

# Syria & Iraq: October 2016

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## Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 35 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 That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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 quote only a small part of an article by a news agency or newspaper. Furthermore, I post each of my essays at least a few days — typically a week — after the end of the month described in that essay, so I am *not* distributing "hot news", but only creating a scholarly historical record.

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. Beirut and Damascus are +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. During October 2016, I also checked the webpage for the [Spokesman](#) of the United Nations Secretary General and read his daily press briefings, to see if the United Nations was going to do something about Syria.

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 calls itself "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 calls itself "Jabhat Fatah al-Sham". See also [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 28 July. Despite the change of name and loss of the Al-Qaeda franchise, Nusra is the same group of terrorists with the same ideology and same goals as before the change. The U.S. State Department spokesman, John Kirby, [said](#) "... we judge any organization, including [Nusra], much more by its actions, its ideology, its goals. Affiliations may be a factor, but ultimately it's their actions, ideology, and goals that matter the most. .... ... we certainly see no reason to believe that their actions or their objectives are any different, and they are still considered a foreign terrorist organization."

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. OPCW has also issued occasional fact-finding reports that report their conclusion whether or not chemical weapons were used in Syria at a specific place and time, but do *not* conclude *who* released the chemical weapons. 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.

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. On 24 November 2015, United Nations Security Council document S/2015/908, beginning at page 194, contains an OPCW fact-finding report that concludes "with the utmost confidence" that mustard was used in Marea on 21 August 2015.

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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.

The first report of the JIM is U.N. Security Council document [S/2016/142](#) (12 Feb 2016), 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 ¶¶43, 46, and 47 of their report.

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.

### **Third JIM Report**

On 24 August 2016, the JIM released its third report, which concluded:

1. Syrian government released chlorine in Talmenes on 21 April 2014;
2. Syrian government released chlorine in Sarmin on 16 March 2015; and
3. ISIL released sulfur mustard in Marea on 21 August 2015.

More investigation is needed for the cases at:

4. Kafr Zita in Hama province on 18 April 2014 (chlorine?);
5. Qmenas in Idlib province on 16 March 2015 (chlorine?); and
6. Binnish in Idlib governorate on 24 March 2015 (chlorine?).

No further investigation is recommended for the cases at:

7. Kafr Zita on 11 April 2014;
8. Al-Tamanah on 29-30 April 2014; and
9. Al-Tamanah on 25-26 May 2014.

The third JIM Report will be publicly distributed "shortly" after it is discussed by the U.N. Security Council on 30 August. [U.N.](#) Journalists immediately reported that Russia and China would likely prevent any U.N. sanctions on Assad for releasing chlorine gas during war. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The [White House](#) issued a statement on the Third JIM Report that said: "It is now impossible to deny that the Syrian regime has repeatedly used

industrial chlorine as a weapon against its own people in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 2118."

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

One wonders how many millions of dollars the U.N. spent on this year-long JIM project, which found *only two* uses of chlorine by Assad. One could read news articles by Reuters and the Associated Press since April 2014 to learn about cylinders of chlorine being dropped from helicopters in Syria. Assad had — before the Russian imported their helicopters in September 2015 — the only military that flew helicopters in Syria.

Finally, I comment that these OPCW investigations *may* be useful to war crimes prosecutors, sometime ten or twenty years in the future.

At the 30 August 2016 meeting of the U.N. Security Council, Russia expressed doubts about whether Assad had released chlorine gas on the two occasions that the JIM found. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). That means Russia will probably veto any sanctions against Assad.

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#### Fourth JIM Report

The fourth report of the JIM was due at the end of September, but the U.N. Security Council extended the deadline until 21 October. [Reuters](#).

The fourth report was provided to the United Nations Security Council on Friday, 21 October. The Security Council is scheduled to discuss the report on 27 October. The fourth report concludes that Assad's government was responsible for a third attack: dropping chlorine on Qmenas in Idlib province on 16 March 2015. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Reuters reported on the closed-door meeting of the U.N. Security Council on 27 October. France, Britain and the United States hope to persuade Russia to agree to a 12-month extension to the mandate of the [JIM] inquiry, which expires on Oct. 31, before starting negotiations on a draft resolution to punish those blamed for such attacks.

"The conclusions of the JIM (Joint Investigative Mechanism) are not definitive, have no legally binding force and cannot serve as accusatory conclusions for taking legal decision," Russian U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told the council, according to a copy of his remarks.

"Damascus should carry out a comprehensive national investigation on chemical incidents confirmed by the JIM," he said, adding that while Russia is still studying the latest report, most cases in the international inquiry's report were "full of contradictions and therefore, unconvincing."

The United States has circulated a draft resolution to the council to renew the mandate for the inquiry and the council could vote on the measure as early as Monday [31 Oct], diplomats said.

Michelle Nichols, "Russia says Syria should look at gas attacks, dimming sanctions hopes," [Reuters](#), 22:01 GMT, 27 Oct 2016.

My comment is that after a 13-month investigation, Russia still refuses to believe that Assad is responsible for dropping chlorine gas on civilians. More investigation is unlikely to convince Russia. Russia's made an absurd suggestion that Damascus should investigate itself — a criminal suspect has an obvious bias that would reduce the credibility of any conclusion that they are *not* responsible for war crimes.

On 31 October 2016, the United Nations Security Council voted to extend the JIM mission until 18 November 2016, while discussions of a one-year extension continue. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

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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. I have searched for, but *not* found, any official OPCW report on the use of mustard in Iraq in August 2015.

My comment is the United Nations and OPCW have little enthusiasm for investigating use of chemical weapons in Iraq.

On 13 September 2016, the Pentagon reported that a U.S. airstrike had destroyed a major ISIL chemical weapons production plant near Mosul, Iraq. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#).

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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. 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. On 5 September 2016, North Korea launched three missiles that landed in the ocean near Japan. And on 9 Sep 2016, North Korea detonated a fifth nuclear weapon, which was more energetic than any of their previous weapon tests. Each time, the United Nations Security Council condemns the violations by the North Korean government, but these condemnations are clearly *not* effective in stopping the belligerent behavior of the North Koreans.
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## Deaths in Syria

On 1 November 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published a death toll for the month of October.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented death of 4527 persons in the month of October 2016. The casualties are as follows:

- Civilian casualties: 1343 civilians, including 317 children under the age of eighteen, and 182 female citizens over the age of 18, they were killed as follows:
  - 549 citizens including 149 children and 90 citizen women killed in raids by Russian and Syrian warplanes' bombing and helicopters' barrel bombs,
  - 191 people including 32 children and 24 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,
  - 30 persons including a woman were killed under torture in Syrian security prisons,
  - 196 persons including 58 children and 26 citizen women were killed in the fall of shells and targeting by the rebel and Islamic Factions and the "Islamic State" organization,

- 59 including 16 children and 9 women were killed in shelling by Turkish warplanes,
  - 6 including 1 child were killed by the gunshots of the Turkish border guards,
  - 15 persons including a child were executed by the “Islamic State” organization,
  - 38 including 5 children and 3 women were killed in bombing by warplanes of the international coalition,
  - 76 people including 8 children and 8 citizen women were killed in the explosions of booby trapped vehicles and explosive belts detonation,
  - 3 children and a man died due to poor health conditions and the bad living conditions and the lack of medication,
  - 1 person was killed by the Syrian Democratic Forces, and
  - 173 including 44 children and 22 citizen women were 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 movements and organizations: 690
  - Defected soldiers and officers: 6
  - The regime forces: 452
  - Members from Popular Committees, NDF and militiamen loyal to the regime of Syrian nationality: 429
  - Militiamen from the Lebanese Hezbollah: 33
  - Non-Syrian Pro-regime mostly Shia militiamen: 56
  - Unidentified casualties: 14
  - 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: 1024

We in the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights believe that the number of casualties in the ranks of the rebel and Islamic factions and the “Islamic State” organization is 900 more than the number documented we were able to document, because of the extreme secrecy by the targeted parties about their death toll.

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

"About 1350 civilians between 4500 were killed in October 2016," [SOHR](#), 1 Nov 2016.

[Formatting as indented list by Standler.]

When I add the civilian deaths. I obtain a total of 1337, not 1343. When I add 1337 civilians to the dead fighters, I obtain a total of 4041, not 4527.

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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 was *more than* 305,500 at the end of October 2016.

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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.

My essay for [July 2016](#) mentions a failed military coup in Turkey on 15 July 2016.

My essay for [August 2016](#) chronicles the beginning of the Turkish invasion of Syria during 24-31 August.

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### **October 2016: Turkish invasion of Syria**

Since December 2015, Turkey has approximately 2000 soldiers stationed in northern Iraq, allegedly to fight ISIL and Kurdish terrorists (PKK and YPG). On 6 Oct, Iraq requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the unwelcome Turkish soldiers in Iraq. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 15 October 2016, Syrian rebels backed by Turkish airstrikes, and by Turkish tank and

artillery support, began to liberate the town of Dabiq, Syria from ISIL. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). On 16 Oct, Dabiq was declared liberated. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 20 October, in an early version of a [Reuters](#) news article, they reported: "Turkish jets carried out 26 airstrikes on 18 Syrian Kurdish YPG militant targets in northern Syria and killed 160 to 200 militants". [Anadolu](#) Agency in Turkey reported: "In a statement, the Turkish General Staff said between 160 and 200 members of the terror group were killed in airstrikes carried out as part of Operation Euphrates Shield." My comment is that the news articles should have said rabid Turkish invaders in Syria do ethnic cleansing, murder 200 of best fighters against ISIL.

There was an attempted coup in Turkey on 15 July 2016. Following that coup, a paranoid president Erdogan fired more than 100,000 government employees, arrested 37,000 suspected coup supporters, and closed more than 140 newspapers and magazine publishers. On 30 October 2016, [Reuters](#) and the [Associated Press](#) reported that an additional 10,000 government employees were sacked and another 15 newsmedia publishers were closed.

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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 to 250 additional U.S. personnel in Syria, including Special Forces, ...." [White House](#).

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

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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 13 September 2016, in an exclusive interview with the [Associated Press](#) Ban Ki-moon again said he "can't understand why Syria is being held hostage to 'the destiny' of one man, President Bashar Assad." That is because who rules Syria is more important to world leaders than whether 600,000 besieged persons are hungry.

