

MR KIRBY: I think there's a little confusion there in the question. He was referring — there's sort of two things here. There are discussions going on between U.S. and Russia teams in Geneva — I talked about this a little bit yesterday — to work through the technicalities and the modalities of the proposals that Foreign Minister Lavrov and Secretary Kerry agreed to back in Moscow a couple of weeks ago. These are designed to get the cessation of hostilities in a better place, to get it more enforceable, and to create the space that Special Envoy de Mistura needs to resume the political talks.

And I think you heard the Secretary today talk about conversations he's been having with Russian officials to better understand the announcement yesterday of humanitarian corridors and what that — and what that means, and also to express quite frankly our concerns about these corridors. There should be no need for them if the cessation of hostilities is being enforced and observed in and around Aleppo. People should not have to be told to leave or given the impression that there is some sort of forced evacuation. They should be able to stay in their homes peacefully because they're not at risk by regime forces.

....

QUESTION: And what do you think about Special Envoy de Mistura's statement today that perhaps what they should do is take these corridors, if they are opening them, and simply hand them over to the UN so that the UN can then take responsibility for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people in the city, as you've been — or in those parts of the city, as you've been demanding for many, many months now?

MR KIRBY: Well, again, I'd say, first of all, there should be no need for humanitarian corridors because there should be no need for the people of Aleppo to feel besieged — and they do, and they are. Point one.

Point two, we've seen the comments that the special envoy made about the potential role here for the UN, and we're trying to get a little bit more clarity on exactly what he meant by that. I don't have an update for you and I don't have a position by the United States on that suggestion. But as with all manners of proposals and options and

alternatives proposed by the special envoy, obviously we take those seriously; we want to learn more about it.

"Daily Press Briefing," [State Dept](#), 29 July 2016.

On Saturday morning, 30 July, [Reuters](#) summarized what was happening.

There was no U.S. State Department daily press briefing on Monday, 1 August, so everyone needs to wait longer to learn what is happening.

Meanwhile, it is unclear how many people in Aleppo have used the humanitarian corridors to flee from the besieged city. On 30 July, the [Associated Press](#) and [RIA-Novosti](#) report that the Russians claim a total of 169 civilians have fled from Aleppo — 85 civilians fled on 29 July and 52 civilians fled on 30 July. The Russians also claim 69 insurgents have surrendered their weapons and departed from Aleppo, under an amnesty program offered by Assad. [SANA](#) claims only "tens of families" departed via the corridors on 30 July. But rebels say *no* one has fled, because of snipers shooting at anyone in the corridors, and because of fear of arrest by Assad's government. Even if the Russian claims are true, the 169 civilians are less than 0.07% of the people in Aleppo.

My comment is that it is conceivable that Assad can capture Aleppo, with the help of Russia. That would be a major step toward Assad winning the civil war. If Assad wins the civil war, then there will be *no* need for negotiations in Geneva.

### **July 2016: Assad ready for negotiations in Geneva**

On 24 July 2016, Assad's government announced it was ready for negotiations in Geneva without any pre-conditions. [RIA-Novosti](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(Reuters).

My comment is that this announcement is a publicity stunt, a kind of propaganda, designed to contrast Assad's willingness to negotiate with the HNC's refusal to negotiate until its pre-conditions (i.e., demands) are met. While it is true that Assad — unlike the HNC — is willing to send negotiators to Geneva, Assad's government is pursuing a military solution in Syria, including attacks on the city of Aleppo, attacks in Damascus province, and continuing to besiege cities in Syria.

As de Mistura announced on 28 July, on 31 July de Mistura's deputy was in Damascus for consultations with Assad's government. [Reuters](#). On 31 July, Assad's government again announced it was ready for negotiations in Geneva without any pre-conditions. [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [SANA](#).

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## **ISSG Meetings**

### **Previous ISSG Meetings**

On 23 October 2015, the foreign ministers of USA, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey met in Vienna for a two-hour meeting about political transition in Syria.

On 30 October 2015, there was another meeting in Vienna, this time with foreign ministers of 17 nations, plus the EU and UN: European Union (Federica Mogherini), U.N. Special Envoy to Syria (Staffan de Mistura), China, Egypt, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom (i.e., Britain), and the USA. See my essay for [October 2015](#).

On 14 November 2015, there was a second big meeting in Vienna, as chronicled in my essay for [November 2015](#). The Arab League joined the meeting in November. The participants are now called the "International Syrian Support Group" (ISSG).

On 18 December 2015, there was a third meeting of the ISSG in New York City, followed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254. (See my essay for [December 2015](#).)

On the night of 11 February 2016, there was a fourth meeting of the ISSG in Munich. See my essay for [February 2016](#).

On 17 May 2016, there was a fifth meeting of the ISSG in Vienna. See my essay for [May 2016](#).

I have collected the full-text of statements issued at ISSG meetings in my document at [rbs0.com](#)

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### **July 2016: ISSG Meeting**

With de Mistura's repeated calls in June for foreign nations to use their influence to create a "critical mass" amongst the HNC and Assad's delegation, it would appear to be useful to have another ISSG meeting in June or early July. But the last ISSG meeting, on 17 May 2016, produced many promises, but few results. It is becoming obvious that the brief ISSG meetings (less than one day for more than 17 nations to reach a consensus!) are carefully choreographed by Russia and the USA. I suspect that the statements issued by the ISSG meetings are drafted in advance by the USA, with the approval of Russia, and *not* the product of the participants at the ISSG meeting.

Note also that during October-December 2015, the ISSG met every month. Then meetings became less frequent. There have been *no* meetings since 17 May 2016, despite significant problems in Syria.

One might interpret the Kerry-Lavrov meetings in Moscow on 14-15 July 2016 as a kind of ISSG meeting.

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### ***No Geneva Negotiations in July***

*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.

On 9 June 2016, de Mistura announced a series of "technical meetings" by members of his staff in Riyadh, Damascus, Cairo, and Moscow.

- 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 2016, 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 29 July 2016, my search of Google News found *no* mentions of "technical meetings" in either Riyadh or Damascus. My interpretation of the silence is that both the HNC and the local Syrian opposition refused to meet with de Mistura's team.

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On 7 July, I wrote a [section](#) in the conclusion of this essay that identified five reasons why the negotiations in Geneva failed.

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## July 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.

My essay for [June 2016](#) continued to chronicle violations of the cessation of hostilities. The only source of daily reports on violations is by Russia, which does *not* include violations by Assad and Russia. As I reflected 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 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.

## 2 July 2016

On 1 July, a Syrian military aircraft crashed east of Damascus. The pilot safely ejected, but was later killed by Nusra Front. [Associated Press](#). On 2 July, Assad retaliated by bombing civilians in the town of Jeiroud, killing at least 25 people. [Associated Press](#).

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## 6 July 2016

On 6 July, the Syrian government announced a unilateral, nationwide, three-day truce, beginning at 01:00 on 6 July and ending at 24:00 on 8 July. The Associated Press noted the truce "coinciding with the start of the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holidays that marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan". [SANA](#) (terse announcement); [Associated Press](#).

It was the first time Assad had announced a nationwide ceasefire, and John Kerry hoped to permanently extend the ceasefire. (On 6 July Kerry was in the former Soviet republic of Georgia for discussions with Georgia's prime minister and other government leaders.)

QUESTION [by Dave Clark from AFP]: Mr. Secretary, Mr. Prime Minister, sorry to take you away from Georgia for a moment, but the Syrian army has declared a 72-hour ceasefire to mark the Eid al-Fitr holiday. Is this sufficient, or should it be the basis for a longer ceasefire? And was it the subject of conversation when — of your last talks by telephone, I believe, with Foreign Minister Lavrov? Is it a product of the ISSG intervention or was it a Syrian initiative on its own? Thank you.

SECRETARY KERRY: We welcome, very much welcome, the Syrian army declaration of a 72-hour period of quiet in celebration of and in honor of Eid. And we very much hope that it will be honored by all parties and that it will hold. This has been a matter of discussion within the ISSG/ceasefire task force efforts both in Geneva and Amman. And it is, I hope, an outgrowth of that discussion. We are engaged right now



in ongoing discussions with various parties, including the Russians, regarding the possibility of extending this. So is 72 hours enough? The answer is very simple: no. Is 72 hours more welcome than nothing? The answer is yes. But we are trying very hard to grow these current discussions into a longer-lasting, real, enforceable, accountable cessation of hostilities that could change the dynamics on the ground hopefully to permit a legitimate conversation in Geneva for transition and for a political solution to begin to take place. I'm not going to offer any judgments about the prospects of that happening, but it has to be our goal and it's one that we're working on very, very hard, and we hope that the 72 hours could perhaps be a harbinger of possibilities to come.

John Kerry, "Remarks With Georgian Prime Minister Kvirikashvili," [U.S. State Dept](#), 6 July 2016.

Note that Kerry said these remarks early in the morning, before it was clear that Assad's military was repeatedly violating their own ceasefire.

So what happens during a nationwide ceasefire in Syria? The Associated Press reports that Assad's warplanes bombed in the provinces of Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama:

There were nevertheless reports of sporadic violence Wednesday [6 July].

One rebel group, the Army of Islam, said government forces and allied fighters moved in on a strategic rebel-held town in the Damascus suburbs. Seizing Madya, north of the capital, could potentially sever one of their main supply routes. It said pro-government forces have also kept up their bombardment of the besieged suburb of Douma.

"The government declaration is a way to evade international pressure but it will change nothing on the ground," said Islam Alloush, an Army of Islam spokesman. He said his group would nevertheless hold fire and only respond to government violations.

....

Elsewhere in Syria, insurgents launched rockets into al-Zahraa, a mainly Shiite town in the northern Aleppo province, killing two children, the Observatory said. It said warplanes struck a rebel-held area in Aleppo city, killing one person and wounding a media activist.

A rescue worker in the rebel-held part of Aleppo city, Bibars Meshal, said government forces dropped barrel bombs on Hraitan, an area north of the city.

In the central Hama province, activist Hassan al-Amari said warplanes targeted the town of Hawash in the Sahal al-Ghab plains, where hard-line rebels, including the Nusra Front, seized territory from the government in April. The plains lie just east of Assad's coastal stronghold of Latakia.

Sarah El Deeb, "Syrian army declares temporary, nationwide truce," [Associated Press](#), 17:23 GMT, 6 July 2016.

Reuters reported Assad's airstrikes in the provinces of Damascus, Aleppo, and Idlib:  
Wednesday's ceasefire covers the three-day Eid al-Fitr holiday celebrated by Muslims

to mark the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. But opposition groups and a monitoring organization said little had actually changed on the ground.

"The regime announced the ceasefire, but they did not commit to it. There has been a lot of shelling and bombing on Douma and Daraya (rebel-held towns near Damascus)," a spokeswoman for the Syrian opposition delegation [HNC] to Geneva peace talks said.

....

Islam Alloush, spokesman for the powerful Jaish al Islam rebel faction, said in a telegram message to journalists: "The regime has made this announcement purely to escape international pressure. On the ground, I don't think anything has changed."

Jaish al Islam is represented on the official Syrian opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC).

Jaish al Islam said in a separate statement that, despite the announced truce, government and allied forces had attacked the town of Maydaa, in the Eastern Ghouta area east of Damascus. Maydaa has been held by Jaish al Islam.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Wednesday that government and allied forces had taken almost complete control of Maydaa and that fighting continued. Syrian state media said the army and its allies had taken ground from "terrorists" in the area. The Syrian government describes all groups fighting against it as terrorists.

The Britain-based Observatory, which monitors the Syrian conflict, also said there had been rebel and government shelling in areas around the northern city of Aleppo, and air strikes had hit towns in the northern Aleppo countryside on Wednesday.

The Observatory said five air strikes hit the town of Jisr al-Shughour in rebel-held Idlib province, killing two children who were brothers, and injuring a number of others. Lisa Barrington, et al., "Syrian army, rebels agree to 72-hour Eid truce, but fighting continues," [Reuters](#), 00:10 GMT, 7 July 2016.

In addition to attacks by Assad's military, the Associated Press (cited above) and [Reuters](#) reported that an ISIL suicide bomber attacked a bakery in the Kurdish-controlled Hassakeh province of Syria on 5 July, killing approximately 20 people. The Associated Press commented: "It was the third major attack claimed by the group in the final week of Ramadan, following a massive bombing in Baghdad that killed 175 people and an assault in Bangladesh that killed 22." ISIL also attacked an airport in Istanbul on 28 June, killing 44 people. And on 4 July, an ISIL suicide bomber exploded near a holy mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia, killing 4 people.

Another [Associated Press](#) article says that Muslims worldwide were "struggling" to understand the violence by ISIL that killed approximately 350 people during the holy month of Ramadan. (The Ramadan death toll should be at least 425, because the AP uses the stale 175 dead in Baghdad, instead of the current 250 dead.) It is easy to understand: ISIL is not

only Evil, but also ISIL perverts the doctrines of mainstream Islam.

On Wednesday, 6 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports violations by jihadists in Syria:

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 near Jaur-al-Basha, Arbil, Duma and Harasta.

....

In connection with the celebration of the muslim holiday Eid al-Fitr, the High Command of the Syrian Armed Forces has declared “the silence regime” on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic from 00:01 July 6th, 2016 for 72 hours.

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 (July 6, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 6 July 2016.

My comment on Assad's 6-8 July ceasefire is that it is not only temporary but also repeatedly violated by Assad's military. Kerry is trying to stretch this non-ceasefire "into a longer-lasting, real, enforceable, accountable cessation of hostilities". It is increasingly obvious that neither Assad nor the insurgents really want a ceasefire, although they issue some propaganda about ceasefires. Remember the proposal of the HNC on 1 June 2016 for a ceasefire in Syria during Ramadan — but that proposal never received serious consideration.

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### 7 July 2016

On 7 July, the second day of the so-called nationwide ceasefire, Assad's military continued to violate the ceasefire that it announced on 6 July. In the morning of 7 July, the Associated Press reported:

In a multi-pronged offensive, Syrian government and allied troops pushed their [sic] into an area north of Aleppo city on Thursday [7 July], threatening a key rebel supply line and setting off intense clashes despite a day old truce, pro-government fighters and opposition activists said.

Fierce fighting also broke out in the eastern and southern suburbs of the Syrian capital, Damascus, activists and rebel fighters reported.

....

Government forces and allied troops, including Lebanon's Hezbollah militia, have been mounting repeated attacks on the Castello road to close the only route to the opposition-held areas in Aleppo city. If they succeed in closing the road off

completely, the rebels could lose one of their most-prized strongholds.

The government offensive secured control over the surrounding Mallah farms, leaving troops less than a mile (1.3 kilometers) away from Castello road, the military media arm of Hezbollah said. In a statement, it said the advance was in retaliation for violations of the truce by armed groups. Syrian State TV declared that, "terrorists are violating the truce."

The rebel group, Nour al-Din Zinky, posted on its Facebook page that government warplanes and artillery heavily shelled the Mallah farms close to the road, and had taken control of some of them in an attempt to cut the rebel supply line. The group said it is battling alongside other fighters to regain control of the farms.

....

Ahmed Ramadan, an exiled Syrian political opposition member, wrote on his Twitter page that, "the truce of Bashar (Assad) the Butcher is a hoax." anonymous, "Fighting reported across Syria despite a 3-day truce," [Associated Press](#), 12:31 GMT, 7 July 2016.

Later on 7 July, the Associated Press reported:

In a multi-pronged offensive, Syrian government forces and their allies pushed into an area north of the city of Aleppo on Thursday [7 July], threatening a key supply line for the city's opposition-held quarters and setting off intense clashes with rebels, activists said.

The advance came despite of[,] and in violation of[,] the government's own cease-fire, which the authorities announced the day before to coincide with the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr that marks the end of Ramadan.

....

Fierce fighting also broke out in the eastern and southern suburbs of the Syrian capital, Damascus, activists and rebel fighters reported.

Islam Alloush, a spokesman for the Jaish al-Islam fighting group, said government forces moved in on the suburb of Mayda, seeking to block a rebel supply line, while the opposition fought back to regain a number of areas previously captured. Government advances were also reported in Daraya, a besieged opposition-held town overlooking Damascus airport, the opposition-operated Facebook account of the Local Council of Daraya reported.

....

The rebel supply line to Aleppo is known as the Castello road and government forces and their allies, including Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, have been mounting repeated attacks on it.

The government has so far secured control over the surrounding Mallah farms, leaving Syrian forces less than a mile (1.3 kilometers) away from Castello road, Hezbollah's media arm said, describing it as retaliation for violations of the truce by armed groups. Syrian State TV declared that, "terrorists are violating the truce."

Rebel Nour al-Din Zinky group said on its Facebook page that government warplanes and artillery shelled the Mallah farms close to the road. It said the rebels were trying to regain control of the farms.

Philip Issa, "Fighting reported across Syria despite declared 3-day truce," [Associated Press](#), 17:23 GMT, 7 July 2016.

At 23:27 GMT on 7 July, [Reuters](#) reported: "Syrian government forces took a step toward completely encircling rebel-held parts of Aleppo on Thursday, capturing ground overlooking the only road into the opposition half of the city and effectively putting those areas under siege."

[Reuters](#) reports that a spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry said: "Without a full and lasting truce, and without full and continuous humanitarian access to all people in need in Syria, it is unrealistic to expect a resumption of negotiations."

The United Nations Office in Geneva issued de Mistura's first press release during July: The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, extends his wishes to the Syrian people on the occasion of Eid el-Fitr.

Mr. de Mistura also welcomes all efforts, including by the International Syria Support Group co-chairs through their joint mechanism in Geneva and as part of ongoing efforts to consolidate the several months long Cessation of Hostilities to bring about a hudna [*Arabic for truce or armistice*] throughout the country in respect of the spirit and true message of peace.

This would certainly enhance the prospects of meaningful negotiations towards a political settlement.

Mr. de Mistura continues to closely monitor the situation in Syria. In this regard, and despite some initial reports of potential violations, Mr. de Mistura urges all parties to the Cessation of Hostilities to abide by these days of silence for the sake of all Syrians. "Media Statement from the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N. Geneva](#), 7 July 2016.

As expected, all of the parties in Syria ignored de Mistura's plea for a ceasefire in Syria.

On 7 July, the spokesman for the U.S. State Department, John Kirby, at his daily press briefing characterized the ceasefire as generally successful, despite some violations by Assad: MR KIRBY: I want to just provide a short update on the period of calm in Syria. So today's the second now of three days of the recently announced period of calm for Eid in Syria. Violence thus far we assess has been broadly reduced, showing us that it is

possible for both sides to refrain from aggression when they choose to do so. However, we've certainly seen reports of regime strikes and attacks in familiar locations: in Aleppo; artillery attacks in the Damascus suburbs; and we've seen reports of strikes in Idlib. So obviously, it's extremely troubling and deeply disturbing to us that once again the regime is not meeting their full commitment, contrary to their own declaration.