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.

On 10 October 2016, U.N. Secretary General again said: "The future of one person, like President Assad, should not block this process." [Deutsche Welle](#).

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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 essays prior to April 2016.) 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 the HNC (Mohammad Alloush) on 29 May, and explains 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.

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

My essay for [August 2016](#) chronicled the continuation of efforts to restore the cessation of hostilities and to begin routine deliveries of humanitarian aid in Syria. I concluded that the Syrian peace negotiations in Geneva during 2016 have *failed*.

My essay for [September 2016](#) chronicled the creation of new agreements by Russia and the USA on 9 Sep, the hundreds of violations during the first week of the new ceasefire, the collapse of the new ceasefire on 18 Sep, and the failure of diplomats to resuscitate the new ceasefire. The situation on the ground in Syria actually worsened after the new ceasefire became effective, as Assad and Russia began a ferocious new assault on the city of Aleppo on the night of 21 Sep. I characterized the ISSG as a "complete failure". I concluded that the Syrian peace negotiations in Geneva were dead for the foreseeable future.

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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.

My essay for [July 2016](#) reports that the HNC met during 15-18 July, but did *not* select a new negotiating team.

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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### 1-5 October 2016

On 3 October 2016, de Mistura made his clearest statement about the collapse of the ceasefire in Syria. The Associated Press reported:

The U.N. envoy for Syria "deeply regrets" the failure of a U.S.-Russia diplomatic effort to achieve a cease-fire in Syria.

Staffan de Mistura said the United Nations will continue to push "energetically for a political solution" in Syria and "will never abandon the Syrian people to a destiny of endless violent conflict."

De Mistura's office in Geneva said Monday [3 Oct] he regretted the U.S.-Russia push to revive a truce "did not reach a positive conclusion."

"The Latest: UN envoy regrets inability to end Syria fighting," [Associated Press](#), 21:04 GMT, 3 Oct 2016.

The United Nations Geneva Office did *not* post de Mistura's statement online.

On 3 October 2016, Russian president Putin retaliated for U.S. sanctions on Russia and for U.S. troops in Eastern Europe, by suspending a treaty with the U.S. for disposal of weapons-grade plutonium. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The Russian suspension occurred *before* the U.S. announcement in the next paragraph, but the acts of both Russia and the USA show a deteriorating relationship.

On 3 October 2016, the U.S. State Department announced it had suspended talks with Russia about a ceasefire in Syria.

The United States is suspending its participation in bilateral channels with Russia that were established to sustain the Cessation of Hostilities. This is not a decision that was

taken lightly. The United States spared no effort in negotiating and attempting to implement an arrangement with Russia aimed at reducing violence, providing unhindered humanitarian access, and degrading terrorist organizations operating in Syria, including Daesh and al Qaeda in Syria.

Unfortunately, Russia failed to live up to its own commitments — including its obligations under international humanitarian law and UNSCR 2254 — and was also either unwilling or unable to ensure Syrian regime adherence to the arrangements to which Moscow agreed. Rather, Russia and the Syrian regime have chosen to pursue a military course, inconsistent with the Cessation of Hostilities, as demonstrated by their intensified attacks against civilian areas, targeting of critical infrastructure such as hospitals, and preventing humanitarian aid from reaching civilians in need, including through the September 19 attack on a humanitarian aid convoy.

The U.S. will also withdraw personnel that had been dispatched in anticipation of the possible establishment of the Joint Implementation Center. To ensure the safety of our respective military personnel and enable the fight against Daesh, the United States will continue to utilize the channel of communications established with Russia to de-conflict counterterrorism operations in Syria.

John Kirby, "Suspension of Participation in Bilateral Channels With Russia Established to Sustain the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria," [State Dept](#), 3 Oct 2016.

My comment is that the U.S. State Department should have done this on 23 September. It was an embarrassment to the USA that the U.S. Government continued to negotiate with Russia after Russia had not only repeatedly violated its promises and commitments in Syria, but also committed war crimes (e.g., bombing hospitals, helping Assad besiege Aleppo, etc.). Although Kirby did not say it, Russia may also have caused the ISSG to fail.

On 4 October, *The New York Times* explained that the U.S. presidential election was being exploited by the Russian government, to enable Assad and the Russians to pursue a military victory for the next four months.

Russia is using the waning days of the Obama administration to strengthen President Bashar al-Assad's hold on power, expand the territory he controls in Syria and constrain the options of the next American president in responding to the civil war, according to a number of American officials and Russian analysts.

The strategy of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, they say, is to move aggressively in what he sees as a prime window of opportunity — the four months between now and the 2017 presidential inauguration — when Mr. Putin calculates that the departing President Obama will be unlikely to intervene in the escalating Syrian conflict and a new American president who might consider a tougher policy will not yet be in office.

... Nikolai V. Petrov, a political scientist in Moscow [said:] "The next American president will face a new reality and will be forced to accept it."

....

Under this scenario, the Syrian government would control five major population centers: Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Latakia.

....

... Andrew J. Tabler, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy [said:] "The seizure of Aleppo would be a *fait accompli* for the next American president."

Michael R. Gordon & Neil MacFarquhar, "U.S. Election Cycle Offers Kremlin a Window of Opportunity in Syria," [NY Times](#), 4 Oct 2016.

Having a presidential election every four years, with a maximum of eight years of service by one president, prevents the USA from acquiring a long-term leader, like Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Assad in Syria, or Gaddafi in Libya. But the frequent presidential elections in the USA are also a liability, as explained above. Electing a new president can also cause a major change in U.S. policy and disrupt long-term planning.

### **6, 14 October 2016: Assad interviews**

On 6 October 2016, Assad gave an interview to Danish television. The Syrian Arab News Agency reported the full-text of the interview. I quote the important parts below:

[Questions about the targeting of hospitals. Here is part of Assad's answer.]

President Assad: Pictures cannot tell you the story, even videos, everything could be manipulated these days. I wouldn't say that there are no such attacks on any building, but as a government, we don't have a policy to destroy hospitals or schools or any such facility for a simple reason: first of all, morally, the second reason is that if we do so, we are offering the militants the incubator, the social incubator that they've been looking for, it's going to be a gift, something we wouldn't do because it's against our interests. It's like shooting ourselves in the foot. If there's such an attack from the army, it could be by mistake, but we don't have any information that thing has happened. All what we have is allegations and only in the Western media, not from Syria.

Question 5: So, if the Syrian Army didn't attack hospitals, or maybe they did by mistake, you say, are you sure it's not the Russian air force who are targeting hospitals?

President Assad: The question that you should ask when you have a crime: who is the beneficiary of that crime? What would they get, I mean for the Russians or the Syrians, if they attack a school or if they attack hospital? What would they get if they attack a hospital? Nothing, they wouldn't get anything. I mean, even if you want to talk about the terrorists, most of their hospitals for the militants would be in the basement in ordinary buildings. So, attacking a hospital intentionally by the army is based on shaky logic, let's say.

Question 6: Do you then agree that whoever attacks hospitals, they are guilty of war crimes?

President Assad: Of course, by international law, it is. I mean, hospitals have immunity. Any other facility for any inhabited area — inhabited by civilians, not by militants — has immunity, and any government shouldn't do it, of course, I agree with you.

....

Question 15: So, there's a fierce battle going on in Aleppo right now. What will be the Syrian army and the Russian army's next move to retake the eastern rebel-held part of Aleppo?

President Assad: To continue the fight with the rebels till they leave Aleppo. They have to. There's no other option. We won't accept that terrorists will take control of any part of Syria, not only Aleppo. This is our mission, and this is our goal, and this is our next step.

Question 16: So, this intense way of warfare that we see right will continue, that's what you're saying?

President Assad: No, if you have any other option like the reconciliations in other areas, that's the best option, not the war, and that's why we announced — we gave many amnesties to hundreds, and maybe thousands, not hundreds, thousands of militants, in order to save blood, and it worked. That's why we said we give them guarantee, whether they want to have reconciliation and to have the amnesty, or to leave with their armaments outside the city of Aleppo completely, to leave the city safe, and for the people to go back to their normal life.

Question 17: The United States, they stopped all bilateral talks with Russia about any kind of peace agreement, and the Russians they said that they actually regret this. Do you regret it as well?

President Assad: We regret it, but we knew in advance that it wouldn't work, because the agreement, it's not only about the talks between the two great powers, it's not about what they're going to sign or agree upon; it's about the will, and we already knew, we had already known that the Americans didn't have the will to reach any agreement, because the main part of that agreement is to attack al-Nusra which is, according to the American list and to the United Nations list, is a terrorist group, but in the Syrian conflict, it's an American card. Without al-Nusra, the Americans cannot have any real, let's say, concrete and effective card in the Syrian arena. That's why we regret it, but we already knew that it wouldn't happen.

Question 18: But isn't it very difficult for the United States to separate the so-called "moderate rebels" and some of the more radical ones? This is very difficult, when you are attacking the moderate rebels all the time.

President Assad: You are right, do you know why you are right? Do you know the unicorn, the animal that's like a horse, has a long horn? It's a myth. And the moderate opposition is a myth. That's why you cannot separate something that doesn't exist from

something that exists. All of them have the same grassroots, the same grassroots that used to be called “free Syrian army” four years ago, five years ago, then it became al-Nusra, then it became ISIS. So, the same grassroots move from group to another group. That’s why they cannot separate it. And they don’t want... if this is reality, not a myth, they don’t want, but they cannot, because it doesn’t exist.

Question 19: But why did you ask them to do it if it’s not possible?

President Assad: Because they insisted that there is a moderate opposition, and the Russian told them “ok, if there is a moderate opposition, please separate those moderates from the extremists,” and it didn’t work, because they don’t exist, that’s why.

....

Question 30: Mr. President, you have said many times that you will continue the fight until you have recaptured the whole country, is that still your approach to this process?

President Assad: No, it’s not my approach; it’s my mission according to the constitution. It’s the mission of the army according to the constitution; it’s the mission of the state’s institutions according to the constitution. It’s not an option, it’s not a personal opinion, and it’s not my plan. My mission is to defend the civilians. My mission is to fight terrorists. My mission is to take control of every part of my country. You don’t take part of your country as a state. You don’t say “it is enough for me have half of the country” or so.

Question 31: So you think that you are defending the civilians?

President Assad: Definitely.