So we're going to continue to monitor these violations carefully, as we have in the past. We continue also to call on Russia to use all of its available influence on the regime and its allies to cease offensives during this pause, particularly in Aleppo where the regime appears to be continuing to pursue an offensive military plan in violation of the calm they themselves have announced.

Broadly speaking, despite these violations, as I said at the top, the level of violence has been reduced in the first 48 hours of this 72-hour period. And of course, we welcome that reduction in violence. As we've also said before many times, we want a full and enduring compliance by all parties that resets the cessation and renews both sides' longer-term commitment to ending this conflict through a political transition.

....

MR KIRBY: Well, as I also said, in general there's been a reduction in the violence in the last 48 hours. Even though we have been concerned about these violations, there still has been a general reduction in the violence across the country, which — again, we think that's a good thing. What we'd like to see is a total application of the cessation of hostilities and to have that be enduring, not temporal, not for 48 hours, for 72 hours. And again, we welcomed this announcement when it came and it was our fervent hope that it would be fully applied over those 72 hours, and we're obviously deeply troubled that it hasn't been.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 7 July 2016.

Kirby's characterization of the ceasefire is different from the dismal characterization by journalists. Journalists obtain most of their information from grieved insurgents, who may exaggerate violations by Assad. On 8-9 July the Russians did report *no* violations of the ceasefire by jihadists or rebels. But the Russians have a long history of making false statements — remember their claims in [October 2015](#) and [November 2015](#) that Russian airstrikes only targeted ISIL, when Russia was actually bombing U.S.-supported rebels. On 12 July 2016, the [Washington Post](#) exposed another false statement by Russia. I conclude that it is difficult to know what is really happening in combat zones in Syria.

On Thursday, 7 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports violations by jihadists in Syria:

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 Aleppo and Idlib provinces.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed shelling of Zahraa quarter of Aleppo with improvised artillery.

In the Idlib province, terrorists of Ahrar al-Sham grouping have performed 3 mortar shellings of positions of the Syrian Armed Forces near Fuah.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (July 7, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 7 July 2016.

The English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights was *not* available on 7 July.

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### 8 July 2016

On 8 July the Associated Press did *not* report on fighting in Syria. The English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights was *not* available on 8 July.

Reuters reported on fighting in Syria during the last day of the three-day ceasefire:

Air strikes killed 23 people at a holiday spot in Syria's Idlib province while at least 25 died when rebels shelled government-held areas of Aleppo city on Friday [8 July], the last day of a 72-hour ceasefire announced by the Syrian army, [the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said].

....

A 72-hour ceasefire was announced by the Syrian army on Wednesday, but rebels and the Observatory said there had been little let-up in the violence.

On Thursday [7 July], government forces took a step toward completely encircling rebel-held parts of Aleppo, capturing ground overlooking the only road into the opposition half of the city and effectively putting those areas under siege.

Lisa Barrington, "Almost 50 killed in Syria on ceasefire's last day: monitor," [Reuters](#) 20:33 GMT, 8 July 2016.

On Friday, 8 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports no violations by jihadists in Syria:

Within last 24 hours, no ceasefire violation has been registered in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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

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### 9 July 2016

The Syrian ceasefire was so successful <*sarcastic smirk*> that Assad decided to continue the ceasefire for an additional three days, now ending at midnight on 11 July. [SANA](#); [Associated Press](#).

Journalists continue to report major military offensives by Assad. The Associated Press says:

Fierce clashes erupted between rebels and pro-government forces around Syria's largest city, Aleppo, Saturday [9 July] despite a proclamation from the Syrian military that it would extend its own cease-fire through Monday [11 July].

The military had declared a nationwide cease-fire for the Eid al-Fitr holiday July 6, expiring July 8 at midnight, but it had little impact on the ground, as pro-government forces choked off the last supply route to opposition areas in the contested city of Aleppo on July 7.

On Saturday evening [9 July], rebels launched a counteroffensive, leading with two car bombs to open the vital Castello road to eastern Aleppo, according to activists. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group, which gathers information from a network of informants across the war-torn country, said the cars were driven by two suicide bombers from al-Qaida's Syria affiliate, the Nusra Front, which fights alongside rebel groups against government forces. ....

Philip Issa, "Syria's military extends cease-fire but no letup in fighting," [Associated Press](#), 23:12 GMT, 9 July 2016.

Reuters reported:

Rebel shelling into government-held parts of Syria's second city Aleppo killed at least 38 civilians on Saturday [9 July], [the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights] said, as Syrian government forces continued their offensive to completely encircle rebel-held parts of the city.

....

Syrian forces are now 500-1000 metres away from the [Castello] Road, sources say, bringing the road within firing range and trapping between 250,000 and 300,000 people in opposition-held parts of Aleppo.

Lisa Barrington, "At least 38 civilians killed in rebel fire on government-held part of Syria's Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 14:21 GMT, 9 July 2016.

On Saturday, 9 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports no violations by jihadists in Syria:

Within last 24 hours, no ceasefire violation has been registered in the Syrian Arab Republic.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS international terrorist organizations do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime [in Aleppo, Damascus, and Latakia provinces].

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

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**10 July 2016**



On 10 July, neither the Associated Press nor Reuters reported on fighting in Syria. The English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights continues to be *unavailable* on 10 July.

On Sunday, 10 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports violations by jihadists in Syria:

The ceasefire has been observed in most provinces of the Syrian Arab Republic. Within last 24 hours, 2 ceasefire violations have been registered in the Damascus province.

Jaysh al-Islam formations, which had claimed to belong to the opposition, have performed shelling of Jaur-al-Basha and Duma with mortars and MLRS.

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, has been prolonged by 72 hours until 23.59 on July 11, 2016.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS international terrorist organizations 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 (July 10, 2016)," [Russia MoD](#), 10 July 2016.

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### 11 July 2016

On 11 July, the Associated Press reported on the last day of Assad's six-day ceasefire:

Fierce clashes and air raids on Monday [11 July] across northern Syria, mainly in the contested city of Aleppo, killed at least 26 people and left scores wounded, according to reports.

Syrian state media and opposition monitoring groups said insurgents bombarded government-held neighborhoods in Aleppo, killing eight people there and wounding dozens. Later in the day, activists said a government airstrike on the rebel-held neighborhood of Bab al-Maqam killed 10 people.

Meanwhile, air raids on a fuel market in the northern Idlib province killed at least eight people, including a media activist who used to report for the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV network.

In Aleppo, rebels fired hundreds of shells and rockets, with the clashes being the most intense near the old quarter and the city's famed citadel. .... The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said opposition fighters fired 300 shells on government-held neighborhoods on Monday alone.

....

[Aleppo] and its suburbs have witnessed intense shelling and fighting over the past few

days during which government forces were able to effectively cut the main route into rebel-held neighborhoods. The passageway, known as the Castello road, has been a lifeline to about 300,000 people in the rebel-held part of the city.

Bassem Mroue, "More fighting in Syria's Aleppo, Idlib kills at least 26," [Associated Press](#), 16:07 GMT, 11 July 2016.

Assad's government extended the so-called ceasefire for another three days. The government's Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) tersely reported:

General command of the army and armed forces announced on Monday that the truce will be extended for 72 hours.

The army's general command said in a statement to SANA that the truce will be applied in all Syrian territories as of 00.01 July 12 until 23.59 July 14th.

"General command of Army: Truce extended for 72 hours," [SANA](#), 11 July 2016.

Reuters reported:

Rebels attacked Syrian government positions in the historic centre of Aleppo on Monday [11 July] in response to an offensive that cut a road leading into the opposition-held sector of the city, monitors and insurgents said.

....

Residents contacted in the city said prices of fresh vegetables, bread and fuel had on average almost doubled in the past week with no new supplies coming into Aleppo, Syria's largest city and commercial hub before the war.

....

The Syrian military said it would extend a nationwide ceasefire for another 72 hours from Tuesday, state media reported on Monday. The Syrian army and the Russian military, which backs Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, have periodically this month announced these temporary truces but continued to step up their military campaigns in major battlefields.

....

Early on Monday more than 300 shells fired by rebels hit western, government-held neighbourhoods of Aleppo, killing five people and wounding dozens more, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. State television said eight people had been killed and that the bombardments had brought down buildings.

....

Syrian warplanes bombarded rebel districts of Aleppo, the British-based Observatory said, with at least 10 civilians killed in a strike on Hay al Maqam. A pro-Damascus TV channel said Russian warplanes, backing the government, were bombing areas north of the city, near the Castello Road.

Jets believed to be Russian or Syrian also rocketed a fuel market in a town in the northwestern province of Idlib, killing at least 10 people and injuring scores, according to a local rescue worker near the site.

An air strike hit a local field hospital in the town of Ahsem in Idlib province, killing three people, including a child, an international charity and an aid worker said. John Davison & Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Rebels attack government lines in Syria's Aleppo after supply road cut," [Reuters](#), 21:12 GMT, 11 July 2016.

On 11 July, the spokesman for the U.S. State Department, John Kirby, said at his daily press briefing:

MR KIRBY: Well, as you rightly said, the regime extended it for an additional 72 hours which was ending today. But even as recently as yesterday, Syrian regime forces continue to conduct ground and aerial operations in Aleppo in violation of both the nationwide cessation of hostilities, which was called for in the UN Security Council resolution, but also the Eid period of calm which they themselves announced. We've also seen disturbing reports of regime advances in Daraya, which is a suburb of Damascus.

That said, the cessation has largely held in other parts of the country, and we continue to urge all parties for complete compliance with the nationwide cessation of hostilities. The regime needs to do — and we've said this before, Dave — they need to do what it committed to do, which is to end the indiscriminate use of weapons, including the targeting of civilians and civilian authorities, and including medical ones. And we look to the Russians to make a greater use of the influence that we know that they have to make that happen.

Daily Press Briefing, [U.S. State Dept.](#), 11 July 2016.

On Monday, 11 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports violations by jihadists in Syria:

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 shelling of Harasta, Jaubar, Arbil and Duma with mortars.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS international terrorist organizations do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime [in Aleppo, Damascus, and Latakia provinces].

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

Note the Russians do *not* mention the rebel offensive to break the siege of Aleppo. There is also no mention of the airstrikes in Idlib province.

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## 12 July 2016

On 12 July, the Associated Press reported:

Intensified fighting between Syrian government forces and rebels north of Aleppo has completely cut off access for humanitarian aid deliveries into the rebel-held part of the contested city, a U.N. spokeswoman said Tuesday [12 July].

Alessandra Vellucci told reporters that the passageway known as the Castello road, which is considered the only access in and out of eastern Aleppo, has been rendered "impassable" since hostilities there worsened starting Thursday [7 July].

Jamey Keaten, "UN: Syria fighting cuts off passage to rebel part of Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 19:32 GMT, 12 July 2016.

[Reuters](#) had a similar report about U.N. concern about Assad besieging Aleppo.

The English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights continues to be unavailable on 12 July.

On Tuesday, 12 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports no violations by jihadists in Syria:

Within last 24 hours, no ceasefire violation has been registered in the Syrian Arab Republic.

....

“Silence regime”, which had been established in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, has been prolonged by 72 hours until 23.59 on July 14, 2016.

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS international terrorist organizations do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime [in Aleppo, Damascus, and Latakia provinces].

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

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## 13 July 2016

At 13:12 GMT on 13 July, Agence France-Presse reported that airstrikes "on the town of Ariha in Idlib province" had killed 11 civilians. Also, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 8 people were killed "in the town of Rastan in central Homs province", of whom 5 died in airstrikes on the marketplace. [Al-Arabiya](#).

On 13 July, the Associated Press reported:

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said airstrikes on a market in the northwestern town of Ariha killed 12 people, including three children, and that airstrikes in the central town of Rastan killed 16 people.

The Local Coordination Committees, another activist network, said nine people were killed in the aerial attacks on Ariha, in the insurgent-held Idlib province. It said the air raids on Rastan killed and wounded dozens.

anonymous, "Air raids in northern and central Syria kill and wound many," [Associated Press](#), 17:29 GMT, 13 July 2016.

The English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights continues to be unavailable on 13 July.

On 13 July, [Reuters](#) reminds us that approximately 600,000 Syrians have been living in besieged towns. There are approximately 300,000 people living in Aleppo, which Assad has recently besieged. The siege of Aleppo will cause a 50% increase in the number of besieged Syrians. Worse, "the United Nations and other aid agencies" have enough food to feed half of the people in Aleppo for one month. This humanitarian disaster in Aleppo will surely additionally discourage further negotiations in Geneva.

On Wednesday, 13 July, the bulletin issued by the Russian Ministry of Defense reports violations by jihadists in Syria:

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 shelling of Harasta, Jaubar, Arbil and Duma with mortars.

....

Groupings of Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS international terrorist organizations do not stop making attempts to break the ceasefire regime [in Aleppo province].

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

Notice that the airstrikes in Idlib and Homs provinces are missing from the Russian report of violations. Because I think the Russian reports are garbage, I will no longer cite them.

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### 14 July 2016

On 14 July, the Associated Press reported:

A series of airstrikes on rebel-held areas of Syria's divided Aleppo city killed at least 12 Thursday [14 July], anti-government activists and monitoring groups said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 12 people, including seven women and children, were killed when airstrikes hit the Salheen and Tariq al-Bab districts, in the rebel-held parts of Aleppo city. The Local Coordination Committees, another anti-government monitoring group, said five children were among those killed in Tariq al-Bab neighborhood. Ibrahim al-Haj, a member of the team of

Syrian Civil Defense first responders, said the strikes hit a residential house and a mosque opposite it. He said at least four people remain under the rubble. Sarah El-Deeb, "Airstrikes kill at least 12 in Syria's rebel-held Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 14:08 GMT, 14 July 2016.

The English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights continues to be unavailable on 14 July.

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### 15-19 July 2016

The terror attack in Nice, France on the night of 14 July, a failed military coup in Turkey on 15 July, and Kerry's visit to Moscow on 14-15 July, all pushed Syria out of the news.

On 16 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports that Assad, with the help of Russian airstrikes, has liberated the town of Kinsabba in Latakia province.

Since 7 July 2016, the Syrian army has been near Castello road, so the Syrian army could prevent travel on that road, effectively besieging Aleppo. On 17 July, the Syrian army actually captured Castello Road. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 18 July 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that 914 civilians have been killed in Aleppo since 22 April 2016. [SOHR](#).

On 19 July, I wanted to see if Assad had renewed the so-called "truce" that expired at midnight on 14 July. I accessed the Russian Ministry of Defense website that posted "reconciliation" bulletins that report on ceasefire violations, and found *no* renewal of the truce during 14-19 July. I looked at the English-language website of the Syrian Arab News Agency, and found *no* renewal of the truce during 12-19 July. I conclude that Assad's so-called "truce" only existed during 6-14 July.

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### 19 July 2016: beheading a 12 years old boy another atrocity in Syria

A man who is apparently a member of the Nour al-Din al-Zinki Movement, a U.S.-supported rebel group in Syria, was videotaped beheading a 12 year old palestinian boy who had allegedly fought for Assad. The video elicited outrage from humanitarians, despite the fact that the death of one boy is *not* significant in a civil war that has killed *more* than 290,000 people. The beheading of the one boy is a *symbol* that — unlike the routine deaths in Syria of more than 4000 people/month — inspires outrage amongst illogical humanitarians.

The al-Zinky Movement said the beheading was "an individual error." That response is *not* adequate.

The enemies of the USA used this incident to tarnish the USA. See, e.g., the article in Iran's [PressTV](#) titled "US-backed militants' beheading of Syrian kid stirs outrage". The Syrian

Arab News Agency ([SANA](#)) said: "... the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the immoral and inhuman crime committed by Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement, backed by the regimes in Riyadh, Doha, Ankara and the US administration...."

### **Bibliography:**

- "Syria conflict: Rebels 'filmed beheading boy' in Aleppo," [BBC](#), 19 July 2016.
- "Child beheading in Syria triggers backlash against rebels," [Associated Press](#), 16:09 GMT, 20 July 2016.
- "Syrian rebels once supported by U.S. appear to behead child in video," [Los Angeles Times](#), 16:55 GMT, 20 July 2016.
- "Resentment in the areas controlled by the factions in Aleppo due to slaughtering a prisoner in al-MashHad neighborhood by the fighters of Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights ([SOHR](#)), 20 July 2016.
- "Syrian rebel group investigates beheading of child seen in video," [Reuters](#), 00:01 GMT, 21 July 2016.

There are several conclusions for this atrocity:

1. The U.S.-supported rebels have the same values as ISIL, a group that has beheaded many people in Syria.
2. Videotaping the beheading and posting the video on the Internet (i.e., bragging about the beheading) shows the depraved values of these Muslim "moderate rebels".
3. The U.S. Government is supporting barbarians in Syria.

### **More Hospitals Bombed in Syria**

On 22 July, the United Nations Office in Geneva issued a press release:

#### **WHO condemns multiple attacks on Syrian hospitals**

The World Health Organization (WHO) condemned on 19 July the attacks on hospitals in Aleppo and Idlib governorates. It also offered its condolences to the families and colleagues of the health staff and patients killed in the number of attacks that have taken place in the last few weeks. On 16 July, Omar Ibn Abdel Aziz hospital, located in Al-Maadi neighbourhood in the eastern part of Aleppo city, was hit and a number of medical staff reportedly injured. The hospital had also been reportedly hit a few days earlier, sustaining significant damage to infrastructure. In total, Omar Ibn Abdel Aziz hospital has been hit three times since June 2016. These latest events represent a serious setback for the affected community and an additional challenge to humanitarian work in Syria. "It is unacceptable that such attacks on health care, which violate international humanitarian law, are increasing in both frequency and scale said the agency in a statement, urging once again all parties in the conflict to respect the safety

and neutrality of health workers and health facilities”, [WHO](#) said.  
"Syrian Crisis - UN Response," [U.N.Geneva](#), 22 July 2016.

On 24 July, the Associated Press reported:

Government air raids struck at least five medical facilities in the northern province of Aleppo, where violence has intensified in recent weeks amid a siege by government forces, Syrian opposition activists said Sunday [24 July].

....

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said four clinics were now out of service in the city of Aleppo, as was the fifth in the town Atareb to the west. It said five people had been killed in Aleppo city. The Observatory said the clinics closed because they feared being targeted again.

Aleppo-based activist Baraa al-Halaby confirmed that five clinics were hit, adding that an infant was killed in a clinic in the Shaar neighborhood of Aleppo in the early hours of Sunday. He added that a blood bank was struck in Aleppo as well.

Bassem Mroue, "Intense airstrikes in Syria's Aleppo province hit 5 clinics," [Associated Press](#), 17:15 GMT, 24 July 2016.