Question 32: I mean more than hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed; some people say 250 thousands; some people say 300 thousands. Do you think that you are defending the civilians in Syria?

President Assad: The majority of those that you are talking about, the victims, are supporters of the government, not the opposite. Another part which is unbiased, in the middle, it doesn’t belong to the government or to the other. So the majority are supporters. So, of course, I am defending the civilians. Again, otherwise if I’m not, If I’m killing the civilians, as the propaganda would promote for four years, I wouldn’t be here as President. I cannot withstand for nearly six years.

Question 33: Last question, Mr. President: Do you believe in a diplomatic political solution, or do you, deep inside your heart, know that this is going to be a military solution, and that is really what you want?

President Assad: Neither, neither, because when you have a problem you have a solution, you don’t have a kind of solution, but the problem itself will tell you how many aspects of that problems you have. For example, if I believe in political solution

but you have terrorism, you cannot have a political solution because you have chaos. If you have chaos, this is the antithesis to anything natural, including the political process. So, you need first to fight terrorists in order to reach political solution. So, in reality, you have to follow both paths; the military and the diplomatic or the political, because they are related to each other. So, it's not about my belief; it's not what I believe; it's what the requirement of this conflict to be solved. So you don't define it. The whole circumstances define it. For example, regarding the terrorists, it's not only about military solution; it's about the adjacent countries and the Western countries stop supporting the terrorists. If they stop supporting them, the military aspect of that solution will be marginalized; it won't be important because they will be weak. You will give a chance to more political initiatives in that regard. If they support them more, actually what is going to happen is the opposite; the political solution or path will be marginalized. So, it's not about what I believe in. I wish we can solve everything politically, I wish, that's what I think is suitable, but it's not about what I wish, it's about the facts on the ground.

"President al-Assad to Denmark's TV 2: Moderate opposition is a myth... We won't accept that terrorists will take control of any part of Syria-VIDEO," [SANA](#), 6 Oct 2016.

[Reuters](#); [RIA-Novosti](#); and [Middle East Eye](#) reported on this Danish interview with Assad. But many mainstream news media (e.g., Associated Press) overlooked this interview with Assad.

I comment that Assad deflected a question about targeting hospitals. If what Assad says is true (i.e., if the Syrian army does *not* target hospitals), then the Syrian army pilots have really sloppy control over their airstrikes. Bombing one or two hospitals in five years might be a mistake, but bombing many hospitals is surely a policy.

The Danish interviewer did *not* ask about Assad's use of chemical weapons. Assad could also say the use of chemical weapons "it's against our interests" but his army is still dropping chlorine on towns, with *no* military advantage to Assad and a huge international detriment to Assad.

In his speeches on 7 June 2016 and 12 Sep 2016, Assad declared he would recapture *all* of Syria (i.e., pursue a military victory). This interview is consistent with those previous speeches. See also the Syrian foreign minister's speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 24 Sep 2016.

On 14 October, Assad was interviewed by Russia's *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper:  
Question 17: But what will give you liberation of Aleppo, in strategic point?

President Assad: Aleppo, we call it the "twin of Damascus" for many reasons. It is the second big city in Syria, Damascus is the political capital, while actually Aleppo is the industrial capital in Syria.

Journalist: But no industry now, and I was there, everything is crashed.

President Assad: Exactly. Most of the factories in Aleppo, they don't work; they were stolen, they were taken to Turkey.

Journalist: But if you will take Aleppo, what will it change in the war?

President Assad: Because it is the second —

Journalist: Second city, but you can cut al-Nusra from —

President Assad: First of all, it has political gain, on the strategic level, political gain and national gain. Then, from the strategic point of view, military point of view, no, you don't cut; it's going to be the springboard, as a big city, to move to another areas, to liberate another areas from the terrorists. This is the importance of Aleppo now.

Journalist: Okay, it's liberation, but what's your next step? How to cut this connection between Turkey and Idlib? Because this is the main source, main stream of money, soldiers, everything.

President Assad: You cannot cut, because Idlib is adjacent to Turkey, it's right on the Syrian-Turkish borders. So you cannot cut; you have to clean. You have to keep cleaning this area and to push the terrorists to Turkey to go back to where they come from, or to kill them. There's no other option. But Aleppo is going to be a very important springboard to do this move.

"President Bashar al-Assad's interview given to Russia's Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper," [SANA](#), 14 Oct 2016.

[Reuters](#) and the [Associated Press](#) reported on the 14 Oct interview. Assad clearly intends a military victory in Aleppo, a goal that is *not* compatible with a ceasefire.

### 6 October 2016: de Mistura

On 6 October 2016, de Mistura spoke to journalists. This was the first time the U.N. has posted a transcript of de Mistura's remarks since 25 September 2016. I have added boldface to some important remarks.

**de Mistura:** I am here with my friend and colleague Jan Egeland, because we have just ended an important, in our opinion, Humanitarian Task Force meeting, so will first elaborate, at length actually, about where we are in the situation and then give the floor to Jan Egeland to summarize where we are on the Humanitarian Task Force progress.

No one can deny that we are in an emergency mode, let's be frank, regarding Syria, regarding Aleppo, about the future of this conflict. What has happened the other day when the two co-chairs, who have been working hard, I have seen them with my eyes, on possible cessation of hostilities based on the 9th of September, decided, unfortunately and sadly, **to suspend their own bilateral discussions on the cessation of hostilities, it was and has been a serious setback.** So pretending that that was not the case would be unfair towards the Syrian people, and towards common sense and public opinion. So let me take stock first of all and clarify on consequences on that as to the architecture of international involvement on the attempt to solve the Syrian crisis and in particular establish some type of reduction of violence, humanitarian assess and

political process.

Point number one, **the ISSG** which is, as you know, the international body which has been created finally after four years of a conflict as a contact group, including more than 20 countries and organizations, including the EU, in Vienna, and then also meetings in Munich and in New York, **is still there and needs to be there**, and everybody agrees, in other words, the fact that Russia and America are having their own decision to suspend the current bilateral negotiations, should be not and will not affect the existence of the ISSG.

ISSG may not meet immediately, that's obvious, but needs to be there ready to be convened and to be utilized as a contact group, we need that, Syria needs it, the political and humanitarian security environment require it. That means that one of the outcomes of the ISSG, as you know very well, there were two here, the HTF, the Humanitarian Task Force, and the CTF, the Cessation of Hostilities Task Force, that needs to be reviewed.

Well, the HTF today, we just ended a meeting, which is co-chaired by Jan Egeland and myself, and therefore by the UN, and therefore we have the "power" to dismantle it or not, we have definitely decided that it should not be demolished at all. We need the HTF, Jan Egeland will be able to tell you how much of a difference it has produced in spite of frustrations, or any type of ups and downs that we are facing, we have faced, will continue facing. But the outcome has been still much better than before, where we had nothing like that. That has been, I understand, a unanimous decision by all members of the HTF including Russia and the United States.

Regarding the CTF, well we will be looking at it and discussing it together this afternoon so I am not in a position of telling you where that will be leading. Our personal opinion is that it needs also to remain there, may have some changes if that is so decided by the membership, but it needs to be there, because it is true, de facto, **we don't have any more a cessation of hostilities**, and that's why the discussions did in a way, have a suspension, but we have no alternative to, sooner or later I hope the sooner than later, a new cessation of hostilities, no conflict can just end by a conflict in itself. And we still maintain, some people may think that this is not the case, there is no military victory, or military capacity of keeping a military victory, which may appear to be taking place, but then will be contradicted by further developments. So we will need a body to support, perhaps more effectively, perhaps more stringently, future cessation of hostilities.

Now, let me change subject and focus on the issue that is touching us all and which is something that is keeping us awake, day and night. While not forgetting the rest of the country, Aleppo, the city of Aleppo as such and in particular, eastern Aleppo. Let me first of all, again, try to draw your attention on some facts and then make some comments, today I cannot avoid by making some comments.

We have done a much more updated analysis of the al-Nusra reality in eastern Aleppo. I know I was quoted, and is correct, I did refer to a figure which was close to 50%, you must have heard it, I think it was in the context of the Security Council. Well based on

a more accurate estimates, which are also more up to date, and which are never completely perfect but are in my opinion, quite reliable, we are talking now about a presence in eastern Aleppo of at maximum 900 people, 900 people. The previous figure probably was also based on the out of date figure, that about 1500 al-Nusra fighters had left Idlib and other locations in order to join the al-Ramousseh battle which you remember took place some time ago when they attempted to re-take al-Ramousseh road. But they, according to our information, did withdraw, once this counter-offensive did not succeed and failed. So this amends, and please take it now as the line, which can always be amended by facts and figures, and more effective analysis, but that amends the so-called 50% thing. 900 al-Nusra fighters in eastern Aleppo.

The total number is, the question is of the fighters in general, including the so-called main stream fighters or the AOGs in eastern Aleppo, the maximum figure that is being considered as such is 8000 people, 8000.

Now let's go back and try to remember, all of us, who are we working for, who should we be concerned about? People, Syrian people. In this case, eastern Aleppo people. How many are they? 275,000 is our estimate at the moment. How many children among them? 100,000 is the estimate, enormous number of children and they are all in eastern Aleppo. So are we talking about 900 people basically who are becoming the main reason for which there is 275,000 people actually being attacked? Is this going to be and is the alibi and reason for actually the destruction of the city?

**Since 23rd of September, 376 people had been killed**, one third of them had been children, can't be all terrorists, children. And 1266 wounded. Let's be also intellectually honest, while this has happened on eastern Aleppo, meanwhile there has been and sometimes we tend to forget it, on west Aleppo and there has been reports on it, just got it today, that there has been these horrible canisters of gas or whatever they are calling them, or mortar shelling which has been actually killing several of people there two. The two things are not comparable but we should not forget also what the western Aleppo civilians are suffering.

Let's go back to eastern Aleppo because that is the emergency. All health facilities have been touched. Seven attacks in the last week, **two hospitals have been almost totally destroyed, three doctors killed, two nurses killed, in one week.** 600 patients in need of medical cure, treatment that cannot be today due to this provided are still waiting for that. And outside, there is a need for medical evacuation for at least 200 people and as you know the UN, WHO with the strong support to our own humanitarian evacuation plan from the European Union, and we are grateful to them for that, has been constantly updating possibilities for at least, at least, medical evacuation of the 200 people, who have been, most of them wounded, civilians and that could not survive if there is no trauma support to them.

All sort of ammunition so far have been used in eastern Aleppo, heavy aerial bombings, we can't count them, hundreds of them and all sorts, and type of weapons.

Let's now address the reality and it is my duty, I think morally on behalf of the UN and the Secretary-General to tell you, and through you the world, and those who do have a

capacity of listening to this, the reality. The reality is, the writing on the wall, in front of us, if this continues to be the pattern at this rate, unless there is a major game changer that may change the equation, this cruel constant use of military activities, bombing, fighting, destruction, in eastern Aleppo, will continue, let's be honest, there is nothing that tell us that will not continue, it may be punctuated by one or two interruptions, in order to allow some ambulances to come, like a Band-Aid on a big wound, that then once the Band-Aid has been there, there will be a return to the bombing, so what may be happening, the bombing will continue, and **the bottom line is in maximum, two months, two and a half months, the city of eastern Aleppo, at this rate, may be totally destroyed.** We are talking about the old city, in particular. And thousands of Syrian civilians, not terrorists, will be killed, and many of them wounded and thousands and thousands of them may try to become refugees, in order to escape from this, 275,000. This is what you, we, the world will be seeing when we will be trying to celebrate Christmas or the end of the year, if this continues at this rate, unimpeded, Homs multiplied by 50. This cannot be an option that we can just passively wait to happen.

I am therefore asking publicly, let's start with al-Nusra. We don't talk to each other, you know it, we know it. But can you please look at my eyes, and those of the Aleppo people, of the 275,000 civilians that are there where you are, and confidently tell those 275,000 people that you are going to stay there and that you remain there and keep hostage of your refusal to leave the city because 1000 of you are deciding on the destiny of the 275,000 civilians? I will like you to reply to this question not to me, but to those 275,000 people. **And if you [i.e., Nusra] did decide to leave, in dignity, and with your weapons, to Idlib, or anywhere you wanted to go, I personally, I am ready physically to accompany you.**

**I would then like to ask the Russian authorities and the government of Syria, please look at my eyes too, and the eyes of the world and the public opinion, are you really ready to continue this type of level of fighting using that type of weapons, and de facto destroy the whole city of eastern Aleppo, the ancient city of Aleppo, with its own 275,000 people, for the sake of eliminating 1000 al-Nusra fighters?** Or are you rather ready to announce an immediate and total aerial bombing halt if al-Nusra leaves, and ensure that the local administration, in eastern Aleppo, remains in place, should not be a capitulation, with even international UN presence and a possibility for the UN there to actually reach the population of eastern Aleppo with humanitarian, medical aid?

These questions cannot be avoided, and we have the moral duty, on behalf of everyone who is outraged, shocked, depressed, frustrated in the world, by what they are seeing. We shall consult of course everyone about this and other ideas, but these two questions, at least, need to be answered.

There is one thing that we are not ready to do, be passive, to resign ourselves to another Srebrenica, another Rwanda, which we are capable sadly, today to recognize, written on that wall, in front of us, unless something takes place. That doesn't mean that we will not, and we will, put this into context of a political process, because it is clear anything we do is not only about Aleppo, is going to also to be part of a political

process that we will relaunch, we need to relaunch, we need a political horizon, based on what we said in the Security Council, but first things first. Thank you.

**Jan Egeland:** Thank you very much Staffan. Today was a day of humanitarian stock taking, in the ISSG Humanitarian Task Force we looked at what was achieved and what was not achieved. Progress was indeed made in the first five months after we started in February. We were able to go to places that hadn't gotten assistance for months and years. The co-chair leadership of US and Russia, but also members who are regional powers, helped us like they have not helped us before in this war. So there was progress in the first half of 2016 and no one should belittle that.

However at this point of great crisis we need to be ruthless honest with ourselves and there is no doubt that we are failing an increasing number of civilians in Syria at this point. East Aleppo was just added to our list of besieged areas, which means 275,000 new people in this black list, seen with the eyes of anyone who believes in international law. **A total number of 861,000 Syrians are now besieged**, meaning full military encirclement, no humanitarian supplies going in, and no freedom of civilians to go in or out. It is illegal by international law and it is the reality of 861,000 Syrians.

When we started our work in February, the number was 486,000, so nearly 400,000 new on that list. Secondly, the unprecedented and indiscriminate attack on east Aleppo's hospitals, schools, apartment block, bakeries is the worst since this horrific war started. Indeed, perhaps to add to figures we got in a report to the taskforce today, the 376 killed, under the bombardment of the last two weeks, and 1266 injured, is our minimum figures because it is what the hospitals, that are also under attack, can record. It will be more, there will be more dead, and more injured than those horrific numbers. **When the attack started two weeks ago there were nine functioning hospitals, now there are six, only 30 doctors left.**

In the last month, we were able to really go to besieged areas five out of the days of September. Our heroic humanitarian workers on the ground were then able to reach seven besieged areas with assistance including to Madaya in the four-towns region, which hadn't gotten anything since April. But September is 30 days, how come all of these men with power, suits, uniforms, all well-fed, sabotaged us, four-fifth [should be 5/6] of the month.

We fear that the same thing may happen now in October, **it is the sixth of October and we still haven't gotten the formal answer back for the October plan which we had submitted well in advance of this month, for us to go to all the besieged areas and all of the hard to reach areas that are in great need.**

....

**QUESTION:** After what we seen in the past year, I am just wondering if you feel now that you have been to some extent, duped by the Russians, they repeatedly promised or made promises to turn off the fighting, stop the fighting, they want peace, they joined your peace plan, and yet they continue to bomb eastern Aleppo, and the second part is, you made this offer to accompany al-Nusra fighters out, but what is the incentive for

the Russians and the Syrians to accept your offer? What happens to them if they don't accept it? Thank you.

**de Mistura:** If they do not accept it I don't have a personal incentive, I think the main point will be history, who will be judging this unique moment in which we will all remember that there was a possibility and an option for avoiding destroying a whole city for the sake of aiming at 1000 people who are considered terrorists and using that as an alibi perhaps for destroying a whole city, so history will judge that, it will not be me certainly.

Secondly the issue about whether al-Nusra group that may decide to leave in order to go safely to Idlib in order to ensure that at least there could be a possibility of a cessation of hostilities, well they need some guarantees and I agree, which requires some official guarantees, I can't guarantee more than my own personality and body frankly.

**QUESTION:** Sorry about the first part of my question, do you think you have been duped by the Russians, they have been talking peace, but actions speak louder than words?

**de Mistura:** I don't have that type of feelings I have only facts and I will judge by facts, so we will see whether in the future or today or tomorrow or in the next few days facts will prove that those who can make a difference want to take responsibility on it.

....

**QUESTION:** Mr. Special Envoy, you said that there are 8000 fighters that they are not from al-Nusra and just 900 fighters which are from al-Nusra. We always heard from Russia proposals for all opposition to stay aside to take part from al-Nusra. Is it logical that 8000 fighters they can't fight 900 al-Nusra fighters? And the second questions is regarding the negotiations track, according to these circumstances, the feasibility of continuing the negotiations, the so-called opposition coalition refused to continue the political talks, how will you continue your mission during these circumstances?

**de Mistura:** Regarding the last point, that is not my information. My information I spoke to Riyad Hijab very recently twice, he has indicated his willingness to participate in the Intra-Syrian talks, based, of course, on an invitation that will be issued by ourselves. So let's see **when we call for that meetings, and see who actually comes.** At the moment we are addressing an emergency. As for the other part, I have no comments on that because it will have to be replied by the other people, the fighters themselves, not by me.

"Note to Correspondents: Transcript of the press conference by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Adviser, Mr. Jan Egeland," [U.N.](#), 6 Oct 2016.

[Boldface inserted by Standler.]

On 7 Oct, the U.N. Office at [Geneva](#) also posted a transcript.

My comments are:

1. De Mistura says Kerry's decision to suspend talks with Russia is "a serious setback". If de Mistura were a physician, he would say the death of his patient is a serious setback for the patient.
2. De Mistura says the ISSG "is still there and needs to be there". But the ISSG did absolutely nothing at its last two meetings, on 20 and 22 Sep. The previous meeting of the ISSG, on 17 May, produced promises that were *not* kept.
3. De Mistura admits that "we don't have any more a cessation of hostilities", which is obviously true.
4. De Mistura estimates that there are 900 Nusra fighters in eastern Aleppo. Assad and Russia are willing to risk the lives of 275,000 civilians in order to annihilate 900 Nusra fighters and no more than 8000 other insurgents. Unfortunately, Assad and Russia are barbarians who ignore civilian casualties, bomb hospitals, and are willing to starve civilians into submission.
5. De Mistura mentions 376 people have died in eastern Aleppo since 23 Sep 2016, 12 days ago. That is an average of 31 dead/day. Compare that with the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented 4475 dead/31 days in all of Syria during August 2016, an average of 144 dead/day. That makes the recent ferocious bombing of Aleppo seem small compared to what is happening elsewhere in Syria.
6. Jan Egeland mentions that there were 486,000 besieged civilians in Syria in February 2016, and 861,000 now. That is a 77% increase in the last seven months of a more than five year civil war. Clearly, despite the U.N. Cessation of Hostilities and despite U.N. demands for delivery of humanitarian aid, the situation in Syria is rapidly becoming worse.
7. As the first question suggests, de Mistura has been "duped" by the Russians, although de Mistura will not publicly admit that.
8. If Riyadh Hijab's HNC is now willing to attend negotiations in Geneva, despite none of his four demands in April being fulfilled, then why didn't the HNC attend negotiations in May, June, July, August, and September? On 21 Sep, Kerry said the HNC would have no credibility with the people of Syria if the HNC negotiated with Assad who was bombing hospitals and dropping chlorine gas.

In the two weeks that followed de Mistura's 6 Oct proposal, there were a number of developments.

On 14 October, [Reuters](#) reported several anonymous diplomatic sources as saying Nusra had "no more than 200, perhaps below 100 [fighters in Aleppo]. One Western diplomat said [Nusra] possibly had no more than a 'symbolic' presence." My comment is that, if it is true that there are fewer than 200 Nusra fighters in Aleppo, then Assad and Russia are willing to destroy the city of Aleppo because fewer than 200 terrorists infest Aleppo. That's like burning down a house to destroy cockroaches.