On 29 July either Assad or Russia bombed a maternity hospital in the village of Kafr Takhareem, Idlib province. [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [BBC](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

### **United Nations proposes 48 hour ceasefire Syrians ignore the proposal**

On 21 July, Jan Egeland, humanitarian aid advisor to U.N. Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura, floated a proposal for weekly 48-hour pauses in fighting to allow delivery of food and medicine in Syria. [U.N. Geneva](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

Besieging the city of Aleppo has prevented delivery of humanitarian aid. So, on 25 July, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, proposed a weekly 48-hour ceasefire, to allow delivery of humanitarian aid. [U.N. News](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

It's a silly proposal. The whole point of besieging a city is to starve the residents into submission. Allowing weekly deliveries of humanitarian aid into a besieged city would completely frustrate the purpose of besieging that city. Both Assad's government and the insurgents have repeatedly proven that they are barbarians, so concern about starving civilians will *not* motivate a ceasefire in Syria. *If* suffering civilians were important to Assad and the insurgents, then we would have regular deliveries of humanitarian aid and *no* besieged cities in Syria.

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## **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.

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### **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 issued on 20 July 2016 (S/2016/631), Ban Ki-moon noted "... the continued blatant disregard for humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict." (¶62) Ban said: "Parties to the conflict must immediately abide by international humanitarian law and individuals who fail to do so should be brought to account." (¶62) But Ban did *not* call for referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court. *Who* is going to bring the parties "to account" for many past, and continuing, war crimes?

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## **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 759 Iraqis killed in terrorism, violence, and armed conflict during July 2016 (excluding Anbar province). [UNAMI](#).

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## **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.

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### July 2016: Islamic Terrorism in Iraq

On 3 July there were two terrorist attacks in Baghdad:

1. The first and larger attack was just after midnight on 2 July in a shopping mall in the Karada district of Baghdad, where an ISIL suicide bomber detonated a truck full of explosives. An ensuing fire killed many people who survived the explosion.

By 15:00 on 3 July in Baghdad, the toll was at least 86 dead and 170 wounded. By 19:00, the toll was 115 dead and 187 wounded. The Associated Press reported on 3 July: "It was the deadliest bombing in Iraq since July 2015". On the evening of 4 July, the toll was 157 dead and more than 190 wounded. On the night of 4 July, Reuters reported the toll was 175 dead, 200 wounded, and 37 missing. The death toll of 175 makes this the most successful ISIL suicide bombing of all time. On the night of 5 July, Reuters reported Iraq's Health Ministry had announced 250 dead.

On 7 July, the situation became more complex as two different death tolls were reported by the Associated Press: (1) "Iraqi hospital and police officials said ... 186 [dead], with around 20 people still missing" and (2) "Health Ministry's media office said the ... death toll is 292." On 7 July, Reuters reported 292 dead.

2. On 3 July, the Associated Press reported: "an improvised explosive device went off in Baghdad's northern Shaab area, killing 5 people and wounding 16". Reuters said it was a roadside bomb in a market.

[Associated Press](#)(19:18 GMT, 3 July); [Reuters](#)(18:18 GMT, 3 July);  
[Associated Press](#)(23:58 GMT, 4 July); [Reuters](#)(23:48 GMT, 4 July);  
[Associated Press](#)(09:38 GMT, 5 July); [Reuters](#)(22:37 GMT, 5 July);  
[Associated Press](#)(18:38 GMT, 7 July); [Reuters](#)(16:58 GMT, 7 July). On 13 July, the [Associated Press](#) reports only the 292 dead toll.

On 7 July at 23:00 local time, three ISIL suicide bombers attacked a Shiite shrine in Balad, about 93 km north of Baghdad. The Associated Press says at least 26 people died, while Reuters says at least 35 dead. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). On 8 July, the [Associated Press](#) reported 37 dead in Balad.

On 12 July, a suicide bomber drove his truck full of explosives to a fruit and vegetable market in the al-Rashidiya district of Baghdad. The detonation killed at least 12 people. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 13 July, there were three more bombings in Baghdad, including one involving a car bomb at the checkpoint in the al-Rashidiya district that was bombed yesterday. A total of at least 12 people were killed in the three bombings on 13 July. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 24 July, an ISIL suicide bomber at a checkpoint in Baghdad killed at least 14 people. A bomb in Abu Ghraib killed 3 people. [Associated Press](#).

On 25 July, an ISIL suicide bomber drove his car to a checkpoint in Khalis, a town 80 km north of Baghdad and detonated. At least 14 people died. Separately, three bombs in Baghdad killed at least 9 people. [Associated Press](#).

On 27 July, a series of five attacks in or near Baghdad killed at least 18 people. On 26 July, the Babil Provincial Council "approved a decision allowing authorities to demolish homes of convicted militants and banish their families from the province." [Associated Press](#).

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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 1 August 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.

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### **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 1 August 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.

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### **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.

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## **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.

The Iraqi parliament also did *not* meet during June 2016, the second consecutive month of vacation for the dysfunctional parliament.

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### July 2016

Back in the year 2007, corrupt officials of Maliki's government spent at least US\$ 75 million to purchase bogus handheld "electronic" wands that purportedly detected explosives. In January 2010, the director of the U.K. company that manufactured the bogus wands was arrested and in May 2013 he was sentenced by a court in London to 10 years in prison for fraud. (See, e.g., [NY Times](#) (Jan 2010); [The National](#) in UAE (Jan 2010); [NY Times](#) (April 2013); [Evening Standard](#) (May 2013); [The Independent](#) (Oct 2013); [The Guardian](#) (June 2014). For more articles, search for the query `ADE 651s`, the model number of the bogus wand.)

Despite the fact that these wands had been discredited for many years, they are still in use in Baghdad. Finally, on 3-4 July 2016 — *after* an ISIL bombing in Baghdad that killed more than 175 people — prime minister Abadi ordered police to stop using these bogus wands. [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#). It is bad enough that corrupt Iraqi government officials made a large purchase without any testing to verify performance claims, but even worse to continue to use the bogus wands for more than six years while knowing they were bogus.

So how does a U.K. businessman sell a device inspired by a "novelty" (i.e., toy) US\$ 20 golf-ball finder to Iraq for US\$ 10,000 each? Bribe the corrupt Iraqi government officials. [The Independent](#).

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On Friday, 15 July, the Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr sent thousands of his supporters to Tahrir Square in Baghdad to protest corruption in the Iraqi government. Reuters reports the protesters demanded: "sacking the prime minister, president and parliament speaker; prosecuting corrupt officials; ending the quota system; reforming the judiciary and the election commission; and televising parliament sessions." Sadr defied Abadi, who asked for *no* protests, because protests would divert attention from the future liberation of Mosul. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). My comment is that Abadi used a standard propaganda tactic to call for unity and consensus, in order to suppress disagreement and change the topic away from parliament's failure to implement reforms.

On 17 July 2016, Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr ran off the rails again, when he declared the extra 560 U.S. troops "are a target for us". (These 560 troops will help Iraq liberate Mosul from ISIL.) [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

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## **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."

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On 11 July 2016, the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that an additional 560 U.S. troops would be sent to Iraq. The additional 560 soldiers makes a total of at least 4647 U.S. military personnel in Iraq. (I say "at least" because the Pentagon does *not* count personnel deployed to Iraq for fewer than four months.) [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).

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## 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](#).)

### July 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 9 July 2016, the Iraqi army captured the air base at Qayara (also spelled Qaiyara or Qayyarah). The liberation of this air base from ISIL is significant, because the air base can be used to launch attacks on Mosul, which is 40 km north of Qayara. *The New York Times* reports that, before ISIL fled from the Qayara air base, ISIL "badly damaged" two runways and some buildings. [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#).

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## **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](#).)

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### July 2016

In my essay for [June 2016](#), I cited a Voice of America news article on 20 June 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 30 years.

On 28 June 2016, the U.S. Secretary of State said — and I quote two whole paragraphs:  
Now, terrorist recruiters are on the prowl — (applause) — if I were running for office, I'd milk that; I'd — (laughter) — try to — but I'm not. I'm sorry. (Laughter and applause.) Terrorist recruiters are literally prowling around. I have a foreign — I won't tell you which country, but in Africa, my counterpart told me how [terrorists] grab these kids at age five, and they pay them, and then they proselytize, then they don't need to proselytize because their minds are gone, and they've got them, and then they don't have to pay them. Then they go out and get the next group. And my counterpart, the foreign minister of this country, said to me, "You know, they have a plan for 30 years or 35 years; we don't even have a five-year plan."

So think about it. To win the battle of ideas, we have to ensure that kids everywhere actually have schools to go to, that schools don't preach hate and radical views, but they offer an opportunity to prepare for a better life. And guess what? That does take a little bit of money. Not as much as people think, but I am convinced when you think of the other side on which we wind up paying for all of this, it is far cheaper to do it up front and far more effective in so many different ways.

John Kerry, "Remarks at the Aspen Ideas Festival and Conversation with Walter Isaacson," [U.S. State Dept.](#), 28 June 2016.

Kerry's remark is quoted at the end of Eric Schmitt's 3 July article in the [NY Times](#) about how ISIL will sponsor or inspire more terrorist attacks overseas, as ISIL is defeated in Iraq and Syria.

My comment is that the anonymous African foreign minister laments that he does not have a five-year plan, but the U.S. Government does *not* have any realistic plan to defeat the ideology of Islamic terrorism. That may be because Americans prefer to focus on today (e.g.,

bomb an enemy) than to focus on the future (e.g., educate a potential enemy, to prevent terrorism). Also, Obama can *not* give a speech telling Americans that their children — and their grandchildren — will die in Islamic terrorist attacks and that other Americans will die in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and other Islamic nations. As chronicled in my previous essays, Obama can *not* even say the words "Islamic terrorism", to identify the problem.

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## 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. [Ahrum](#) 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 my essay for [June 2016](#).
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 2016, three ISIL suicide bombers attacked an airport in Istanbul, Turkey. At least 42 people were killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
28. At 20:45 on 1 July 2016, seven ISIL terrorists attacked a bakery/restaurant in Dhaka, Bangladesh, taking hostages. The terrorists killed 20 hostages and 2 policemen. The terrorists had the hostages recite verses from the Koran, to identify who was a Muslim. The non-Muslim hostages were tortured and killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). While the Bangladeshi government attempted to deny that the terrorists were affiliated with ISIL, the terrorists belonged to a gang that had pledged allegiance to ISIL. [NY Times](#) (“... a local extremist group that has pledged loyalty to the Islamic State butchered diners in a restaurant.”); [Reuters](#) (“... Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen claims it represents Islamic State.”). Further, ISIL claimed credit for the attack in Dhaka. [The Telegraph](#); [Reuters](#). Moreover, the attackers uploaded photographs of their attack to the ISIL headquarters in Syria. The children of upper-class parents had joined the terrorist gang, which the [NY Times](#) says is evidence of the radicalization of the population. More about the elite attackers is at [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#).
29. On 3 July 2016, an ISIL truck bomb detonated at a shopping center in Baghdad, killing at least 292 people. (see [above](#).)
30. On 4 July 2016, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in the parking lot outside the mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia, where the prophet Mohammed is buried. The blast killed four Saudi Arabian soldiers who were guarding the mosque. This attack is important because it occurred at one of the holiest sites of the Islamic religion. [Al-Arabiya](#); [Saudi Press Agency](#); [The Guardian](#).
- 31.

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.

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](#).

In June 2016, I began a new concluding [section](#) about how the U.S. War on Terror has decreased security in Europe and the USA.

## **Cost of U.S. War Against ISIL**

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

As of July 15, 2016, the total cost of operations related to ISIL since kinetic operations started on August 8, 2014, is \$8.4 billion and the average daily cost is \$11.9 million for 708 days of operations. A further breakdown of cost associated with the operations is [here](#).

"Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 27 July 2016.

Note that the numbers 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 12 July 2016, the U.S. Government has spent a total of US\$ 5.6 billion on humanitarian aid for Syria. [State Dept.](#)

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## **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.

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## 1 July 2016: airstrikes

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

On June 30, 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 nine 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 Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL bulldozer.
- Near Manbij, six strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL cave entrance.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed four ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 23 ISIL vehicles, five ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL heavy machine guns, and three ISIL rocket rails.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area.

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

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

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

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## 2 July 2016: airstrikes

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

On July 1, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three strikes using attack 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 attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Manbij, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, five strikes struck two ISIL improvised weapons factories, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL staging facility, and an ISIL bed down location.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL tunnel entrance and an ISIL cave entrance and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Habbaniyah, two strikes destroyed two ISIL front-end loaders and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Qayyarah, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-used road, two ISIL assembly areas, and an ISIL checkpoint and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL vehicles and an ISIL boat.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar system.

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

[Central Command](#), 2 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 2 July 2016.

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## **3 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Sunday, 3 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 2, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight strikes using attack and bomber 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 Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed two ISIL cranes and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, six strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.



- Near Bayji, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed eight ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL command and control node, and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Qayyarah, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL assembly areas, three ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL mortar position, two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL supply cache, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL front-end loader, two ISIL bulldozers, and an ISIL oil tanker.
- Near Ramadi, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, five ISIL vehicles, an ISIL light machine gun, and an ISIL boat and damaged an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL improvised weapons factory, and an ISIL-used bridge and destroyed an ISIL bunker.

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

[Central Command](#), 3 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 3 July 2016.

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## 4 July 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 4 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 3, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted [19] strikes using bomber, attack, ground-attack, 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, attack, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Manbij, 14 strikes struck 12 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 18 ISIL fighting positions, four ISIL tactical vehicles, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) facility, an ISIL VBIED, and six ISIL vehicles.
- Near Manbij, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mar'a, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL tactical vehicles, an ISIL fighting position, and an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Washiyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes destroyed two ISIL bunkers.
- Near Al Qaim, one strike damaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Abu Hayat, one strike struck an ISIL weapons cache.

- Near Bayji, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL VBIED, and an ISIL weapons cache and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and two ISIL improvised weapons factories and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, one strike destroyed two ISIL weapons caches and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.

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

[Central Command](#), 4 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 4 July 2016.

The 5 July press release from CENTCOM added one airstrike near Manbij, Syria, which I have inserted above. Then I changed the 18 airstrikes to 19, to properly count the extra airstrike.

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## 5 July 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 5 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 4, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted [13] strikes using attack, bomber, 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, attack, ground-attack, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed six ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Washiyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL trench.

- Near Mosul, one strike struck an ISIL IED factory.
- Near Qayyarah, three strikes destroyed an ISIL excavator, an ISIL aircraft hangar, two ISIL vehicles, 18 ISIL rocket rails, 11 ISIL rockets, an ISIL boat, and an ISIL checkpoint.
  - Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL vehicle.
  - Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed ISIL rocket fire.
  - Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL weapons caches, two ISIL tunnels, and four ISIL assembly areas.

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

[Central Command](#), 5 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 5 July 2016.

The CENTCOM press release on 5 July says: "Additionally, one strike from July 3 was not included on the July 4 strike release." I have inserted the additional airstrike into the 4 July press release, above.

The CENTCOM press release on 6 July says: "due to an administrative error, two strikes were not reported" on 5 July. I have inserted the two airstrikes near Manbij into the 5 July press release and increased the total airstrikes in Syria from 11 to 13.

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## 6 July 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 6 July 2016, CENTCOM reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 5, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Coalition military forces conducted one strike in Syria in support of Coalition operations using fighter aircraft. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using fighter, attack, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Manbij, 13 strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 21 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL tactical vehicle.

Coalition military forces conducted one strike in Syria in support of Coalition operations using fighter aircraft:

- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike struck inoperable Coalition equipment denying ISIL access in support of Coalition operations.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Al Huwayjah, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL front-end loader and denied ISIL access to terrain.
  - Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL command and control node.
  - Near Kisik, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and suppressed ISIL rocket firing position.
  - Near Mosul, one strike struck an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory.
  - Near Qayyarah, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL rocket system, and an ISIL headquarters.
  - Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL artillery piece, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL rocket propelled grenade systems, five ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL boat, and an ISIL sniper position.
  - Near Waleed, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL fighting position.

Additionally, due to an administrative error, two strikes were not reported while an additional strike was misreported near Ayn Isa on the July 5 release. The correct assessment reads:

- Near Manbij, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 6 July 2016.

On Wednesday, 6 July 2016, the Pentagon reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

### **Strikes in Syria**

Attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 13 strikes in Syria near Manbij that struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 21 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL tactical vehicle.

In a separate action, fighter aircraft conducted a strike in Syria near Raqqah, where a strike struck inoperable coalition equipment, denying ISIL access to it.

Due to an administrative error, two strikes were not reported and an additional strike was misreported near Ayn Isa in Syria on the combined joint task force's release yesterday, officials said. The release should have read that near Manbij, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

### **Strikes in Iraq**

Fighter, attack, bomber and remotely piloted aircraft conducted 14 strikes in Iraq, coordinated with and in support of Iraq's government:

- Near Baghdadi, a strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Huwayjah, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL front-end loader and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Beiji, a strike destroyed an ISIL command-and-control node.
- Near Kisik, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and suppressed an ISIL rocket firing position.
- Near Mosul, a strike struck an ISIL vehicle bomb factory.
- Near Qayyarah, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL rocket system and an ISIL headquarters.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 10 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL artillery piece, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL rocket-propelled-grenade systems, five ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL boat and an ISIL sniper position.
- Near Waleed, a strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL fighting position.

[Pentagon](#), 6 July 2016.

Astoundingly, the expected [CENTCOM](#) URL gives a press release from one year ago. This kind of error by CENTCOM is the result of not including the year-month-day in the URL of each press release, to make a unique URL that clearly identifies the date and can be easily understood by humans (e.g., /press-release/airstrikes20160706 ) Incidentally, I commented on this problem with CENTCOM URLs in my essay for [August 2015](#) (see airstrike press release on 3 August 2015), which anticipated that this error would occur.

The CENTCOM press releases for 6 July 2016 and 10 July 2016 have a 1 at the end of the URL to distinguish them from the 2015 press releases for the same day and month.

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## 7 July 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 7 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 6, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted [16] strikes using bomber, attack, ground-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 Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed an ISIL oil pump jack and five ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike struck an ISIL-used bridge.
- Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL-used bridges and damaged a separate ISIL-

used bridge.

- Near Manbij, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

## **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, three strikes destroyed an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), an ISIL mortar system, and two ISIL weapons caches.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker and an ISIL tunnel.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL artillery piece, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed four ISIL vehicles, an ISIL mortar system, and an ISIL artillery piece and damaged an ISIL-used road and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun, two ISIL fighting positions, and two ISIL mortar systems and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.
- Near Rawah, one strike struck an ISIL weapons factory.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes struck an ISIL improvised weapons factory and destroyed an ISIL command and control node, an ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL bed down location.

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

[Central Command](#), 7 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 7 July 2016.

CENTCOM's 8 July press release admits "an administrative error" that caused the omission of two airstrikes on Manbij. I have added the two airstrikes above, so the 7 July press release is now correct. I also changed the 14 airstrikes in Syria to 16.

As a large number of airstrikes on Manbij accumulate, [Reuters](#) reports that U.S.-backed fighters are within 1 km of the center of Manbij.

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## **8 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Friday, 8 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 7, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 10 strikes using bomber, attack, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

## Syria

- Near Ayn Isa, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units.
- Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL headquarters.
- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 17 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.

## Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Kisik, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun and five ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, an ISIL fighting position, and an ISIL recoilless rifle.
- Near Waleed, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL mortar system.