On 7 October, Nusra refused to leave Aleppo, which rejected de Mistura's 6 Oct proposal for a ceasefire in Aleppo. [Associated Press](#). Groups of rebels/jihadists also refused to depart from Aleppo. [Reuters](#). Later, the [Associated Press](#) reported that a Nusra spokesman said Nusra "would only leave if the Shiite militias withdrew from Aleppo."

On 5 October, Assad's government repeated their offer of amnesty to any rebels/jihadists who departed from Aleppo. [SANA](#); [Reuters](#).

On 17 October, Russia announced a unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo to begin on 20 October. In the section of this essay on cessation of hostilities [below](#), I suggested *why* Russia might have offered a temporary cessation of airstrikes in Aleppo as an opportunity for Nusra to depart from Aleppo. I also mention the continuing refusal of insurgents to depart from Aleppo.

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### 7-14 October 2016

On 7 October, John Kerry called for an investigation of alleged war crimes in Syria by Assad and Russia. Kerry said:

Last night, the regime attacked yet another hospital, and 20 people were killed and 100 people were wounded. And Russia and the regime owe the world more than an explanation about why they keep hitting hospitals and medical facilities and children and women. These are acts that beg for an appropriate investigation of war crimes. And those who commit these would and should be held accountable for these actions.

John Kerry, "Remarks With French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault Before Their Meeting," [State Dept](#), 7 Oct 2016.

See also [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

At a United Nations Security Council meeting on 21 Sep 2016, Kerry proposed prohibiting *all* warplanes flying in the vicinity of Aleppo. Russia rejected Kerry's proposal on 23 Sep, which effectively ended discussions for resuscitating the ceasefire in Syria. (See my essay for [September 2016](#).)

On 3 Oct, France and Spain presented a draft resolution to the U.N. Security Council, which draft resolution would "put an end to all military flights over the city [Aleppo]." [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). After some discussion, a vote was scheduled for Saturday, 8 October.

On Friday afternoon, 7 Oct, Russia introduced a rival draft resolution, which had some of the French features, but *no* grounding of warplanes, *no* threat of sanctions for violations, and a call to separate rebels/jihadists from Nusra. It is expected that Russia will veto the French draft resolution, then France and allies will veto the Russian draft resolution.

On Saturday, 8 Oct 2016, as expected, Russia vetoed the French draft resolution and China abstained. Then the Russian draft received only 4 yes votes in the 15 member Council. The [Associated Press](#) reported: "When Syria's U.N. Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari started speaking after the votes, a number of ambassadors walked out, including the representatives of Britain, France, Ukraine and the United States." [Reuters](#) reported: "It was the fifth time Russia has used its veto on a U.N. resolution on Syria during the more than five-year conflict." [U.N.](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). *The New York Times* failed to report on the veto on 8 Oct. *The*

*Washington Post* published an [AP](#) article on the veto. I suggest that the news media in the USA is fatigued with diplomacy that futilely attempts to end the Syrian civil war.

In all of the propaganda and rhetoric by diplomats during 3-8 Oct, no one seemed to notice that the real man of peace during that week was Assad, for reducing the number of airstrikes on Aleppo beginning 5 Oct. Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council *failed again*.

On 8 October, U.S. ambassador Samantha Power was traveling in Korea, ([State Dept](#)), so the U.S. Government was represented at the United Nations by deputy ambassador David Pressman. In commenting on the Russian veto of the French draft, Pressman [called](#) the Russians "war criminals" and "thugs". The French Foreign Minister — who made a futile trip to Moscow on 6 Oct, then met with Kerry in Washington, DC on 7 Oct — was at the Security Council meeting on 8 Oct to personally see the French draft vetoed.

With the childish stunt of France and Russia defeating each other's draft resolution, the United Nations Security Council seems to have exhausted its ability to create a ceasefire in Syria.

On 9 October 2016, Jund al-Aqsa, an extremist jihadist group, merged with Nusra Front (now called "Fatah al-Sham"). [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). On 20 Sep 2016, the U.S. State Department [declared](#) Jund al-Aqsa to be a terrorist organization, so the U.S. Government probably had *no* influence with Jund al-Aqsa.

One of the things that Assad and the Russians need to worry about, is who will become president of the USA in January 2017, with an unknown change in U.S. policy in Syria. On 10 October 2016, the Associated Press correspondent at the U.S. State Department wrote: "... neither Hillary Clinton nor Donald Trump has articulated a comprehensive or realistic proposal to deal with [the war in Syria]." [Associated Press](#).

At the so-called debate between Trump and Hillary Clinton on 9 October, moderator Martha Raddatz asked Trump: "What do you think will happen if Aleppo falls?" Trump tossed out a terse reply: "I think that it basically has fallen. OK? It basically has fallen." Then Trump changed the subject to Mosul in Iraq. [Washington Post](#). Given that Assad and Russia are besieging Aleppo, bombing civilians and hospitals, there is a lack of clean drinking water in Aleppo, and the United Nations has *no* credible plan for how to stop Assad and Russia, Trump may be correct. By January 2017, Assad and Russia may have starved and bombed Aleppo into submission. Commentary in the [Washington Post](#) correctly notes that Trump has *no* understanding of what is happening in Syria. Nonetheless, Trump seems to have stumbled across a likely truth that Aleppo is now a lost cause. Amongst the mainstream news media, the [BBC](#) is one of a few to notice Trump's terse remark about Aleppo.

On 10 October 2016, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon declared in an interview: "It's true that because of [Assad's] failure of leadership so many people have died, more than 300,000 have been killed." [Deutsche Welle](#). In my opinion, that is an unfair remark. There has also been a failure of leadership in the expatriate groups (e.g., Syrian National Coalition and HNC) who failed to negotiate in Geneva. Russia's bombing in Syria since 30 Sep 2015 is another failure of leadership. The anti-Assad foreign meddlers (including Obama) is yet another failure of leadership that has prolonged the civil war by insisting that Assad is unfit to

lead Syria. And the failure of leaders of insurgent groups to surrender to Assad — despite their increasingly futile 5½ year civil war — is another failure of leadership to do what is best for the people of Syria. *Each* of these failures of leadership contributed to the huge death toll in Syria.

On Monday, 10 October 2016, the United Nations Secretary General indicated his displeasure at what happened at the Security Council meeting on Saturday, 8 October, when Russia vetoed the French draft resolution on Syria.

The situation in Aleppo — again heart-breaking — and I was deeply disappointed when the Security Council last Saturday again failed to unite. There is no time to debate and disagree on what Security Council should take action. This answer is evidently clear. They have to work to protect human lives, to bring this matter to a political solution. For that [to be] possible, there must be some atmosphere created. As Staffan de Mistura has always been urging and I have been urging to the Security Council, and also in public statements, that first of all there should be a cessation of hostilities. This is again very important, to build trust and confidence among the parties. And bombing, in Aleppo or elsewhere, must be stopped immediately. Let the negotiators, the Special Envoy, be able to convene this political dialogue. There is no substitute, no alternative to political dialogue.

"Secretary-General's press encounter," [U.N.](#), 10 Oct 2016.

On 12 October 2016, the [U.S. State Dept](#) announced that Kerry will spend one day in Lausanne, Switzerland on 15 October, to meet with "key regional partners" about the crisis in Syria. Kerry will then meet in London on 16 October with "key regional and international partners ... to discuss a multilateral approach to resolving the crisis in Syria, including a sustained cessation of violence and the resumption of humanitarian aid deliveries." [Reuters](#) reported that Lavrov — with "foreign ministers from Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran" — would be in Lausanne on 15 Oct to meet with Kerry. Reuters also reported: "The resumption of talks, despite the offensive, was a sign of the lack of options facing Western nations over the Syria conflict, where they worry scaled-up arms supplies for the rebels could end up in the hands of jihadist groups." [RIA-Novosti](#) reported that Lavrov would be in Lausanne on 15 Oct, and that "Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar were likely to participate." On 12 October, there is no public information on who will attend the 16 Oct meeting in London.

On 3 October, Kerry decided to "suspend" bilateral discussions with Russia about a ceasefire and delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria. Not only was the discussion suspended, but also on 7 October Kerry accused Russia (and Assad) of war crimes in Syria. (See quotations above.) The French foreign minister also accused Russia of war crimes in Syria. (See, e.g., [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).) So why does Kerry now want to meet with Russian war criminals, who also wasted two months of negotiations from 14 July to 10 September about a ceasefire that never happened? The official explanation is that the meeting in Lausanne on 15 Oct is "multilateral", while Kerry only suspended "bilateral" negotiations with the Russians. [U.S. State Dept](#). During the daily press briefing on 12 Oct, John Kirby used the word "multilateral" 16 times, so it is an important word. Kirby also indicated that the nations at the Lausanne meeting would be a subset of the nations in the ISSG.

On 12 October, the White House press secretary clearly stated that there would be

*no* cooperation between the U.S. and Russian military on attacking Nusra Front in Syria. The press secretary also mentioned that Russian acts in Syria were "immoral" and "potentially a war crime."

.... And in exchange for a reduction of that violence and the steady flow of humanitarian assistance, the United States would begin military cooperation with the Russians in applying pressure to extremists there.

But Russia was never able to, on a sustained basis, fulfill their end of the bargain, and so we never got to the point where the United States was cooperating militarily with the Russians. So that is no longer an agreement that we're trying to broker, but we are certainly working through a variety of diplomatic channels to try to reduce the violence inside of Syria, and that's necessarily going to include some Russian participation. But it no longer is in the context of trying to broker this agreement that would, at the end of it, hold out the prospect of U.S. military cooperation with Russia. That's something that Russia has lost — frankly, lost the credibility to be able to try to agree to.

....

.... We're deeply concerned about the way that Russia backs the Assad regime and the way that Russia has refused to use their influence with the Assad regime to reduce violence against civilians inside of Syria. And there are also examples of the Russians themselves carrying out strikes against civilian targets in Syria. That's deeply, deeply concerning, it's immoral, and it runs directly against the kinds of values that we hold dear in this country.

....

We continue to see the Assad regime, with the support of the Russian government, engage in depraved tactics that target civilians, attempting to bomb them into submission to collect military gains on the ground. It is immoral. It is heinous. ....

....