Strike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 8 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 8 July 2016.

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## 9 July 2016: airstrikes

On Saturday, 9 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 8, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes using bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted eight strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

## Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed three ISIL wellheads.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck two ISIL-used bridges.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Manbij, three strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL-used bridge.
- Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL operations center.

## Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL

- weapons cache.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL front-end loader.
  - Near Hit, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL weapons cache.
  - Near Mosul, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL weapons cache, and two ISIL fighting positions.
  - Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed an ISIL front-end loader.
  - Near Ramadi, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL rocket propelled grenade system, an ISIL recoilless rifle, an ISIL anti-air artillery piece, six ISIL heavy machine guns, an ISIL supply cache, and an ISIL fighting position and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.
  - Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.

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

[Central Command](#), 9 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 9 July 2016.

The 10 July press release mentions a correction for Manbij in Syria.

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## 10 July 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 10 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 9, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 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 attack, ground-attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike struck an ISIL used-bridge.
- Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions, three ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL-used bridge and suppressed an ISIL sniper position.

### Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Bayji, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL tunnel.
- Near Hit, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL artillery piece and an ISIL bunker.



- Near Mosul, one strike suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL tactical vehicle, an ISIL excavator, four ISIL vehicles, an ISIL fighting position, six ISIL rockets, and four ISIL rocket rails and denied ISIL access to terrain.
  - Near Ramadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL tactical unit.
  - Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.

Additionally, due to an administrative error, three strikes were not reported on the July 9 release. The correct assessment reads:

- Near Manbij, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL-used bridge.

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

[Central Command](#), 10 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 10 July 2016.

The additional three airstrikes on Manbij look suspiciously similar to what was included in the 9 July press release when I viewed it on the afternoon of 11 July. So I did *not* insert the correction in the 9 July press release above.

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## 11 July 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 11 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 10, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using bomber, 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 Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed five ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Manbij, 10 strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL-used bridge, an ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL artillery piece.
- Near Mar'a, one strike produced inconclusive results.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike struck an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) factory.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL supply caches, an ISIL weapons cache, five ISIL assembly areas, and

- an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Qayyarah, five strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and an ISIL rocket storage facility and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL headquarters, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL assembly area, and an ISIL vehicle and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL supply cache, two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, four ISIL front end loaders, and an ISIL tactical vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL assembly area.

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

[Central Command](#), 11 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 11 July 2016.

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## 12 July 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 12 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 11, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted seven strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, ground-attack, and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes struck an ISIL used-bridge and destroyed an ISIL oil wellhead and three ISIL pump jacks.
- Near Manbij, 14 strikes struck nine separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 17 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL logistics hub, and an ISIL artillery piece and damaged an ISIL fighting position.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL communication relay tower.
- Near Bashir, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and ISIL assembly area.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Qayyarah, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, three ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL assembly area, an ISIL excavator, an ISIL mortar system, and three ISIL boats and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Sinjar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

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

[Central Command](#), 12 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 12 July 2016.

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### **13 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Wednesday, 13 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 12, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 10 strikes using bomber, attack, 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, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

#### **Syria**

- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed three ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Palmyra, one strike destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle.

#### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, five strikes struck an ISIL bed down location, an ISIL staging area, two ISIL weapons caches, and an ISIL weapons storage facility.
- Near Al Qaim, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL staging area.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL bunker, four ISIL tents, and an ISIL petroleum, oil, and lubricant site.
- Near Hit, one strike destroyed an ISIL artillery piece.
- Near Kisik, two strikes destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL checkpoint, and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 13 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 13 July 2016.

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### **14 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Thursday, 14 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 13, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using bomber, 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 rocket artillery and attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike destroyed an ISIL front-end loader.
- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 14 ISIL fighting positions and damaged two separate ISIL fighting positions.

### **Iraq**

- Near Habbaniyah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Hit, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL mortar cache.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Qayyarah, four strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL weapons storage facility and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL weapons cache, an ISIL tactical vehicle, and four ISIL mortar systems and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL staging area and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.
- Near Sinjar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas.

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

[Central Command](#), 14 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 14 July 2016.

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## **15 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Friday, 15 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 14, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition

military forces conducted six strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Coalition military forces conducted one strike in Iraq in support of Coalition operations using fighter aircraft.

### **Syria**

- Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck six separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 18 ISIL fighting positions and damaged an ISIL-used bridge.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Al Qaim, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, one strike struck an oil tanker storage area.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) production and storage facility.

Coalition military forces conducted one strike in Iraq in support of Coalition operations using fighter aircraft:

- Near Abu Hayat, 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](#), 15 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 15 July 2016.

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## **16 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Saturday, 16 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 15, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 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 attack helicopter and bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Raqqah, two strikes struck two ISIL oil pump-jacks.

- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 14 ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes destroyed three ISIL mortar systems.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL bunker, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).
- Near Mosul, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed 21 ISIL boats and suppressed two ISIL mortar positions.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL staging area.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes struck an ISIL VBIED factory and damaged an ISIL excavator.

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

[Central Command](#), 16 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 16 July 2016.

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## **17 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Sunday, 17 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 16, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes using bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted eight 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, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike struck two ISIL oil pump jacks.
- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL tactical vehicle, and an ISIL house borne improvised explosive device (HBIED).

### **Iraq**

- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL supply cache, two ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL bunker, and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) facility, and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed two ISIL mortar systems, 11 ISIL oil tankers, an ISIL supply cache, and an ISIL assembly area.
- Near Ramadi, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL bulldozer.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.

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

[Central Command](#), 17 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 17 July 2016.

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## 18 July 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 18 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 17, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using bomber, attack, ground-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 attack and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil wellheads.
- Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 22 ISIL fighting positions.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL bed down location and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed three ISIL tunnel entrances and an ISIL tunnel vent.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL security headquarters and destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL mortar systems, 14 ISIL rocket rails, and an ISIL vehicle and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Sinjar, two strikes destroyed an ISIL mortar system and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.

- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL headquarters.

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

[Central Command](#), 18 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 18 July 2016.

On 17 July, U.S.-supported Kurdish and Arab fighters captured the ISIL headquarters in Manbij. [Pentagon](#).

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## 19 July 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 19 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 18, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 21 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 attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed an ISIL crane and an ISIL front-end loader.
- Near Manbij, 18 strikes struck 15 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 13 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL mortar system, seven ISIL vehicles, two ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive devices, an ISIL staging area, and an ISIL tactical vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL fighting positions.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL staging area and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Hit, one strike struck an ISIL VBIED facility.
- Near Mosul, four strikes struck an ISIL headquarters and destroyed two ISIL vehicles and an ISIL tunnel entrance.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed an ISIL headquarters and an ISIL training camp.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL headquarters.

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

[Central Command](#), 19 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 19 July 2016.

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## 20 July 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 20 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 19, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted three strikes using bomber and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 13 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 Manbij, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL command and control node, and 12 ISIL vehicles.

### Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed three ISIL weapons caches.
- Near Hit, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed an ISIL supply cache and suppressed an ISIL sniper position.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and seven ISIL media sites and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL improvised explosive device factory.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and suppressed two ISIL mortar positions and an ISIL machine gun position.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL media site.

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

[Central Command](#), 20 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 20 July 2016.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the U.S.-led coalition had airstrikes on 19 July in the village of al-Tukhar, near Manbij, that killed at least 56 civilians. [SOHR](#); [Associated Press](#). On 19 July, [Amnesty International](#) claimed 125 civilians died in airstrikes "in al-Tukhar village, near Manbij, on 18-19 July." Amnesty International later retreated from the claim of 125 dead and said "at least 60 civilian deaths in airstrikes in recent days on al-Tukhar village". On 19 July, the Syrian government said France conducted the lethal airstrikes in the village of Toukhan al-Kubra, to the north of Manbij. [SANA](#). On 21 July, the French president is still clueless about whether his airplanes massacred civilians. [Reuters](#).

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## 21 July 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 21 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 20, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine 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 fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Manbij, five strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven ISIL fighting positions.
- Near Mar'a, three strikes struck three separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and damaged a separate ISIL fighting position.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Qaim, one strike produced inconclusive results.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL command and control node.
- Near Hit, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL headquarters, and an ISIL financial headquarters and destroyed seven ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL artillery piece.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL boats, an ISIL mortar system, and an ISIL tunnel.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL recoilless rifle, an ISIL fighting position, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike struck one ISIL tactical unit.

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

[Central Command](#), 21 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 21 July 2016.

The U.S.-supported Kurds and Arabs are apparently unable to liberate the town of Manbij from ISIL, so on 21 July, the Kurds offered to allow ISIL to escape from Manbij during the next 48 hours. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). But on 23 July, [Reuters](#) reported that ISIL in Manbij declined the withdrawal offer.

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## **22 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Friday, 22 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 21, 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 nine strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of

Iraq using bomber, attack, fighter, and ground-attack aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an ISIL workover rig.
- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL artillery piece.

### **Iraq**

- Near Hit, two strikes destroyed an ISIL mortar cache and an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas and an ISIL vehicle and suppressed a separate ISIL vehicle, an ISIL mortar position, and an ISIL rocket firing position.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL fighting position, an ISIL heavy machine gun, an ISIL vehicle, ISIL-used engineering equipment, two ISIL mortar systems, two ISIL tunnel systems, four ISIL supply caches, and four ISIL assembly areas.
- Near Ramadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit.

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

[Central Command](#), 22 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 22 July 2016.

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## **23 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Saturday, 23 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 22, 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 ten 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 destroyed three ISIL command and control nodes.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position and an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck nine separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 12 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil well head and an ISIL drilling rig.

## Iraq

- Near Abu Hayat, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Mosul, three strikes struck three ISIL tactical units and destroyed an ISIL vehicle, an ISIL unmanned aerial vehicle, an ISIL mortar system, ISIL-used engineering equipment, an ISIL tunnel system, and two ISIL assembly areas and suppressed and ISIL rocket position.
- Near Ramadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Tuz, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike struck an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device storage facility.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL weapons storage facility.

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

[Central Command](#), 23 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 23 July 2016.

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## 24 July 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 24 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 23, 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 four strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike struck an ISIL improvised explosive device factory.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL command and control node.

### Iraq

- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL mortar systems, 12 ISIL rockets, 19 ISIL rocket rails, seven ISIL oil tankers, and an ISIL assembly area and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL

- fighting position, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL weapons storage facility.

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

[Central Command](#), 24 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 24 July 2016.

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## 25 July 2016: airstrikes

On Monday, 25 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 24, 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 seven strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 15 ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Mar'a, six strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device, and an ISIL vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, one strike struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL vehicles, five ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL command and control node, and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed six ISIL rocket rails and an ISIL VBIED factory and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL weapons storage facility.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike struck three separate ISIL media facilities.

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

[Central Command](#), 25 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 25 July 2016.

On 25 July, the U.S.-supported Kurds and Arabs renewed their offer to allow ISIL fighters to leave Manbij with their small arms. ISIL ignored the previous offer on 21 July.

[Associated Press](#).

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## 26 July 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 26 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 25, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted seven strikes using attack, ground-attack, 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 attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Manbij, seven strikes struck five separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL house borne improvised explosive device.

### Iraq

- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Hit, one strike produced inconclusive results.
- Near Mosul, six strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit, an ISIL weapons facility, an ISIL vehicle borne IED factory, and two ISIL media sites and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and suppressed an ISIL mortar position.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck a large ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL mortar systems and an ISIL artillery piece and suppressed an ISIL mortar firing position.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area, two ISIL vehicles, five ISIL rockets, and six ISIL rocket rails and suppressed an ISIL mortar position and denied ISIL access to terrain.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes struck an ISIL check point and suppressed an ISIL machine gun position.

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

[Central Command](#), 26 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 26 July 2016.

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## 27 July 2016: airstrikes

On Wednesday, 27 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 26, 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 10 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 struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 12 ISIL fighting positions and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two ISIL headquarters.
- Near Palmyra, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, two strikes destroyed an ISIL vehicle and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Albu Hayat, one strike struck an ISIL weapons storage facility.
- Near Hit, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed three ISIL vehicles and an ISIL bunker.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL assembly areas, an ISIL vehicle, two ISIL rockets, 33 ISIL rocket rails, and an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions and an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed three ISIL mortar positions.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area.

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

[Central Command](#), 27 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 27 July 2016.

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## **28 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Thursday, 28 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 27, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 14 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 bomber, attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Manbij, nine strikes struck seven separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL vehicle, and an ISIL tactical vehicle.

- Near Mar'a, four strikes struck four separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed eight ISIL fighting positions.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed two ISIL mortar systems.
- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL-used safe house.
- Near Fallujah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Hit, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL antenna, an ISIL unmanned aerial vehicle, 25 ISIL rocket rails, two ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL rocket, two ISIL rocket systems, and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kisik, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL assembly area and three ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mosul, one strike destroyed an ISIL excavator.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ramadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Rawah, one strike struck an ISIL improvised explosive device factory.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL tactical vehicle and an ISIL assembly area.

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

[Central Command](#), 28 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 28 July 2016.

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## **29 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Friday, 29 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 28, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 22 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle borne improvised explosive device storage area.
- Near Manbij, 19 strikes struck 19 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 17 ISIL fighting positions, an ISIL heavy machine gun, and two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes struck two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL fighting positions, one ISIL rocket rail, and an ISIL vehicle.

### **Iraq**



- Near Habbaniyah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Hit, two strikes destroyed an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Mosul, two strikes struck two separate ISIL tactical units, and destroyed six ISIL assembly areas, six ISIL weapons caches, four ISIL vehicles, three ISIL-used roads, and two ISIL command and control nodes.
- Near Qayyarah, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL rocket rails, five ISIL boats, three ISIL mortar systems, and an ISIL rocket system.

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

[Central Command](#), 29 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 29 July 2016.

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### **30 July 2016: airstrikes**

On Saturday, 30 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 29, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using bomber, attack, ground-attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

#### **Syria**

Near Manbij, 11 strikes struck 10 separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed 12 ISIL fighting positions. Near Mar'a, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle.

#### **Iraq**

Near Al Baghdadi, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL rocket rails, an ISIL bunker, and an ISIL storage facility. Near Ar Rutbah, one strike destroyed an ISIL bulldozer. Near Haditha, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL fighting position. Near Hit, one strike produced inconclusive results. Near Mosul, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL headquarters and destroyed an ISIL supply cache, an ISIL assembly area, and an ISIL mortar system. Near Qayyarah, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL vehicle and suppressed an ISIL mortar position. Near Sinjar, one strike struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL mortar system and suppressed an ISIL sniper position.

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

[Central Command](#), 30 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 30 July 2016.

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## 31 July 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 31 July 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On July 30, coalition military forces continued to attack ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted [11] strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted eight strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, [three] strikes destroyed six ISIL excavators.
- Near Manbij, eight strikes struck eight separate ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL fighting positions.

### Iraq

- Near Mosul, three strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL weapons cache and an ISIL assembly area and degraded an ISIL tunnel and suppressed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes struck an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 15 ISIL rocket rails, 13 ISIL rockets, seven ISIL mortar tubes, an ISIL mortar system, an ISIL artillery piece, and an ISIL supply cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike struck an ISIL headquarters.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL cave entrance and an ISIL tunnel.

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

[Central Command](#), 31 July 2016.

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 31 July 2016.

On 1 August, CENTCOM issued a [correction](#) to the 31 July press release: "Near Raqqa, three strikes destroyed six ISIL excavators." So, above, I changed "four strikes" near Raqqa Syria to "three strikes" and changed the total of "12 strikes" in Syria to "11".

On the night of 31 July, [Reuters](#) says the U.S.-supported Kurdish and Arab rebels have now captured almost 70% of Manbij.

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# 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.
- My essay for [June 2016](#) describes an Islamic terrorist who perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, by killing 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

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.

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## **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 disenchanting 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 disenchanting 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.

### **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 10 July 2016, [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#) leaked a confidential German government report that said "more than 2000 men" had sexually assaulted 1200 women on New Year's Eve, 31 Dec 2015, in Germany. Worse, the German police had arrested only 120 suspects, half of whom were recent immigrants to Germany. There have been only 4 guilty verdicts. [Washington Post](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

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.

During 18-24 July 2016, there were three attacks by recent Islamic immigrants to Germany, two attacks inspired by ISIL. Angela Merkel — the Chancellor who welcomed 1,100,000 Islamic immigrants into Germany during 2015 — had the slogan "Wir schaffen das." (We can do it.) But an opinion poll of 1017 Germans during 26-29 July showed "Those who 'slightly agree' were 18 percent and 8 percent were in total agreement, meaning little more than a



quarter of respondents had confidence in Merkel's promise." [Deutsche Welle](#).

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## 14 July 2016: Nice, France

A large number of people had gathered on the beach in Nice, France to watch the Bastille Day fireworks on 14 July 2016. After the fireworks finished, between approximately 22:45 and 23:00 French time, a 19-ton truck drove along the sidewalk for 2 km, plowing through pedestrians. Witnesses said the truck zig-zagged through the crowd, to hit as many pedestrians as possible. When the truck stopped, the driver began shooting at the crowd of civilians. Police shot and killed the driver, ending the attack. The Associated Press initially reported that the truck "was loaded with arms and grenades". By 03:00 French time on 15 July, the toll was 77 dead and 50 wounded.

There has been a "state of emergency" in France since the Islamic terrorist attack in Paris on 13 November 2015. Ironically, just before the attack occurred in Nice, French president Hollande was intending to end the state of emergency on 26 July. Now the state of emergency will be extended for another three months.

The live blog at *The Telegraph* newspaper in London reported more information about the truck driver:

[03:19 French time, 15 July] The local newspaper, Nice-Matin, reports that the man driving the truck was a 31-year-old Nice resident of Tunisian origin. The truck driver was said to have shouted 'Allahu Akbar' — God is greatest — before being shot dead by police.

[06:48 French time, 15 July] A source close to the investigation said an "inactive" grenade was found inside the 19-tonne truck, as well as "several fake rifles".

[07:35 French time, 15 July] The truck driver was known to French police for common law crimes such as theft and violence, according to police sources, but not to the intelligence services.

[summary at 10:07 French time, 15 July] Sources close to the enquiry said the perpetrator was a local 30-year-old career criminal who was born in Tunisia before moving to France. His 19 tonne lorry had zigzagged through crowds massing on the Promenade des Anglais on Thursday night [14 July], killing anyone he could.

[summary at 11:07 French time, 15 July] "He was known to the police for violence, and using weapons, but had no direct links with terrorism," said an investigating source. "His identity card was found in the lorry. He had French and Tunisian nationality." A search of the vehicle uncovered a pistol, a larger gun, and a number of fake weapons and grenades.

[11:19 French time, 15 July] Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel — a 31-year-old career criminal who was born in Tunisia before moving to France — has been named as the Nice truck attack suspect by local news website Nice-Matin.

[14:07 French time, 15 July] BFM TV reports that he was a divorced father-of-three who had become depressed following the breakdown of his marriage, reports Camilla Turner.

[17:18 French time, 15 July] [Toll now 84 dead and 202 wounded,] with 50 in a critical condition and 25 in intensive care.

[17:33 French time, 15 July] Paris prosecutors say they believe the attack may have been inspired by calls-to-arms from terror groups such as the so-called Islamic State which urge sympathisers to carry out lone wolf attacks in their own countries.

[17:53 French time, 15 July] François Molins, the Paris prosecutor, said: "The attacker got on board a 19 tonne truck which had been rented on July 11 from a company in St Laurent du Var, which should have been returned on the 13th. The lorry penetrated the area and it ran for a distance of two kilometres.... and violently knocked over a number of spectators who had assembled on the promenade to watch the fireworks of July 14."

....

"In the cabin of the lorry, the following items were recovered: an automatic 7.65mm calibre pistol, a second automatic pistol, two replica assault rifles — a kalashnikov and M16, a grenade, ammunition, a mobile phone and documents."

[19:09 French time, 15 July] Bouhlel's conviction earlier this year was for road rage, it has emerged. He was convicted for the first time in March this year, French Justice Minister Jean-Jacques Urvoas said. "There was an altercation between him and another driver and he hurled a wooden pallet at the man."

[10:33 French time, 16 July] Terrorist group ISIL have claimed responsibility for the attack.

An Islamic State-run media outlet says the man who drove his truck into a crowd in the French coastal city of Nice is a "soldier" of the group.

The Aamaq news agency on Saturday [16 July] cited a "security source" as saying the attacker "carried out the operation in response to calls to target the citizens of coalition countries fighting the Islamic State."

.... Sources close to the police have told the *Figaro* newspaper that there is still no evidence that Bouhlel pledged allegiance to ISIL.

[12:09 French time, 16 July] "His wife left him because he kept hitting her," said Hamid, a local man who was acquainted with the killer. "He wasn't an observant Muslim. He ate pork, drank alcohol, took drugs and didn't fast during Ramadan. When I hear them saying he did this for Islam it makes me shudder. So many innocents died. It is someone's idea of a sick joke to call that guy an 'Islamist'. To me, he wasn't even

a Muslim, more of psychopath.”

[12:22 French time, 16 July] Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel's father insists the killer had "nothing to do with religion" but had been plagued by mental health problems for more than a decade. Mohamed Mondher Lahouaiej-Bouhlel told French media from his home in Tunisia: "He had some difficult periods. "I had to take him psychiatrist who gave him medicine. He had a very serious illness. From 2002 to 2004 he had problems that caused a nervous breakdown. He became angry, he shouted, he broke anything had was in front of him. "But after he went to France, nothing was done about it." .... "What I do know, is that he never prayed, he never went to mosque, he had nothing to do with religion." "He didn't pray, he never did Ramadan, he didn't do these sorts of things.”

[13:07 French time, 16 July] Investigators are considering the possibility that the delivery driver who massacred 84 people in Nice on Bastille Day might have been motivated more by a desire to commit suicide than by Islamist ideology. Despite a claim by ISIL that it ordered the attack, describing Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel as a “soldier of Islam”, a source close to the investigation told the Telegraph that he may have been “a suicide case who decided to make his suicide look like an Islamist attack. Investigators are being cautious about definitively ascribing a motive for the time being.”

....

Investigators who have been examining Bouhlel's phone records have found evidence that he was in contact with known Islamic radicals but an intelligence source cautioned: “That could just be a coincidence, given the neighbourhood where he lived. Everyone knows everyone there. He seems to have known people who knew Omar Diaby.” Diaby is a known local Islamist believed to be linked with the Al Nusra group close to Al Qaeda, but not with ISIL.

....

The French government has also made contradictory claims about Bouhlel's motives. The prime minister, Manuel Valls, said on national television on Friday evening that he was “a terrorist undoubtedly linked with radical Islam in one way or another.” However, the interior minister, Bernard Cazeneuve, asked on another TV channel around the same time if he could say whether Bouhlel was linked with radical Islam, answered: “No.”

[13:52 French time, 16 July] French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said Saturday [16 July] that the Nice attacker "seems to have been radicalised very quickly, according to information that has arisen from the testimony of his entourage." Speaking after Islamic State claimed the attacker as one of its soldiers, Cazeneuve repeated that France had no evidence of that from his criminal record or from intelligence information.

[15:30 French time, 16 July] ... one neighbour of his estranged wife added: "Mohamed [Bouhlel] only started visiting a mosque in April."

[02:54 French time, 17 July] Manuel Valls, the French Prime Minister, has warned the country that it will have to live with the constant threat of terrorism for a long time. Interviewed by *Le Journal du Dimanche*, Mr Valls painted a gloomy picture of the the future. "The terrorism threat is will be a fundamental and enduring problem and other lives will be wrecked," he said. "One could refuse to face facts, we could forget, move on. But I must tell the truth to the French people, terrorism will be part of our daily lives for a long time."

[09:43 French time, 17 July] Police arrested a man and a woman in the French city of Nice on Sunday morning [17 July] in connection with the truck attack that killed at least 84 people celebrating Bastille Day, a judiciary source said. Authorities have now detained seven people over the killings, claimed by Islamic State.

[16:08 French time, 17 July] The ex-wife of Nice terrorist Mohamed Bouhlel has now been released by police after questioning and was believed to be in hiding at her mother's apartment. Hajer Khalfallah was questioned for two days about her ex-husband who reportedly used to be beat her. The mother-of-three left a central Nice police station with her lawyer on Sunday morning [17 July]. [There are now 6 people in police custody in this case.]

[18:43 French time, 17 July] A seventh man has been arrested in connection with the Nice terror attacks. He was arrested in Nice on suspicion of supplying weapons to Bouhlel.

[summary at 22:00 French time, 17 July] According to officers, [Bouhlel's mobile] phone is proving more important to the investigation than the seven suspects currently in custody for their links to the terrorist.

....

Bouhlel fired a 7.65mm automatic handgun at police before they shot him dead on Thursday night [14 July]. Other weapons found in the lorry turned out to be fakes or replicas.

....

He sold his car and emptied his bank account shortly before the killings and he reportedly to have sent up to £84,000 to relatives in Tunisia — a huge amount for a man who had worked as a low-paid delivery driver.

"Nice terror attack: 'soldier of Islam' Bouhlel 'took drugs and used dating sites to pick up men and women'," [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins at 20:58 BST, 16 July and ends at 21:00 BST on 17 July 2016.

"Nice terror attack: Police vans blocking promenade withdrawn hours before — the news as it

unfolded on Saturday, July 16," [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins 18:43 BST on 15 July and ends at 09:22 BST on 17 July 2016.

"Nice terror attack: Truck driver who killed 84 named — the news as it unfolded on Friday, July 15," [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins 08:16 BST on 15 July and ends at 04:01 BST on 16 July 2016.

"84 killed in Nice by lorry during Bastille Day celebrations — how the attack unfolded," [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins 22:23 BST on 14 July and ends at 07:52 BST on 15 July 2016.

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On Sunday night, 17 July, *The Telegraph* newspaper in London ended their blog. Afterwards, I quote the Associated Press and Reuters news articles:

The Associated Press reported at 17:05 French time, 18 July:

The Paris prosecutor says that the truck driver who killed 84 people in Nice had expressed support for the Islamic State group and searched online for information about the Orlando attack on a gay nightclub. .... [Prosecutor Francois] Molins described a quick radicalization of a man who in the past hadn't been religious. He said a review of Bouhlel's computer and phone showed online searches relating to IS, other jihadi groups and violent images.

"The Latest: Nice victim memorials removed ahead of reopening," [Associated Press](#), 01:03 GMT, 19 July 2016.

The Associated Press reported at 22:41 French time, 18 July:

Authorities investigating the truck driver who killed 84 people in a Bastille Day attack painted a complex picture Monday of a man who did not seem devout but had recently become interested in jihadi violence and researched past attacks in France and the United States, including one on a gay nightclub in Orlando.

Paris prosecutor Francois Molins, who oversees terrorism investigations, said by all accounts Mohamed Lahouaiyej Bouhlel drank, ate pork and had an "unbridled sex life." But his computer and phone showed online searches relating to IS and other jihadi groups.

"A search of his computer illustrates a clear ... and recent interest in radical jihadism," Molins said, adding that Bouhlel had recently grown a beard and told people it was for religious reasons. While officials have said the attack was obviously premeditated, they have not found any evidence that Bouhlel had coordinated with an extremist network.

"French authorities paint complex picture of attacker," [Associated Press](#), 20:41 GMT, 18 July 2016.

Reuters staff reported:

According to a recent Europol study, some 80 percent of Islamic State recruits have criminal records and some 20 percent were diagnosed with mental health issues. "In view of this shift away from the religious component in the radicalization of, especially, young recruits, it may be more accurate to speak of a violent extremist

social trend rather than using the term radicalization," Europol wrote. "From idealism to disillusion, the shifting profile of Islamist attackers," [Reuters](#), 18 July 2016.

On 20 July, the Associated Press tersely summarized the current state of the investigation: Officials say five unidentified people remain in custody for possible links to the Nice truck attack and could face terrorism charges.

IS claimed responsibility for the attack, but investigators believe attacker Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel was inspired by their calls and not directly commanded by the extremist group.

Thomas Adamson, "French to extend state of emergency; Paris cancels events," [Associated Press](#), 20:22 GMT, 20 July 2016.

On 21 July, Reuters reported:

The Tunisian man who killed 84 people on the French Riviera by plowing his truck into Bastille Day crowds had been planning the attack for months with the help of at least five accomplices, the Paris prosecutor said on Thursday [21 July].

"The investigation under way since the night of July 14 has progressed and not only confirmed the murderous premeditated nature of Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel's act but also established that he benefited from support and complicity," Francois Molins told a news conference.

The prosecutor said he had placed the five people — an Albanian couple, a Tunisian man and two Franco-Tunisian men — under formal investigation after they were taken into custody. None of them had been known to intelligence services.

Records of Bouhlel's phone use indicated a large number of exchanges, calls and text messages over the last year with several of the accomplices under investigation, he said.

Michel Rose, "Paris prosecutor says Bastille Day killer had help preparing attack," [Reuters](#), 19:05 GMT, 21 July 2016.

On 21 July, the Associated Press reported:

The truck driver who killed 84 people on a Nice beachfront had accomplices and appears to have been plotting his attack for months, the Paris prosecutor said Thursday [21 July], citing text messages, more than 1,000 phone calls and video of the attack scene on the phone of one of five people facing terror charges.

....

People close to Bouhlel said he had shown no signs of radicalization until very recently. But Molins said information from Bouhlel's phone suggested he could have been preparing an attack as far back as May 2015. One photo in his phone, taken May 25, 2015, was an article on Captagon, a drug said to be used by some jihadis before attacks.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the attack, though authorities say they have not found signs the extremist group directed it.  
Elaine Ganley & Thomas Adamson, "Truck attacker in Nice had accomplices, planned fo [sic]," [Associated Press](#), 22:52 GMT, 21 July 2016.

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### Commentary

It was stupid for Bouhlel to carry two fake assault rifles and fake grenades. Obviously, such fakes are worthless in his attack. Further, if police saw the fakes, the police might shoot Bouhlel dead. Carrying fake weapons suggests to me that Bouhlel was mentally ill.

Journalists ignored the fact the Bouhlel's rented truck was scheduled to be returned on 13 July. If the rental firm had reported the overdue truck to police, then police might have found the 19-ton truck before it was used in a terror attack on the night of 14 July.

On the morning of 15 July, it was *not* clear whether the "Islamic terrorist" label applies to Bouhlel, because he was *not* religious and there is *no* evidence that he was in contact with any Islamic terror organization. On 15 July, Bouhlel seemed to be a mentally ill man with a history of violence, who was recently depressed by his wife filing for divorce.

[Reuters](#) reported that, on 15 July, French prime minister Manuel Valls spoke about Bouhlel: “ ‘He is a terrorist probably linked to radical Islam one way or another,’ Valls told France 2 television's evening news program.” This is a classic rush to judgment. I am concerned that French police could arrest some friends of Bouhlel, squeeze them hard during long interrogations, and find false "information" that Bouhlel was an Islamic terrorist, to satisfy Valls' belief. And, yes, the five friends who were arrested on 15 July apparently told police on 16 July that Bouhlel had been radicalized in the past few months. My point is only that Valls' early public conclusion caused doubt about the perceived objectivity of the investigation by police.

If Bouhlel was recently radicalized (e.g., since April 2016), that would reconcile his father's statement that Bouhlel was *not* religious with Bouhlel's alleged recent Islamic extremism. His father last saw Bouhlel in 2012.

On the evening of 16 July, French prime minister Manuel Valls concluded that Bouhlel was an Islamic terrorist. Reuters reported:

Authorities have yet to produce evidence that the 31 year-old Tunisian Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, shot dead by police, had any links to Islamic State, which claimed the attack, but Valls said there was no doubt on the assailant's motives.

"The investigation will establish the facts, but we know now that the killer was radicalised very quickly," Valls said in an interview with Sunday newspaper [Le Journal du Dimanche](#).

"The claim on Saturday morning by Islamic State and the fast radicalization of the

killer confirms the Islamist nature of this attack."

Officials said on Saturday that people questioned by police had indicated that he had undergone a rapid transformation from someone with no apparent interest in religion.

....

Valls ... indicated that at play on Thursday [14 July] was the group's modus operandi of cajoling unstable individuals into carrying out attacks with whatever means possible.

"Daesh gives unstable individuals an ideological kit that allows them to make sense of their acts ... this is probably what happened in Nice's case," Valls said, referring to the Arabic acronym for Islamic State.

....

... Valls warned that there was no risk zero and new attacks would occur. "I've always said the truth regarding terrorism: there is an ongoing war, there will be more attacks. It's difficult to say, but other lives will be lost."

John Irish & Emmanuel Jarry, "French PM says clear that Nice truck driver was radicalised quickly," [Reuters](#), 23:08 GMT, 16 July 2016. [Link added by Standler.]

My comment is that France has a huge problem that they can *not* admit because of political dogma about multi-culturalism. France allowed approximately five million Muslims to immigrate to France from former French colonies (e.g., Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia). Many of those Muslims failed to assimilate into the French culture, so these Muslims now live in ghettos in France. As Valls says, Islamic terrorist organizations inspire disaffected Muslims to commit terrorist attacks. So now France faces a huge problem of establishing a lawful program of either surveillance, deportation, or imprisonment of potential Islamic terrorists, without alienating Muslims who are assimilated into French society. Depriving a potential Islamic terrorist of their civil liberties, just because they are an immigrant — or child of an immigrant — from a nation with a Muslim majority, is the wrong way to solve the problem.

Here is my comment on the Europol study that 20% of ISIL recruits have been "diagnosed with mental health issues". ISIL dogma assures these deranged recruits that it is good to focus their anger on Christians, Jews, and takfiri Shiite muslims. As for the 80% of ISIL recruits who are *not* mentally ill, ISIL dogma tells them that oppression by Christians and Jews has deprived them of opportunities, and inspires the ISIL recruits to take revenge on Christians and Jews. Conventional local values consider these ISIL recruits as dysfunctional (e.g., mentally ill, a criminal, and/or a failure in school), but ISIL promises their suicide attackers they will be rewarded by eternity in Paradise. Membership in ISIL allows these insignificant individuals to be part of something important.

In the USA, a person sometime runs amok and kills at least several people. This kind of mass murder has almost routinely occurred in the USA at least since the 1970s. But when a government official declares an attack is "Islamic terrorism" — or when ISIL or Al-Qaeda claims credit for the attack — the attack begins to have a new significance, part of something larger than just one angry individual.



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### Bibliography for attack in Nice, France

Most of the news on Saturday, 16 July, was about either the victims or eyewitness accounts of the terror attack. Beginning Monday, 18 July, journalists had little coverage of the terror attack in Nice. On both 20 July and 22 July, there was *no* coverage of Bouhlel by either Reuters or the Associated Press.

- "Islamic State supporters celebrate deadly attack in France on social media," [Reuters](#), 00:54 GMT, 15 July 2016. (One Tweet from supporters of ISIL said: "The number of those killed had reached 62 french crusaders and sinful infidels in Nice, France.. God is great, God is great.")
- "The Latest: Truck attack death toll rises to 80," [Associated Press](#), 02:31 GMT, 15 July 2016.
- Ciaran Fahey & Raphael Satter, "Truck slams into revelers in Nice, at least 80 dead," [Associated Press](#), 02:35 GMT, 15 April 2016.
- "Who is the Nice terror attack suspect? Everything we know so far about Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel," [The Telegraph](#), 16:25 GMT, 15 July 2016. ("He was known to the police for assault with a weapon, domestic violence, threats and robbery but had no previous convictions for terrorism. Investigating sources said his last appearance in a criminal court was as recently as March [2016] and had previous convictions for armed theft, conjugal violence and threatening behaviour. Despite this, he had no known links with terrorism and was not under surveillance.")
- "The Latest: French author decries attack," [Associated Press](#), 21:22 GMT, 15 July 2016.
- "Twitter, Facebook move quickly to stem celebrations of Nice attack," [Reuters](#), 00:23 GMT, 16 July 2016. (On social media, supporters of Islamic terrorism are praising the attacks in Nice.)
- "France calls up reservist forces after deadly Nice rampage," [Associated Press](#), 01:43 GMT, 16 July 2016. ("Bouhlel's father, interviewed in Tunisia by France's BFM TV, said his son was a depressed man who, in Tunisia, took prescription medication to calm fits of anger. He was not religious, neither praying nor fasting during Ramadan, the Muslim holy month, and was 'always alone.'")
- "With 84 dead, France investigates whether truck attacker acted alone," [Reuters](#), 01:55 GMT, 16 July 2016.
- "ISIS militants claim Nice attacker as a 'soldier'," [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP), 09:05 GMT, 16 July 2016. ("Amaq quoted an ISIS security source as saying one of its 'soldiers' carried out Thursday's carnage 'in response to calls to target nations of coalition states that are fighting (ISIS)'")

- "Nice attacker treated for psychological issues before leaving Tunisia: sister," [Reuters](#), 14:16 GMT, 16 July 2016. ("Bouhlel ... was from Msaken [Tunisia] ..., and had last visited the town four years ago. .... TF1 and other French media quoted people close to Bouhlel as saying he ate pork and drank alcohol, behavior that would be unlikely in a devout Muslim.")
- "The Latest: 'Bastille Day' film pulled from French cinemas" [Associated Press](#), 20:14 GMT, 16 July 2016. (At 15:40 French time: "The Islamic State group claimed Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel as a 'soldier' on Saturday, but what is known so far about Bouhlel suggests a troubled, angry man with little interest in Islam.")
- "Officials: France truck attacker may have become radicalized," [Associated Press](#), 20:54 GMT, 17 July 2016. ("There is mounting evidence that Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, the Tunisian-born truck driver responsible for the deadly carnage in Nice last week, had recently absorbed extremist ideas and had become radicalized, French authorities said Sunday [17 July]." "While [of those taken in for questioning] they all said he had long been indifferent to religion, some described a recent and very rapid conversion to radical Islam ....")
- "The Latest: American student confirmed among Nice dead," [Associated Press](#), 23:48 GMT, 17 July 2016. (Blog by Associated Press on Sunday, 17 July.)
- "With 84 dead, France investigates whether truck attacker acted alone," [Reuters](#), 00:50 GMT, 18 July 2016. (Main story by Reuters on Sunday, 17 July.)
- "The Latest: Nice victim memorials removed ahead of reopening," [Associated Press](#), 01:03 GMT, 19 July 2016. (Blog by Associated Press on Monday, 18 July.)
- "The Latest: Romanian dies from wounds in Nice truck attack" [Associated Press](#), 16:09 GMT, 19 July 2016. (Blog by Associated Press on Tuesday, 19 July.)
- "Timeline: The Bastille Day attack in Nice," [Reuters](#), 10:28 GMT, 21 July 2016.
- "The Latest: French prosecutor: Nice attacker had accomplices," [Associated Press](#), 16:04 GMT, 21 July 2016.
- "Dancing, drugs, extremism — multiple lives of Nice," [Associated Press](#), 22:21 GMT, 24 July 2016. ("[Bouhlel's] darkest side appears to have been his best-kept secret: a calculated, committed jihadi ready to kill scores of people in a French Riviera rampage." "... there was his erratic social life: smoking pot with acquaintances in the Tunisian immigrant community; martial arts training and possible steroid use to bulk up muscle; salsa dancing to pick up women; and a reported male lover in his 70s.")