So the United States is deeply concerned about the situation in Syria. And the willingness of the Assad regime to target hospitals, to pursue a strategy that, at its root, is nothing more than bombing civilians into submission, is immoral and something that, as Secretary Kerry said, potentially a war crime. And the United States believes in accountability, and we'll pursue that accountability through the avenues that are available to us.

Josh Earnest, "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest, 10/12/2016" [White House](#), 12 Oct 2016.

My comment is that Earnest once mentions that Kerry accused the Russians of war crimes, but three times Earnest accuses Russia of "immoral" conduct. I am pleased to see that the U.S. Government has now rejected Kerry's stupid idea of cooperation between the U.S. and Russia military on attacking Nusra.

On 14 October 2016, Russia ratified a treaty with Syria that allows Russia to "indefinitely"

use the air base at Hmeimim in Syria. Reuters and Russia Behind the Headlines (RBTH) say Russia also plans a "permanent" naval base at Tartus in Syria. [RIA-Novosti](#); [Reuters](#); [Deutsche Welle](#); [RBTH](#)(12 Oct); [PressTV](#) in Iran; [RBTH](#)(11 Oct Tartus). My comment is that Russia is becoming more embedded in Syria. Also, a Russian air base in Syria would make it convenient for Russia to attack the U.S. Incirlik air base in Turkey

### **15 October 2016: meeting in Lausanne**

Before the talks began in Lausanne, Reuters reported:

Kerry has pointedly avoided new bilateral negotiations with Lavrov [since 3 Oct], and his invitation to the Turkish, Saudi, Qatari, Iranian, Jordanian and Egyptian foreign ministers to join them for talks in the Swiss lakeside town of Lausanne will broaden the discussion to include powerful backers of Syria's government and rebels.

....

Many in Syria's opposition say Kerry has put too much trust in Lavrov, with protracted diplomatic wrangling over ceasefires buying time for Russia's military campaign and obscuring the once central question of the fate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while the clock runs down to the U.S. elections on Nov. 8.

Alexander Winning & Lesley Wroughton, "U.S. broadens Syria talks after failure of truce deal with Russia," [Reuters](#), 10:05 GMT, 15 Oct 2016.

In the morning, Kerry met privately with Lavrov for 40 minutes, and Kerry met privately with the Saudi Arabian foreign minister (Adel al-Jubeir). Beginning in the afternoon there was a 4½-hour "multilateral" meeting.

After the meeting in Lausanne, the Associated Press reported:

The United States, Russia and seven other would-be Syria mediators ended a 4½-hour meeting Saturday [15 Oct] without agreement or concrete steps to match what America's top diplomat described as the urgent crisis in the city of Aleppo. Instead, the envoys said only that new ideas were proposed and more discussions planned.

The lackluster result from the gathering in Switzerland highlighted the world's inability to find a peaceful path out of a conflict that has killed as many as a half-million people, contributed to Europe's worst refugee crisis since World War II and created a vast space of instability that the Islamic State group has exploited.

....

No official news conference or joint statement followed the meeting. Kerry said contacts, but not necessarily a meeting, would start anew next week.

....

Given the collapse of several cease-fires in Syria in recent months, Washington doubts Moscow's seriousness. And with rebel-held Aleppo poised to fall, potentially in a

matter of weeks, there is deep skepticism that the Syrian and Russian governments want to stop the fighting just yet.

Bradley Klapper & Jamey Keaten, "Amid Syria's violence, diplomats produce ideas but no truce," [Associated Press](#), 20:25 GMT, 15 Oct 2016.

After the meeting in Lausanne, Reuters reported:

Syria talks convened by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in the Swiss city of Lausanne on Saturday evening failed to agree on a common strategy with Russia to end the conflict in Syria, now in its sixth year.

....

Kerry hosted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and seven foreign ministers from the region — from Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, Jordan and Egypt — weeks after the collapse of a painstakingly crafted U.S.-Russian ceasefire plan that many saw as the last hope for peace this year.

....

However, a former Western envoy in Syria told Reuters: "I don't understand (why) the Americans are asking the Russians to talk again. They have made zero concessions. Do the Americans believe Moscow was shaken by the break-off last week and will change behaviour now?"

Separately, a Western diplomat in Lausanne said the meeting appeared ill-prepared and vague in its goals, and the list of invitees had been clarified only at the last moment. Lesley Wroughton & Alexander Winning, "Syria talks in Lausanne end without breakthrough," [Reuters](#), 21:07 GMT, 15 Oct 2016.

The U.S. State Department website published *no* press release on Kerry's failure in Lausanne, and published *no* transcript of Kerry's remarks in Lausanne.

In addition to Kerry, Lavrov, and 7 other foreign ministers, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, attended the meeting in Lausanne.

On 16 October, the Russia Foreign Ministry alleged that *all* participants in Lausanne agreed: (1) Syria should remain geographically intact, (2) Syria should continue to have a secular government, and (3) Syrians should decide their own future. [RIA-Novosti](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that this is *not* new — these are explicitly contained in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted on 18 Dec 2015.

On 17 October, the Associated Press reported:

Russia's [U.N. Ambassador Vitaly] Churkin said that at a meeting Saturday [15 Oct] co-chaired by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar said they would work to separate moderate opposition groups from the former al-Qaida affiliate once known as the Nusra Front in rebel-held eastern Aleppo.

Military experts from all these countries were scheduled to meet Monday [17 Oct], he said.

If the separation succeeds — which is a key Russian and Syrian demand — there are two options, Churkin said. Nusra fighters must leave Aleppo or they will be defeated, he said.

Churkin said "the understanding" reached at Saturday's meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, is that once Nusra is gone the moderate opposition and the Syrian government will agree on a cease-fire to end the bloodshed.

Bassem Mroue, "Russia sets brief cease-fire for Aleppo as strikes kill 36," [Associated Press](#), 22:13 EDT, 17 Oct 2016.

**My comments:** Russia and the USA have been attempting to impose a ceasefire on Assad and insurgents in Syria since February 2016. Except for a brief period in March 2016, the ceasefires have failed. Not just failed, but conditions on the ground in Syria are becoming worse, as Assad and insurgents both pursue a military victory.

While diplomats in the ISSG *talk* about ceasefires and delivery of humanitarian aid, many of these nations are hypocritically sending weapons and ammunition to their proxy armies in Syria. Worse, Russia has been actively engaged in airstrikes in support of Assad since 30 Sep 2015. Expecting these hypocrites to convince their proxy armies to stop fighting has been futile.

If one truly wants a ceasefire in Syria, then one should negotiate with the parties who are actually fighting, instead of negotiations between Russia and the USA. But Assad has plainly said on multiple occasions that he is committed to a military victory over the insurgents who are conducting an insurrection against Assad's government. The rebels and jihadists are united on *one* goal: removing Assad from power. Because Assad will not resign, the rebels and jihadists believe they must defeat Assad militarily. Clearly, *neither* Assad *nor* the insurgents want a ceasefire. And that is why ceasefires keep failing in Syria.

It is illogical for Russia and the USA to continue to attempt to impose a ceasefire on Assad and insurgents in Syria. This is especially true, given Russia's conspiracy with Assad since 30 Sep 2015 — Russia is actively helping Assad pursue a military victory over the insurgents. Further, the U.S. Government has been openly advocating the overthrow of Assad since mid-2011. Neither Russia nor the USA are neutral parties.

My conclusion is that it is a waste of time and money to continue diplomatic negotiations with Russia — and/or the ISSG — toward a ceasefire and delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria. It might be desirable to hold negotiations between Assad's government and the insurgents. I say "might" because, in October 2016, the HNC does *not* want to negotiate, and there is no other group that represents the main rebel and jihadist factions.

In my opinion, what is really needed is for the rebels and jihadists to surrender to Assad. The insurgents have failed to depose Assad during a more than 5 year civil war, and now it is past time to stop destroying Syria and to stop killing people.

### 16 October 2016: meeting in London

In contrast to the 15 October meeting in Lausanne, there was little information published in the news media about the 16 Oct meeting in London. The British Broadcasting Corporation published a news article before the London meeting:

US Secretary of State John Kerry is meeting his UK, French, German and Italian counterparts in London as part of renewed Syria peace efforts.

....

Mr Kerry's talks with his European counterparts are being hosted by the UK's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson.

"US Secretary Kerry visits London for Syria and Yemen talks," [BBC](#), 16 Oct 2016.

But the meeting in London was more than just four European foreign ministers, also "the Gulf countries, the Qataris, the Turks, the Saudis, UAE" attended, according to the press briefing after the meeting. Although *no* one publicly mentioned it, the meeting in London on 16 Oct was effectively a meeting of the London-11 subgroup of the Friends of Syria, a group of anti-Assad governments.

The U.S. [State Dept](#) posted a transcript of a press briefing by Boris Johnson and John Kerry after the 16 Oct meeting. I summarize this transcript by indicating the proposals discussed at the 16 Oct meeting:

1. **reject military action, instead have more diplomatic discussions.**

Johnson: "... these so-called military options are extremely difficult and there is, to put it mildly, a lack of political appetite in most European capitals and certainly in the West for that kind of solution at present. So we've got to work with the tools we have. The tools we have are diplomatic...."

Kerry: "we also need to make certain that we're not lighting a fire under a larger war that excites sectarian confrontation through the entire region or even a greater superpower in other kinds of confrontation, which would also have disastrous consequences."

Kerry: "But I haven't seen a big appetite in Europe of people to go to war. I don't see the parliaments of European countries ready to declare war. I don't see a lot of countries deciding that that's the better solution here. So we are pursuing diplomacy because those are the tools that we have, ...."

2. **prosecution for war crimes.** Johnson: "measures to bring the culprits for the slaughter to justice before the International Criminal Court or some other tribunal."

3. **economic sanctions on Syria and Russia.** Johnson: "... extra sanctions on the Syrian regime and their supporters...." Kerry: "We are considering additional sanctions...."

4. **hopelessness.** Kerry: "... there are still deep beliefs in a lot of people that Russia is simply pursuing a Grozny solution in Aleppo and is not prepared to truly engage in any

way."

On the nights of 16, 17, and 18 October, I looked at the homepage of the U.K. Foreign Office, hoping to find a press release or statement about the 16 Oct meeting, but there was nothing. That suggests that Boris Johnson does *not* regard his 16 Oct meeting as important.

What does Kerry really want? On 22 September 2016, Kerry had a private meeting with a group of Syrians, and later one attendee gave to *The New York Times* a tape recording of Kerry's private remarks. *The Times* reported:

Over and over again, he complained to a small group of Syrian civilians that his diplomacy had not been backed by a serious threat of military force, according to an audio recording of the meeting obtained by The New York Times.

....

At the meeting last week, Mr. Kerry was trying to explain that the United States has no legal justification for attacking Mr. Assad's government, whereas Russia was invited in by the government.

Mr. Kerry has been hamstrung by Russia's military operations in Syria and by his inability to persuade Washington to intervene more forcefully. He has also been unable to sell Syrian opponents of Mr. Assad, like the ones in that room, on a policy he does not wholeheartedly believe in.

His frustrations and dissent within the Obama administration have hardly been a secret, but in the recorded conversation, Mr. Kerry lamented being outmaneuvered by the Russians, expressed disagreement with some of Mr. Obama's policy decisions and said Congress would never agree to use force.

....

Several of the Syrian participants said afterward that they had left the meeting demoralized, convinced that no further help would come from the Obama administration.

....

[Kerry] also spoke of the obstacles he faces back home: a Congress unwilling to authorize the use of force and a public tired of war.

Anne Barnard, "Audio Reveals What John Kerry Told Syrians Behind Closed Doors," [NY Times](#), 30 Sep 2016.

Kerry's private remarks in September are relevant now, as apparently military action in Syria was discussed at the London meeting on 16 October. Neither the Europeans nor Obama's government favor military action in Syria, although Boris Johnson and John Kerry wanted to threaten Assad with military action. The [Associated Press](#) reported: "The result was a somewhat schizophrenic threat that was unlikely to scare Assad's government or Russia as

they move to crush the last rebel-held areas of Aleppo...." [Reuters](#) reported that Boris Johnson admitted "there was no appetite in Europe for going to war in Syria."

Kerry mentioned Grozny in his remarks. Grozny is the capital of the Chechen Republic. In slightly more than one month, beginning in December 1999. Grozny was destroyed by Russian artillery and airstrikes. Corpses were thrown in mass graves, without counting the corpses. [NY Times](#).

On 17 Oct, de Mistura [told](#) the European Union: "... between now and December, if we cannot find a solution, Aleppo will not be there anymore." De Mistura was *not* exaggerating. Already photographs in news reports show blocks of buildings in Aleppo, many buildings without exterior walls, and some buildings reduced to rubble.

My comment is that Obama was correct *not* to get involved in the sectarian Syrian civil war (except for the CIA clandestinely sending munitions to rebels). Before September 2015, Obama *could* have bombed Assad's airbases and effectively grounded Assad's warplanes. But the entry of the Russian air force in Syria in September 2015 prevents any airstrikes on Assad. It is definitely *not* worth starting World War III over military action in Syria.

Kerry and Johnson look weak in threatening military action in Syria, while honestly admitting that military action is unlikely to happen. The threat to prosecute for war crimes is also weak, as explained [below](#). Given that Europe receives most of its energy from Russia, there will be little enthusiasm amongst European governments for more sanctions on Russia. So Kerry has *no* credible threat to motivate Russia to create a ceasefire in Syria.

The reality is that Assad, with the support of Russia, firmly controls Syria. That means that Assad can do whatever he wants. Kerry and European foreign ministers can hurl invectives and make empty threats, but they have *no* effect in Syria.

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### 17 October 2016: European Union

On Monday, 17 October 2016, de Mistura attended a meeting of European Union Foreign Ministers in Luxembourg. Afterwards, de Mistura released the following statement about what he told the Foreign Ministers.

I insisted on the fact that the issue of Aleppo is vital and crucial. Any discussion should not forget the fact that between now and December, if we cannot find a solution, Aleppo will not be there anymore. ....

In Lausanne, there was some progress despite of everything and we have to build on it.

In London there were important discussions and I hope that today Europe will show unity, but particularly about one place (Aleppo), which for us in Europe has a symbolic value and for the UN is crucial, with 275,000 people in East Aleppo. West Aleppo has been suffering too frankly.

The issue about having talks is a priority for us too, but we cannot imagine having

regular normal discussions about Syria, when the issue of Aleppo, which is so iconic, is simply left in the sky with bombing and 100,000 children there, and no humanitarian access for over a month. That is why any type of discussion that ignores Aleppo would be something that history will judge us for. I think our European friends realize that. I am never pessimistic, I am very determined, but I am also sometimes worried about the fact that if we miss some type of opportunity to make a change, history will judge us. Mosul should not be confusing the priority of Aleppo, in other words if the world is watching Mosul, Aleppo should not be forgotten.

Staffan de Mistura, "Note to Correspondents: Near verbatim transcript of stakeout by the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, following his meeting with EU Foreign Ministers," [U.N.](#), 17 Oct 2016.

De Mistura adopts the HNC's position that negotiations are *not* possible when airstrikes continue in Syria and there are no deliveries of humanitarian aid. Obviously, parties can negotiate whenever they want. During the Vietnam war, there were negotiations in 1969-1973 between North Vietnam and the USA in the midst of a war. The real problem is that the HNC does *not* want to negotiate with Assad's government.

De Mistura's concluding remark about Mosul refers to the Iraqi army assault on Mosul, which began on the morning of 17 October, as mentioned [below](#). The battle in Mosul is expected to take at least a few weeks, maybe months.

On the afternoon of 17 October, the 28 Foreign Ministers of the European Union (EU) unanimously agreed to an eight-paragraph statement. Here is my terse summary of that statement:

1. **condemn Assad's and Russian airstrikes in Aleppo:** "Since the beginning of the offensive by the regime and its allies, notably Russia, the intensity and scale of the aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo is clearly disproportionate and the deliberate targeting of hospitals, medical personnel, schools and essential infrastructure, ... and may amount to war crimes."
2. "The EU therefore strongly condemns the excessive and disproportionate attacks by the regime and its allies, both deliberate and indiscriminate, against civilian populations, humanitarian and healthcare personnel and civilian and humanitarian infrastructures and calls on them to cease indiscriminate aerial bombardments."
3. "In these deteriorating circumstances, the EU calls urgently for: an end of all military flights over Aleppo city; an immediate cessation of hostilities to be monitored by a strong and transparent mechanism; sieges to be lifted; and full unhindered sustainable country-wide humanitarian access granted by all parties."
4. "The EU calls upon all parties, especially the Syrian regime, to provide full and unhindered countrywide access to all those in need and to end all obstruction to the delivery of humanitarian aid. The use of starvation of civilians through the besiegement of populated areas for which the regime bears the greatest responsibility, as a tactic of war, and forced population transfers are a clear breach of international humanitarian law and must stop."

5. "The EU deplores the Russian veto on 8 October to the UN Security Council Resolution to restore the cessation of hostilities and allow humanitarian access in Aleppo which was co-sponsored by all EU Member States."
6. "The Council [of the European Union] calls on Russia, including as co-chair of the ISSG, to demonstrate through policies and actions all efforts, in order to halt indiscriminate bombing by the Syrian regime, restore a cessation of hostilities, ensure immediate and expanded humanitarian access and create the conditions for a credible and inclusive political transition."
7. "The EU recalls its conviction that the situation in Syria should be referred to the ICC [International Criminal Court] and renews its call to the UN Security Council to take action in this respect."
8. **impose more sanctions on President Bashar al-Assad's government (but *not* on Russia):** "... the EU will act swiftly, according to established procedures, with the aim of imposing further restrictive measures against Syria targeting Syrian individuals and entities supporting the regime as long as the repression continues."

The full text of "Council conclusions on Syria" is posted by the [E.U.](#). Journalists reported part of these conclusions at, e.g., [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

My comment is that none of these E.U. measures will have any effect on Assad or Russia.

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### 18-31 October 2016

On 19 October 2016, Kerry finally admitted that there was only a dim hope of a ceasefire in Syria.

I'm not approaching this with a great high sense of expectation, and nothing is based on trust. There's absolutely nothing we're looking for that would be based on trust.

....

But the world will make its judgment about what [Russia and Assad] choose to do. And the world will hold people accountable who violate the laws and standards of modern warfare, as crazy as that sometimes sounds, and I know it does.

John Kerry, "Remarks With Republic of Korea Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se at a Press Availability," [U.S. State Dept](#), 19 Oct 2016.

[Reuters](#) reported on Kerry's statement and published a photograph showing a weary Kerry holding his head in his hands. Kerry has spent *many* hundreds of hours during 2016 trying to negotiate a ceasefire with Russia, only to fail because Russia is committed to helping Assad achieve a military victory, while Russia insincerely talked about a ceasefire. The situation on the ground in Syria continues to worsen, despite the *talk* about a ceasefire.

Kerry's made an empty threat to prosecute Russia and Assad for war crimes (i.e., "hold

people accountable"), as I explain [below](#).

On 20 October, de Mistura held a press briefing about the unilateral Russian/Assad ceasefire in Aleppo. I quote the transcript [below](#) in the section on the ceasefire in Syria.

Russia has used its veto five times on U.N. Security Council draft resolutions on Syria since 2011. On 20 October, Ban Ki-moon asked the U.N. General Assembly to hold a rare emergency session on Syria, to break the Russian logjam in the Security Council. Ban said:

I regret that the Security Council has failed to discharge its responsibilities to uphold peace and security for Syria.

I am troubled that regional rivalries have taken primacy over the needs of the Syrian people.

....

I call on all of you [in the General Assembly] to cooperate and fulfil your collective responsibility to protect.

Ban Ki-moon, "Secretary-General's remarks to Informal Meeting of the General Assembly on the Situation in Syria [as delivered]," [U.N.](#), 20 Oct 2016.

See also [Reuters](#). There are *no* vetoes in the General Assembly.

My search of Google News on the night of 26 October, and again on the night of 31 October, found nothing further on the U.N. General Assembly considering Syria. One wonders if the General Assembly is going to ignore the U.N. Secretary General's call for a resolution on Syria.

On Friday, 28 October 2016, the United Nations General Assembly voted *not* to re-elect Russia to a seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council. The vote is interpreted as an international rebuke to Russia over allegations of Russian war crimes in Syria. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

Ending a dismal month in the Syrian civil war, the Russian Defence Minister blamed Western Europe and the USA for the continued fighting in Aleppo and the failure of peace negotiations in Geneva. Reuters reported:

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday [1 Nov] a Western failure to rein in violent Islamists in Syria had indefinitely delayed the resumption of peace talks.