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**18 July 2016: Würzburg, Germany**

On 21:15 local time at 18 July, a 17 year old immigrant from Afghanistan shouted "Allahu akbar" and wounded five people with an axe on a train that arrived in Würzburg, in Bavaria, Germany. The Afghani immigrant, Mohammed Riyad — also known as Riaz Khan Ahmadzai — was showing gratitude for more than one year of free food and free lodging in Germany. The immigrant was shot and killed by police. Afterwards, police found an ISIL flag in his room. On 19 July, the Amaq News Agency claimed the immigrant was an "Islamic State fighter".

Amaq, which is ISIL's news agency, also posted a video made by the vicious immigrant from Afghanistan. [Reuters](#). This video is discussed below.

The vicious immigrant had been living in a residence hall in Würzburg for unaccompanied minors who were immigrants to Germany. Two weeks ago he was placed in a foster home in Ochsenfurt. On 18 July, he traveled by train from Ochsenfurt to Würzburg.

[Süddeutsche Zeitung](#); [Deutsche Welle](#); [The Telegraph](#)(blog); [Associated Press](#)(blog); [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#). On 20 July [The Telegraph](#) explained the names of the vicious immigrant.

Journalists are *not* asking how the Amaq news agency obtained a video showing the vicious Afghani immigrant. The obvious answer is that the immigrant sent the video via e-mail to Amaq. And that act of sending to Amaq shows a relationship between the vicious Afghani immigrant and ISIL.

On 19 July, the Associated Press reported:

In a video posted by the Islamic State that purports to show the attacker.... "You can see I have lived in your own home and have planned to behead you in your own territory," the young man says in Pashto while brandishing a knife.

Despite the IS claim of responsibility and a hand-painted IS flag found in the suspect's apartment, authorities said so far they have found no direct links between the suspect and IS and believe that he self-radicalized.

Investigator Lothar Koehler said the teenager's motivation appeared to be Islamic extremism based upon a passage, found among notes in his apartment, which read: "Pray for me that I can take revenge on these infidels and pray for me that I will go to heaven."

....

The suspect hid in a bathroom and armed himself. "Then, without warning, he attacked the passengers using great force on their bodies and their heads," [Bamberg prosecutor Erik] Ohlenschlager said, adding he shouted "Allahu akbar," Arabic for "God is great." Witnesses said the interior of the train was covered with blood and looked "like a slaughterhouse," the German news agency dpa reported. After the train made an emergency stop, the suspect fled and ran into two women walking a dog. He attacked one from behind, saying "I'll finish you!" and yelling a vulgar term for a woman in German, as he hit her at least twice in the face with the ax. Shortly after, he

encountered a police SWAT team, jumping out at them from bushes brandishing his ax. He was shot and killed.

Kirsten Grieshaber, David Rising, & Christoph Noelting, "German train attacker vowed 'revenge on the infidels'," [Associated Press](#), 18:54 GMT, 19 July 2016.

Reuters reported:

Police found a hand-painted Islamic State flag in the refugee's room at his foster family's home, along with a letter he appeared to have written to his father, which officials said read: "And now pray for me that I can get revenge on these non-believers, pray for me that I go to heaven."

Islamic State posted a video in which a man whom it identifies as the Afghan refugee vows to carry out a suicide mission and urges other Muslims to do the same.

In the two minute and 20 second video, entitled "Germany — Video of the Islamic State Soldier Muhammad Riyadh Who Carried out the Wuerzburg Attack", a young man wields a small knife, which he says he will use to slaughter infidels and avenge the deaths of men, women and children in Muslim countries.

"I will carry out a suicide operation in Germany," the young man says in the video. "I will slaughter you in your houses."

Jens Hack, "German train ax attack puts Merkel migrant policy back in spotlight," [Reuters](#), 19:34 GMT, 19 July 2016.

Deutsche Presse-Agentur (German Press Agency) reported:

German authorities have identified a man shown in a video released by the Islamic State group as the teenage Afghan refugee who committed a stabbing attack on a German train, a German official told dpa Tuesday, establishing an apparent link between the terror group and the attack.

"The man in the video is the Wuerzburg assailant," a spokesman for Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann said, referring to a video posted online by the Aamaq News Agency, an Islamic State mouthpiece.

In the video, the assailant waved a knife and claimed in Pashto to be a "holy warrior" of the group with the intention of carrying out an attack in Germany.

Friederike Heine & Pol O Gradaigh, "Video links German train attacker to Islamic State," [dpa](#), 22:00 GMT, 19 July 2016.

On 20 July, there are some hints that the vicious Afghani immigrant may actually have come from Pakistan, but falsely claimed to come from Afghanistan "in order to better his chances of being granted refugee status in Germany." The hints include Pakistani documents found in his room, and his use of the Pashtu dialect from Pakistan. [Deutsche Welle](#). Lies and immigration fraud in the service of Islamic terrorism is my comment.

On 20 July, Reuters reported:

Islamic State posted a video, described by [German Interior Minister Thomas] de

Maiziere as authentic, in which a man whom it identifies as the refugee vows to carry out a suicide mission and urges others to do the same.

De Maiziere said it was unclear when the film was made, adding it was "a classic farewell video by a suicide attacker".

"Germany fears more 'lone wolf' attacks after train rampage," [Reuters](#), 14:52 GMT, 20 July 2016.

On 20 July, the Associated Press reported:

By all accounts, the 17-year-old Afghan behind an ax-and-knife rampage aboard a commuter train in Germany seemed to be quickly integrating and adapting to life in Germany — until something, possibly the death of a friend back home, prompted him to radicalize and turn on the country that took him in.

....

He wasn't on authorities' radar, and people who knew him said he seemed to be fitting in. He played soccer with the locals and had an internship at a local bakery, a growing command of the German language and a new home with a foster family outside the serene Bavarian town of Ochsenfurt.

....

Two days before the attack, he found out that a friend had died in Afghanistan and reportedly was very agitated by the news, but investigators say exactly what happened is unclear.

After that, his foster parents told the police he acted differently, spending a lot of time on his cellphone, though it wasn't clear who he was speaking to.

....

He had been living since July 1 with his foster family, whom he had been placed with because of his exemplary behavior, the head of the social welfare office in the Wuerzburg area, Michael Horlemann, told daily *Die Welt*.

Kirsten Grieshaber, David Rising, & David McHugh, "Refugee teen in German train attack seemed to be adjusting," [Associated Press](#), 19:27 GMT, 20 July 2016.

My comment is that the death of a friend in Afghanistan is *not* a rational reason to use an axe to hack four tourists from Hong Kong and one German woman who was walking her dog. German politicians need to quickly solve the problem of more than one million potential ticking time bombs who were admitted as so-called refugees in 2015. If a Muslim immigrant with "exemplary behavior" commits a heinous crime, what can we expect from an immigrant with less than "exemplary behavior"?

On 20 July, the editor of Deutsche Welle, the German government shortwave radio station and news website, wrote an articulate editorial:

But whatever the terminology ["attack" or "terror attack"] may be: Many people see something systematic in the series of large and small attacks carried out without exception by Muslims. Many are afraid their own lives are at risk — and that's the very point of terrorism.

....

No matter whether there is valid criticism of the open border policy, it is not helpful to view all refugees, let alone all Muslims, with suspicion. Fear of new arrivals and Muslims who have lived here for years is a slap in the face to basic principles of liberal democracy. The integration process is crucial for our security and general suspicion will not help in achieving this goal. However, these considerations are too complex for social media, where mocking those who welcome refugees is much more fun.

There's a similar irrationality on the other end of the political spectrum. Anyone who dares point out that all attackers are believers of the same religion is labeled a Nazi, or at the very least accused of strengthening right-wing extremists. These people claim religion was no issue here, rather that the young man was traumatized by his refugee experience, and proper therapy could have prevented the attack. Average citizens can only look to these intellectual contortions with bewilderment.

Felix Steiner, "Opinion: After Würzburg — general suspicion and denial of reality," [Deutsche Welle](#), 20 July 2016.

On 25 July, one week after the attack, the Associated Press reports that two victims remain in the intensive care ward of a hospital.

[10:20 German time] A hospital treating four people wounded by an ax-and-knife-wielding man who attacked people on a German train last week says two of the victims remain in intensive case.

Würzburg's university hospital said in a statement Monday that "the state of health of all patients has stabilized but the risk of complications remains substantial."

It said one of the patients, a tourist from Hong Kong, is still in a medically induced coma.

A fifth person wounded in the attack has been released from hospital.

"The Latest: Syria opposition group shamed by Germany attacks," [Associated Press](#), 16:32 GMT, 25 July 2016.

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## 22 July 2016: München, Germany

At 17:52 local time on Friday, 22 July, one gunman with a 9 mm pistol began shooting in a McDonald's restaurant in the Olympic shopping center in Munich Germany. Sometime around 20:30, the gunman suicided with a bullet to his head, about 1 km from the shopping center. There were a total of 9 dead (excluding the gunman) and 27 wounded in the attack.

The gunman was later identified as an 18 year old boy, who was born in Munich of Iranian parents. The gunman held dual Iranian and German citizenship. He had psychiatric treatment for "social phobias" and depression in the past. Although perhaps not inspired by ISIL, his attack was definitely an act of terrorism, which is why I am including it here.

In addition to the dead and wounded, the terrorist caused the cancellation of a weekend festival celebrating 500 years of the German beer purity law.

Initial reports were chaotic, but four hours after the attack began, the following was reported:

1. at least 6 people dead;
2. initial reports (which were false) said the gunmen had rifles;
3. police are searching for three gunmen;
4. *none* of the gunmen have been located by police;
5. police asked the approximately 1,500,000 people in Munich to stay inside their home, and avoid streets and other public places; and
6. ISIL supporters are happy about the attack.

Later it was clear there was only one gunman and he had one pistol, *not* a rifle.

In reading journalists' reports of statements by German police and German politicians, remember that the German federal government has a policy of ignoring or minimizing crimes by Islamic immigrants.

One witness reported that the Munich gunman shouted "Allahu akbar" as he was shooting people in the McDonald's restaurant. (citations to CNN and *The Telegraph* in bibliography, below)

About four hours after the attack began, Reuters reported that ISIL supporters were happy:

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but supporters of Islamic State celebrated the rampage on social media. "Thank God, may God bring prosperity to our Islamic State men," read one tweet. "The Islamic state is expanding in Europe," read another.

....

The Munich assault was also reminiscent of Islamist militant attacks in a shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013 and in Mumbai, India, in November 2008. Joern Poltz, "Gunmen launch deadly attack on Munich shopping mall, still on the run," [Reuters](#), 19:57 GMT, 22 July 2016.

In contrast to French prime minister Valls' reckless comment on 15 July that Bouhlef "is a terrorist probably linked to radical Islam one way or another," Peter Altmaier, the chief of staff for Merkel, said when asked about an Islamist attack:

"At the current point, we are not ruling out any hypotheses. There is no clarity or certainty as yet. So I would ask that we respect the confidentiality of the investigations, so as not to endanger their chances of success. You can presume that we will of course analyze this possibility."

[Deutsche Welle](#), 22:06 GMT, 22 July 2016.

Approximately eight hours after the attack began, the Associated Press reported:

A gunman opened fire in a crowded Munich shopping mall and a nearby McDonald's Friday night [22 July], killing nine people and wounding at least 10 others before killing himself, said authorities who called the rampage an act of terrorism.

Police gave a "cautious all clear" early Saturday morning [23 July], more than seven hours after the attack began. They said a body found near the scene was that of the shooter and he appeared to have acted alone.

Witnesses had reported seeing three men with firearms near the Olympia Einkaufszentrum mall, but police said on Twitter that "as part of our manhunt we found a person who had killed himself — the person is likely to have been the attacker who, according to the current state of the investigation, acted alone."

They lifted a shutdown of all public transport in the Bavarian capital, and said more details would be disclosed at a press conference later in the morning.

Frank Jordans, David Rising, & Michael Faulhaber, "Police give all-clear in Munich shooting; say suspect dead," [Associated Press](#), 00:19 GMT, 23 July 2016.

The chief of police in Munich identified the dead attacker as an 18 year old immigrant from Iran, who had lived in Munich "for a long time". [Associated Press](#)(00:23 GMT); [Deutsche Welle](#)(00:28 GMT); [Reuters](#)(01:01 GMT, all on 23 July).

On Saturday, 23 July, the Associated Press blog reported:

[at 12:05 German time] Munich police chief Hubertus Andrae says "no evidence" of links to the Islamic State group has been found in the home and room of the Munich shooting suspect.

Andrae also told a news conference that the crime and the perpetrator had "absolutely no" link to the issue of refugees.

[at 12:10 German time] Munich police chief Hubertus Andrae says man suspected of killing nine people in a shooting rampage was born and raised in Munich. Andrae tells a news conference that police have found no indications that anyone other than one shooter was involved.

Police investigator Robert Heimberger says the shooter was armed with 9mm Glock pistol and had 300 rounds [of ammunition].

[at 12:30 German time] Prosecutor Steinkraus Koch tells a news conference the suspect had a book titled: "Rampage in Head: Why Students Kill."

Police Chief Andrae says that the suspect appeared to be "obsessed with shooting rampages."



[at 15:10 German time] German interior minister Thomas De Maiziere says there is "no indication of any connection to international terrorism" in the Munich attack. De Maiziere told reporters he had met with all top security officials and no police record for the suspect has been found. He adds that intelligence agencies had no information on him. De Maiziere says the shooter's parents came to Germany in the late 1990s as asylum seekers.

"The Latest: Munich shooting scars those who witnessed it," [Associated Press](#), 19:57 GMT, 23 July 2016.

On Saturday, 23 July, the Deutsche Welle blog reported:

[at 11:52 German time] Bavaria's police chief Robert Heimberger says the attacker was born and grew up in Munich, where he also attended school. He had no ties to the "Islamic State" (IS) group, according to a search of his house and room.

[at 11:59 German time] [Bavaria's police chief Robert] Heimberger: the attacker had an illegal 9mm caliber Glock pistol with 300 rounds of ammunition in his backpack. The serial number of the gun had been filed off.

[at 12:02 German time] The state of Bavaria prosecutor's office spokesman says the gunman was in psychiatric and medical care for depression but had no criminal record. There was no evidence of a political motivation behind the attack, he added.

[at 12:56 German time] Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann says there is evidence that the attacker may have had "considerable mental disorders." The 18-year-old also had problems in his current education stream, he added.

[at 15:12 German time] In response to a question of a possible connection with the Breivik attack in Norway five years ago, [German Interior Minister Thomas] de Maiziere said that it was too early to give any information as to any possible link.

[at 16:27 German time] The fact that the shootings took place on the 5th anniversary of deadly shootings in Norway is leading to suggestions that the Munich shooter could have been motivated by them. Munich police chief Hubertus Andrae said there was an "obvious" link between the Munich attack and the deaths of 77 people, murdered by Anders Behring Breivik on July 22 2011.

"Munich attack: Germany reacts," [Deutsche Welle](#), 16:50 GMT, 23 July 2016.

At 13:46 German time on 23 July, Reuters reported:

A German-Iranian teenager who shot and killed nine people and then himself in Munich on Friday had received psychiatric care and was in all probability a lone gunman who had no ties to Islamic State, police said.

The 18-year-old triggered a lockdown in the Bavarian capital after opening fire near a busy shopping mall. He was carrying a further 300 bullets in his backpack when he was later found dead of a gunshot wound, Robert Heimberger, president of the Bavarian state crime office, said on Saturday [23 July].

Following a police search of the attacker's room, Munich police chief Hubertus Andrae all but ruled out an Islamist link in the killings. "Based on the searches, there are no indications whatsoever that there is a connection to Islamic State" or to the issue of refugees, he told a news conference.

"Munich gunman raised locally, had no ties to Islamic state: police," [Reuters](#), 11:46 GMT, 23 July 2016.

Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported that police believe that the gunman in Munich was inspired by Anders Breivik, a terrorist in Norway who, on 22 July 2011, killed 8 people with a bomb in Oslo, then shot and killed 69 people at a youth summer camp. Ironically, Breivik was a right-wing terrorist who was opposed to immigration by Muslims like the Munich gunman's parents.

German police believe that the lone, teenaged German-Iranian gunman who shot dead 10 people, including himself, in Munich was inspired by the massacre in Norway five years ago of 77 people by Anders Behring Breivik.

....

Instead [of a connection to the Islamic State], investigators found material on mass shootings in the gunman's room when they raided his family's Munich apartment early Saturday after Friday's night shooting spree in which 27 people were injured.

"Breivik would have played a role. It is obvious that it did," Andrae told a press conference, referring to the material in the gunman's room, which included a book entitled, *Rampage in My Head – Why Students Kill*.

The Munich attack coincided with events in Norway marking the day five years ago when Breivik began his rampage by killing eight people after he detonated a homemade bomb in central Oslo.

....

Another [mobile phone videos of Friday's attack] apparently showed the person believed to be the gunman declaring in the video filmed by a nearby resident: "I was hospitalized for psychiatric problems."

"Police say teen Munich gunman inspired by Breivik massacre in Norway," [dpa](#), 12:45 GMT, 23 July 2016.

On Sunday morning, 24 July, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported:

The 18-year-old German-Iranian suspect was an avid reader of books and articles about mass killings including the Norway attacks, which occurred five years earlier to the day, police said.

Most of his nine victims were teens from Turkish and Kosovar immigrant families.

Witness accounts and smartphone footage of the attack indicate the suspect may have harboured resentment towards foreigners even though he was the German-born son of

Iranian asylum seekers.

....

Investigators were still determining his motive, but prosecutors and Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said the teenager had been treated for depression and that he may have been bullied by peers.

"Toll of injured reaches 35 after deadly Munich shooting," [dpa](#), 08:09 GMT, 24 July 2016.

Reuters reported that most of the dead in the attack were people approximately the same age as the gunman.

Seven of his victims were themselves teenagers, who police said he may have lured to their deaths via a hacked Facebook account on what was the fifth anniversary of twin attacks by Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik that killed 77 people.

....

Turkey's foreign minister said three Turkish citizens were among nine people killed in the Munich attack while Greece's foreign ministry said one Greek was among the dead. According to foreign media reports, there were also three Kosovo Albanian victims.

....

De Maiziere said there were indications the killer had been bullied "by others his age". He also cited concerns about the role violent video games may have played in the crime.

....

Three of his victims were 14 years old, two were 15, one was 17 and one 19. The others were 20 and 45, the police chief said.

Joern Poltz & Karin Strohecker, "Munich gunman fixated on mass killing, had no Islamist ties," [Reuters](#), 02:14 GMT, 24 July 2016.

My comment is that the gunman may have targeted people his age, to retaliate for bullying by people of the same age. But it is strange that the gunman apparently targeted foreigners, when the gunman was the son of immigrant parents. Targeting foreigners *might* be revenge on gangs of "Turks and Arabs" in school who bullied the Munich gunman for years. Targeting foreigners *might* also be consistent with following Norwegian right-wing terrorist, Anders Breivik, who murdered 77 people, to call attention to Breivik's anti-immigrant manifesto. It is difficult to know what to make of the fact that the Munich gunman's attack was the same day as the five year anniversary of Breivik's attack.

On Sunday afternoon, 24 July, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported on the Munich gunman's past activities:

In 2015, he travelled to scene of a massacre that occurred six years earlier at a secondary school in the southern German town of Winnenden, followed by a shootout

at a nearby car dealership. The teen took photos there, which were later retrieved from his camera.

The son of Iranian asylum seekers spent two months in 2015 in a psychiatric hospital receiving treatment for "social phobias" and anxiety and continued treatment thereafter, prosecutor Thomas Steinkraus-Koch said, adding that anti-depressants had been found in his room.

The prosecutor said that the teen regularly played Counter-Strike, a violent first-person shooter video game which he said is played by most perpetrators of mass killings.

The shooter did extensive research on the far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, whose rampage in Norway five years ago left 77 people dead, officials said. Friederike Heine, "Munich shooter planned crime for a year, was in psychiatric treatment," [dpa](#), 15:00 GMT, 24 July 2016.

The shooting in Winnenden was on 11 March 2009. A 17 year old German attacked the school from which he graduated, then murdered a gardner at a psychological clinic, hijacked an automobile, and shot more people at an automobile dealer in Wendlingen. The gunman killed a total of 15 people, before the gunman suicided. [NY Times](#); [Spiegel](#).

On 24 July, Deutsche Welle summarized what is now known about Ali David Sonboly, the Munich gunman.

The 18-year-old gunman behind the shooting spree at a Munich shopping center "had been preparing for a year," Bavarian police chief Robert Heimberger told a press conference Sunday [24 July]. Heimberger said the German-Iranian teen, identified only as David S., visited the site of a 2009 school shooting in the southwest German town of Winnenden and took photographs. He added that material found at the shooter's home showed he had likely obtained his Glock 17 pistol illegally through the internet's "dark net" market, and was an avid player of first-person shooter video games like "Counter-Strike."

....

Officials have ruled out any connection to extremist group "Islamic State," which has claimed responsibility for recent attacks in Paris and Belgium. However, they have pointed to an "obvious link" between Friday's killings and the massacre of 77 people by white supremacist Anders Behring Breivik in Norway in 2011. Breivik's attack took place five years to the day before the Munich shooting. Bavaria's interior minister said a copy of Breivik's manifesto had been discovered on the 18-year-old's computer. "German police: Munich shooter planned crime for a year," [Deutsche Welle](#), 24 July 2016.

At night on 24 July, the Associated Press summarized:

The teenager behind the deadly shooting rampage in Munich was a withdrawn loner obsessed with playing "killer" video games in his bedroom, a victim of bullying who suffered from panic attacks set off by contacts with other people, investigators said Sunday [24 July], adding that he had planned the attack for a year.

Law enforcement officials piecing together a portrait of the 18-year-old shooter said he was seeing a doctor up to last month for treatment of depression and psychiatric problems that began in 2015 with inpatient hospital care followed by outpatient visits.

....

The 18-year-old German-Iranian, identified only as David S. due to Germany privacy laws, had earlier been described by investigators as being bullied by schoolmates at least once four years ago and being fascinated by previous mass shootings. But none of those killed were known to him, investigators said.

....

Witnesses say the gunman shouted slurs against foreigners, even though he himself was the German-born son of Iranian asylum-seekers.

George Jahn & David Rising, "Munich shooter was bullied loner, planned attack for a year," [Associated Press](#), 00:51 GMT, 25 July 2016.

My comment is that the attack in Munich appears similar to mass murders by school pupils. The fact that the attacker was the son of Iranian immigrants appears irrelevant. There is a long history of murders in U.S. public schools, including 5 dead in Arkansas on 24 March 1998; 13 dead at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado on 20 April 1999; and 32 dead at Virginia Tech University on 16 April 2007. In Germany, there are two mass murders involving schools: 16 dead in Erfurt on 26 April 2002 and 15 dead in Winnenden on 11 March 2009.

### **Bibliography for attack in Munich, Germany**

Also see news articles quoted above.

- "Islamic State supporters hail deadly Munich shooting on social media," [Reuters](#), 18:55 GMT, 22 July 2016.
- "The Latest: Munich chief: Attack victims included kids," [Associated Press](#), 01:09 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "Police give all-clear in Munich shooting; say suspect dead," [Associated Press](#), 02:01 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "Munich shooting — police say suspect killed, 'no indication' of other shooters," [Deutsche Welle](#), live blog ends at 03:44 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "Munich shooting: How Friday's deadly attack unfolded," [The Telegraph](#), live blog ends at 05:48 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "Munich shooting: 9 victims, gunman dead, police say," [CNN](#), 06:19 GMT, 23 July

2016. ("A witness who wanted to be identified only by her first name, Lauretta, .... said she heard the gunman say, "Allahu Akbar," or "God is great" in Arabic. "I know this because I'm Muslim. I hear this and I only cry.")

- "Munich attack: Germany reacts," [Deutsche Welle](#), live blog ends 16:50 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "Ali Sonboly: Everything we know about the Munich gunman," [The Telegraph](#), 19:04 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "The Latest: Munich shooting scars those who witnessed it," [Associated Press](#), 19:57 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- "'He's killing the children — they can't run': How teenage gunman's rampage through Munich shopping centre left nine dead," [The Telegraph](#), 21:38 GMT, 23 July 2016. (Summary of what Ali David Sonboly did on 22 July.) ("A woman, who gave her name as Loretta, .... claimed that as ... Sonboly [shot teenagers, he] shouted: "Allahu akbar", a cry heard when ISIL-style terrorist attacks are under way. Nobody else seems to back up the claim and she may have misheard it in the confusion.")
- "Police: Munich suspect was obsessed with mass shootings," [Associated Press](#), 21:44 GMT, 23 July 2016.
- Joern Poltz & Karin Strohecker, "Munich gunman fixated on mass killing, had no Islamist ties," [Reuters](#), 20:33 GMT, 24 July 2016.
- "The Latest: Police question a friend of the Munich shooter," [Associated Press](#), 20:52 GMT, 24 July 2016.

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## 24 July 2016: Reutlingen, Germany

On 24 July at 16:27 German time, a 21 year old recent Syrian immigrant in Reutlingen attacked 3 people with a knife. One pregnant woman was hacked to death. One day after the attack, authorities labeled it as "domestic violence", as the attacker knew his female victim. Also, the attacker is apparently mentally ill. Reutlingen is in Baden-Württemberg, a state in south-western Germany. This was the *second* attack by an Islamic immigrant in Germany during the past six days, following an axe attack in Würzburg.

Reuters reported that German police promptly denied any connection to Islamic terrorism.

A 21-year-old Syrian refugee was arrested after killing a woman with a machete and injuring two other people in the southern German city of Reutlingen on Sunday [24 July], but the attack had no apparent connection to terrorism, police said. The asylum-seeking Syrian man had been involved in previous incidents causing injuries to other people, and was apparently acting alone, a police spokesman said.

....

"Given the current evidence, there is no indication that this was a terrorist attack," police said in a statement.

....

"The attacker was completely out of his mind. He even ran after a police car with his machete," [the mass-circulation newspaper] Bild quoted a witness as saying. The witness told Bild a private motorist knocked down the attacker soon afterward and he was then taken into custody by police.

"Syrian refugee arrested after killing woman with machete in Germany — police," [Reuters](#), 23:44 GMT, 24 July 2016.

On Monday, 25 July 2016, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported:

The 21-year-old Syrian man who killed a female colleague with a deli knife following a dispute in south-western Germany knew the woman personally, German investigators said Monday [25 July].

Police are investigating whether the attack was motivated by a relationship dispute with the victim, but the cause of the murder is still unknown.

Police did not confirm reports of the victim being pregnant.

After an initial interrogation, police said the asylum seeker seems to suffer from mental illness. "He was interrogated and can only provide partial information on the course of events," a police spokesman said.

Both the suspect and the 45-year-old victim, who came from Poland, worked together in a fast-food kebab restaurant for several months prior to the attack.

The attack occurred outside the central bus station in the south-western city of Reutlingen at 4:27 pm (1427 GMT) following an altercation.

The suspect injured five people with a knife while trying to flee the scene and was incapacitated by a witness, who mowed him down with her BMW car. Authorities previously reported that the attacker had used a machete.

The 21-year-old is now in intensive care and being guarded by the police. He was known to police for crimes including grievous bodily harm, theft and drug possession, a police spokesman said.

Monika Wendel, "Perpetrator of public stabbing in Germany knew victim personally," [dpa](#), 13:00 GMT, 25 July 2016.

On Monday evening, 25 July 2016, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported that the attacker and the dead women were a couple:

The Syrian man accused of stabbing to death a female co-worker in south-western Germany was also in a relationship with her, police and prosecutors said Monday

[25 July].

The 21-year-old Syrian used a deli knife to attack the woman in the south-western city of Reutlingen on Sunday following a dispute.

The suspect and the 45-year-old victim, who came from Poland, worked in a fast-food kebab restaurant for several months prior to the attack.

The reason behind the dispute and the motive for the killing was still unclear.

Police also did not confirm reports of the victim being pregnant.

After an initial interrogation, police said the asylum seeker seems to suffer from mental illness. "He was interrogated and can only provide partial information on the course of events," a police spokesman said.

"Public stabbing in Germany: Syrian suspect and victim were a couple," [dpa](#), 18:00 GMT, 25 July 2016.

Because the attack in Reutlingen appears to be domestic violence involving a mentally ill attacker, on the evening of 25 July I decided to minimize my discussion of the attack in Reutlingen, and devote more time to the attack in Ansbach.

### **Bibliography for attack in Reutlingen, Germany**

See also news articles quoted above.

- "Syrian Refugee Arrested in Germany After Fatal Machete Attack," [NY Times](#), 24 July 2016.
- "Man kills woman with machete in Germany, is arrested," [Associated Press](#), 17:47 GMT, 24 July 2016.
- "German police say Syrian refugee held for killing woman with machete," [dpa](#), 18:30 GMT, 24 July 2016.
- "Syrian refugee arrested after killing woman with machete in Germany — police," [Reuters](#), 23:44 GMT, 24 July 2016.
- "German police say Syrian refugee held for killing woman with machete," [dpa](#), 02:45 GMT, 25 July 2016.

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### **24 July 2016: Ansbach, Germany**

A 27 year old so-called refugee from Syria was denied entrance to a music festival in Ansbach, because he did not have a ticket. The refugee walked to a nearby wine bar and suicided by detonating a bomb at 22:00 German time on 24 July. Initial reports said a total of



12 people were injured, one day later there were reports of 15 wounded. Ansbach is a city near Nürnberg, in the German state of Bavaria. This was the *third* attack by an Islamic immigrant in Germany during the past six days, following an axe attack in Würzburg and a knife attack in Reutlingen. This was the *second* attack inspired by ISIL in Germany during the past six days, following the axe attack in Würzburg.

The bomber had been denied asylum in Germany in 2015, but the German government benevolently allowed him to remain in Germany because of the continuing Syrian civil war. But on 13 July 2016, the German government ordered him deported to Bulgaria, because he sought asylum in Bulgaria before arriving in Germany. The deportation to Bulgaria had been postponed because of his "psychological instability".

The bomber previously attempted to commit suicide on two occasions, and on his third attempt he was successful. On 24 July, the bomber apparently intended to detonate inside the music festival, and slaughter German citizens.

On Monday afternoon, 25 July 2016, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported:

The bombing was "very likely" an act of Islamist terrorism, Bavaria's top security official Joachim Hermann said earlier on Monday. The Interior Ministry added that it did not have concrete evidence yet to support an Islamist motive.

The 27-year-old Syrian suspect, who detonated an explosive device in central Ansbach at around 10 pm (2000 GMT) Sunday, came to Germany two years ago, was denied asylum last year and had been due for deportation to Bulgaria, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry said.

....

According to investigators, the suspect had been known to police for drug-related and other crimes. He had received treatment at a psychiatric clinic and had tried to kill himself on two prior occasions.

Friederike Heine, "Germany searches refugee home after Syrian suicide bomber injures 12," [dpa](#), 12:00 GMT, 25 July 2016.

On Monday afternoon, 25 July 2016, Deutsche Welle reported:

[Bavaria's interior minister Joachim] Herrmann told a press conference in Nuremberg that the 27-year-old Syrian, who arrived in Germany in July 2014, had in the video declared his allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Islamic State's (IS) top leader.

The detonation outside an Ansbach cafe and close to an outdoor concert on Sunday evening [24 July] wounded 15 people, many seriously, and killed the suspected bomber, who was carrying a rucksack.

....

"A video made by the assailant was found on his mobile phone in which he threatened an attack," Herrmann said, referring to the Ansbach bombing.

Shortly after Herrmann's announcement, Islamic State's mouthpiece, the agency

Amaq, claimed that the Ansbach perpetrator had been one of IS' "soldiers."

German authorities have not yet identified the 27-year-old.

....

Herrmann said two weeks ago the federal BAMF agency for migration and refugees had ordered the Syrian to [leave](#) Germany and return to Bulgaria, where he had first applied for asylum.

Police had earlier said the man intended to target the open-air festival but was turned away as he did not have a ticket. More than 2,500 people had gathered for the concert. "Bavarian Interior Minister: Ansbach attack linked to Islamist terrorism," [Deutsche Welle](#), 25 July 2016.

Note that it was the Bavarian interior minister, *not* an official of the German federal government, who announced that the bomber was an Islamic terrorist. As seen after the sexual assaults in Germany on 31 December 2015, the German federal government has a policy of denying or minimizing crimes by Islamic immigrants.

At 13:50 GMT on 25 July, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Amaq issued a statement that said the bombing in Ansbach was accomplished by "one of the soldiers of the Islamic State."

On Monday afternoon, 25 July 2016, Reuters reported that Amaq, ISIL's news agency, had claimed credit for the bombing in Ansbach.

An Islamic State fighter carried out the suicide bombing that wounded a dozen people outside a music festival in the German town of Ansbach, the group's Amaq news agency said on Monday [25 July].

"He carried out the operation in response to calls to target countries of the coalition that fights Islamic State," it said.

Omar Fahmy, "Islamic State behind suicide attack outside German music festival — Amaq news agency," [Reuters](#), 14:40 GMT, 25 July 2016.

On Monday afternoon, Reuters reported that the bomber had pledged allegiance to ISIL, which made the bomber a genuine Islamic terrorist:

The Syrian who blew himself up in southern Germany, wounding 15 people, had pledged allegiance to Islamic State on a video found on his mobile phone, the Bavarian interior minister said on Monday [25 July].

"A provisional translation by an interpreter shows that he expressly announces, in the name of Allah, and testifying his allegiance to (Islamic State leader) Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi ... an act of revenge against the Germans because they're getting in the way of Islam," Joachim Herrmann told a news conference.

"I think that after this video there's no doubt that the attack was a terrorist attack with an Islamist background."

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, according to Amaq, a news agency that supports Islamic State.

....

The 27-year-old arrived in Germany two years ago and claimed asylum, a federal interior ministry spokesman said. He had been in trouble with police repeatedly for drug-taking and other offences and faced deportation to Bulgaria.

Andreas Burger, "Bavarian bomber pledged allegiance to Islamic State — minister," [Reuters](#), 15:18 GMT, 25 July 2016.

On Monday evening, 25 July 2016, Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported that:

A Syrian migrant who blew himself up outside a music festival venue in southern Germany pledged allegiance to the Islamic State extremist group in a video found on his phone, Bavaria's top security official said Monday.

The 27-year-old Syrian, whose asylum application was turned down in Germany, vowed to take "revenge against the Germans for obstructing Islam," Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Hermann told a press conference.

....

Federal prosecutors said later Monday that they suspect he was a member of Islamic State. The federal prosecutors' office will take over the investigation because it appears to be connected to a foreign terrorist organization, it said in Karlsruhe.

Islamic State said the bomber was one of its "soldiers" and was acting in response to calls to target member states of the international coalition fighting the extremist group in Syria and Iraq.

....

Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said the deportation to Bulgaria had been suspended because of his "psychological instability."

Friederike Heine, "Islamic State suicide bomber vowed 'revenge against Germans'," [dpa](#), 17:00 GMT, 25 July 2016.

On Monday evening, Deutsche Presse-Agentur summarized:

A Syrian migrant who blew himself up outside a music festival venue in the Bavarian town of Ansbach on Sunday night pledged allegiance to the Islamic State extremist group in a video found on his phone.

The 27-year-old vowed to take "revenge against the Germans for obstructing Islam," Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Hermann said.

Islamic State claimed he was one of its "soldiers."

Federal prosecutors have taken over the investigation; they suspect the bomber was a member of Islamic State.

The man from Aleppo in northern Syria came to Germany in August 2014. He was denied asylum and was due for deportation to Bulgaria.

Federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said the deportation had been suspended because of his "psychological instability."

15 people were wounded in the attack.

....

The explosive device was in his rucksack and he set it off after being denied entry to the venue because he did not have a ticket.

"What we know: Suicide bombing in Ansbach, southern Germany," [dpa](#), 18:00 GMT, 25 July 2016.

Later on 25 July, the Associated Press reported:

Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann said a laptop with extremist videos was found at the apartment of the suspect, a 27-year-old Syrian identified only as Mohammad D in line with German privacy laws. A video on his cellphone showed him declaring loyalty to the Islamic State group and announcing a "revenge act against Germans because they are standing in the way of Islam."

The suspect also declared Germans "won't be able to sleep peacefully anymore," Herrmann said. "I think after this video there's no doubt that the attack was a terror attack with an Islamist motivation."

....

Roman Fertinger, deputy police chief of nearby Nuremberg, said it was clear the suspect wanted to kill others, not just himself, in Sunday's attack. "This was about destroying innocent bystanders," he said.

David Rising, Kirsten Grieshaber, & Tomislav Skaro, "IS attacker: Germans 'won't be able to sleep peacefully'," [Associated Press](#), 18:58 GMT, 25 July 2016.

Apparently, the bomber uploaded his video from his cellphone to Amaq, because Amaq published the video on 26 July. The Associated Press reported:

[at 09:05 German time] The extremist Islamic State group has published a video in which a man pledges allegiance to IS and vows Germany's people "won't be able to sleep peacefully anymore." It appears to be the same as the one found by German investigators on the phone of man who blew himself, killing himself and wounding 15 people.

The IS-linked Aamaq news agency released the video early Tuesday. The man on the

video, his face covered with a black scarf, threatens to make life intolerable and that "we will blow up your homes."

[at 14:55 German time] Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann says the bomber who injured 15 people and killed himself at a music festival had enough material in his room to build "at least another bomb." Herrmann says authorities need to examine how a refugee was able to collect such material in his room in a state-funded home for asylum seekers.

"The Latest: Throng in Kosovo for Munich victim's funeral," [Associated Press](#), 15:01 GMT, 26 July 2016.

On 26 July, the Bavarian Interior Minister began to realize that German taxpayers probably paid for the materials to make the bomb, plus a second bomb in the bomber's room in a residence hall for refugees. The Associated Press reported:

Herrmann said ... authorities in Germany need to investigate how the man, known as Mohammad Daleel, was able to collect enough material to make at least two bombs in his room in an asylum-seeker home. "The people of our country cannot be expected to finance the protection of people who violate the law with their tax money," he said.

David Rising & Kirsten Grieshaber, "German officials vow tighter security and migrant controls," [Associated Press](#), 15:04 GMT, 26 July 2016.

On 27 July, the Associated Press reported:

[at 11:00 German time] The online magazine of the Islamic State group has described how a 27-year-old Syrian asylum-seeker who blew himself up at a bar in the southern German town of Ansbach spent months planning the attack, once even hiding his home-made bomb in his room moments before a police raid.

The weekly Al-Nabaa magazine's report, published late Tuesday [26 July], added that Mohammad Daleel had fought both in Iraq and Syria with a branch of al-Qaida and the IS group before arriving in Germany as an asylum-seeker two years ago.

[at 15:45 German time] State Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann, Bavaria's top security official, says a roll of 50-euro (\$55) notes was found on the attacker in Ansbach. It's unclear where the money came from — but Herrmann says it is "unlikely that it could have been paid for solely from what an asylum-seeker in Germany gets in the way of pocket money." He didn't specify how much cash was found in total.

"The Latest: Young Munich shooting victim buried in Greece," [Associated Press](#), 18:43 GMT, 27 July 2016.

My comment is that the revelation on 27 July clearly shows that Islamic terrorists are entering Germany along with so-called refugees. If someone was paying the bomber, the German taxpayer still provided the Islamic bomber with free housing and free meals.

On 28 July, Reuters interviewed the psychiatrist who treated Daleel the bomber:

... those who knew [Daleel] at the shelter said he was not particularly religious, a sentiment echoed by his psychotherapist Gisela von Maltitz, who is based in the town of Lindau, a two-hour train journey from Ansbach. She said Daleel was mentally

scarred and left suicidal by the death of his wife and son in Syria and by being tortured.

....

Despite Daleel's professed allegiance to Islamic State, von Maltitz said she had seen no indication of any link to radical Islamist ideology, or religion at all. "A connection to Islam doesn't match the picture I had of him at all," said the therapist, who added she had 40 sessions with Daleel between May 2015 and January this year. "He never made any kind of comment in that direction at all, about Islam or any other religion."

"He had been badly tortured in Syria," she said. "His wife and small child had been killed in Syria when a building collapsed on them after an explosion. In Bulgaria he was in prison and maltreated," she added. "We're certain that the information he supplied was truthful."

Von Maltitz, who said Daleel's death had freed her from patient confidentiality obligations, had scheduled further appointments with him for this week but he had postponed them until Aug. 1.

The therapist said she repeatedly intervened with authorities not to deport him. "He was suicidal," she said, adding that the prospect of deportation to Bulgaria "scared him horribly".

[Mahmood Mubaritz, who lived in the same refugee shelter,] also said Daleel had shown no overt signs of religious faith. "I never saw him praying," he said. "He was definitely not a fanatical Muslim."

Erik Kirschbaum, Joseph Nasr, & Joern Poltz, "Fervent jihadist or suicidal refugee — the many faces of Bavarian bomber," [Reuters](#), 16:40 GMT, 28 July 2016.

### **Bibliography for attack in Ansbach, Germany**

See also news articles quoted above. This topic was out of the news, beginning on Friday, 29 July.

- "Syrian man denied asylum killed in German blast: Bavarian minister," [Reuters](#), 02:38 GMT, 25 July 2016.
- "Syrian migrant behind Ansbach explosion, minister says," [dpa](#), 03:23 GMT, 25 July 2016.
- "Police: Bavarian official says attacker was denied asylum," [Associated Press](#), 03:31 GMT, 25 July 2016.
- "Bavarian official: Ansbach attack suggests Islamist motive," [Associated Press](#), 05:39 GMT, 25 July 2016. (" 'My personal view is that I unfortunately think it's very likely this really was an Islamist suicide attack,' Bavarian interior minister Joachim

Herrmann told German news agency dpa.")

- "The Latest: Syria opposition group shamed by Germany attacks," [Associated Press](#), 16:32 GMT, 25 July 2016.
- "IS attacker: Germans 'won't be able to sleep peacefully'," [Associated Press](#), 18:58 GMT, 25 July 2016.
- "ISIL claims to have inspired lone suicide bomber in Ansbach as Germany faces new threat," [The Telegraph](#), 23:03 GMT, 25 July 2016. (Bomber's name is "Mohammed Deleel".)
- "Bavarian bomber pledged allegiance to Islamic State: minister," [Reuters](#), 01:29 GMT, 26 July 2016.
- "The Latest: Throng in Kosovo for Munich victim's funeral," [Associated Press](#), 15:01 GMT, 26 July 2016.
- "The Latest: Young Munich shooting victim buried in Greece," [Associated Press](#), 18:43 GMT, 27 July 2016.
- "Minister: Bavaria bomber in online chat before attack," [Associated Press](#), 22:00 GMT, 27 July 2016.
- "The Latest: TV reporter: Ansbach bomber was 'not aggressive'," [Associated Press](#), 16:28 GMT, 28 July 2016.
- "Fervent jihadist or suicidal refugee — the many faces of Bavarian bomber," [Reuters](#), 16:40 GMT, 28 July 2016. (Only the detonator exploded, but *not* the main explosive, which explains why no victims died.)

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## 26 July 2016: Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, France

On Tuesday morning, 26 July 2016, at 09:25 French time, an 85 year old Catholic priest was saying Mass in an almost empty church in the town of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, near Rouen in the province of Normandy. Two ISIL terrorists entered the church and slit the throat of the priest, who died. The terrorists then took four hostages — two nuns and two parishioners. Police killed both Islamic terrorists when the terrorists exited the church and shouted “Allahu Akhbar”. One male parishioner was seriously wounded.

At 12:32 GMT on 26 July, [The Telegraph](#) [blog](#) tersely reported that ISIL's Amag news agency claimed the church attackers were ISIL "soldiers". At 13:54 GMT on 26 July, [Reuters](#) reported: "[French President Francois Hollande] called it a 'dreadful terrorist attack' and told reporters the attackers had pledged allegiance to IS. The IS news agency Amaq said two of its 'soldiers' had carried out the attack."

On 27 July, Amaq posted a video at its website showing the two attackers pledging allegiance to ISIL. Obviously, one of the attackers, or an accomplice, sent the video to Amaq. This is strong evidence that the attack was at least inspired by ISIL.

One of the two attackers was well known to police. Adel Kermiche, now 19 years old, had attempted to go to Syria in May 2015, but was stopped in Turkey and returned to France. In March 2016, a judge in France put an electronic monitoring ankle bracelet on Adel and confined Adel to his home, but the bracelet was deactivated for 4 hours each day (why?). Adel attacked the church when his bracelet was deactivated.

On the morning of 28 July, two days after the attack in the church, French law enforcement finally identified the second attacker: Abdel-Malik Nabil Petitjean, 19 year old from Aix-les-Bains in eastern France. He was known to French anti-terrorism authorities for his attempt to travel to Syria on 10 June 2016. On 22 July, four days before the attack, the French government anti-terrorism coordinating agency distributed a photograph of an unidentified man to French police with a warning that he could be planning an attack. The man in the photograph was Petitjean.

On 29 July, Reuters reported on Kermiche's history of mental problems.

Adel Kermiche was an attention-seeking child whose behavioural problems frequently led him to a psychiatric hospital and later a specialist school. He died a coldblooded killer who slit the throat of an elderly French priest in the name of Islamic State.

....

A judicial source said Kermiche received regular psycho-therapy and medication between the ages of six and 13, at which point he was sent to school for pupils with behavioural problems.

....

[Kermiche's] mother told Swiss newspaper *La Tribune de Geneve* last year that Kermiche became "bewitched" by hardline Islamic ideology after militants attacked the satirical *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris in January, 2015. Two months later, he made his first attempt to reach Syria to wage jihad.

Michel Rose, "French church attacker — from troubled childhood to altar killer," [Reuters](#), 17:39 GMT, 29 July 2016.

ISIL has previously kidnapped and executed Catholic priests in Syria, but this appears to be the first time that ISIL has killed a Catholic priest in Europe. A terrorist attack that kills only one person is a small event, but there is immense symbolism when Islamic terrorists attack a Christian church.

After Islamic terror attacks in Paris (*Charlie Hebdo* and grocery store) on 7-9 January 2015 (17 dead), in Paris on 13 November 2015 (130 dead), and Nice on 14 July 2016 (84 dead), one wonders if the French government will do something to prevent future Islamic terrorism in France. If the traditional political parties continue to be ineffective, then voters may elect a right-wing, anti-immigrant party. However, it is foreseeable that discrimination against



Islamic immigrants will radicalize formerly moderate Muslims.

### **Bibliography for attack in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray**

- "The Latest: Shocked French town honors slain priest," [Associated Press](#), blog begins at 09:10 GMT and ends at 20:30 GMT, 26 July 2016.
- "ISIL knifemen who 'slit 85-year-old priest's throat' and took nuns hostage shot dead as second victim fights for life," [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins at 09:25 GMT and ends at 18:53 GMT, 26 July 2016.
- "Islamic State group claims attack that killed 85-year-old priest," [Associated Press](#), 21:07 GMT, 26 July 2016.
- "Priest killed at French church in attack claimed by Islamic State" [dpa](#), 21:30 GMT, 26 July 2016.
- "Islamists attack French church, slit priest's throat," [Reuters](#), 09:46 GMT, 27 July 2016.
- "French government faces security criticisms after church attack," [Reuters](#), 19:45 GMT, 27 July 2016. ("Islamic State's news agency on Wednesday [27 July] posted a video it said showed the two church attackers pledging allegiance to the group's leader in Arabic.")
- Lori Hinnant, "Church attacker nurtured jihad in quiet French town," [Associated Press](#), 21:55 GMT, 27 July 2016. ("The attack was claimed by the Islamic State group, which released a video Wednesday [27 July] allegedly showing Kermiche and his accomplice clasping hands and pledging allegiance to the group." "Those who knew [Adel Kermiche] in this Normandy town where he grew up said Kermiche appeared to think of little else other than trying to join [ISIL] in Syria after the January 2015 attacks on the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket.")
- "Second church attacker identified in French priest slaying," [dpa](#), 15:40 GMT, 28 July 2016.
- "French ID 2nd church attacker; police had warning about him," [Associated Press](#), 15:46 GMT, 28 July 2016.
- "France had been hunting second church attacker after tip-off," [Reuters](#), 09:49 GMT, 29 July 2016.
- "French church attacker — from troubled childhood to altar killer," [Reuters](#), 17:39 GMT, 29 July 2016.
- "Teen released, 2 still in custody for French church attack," [Associated Press](#), 13:45 GMT, 30 July 2016. ("A Syrian refugee and a cousin of one of the two attackers remain in custody....")

- "Cousin of church attacker charged and detained — Paris prosecutor," [Reuters](#), 22:07 GMT, 31 July 2016. (Farid K., a cousin of Petitjean, was arrested. Jean-Philippe Steven J. was arrested for attempting to travel to Syria with Petitjean.)
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## 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 walked out of 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.

### **Blame for Failure in Geneva**

In my essay for December 2015, I wrote:

I predict that in February 2016 people will realize the operative principle is the German saying "von nichts, kommt nichts" (out of nothing, nothing comes).

Ronald B. Standler, "Syria & Iraq: December 2015," [www.rbs0.com/syria28.pdf](http://www.rbs0.com/syria28.pdf), 4 Jan 2016.

I wrote "von nichts, kommt nichts" in response to unrealistic expectations by delusional diplomats. By choosing the HNC as the main opposition delegation, the negotiations in Geneva were doomed from the beginning.

By 1 August, 214 days have elapsed in 2016 without any progress toward a new government for Syria. There was a brief cessation of hostilities in March and April, and some deliveries of humanitarian aid, but overall very little progress in ending the Syrian civil war. *Why* so little progress? I see five reasons:

1. Since the HNC was created in December 2015, the HNC has consistently demanded its pre-conditions be satisfied *before* they would negotiate. In March 2016, Assad proposed a so-called "national unity government", but the HNC refused to consider the proposal. The HNC walked out of negotiations on 18 April 2016. It is clear that the HNC *never* wanted to negotiate.
2. On 18 April 2016, 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. My previous essays chronicle other violations of the cessation of hostilities by rebels and jihadist groups.
3. Assad is now clearly pursuing a military solution, as he declared in his 7 June 2016 speech.
4. The foreign meddlers (e.g., Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, USA) continue to pour weapons and ammunition into Syria, in support of a military victory. 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.
5. The USA and Russia, as co-chairs of the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, failed to recommend frequent violators of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement for punishment. In particular, on 11 May 2016, the USA blocked Russia's attempt at the United Nations to declare Ahrar al-Sham and Jaish al-Islam as terrorist organizations, which would exclude them the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. And Russian airstrikes are supporting Assad's military campaign against rebels and jihadists. Neither Assad nor Russia are being punished for violating the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

Back on 2 August 2012 — four years ago — Kofi Annan resigned as the first U.N. Envoy for Syria. In the ninth paragraph of his resignation [speech](#) he said: “You have to understand: as an Envoy, I can’t want peace more than the protagonists, more than the Security Council or the international community for that matter.” It is still true that the participants in negotiations must want the negotiations to succeed. Unfortunately for the people of Syria, the so-called Syrian opposition — a bunch of self-appointed expatriates in the Syrian National Coalition in Turkey and the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) — is focused only on grabbing power from Assad. On the other side, Assad's number one priority is to cling to power.

Why don't the foreign meddlers — who are members of the ISSG — force their proxy armies in Syria to negotiate? Well, the foreign meddlers — like the protagonists in the Geneva

negotiations — are obsessed with the issue of whether Assad remains or resigns. Russia needs Assad to remain in power, so Russia can continue to use the naval base at Tartus. Iran needs Assad (a Shiite) to remain in power, so the Shiite government in Iran can have influence in Syria, where the majority of the Syrians are Sunnis. Obama is under the delusion that if Assad resigns, then the terrorists (i.e., ISIL and Nusra) and the jihadists will all magically disappear.

In summary, Syria is a complicated mess with too many rebel and jihadist groups, acting in a fragmented and disorganized way, supported by foreign meddlers. Politicians and diplomats seem to assume that the leaders in Syria (i.e., Assad, the HNC, other Syrian groups) *sincerely desire* peace. But struggles for political power have apparently overwhelmed peace negotiations.

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### 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.

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 292,000 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.

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## 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. This lack of competent ground forces in Iraq is a glaring defect in Obama's strategy.

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### **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.

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## 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.

The U.S. war against terrorism began in Afghanistan in 2001. Fifteen years later, the U.S. Military is still fighting against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, with *no* end in sight. 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). On 6 July 2016, in response to an apparently worsening situation in Afghanistan, Obama decided to leave 8400 U.S. Military personnel in Afghanistan in January 2017. [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

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. 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.

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 ([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.,

- "Are airstrikes successfully weakening ISIS?," [PBS](#), 1 May 2016. (Doug Ollivant interviewed by Soledad O'Brien. "We are hearing some reports, that actually now is what ISIL is telling people that they're talking to on social media: Don't come here [to Iraq or Syria]. Stay home. .... But that's obviously something we're just as concerned about, if not more so, are these radical jihadists in their home countries doing these lone wolf or very small group attacks. .... This is bad news particularly for Europe, where a much larger percentage of these foreign fighters come from....")
- Colin P. Clarke & Chad C. Serena, "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.")
- "White House says Baghdad attacks strengthen U.S. resolve in Iraq," [Reuters](#), 3 July 2016. (Brennan told Congress in June: "To compensate for territorial losses [in Iraq and Syria], ISIL (Islamic State) will probably rely more on guerrilla tactics, including high-profile attacks outside territory it holds.")
- "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].")
- "As ISIS Loses Land, It Gains Ground in Overseas Terror," [NY Times](#), 3 July 2016.
- "Islamic State's ambitions and allure grow as territory shrinks," [Washington Post](#), 3 July 2016. ("U.S. intelligence officials say battlefield setbacks in Iraq and Syria appear to have driven the Islamic State's leaders to speed up their timeline for attacks abroad.")
- "More than 140 killed in Islamic State's worst ever bomb attack in the Iraqi capital," [Washington Post](#), 4 July 2016. ("U.S. officials have warned that the [Islamic State] group is likely to intensify its attacks overseas as it loses ground in Iraq and Syria, but civilians in the Middle East continue to bear the brunt of the campaign of bombings.")
- "Inside ISIS: Quietly preparing for the loss of the 'caliphate'," [Associated Press](#), 13 July 2016. ("U.S. counterterrorism experts believe the mass-casualty attacks in Istanbul and Baghdad in the past month were largely a response to [ISIL's] military reversals in Iraq and Syria." "... [ISIL]'s highly decentralized nature ensures that it will remain dangerous for some time to come, according to current and former U.S. officials and terrorism experts.")
- "As 'caliphate' shrinks, Islamic State looks to global attacks," [Reuters](#), 13:08 GMT, 31 July 2016.

It appears that the U.S. may have spent huge amounts of money to fight Islamic terrorists, 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.

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This document is at <http://www.rbs0.com/syria35.pdf>  
begun 1 July 2016, revised 1 August 2016.

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

[my homepage](#)