Shoigu said that rebels backed by Western governments had been attacking civilians in the Syrian city of Aleppo, despite a pause in Russian and Syrian air attacks.

"As a result, the prospects for the start of a negotiation process and the return to peaceful life in Syria are postponed for an indefinite period," Shoigu said.

....

Listing attacks he said had been carried out by Western-backed rebels inside Aleppo,

he said: "Is this an opposition with which we can achieve agreements?"  
Katya Golubkova, "Russia says resumption of Syria peace talks delayed indefinitely,"  
[Reuters](#), 11:36 GMT, 1 Nov 2016.

Shoigu has a one-sided view — he does *not* mention Assad and Russia bombing hospitals, schools, and the humanitarian aid convoy. Shoigu does *not* mention Assad besieging cities and refusing to allow the U.N. to deliver humanitarian aid. Nonetheless, Kerry promised to separate the so-called moderate rebels from Nusra, but Kerry failed. Russia and Assad had a unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo on 20-22 October 2016, but the insurgents refused to allow wounded people to be evacuated from eastern Aleppo and the insurgents also refused to allow civilians to leave eastern Aleppo. On 6 October, de Mistura proposed that Nusra depart from Aleppo, but Nusra refused to do that.

Shoigu is correct to doubt that we can "achieve agreements" with the insurgents. Beginning in February 2016, I suggested in my essays that de Mistura both (1) appoint an opposition delegation that is representative of the Syrian people and insurgents fighting on the ground, and (2) ban the HNC — which has caused delay and obstruction since it was created in December 2015 — from attending negotiations in Geneva.

I am intrigued with a remark de Mistura made on 6 Oct 2016 in response to a question from a journalist: "So let's see when we call for that meetings, and see who actually comes." (transcript [above](#)) De Mistura has been waiting since early May 2016 for the situation on the ground in Syria to improve, but the situation has continually worsened. Given that there is *no* reasonable hope of an improvement in the situation in the foreseeable future, why not send out invitations to negotiations in Geneva "and see who actually comes"? Having *no* negotiations in the 6 months since April 2016 guarantees zero results from negotiations.

With both Assad and the insurgents intransigently pursuing a military victory, it is unlikely that either party will be willing to compromise and negotiate an end to the civil war. But the Syrian people *need* an end to the civil war that has killed more than 300,000 people and destroyed much of the towns and cities in Syria.

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## Cessation of Hostilities

### Introduction

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

The last paragraph of the February 2016 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, Iran, Russia), so the world *needs* to hear the U.S. view of violations in Syria.

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.

My essay for [July 2016](#) chronicles a failed Eid al-Fitr truce declared by Assad during 6-14 July, bombing of more hospitals in Syria, and some of the siege of Aleppo.

My essay for [August 2016](#) chronicles the futile attempts of the United Nations to establish weekly 48-hour ceasefires in Aleppo, to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to Aleppo. I collect reports of bombing of hospitals and medical clinics in Syria. I also chronicle the surrender of Daraya and tersely mention the siege of Aleppo.

My essay for [September 2016](#) chronicles the hundreds of violations of the new ceasefire during 12-19 Sep, the ferocious new assault on Aleppo by Assad and Russia that began on the night of 21 Sep, the complete failure to deliver humanitarian aid in Aleppo during September, the delivery of humanitarian aid to a mere six towns in Syria during September, and the surrender of Moadamiyeh on 1 Sep. Also, I collect reports of bombing of hospitals and medical clinics in Syria.

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

On 21 July 2016, 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](#).

For more history, see my essay for [August 2016](#).

A major goal of the 9 Sep 2016 new agreements by Russia and the USA was "unhindered"

delivery of humanitarian aid everywhere in Syria, and especially in Aleppo. But during September 2016, humanitarian aid was delivered to a mere 6 towns in Syria, and there were *no* deliveries to Aleppo.

On 30 September, Stephen O'Brien, the United Nations emergency relief coordinator, was again calling for weekly 48-hour ceasefires in Aleppo, to permit delivery of humanitarian aid.

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## Continuing Civil War in Syria

### 1 October 2016

Assad's continued his assault on Aleppo, which assault began on the night of 21 Sep 2016. [Reuters](#). There were airstrikes on one hospital in Aleppo, as mentioned [below](#).

### 2 October 2016

On 2 October 2016, Assad's army called on insurgents in Aleppo to surrender. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

The above-cited news articles motivated me to look at the English-language Syrian Arab News Agency, which is operated by Assad's government.

General Command of the Army and Armed Forces called on all gunmen in the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo city to leave these neighborhoods for the locals to be able to lead a normal life, the Command said in a statement on Sunday [2 Oct].

The commands of the Syrian and Russian forces pledge a peaceful exit and providing necessary support for the gunmen willing to leave, the General Command said.

"Army General Command calls on gunmen to exit eastern Aleppo," [SANA](#), 2 Oct 2016.

In my opinion, surrender is a good choice for the insurgents, for the following reasons:

1. The insurgents are faced with overwhelming military firepower (including warplanes) of Russia and Assad's army. The insurgents face almost certain annihilation, with collateral slaughter of tens of thousands — maybe hundreds of thousands — of civilians living in Aleppo. While the insurgents can make their own choice about whether to surrender or die fighting, the insurgents do *not* have the right to make that choice for innocent civilians who are trapped in Aleppo.
2. Neither the United Nations nor foreign meddlers are going to rescue insurgents or civilians in Aleppo.
3. The rebels have failed to defeat Assad in more than five years of civil war, so now it is past time to arrange a surrender and end the futile civil war.

### 3 October 2016

On 3 October 2016, the Associated Press reported:

A Syrian monitoring group says more than 400 civilians have been killed in and around the northern city of Aleppo since a U.S.-and Russian-brokered cease-fire collapsed two weeks ago [on 19 Sep].

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says Monday [3 Oct] that Russian and Syrian warplanes, and government artillery, has killed at least 387 civilians in the besieged rebel-held eastern Aleppo and its rural surroundings [since 19 Sep], including 72 children and 24 women. Most were killed inside the city.

The short-lived cease-fire, which collapsed Sept. 19, was followed by an intensive bombing campaign that hit infrastructure, hospitals and water stations in the besieged eastern part of Aleppo, which houses 275,000 people.

....

The Observatory says the opposition has shelled the adjacent government-held neighborhoods of western Aleppo, killing 19 people [since 19 Sep], including five children and seven women. It says the total number killed in and around the city is 406.

"The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), 20:30 Syria time, 3 Oct 2016.

See the original report at [SOHR](#).

The Daily Press Briefing at the United Nations headquarters in New York City said the following about Syria:

Stephen O'Brien, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, said yesterday [2 Oct] that he was deeply alarmed by the ferocious pummeling of eastern Aleppo city, where an estimated 275,000 people are besieged. He said that indiscriminate bombing and shelling continues in a shocking and unrelenting manner, killing and maiming civilians, subjecting them to a level of savagery that no human should have to endure.

Mr. O'Brien warned that the health care system in eastern Aleppo is all but obliterated and medical facilities are being hit one by one. The health system is on the verge of total collapse with patients being turned away and no medicines available to treat even the most common ailments.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator reiterated the demand that the parties and those who support them immediately bring about a cessation of all actions that can result in loss of civilian life or damage to essential civilian infrastructure. He also called for a medical evacuation system for eastern Aleppo so that the hundreds of critical cases can receive proper medical care, and for safe, full, regular and unimpeded humanitarian access to eastern Aleppo, as obliged under international humanitarian law.

Farhan Haq, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 3 Oct 2016.

**4 October 2016**

On 4 October 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights "document[ed] the death of 426 civilians including 78 children and 32 women in Aleppo" during the 15 days (19 Sep to 3 Oct, inclusive) after the end of the ceasefire. Of these dead, 91% were killed by airstrikes in Aleppo. [SOHR](#).

The [Associated Press](#) reported the Syrian strategy in Aleppo "appeared to be to retake rebel-held areas bit by bit, backed by massive Russian airpower, rather than risk a potentially costly all-out ground battle."

On 4 October, Russia announced it had moved more S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to Syria. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). This may be a warning to the U.S. Government *not* to have airstrikes on the Syrian army assets. On 6 October, Russia explicitly warned the U.S. *not* to strike Assad's military. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

### 5 October 2016

On 5 October, journalists reported that the Syrian army had announced on state television the Syrian army would reduce the number of airstrikes in Aleppo, to allow civilians to flee from rebel-held areas. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). I looked at the English-language websites of both the Syrian Arab News Agency and Syrian Radio/Television, but I did *not* find this announcement. My comment is a sarcastic remark about come visit the ruins of beautiful downtown Aleppo, now with 33% fewer war crimes.

The Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) posted a three-sentence news article in which the Syrian army urged the insurgents in Aleppo to leave Aleppo.

General Command of the Army and armed forces said on Wednesday [5 Oct] that in order to prevent bloodshed and avoid more sabotage, it gives gunmen in Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods an additional opportunity to benefit from amnesty decree and settle their status, or hand over their weapons and leave with their families.

The General command added in a statement that "We call on all gunmen in the eastern neighborhoods not to wait for any assistance from any one as all supplying routes became cut off and there is no chance for them, but handing over their weapons."

The army's command stressed that it has accurate information about the places of gunmen and their warehouses in Aleppo eastern neighborhoods, adding that anyone who doesn't make use of the available opportunity will have his unavoidable fate.

"Army's general command gives additional opportunity to gunmen in Aleppo to benefit from amnesty decree," [SANA](#), 5 Oct 2016.

### 6 October 2016

On 6 October, the [Associated Press](#) summarized the current civil war in Syria:

1. In the province of Hama, the jihadist group Jund al-Aqsa is leading the battles against Assad's army.

2. "The opposition holds two pockets in northeastern Damascus, in the Jobar and Barzeh neighborhoods, from which they carry out daily shelling attacks on the city's government-held areas."
3. Turkey continues its invasion of northwest Syria: "The Turkish-Syrian opposition coalition is advancing in the direction of Dabiq".
4. Assad's army is fighting ISIL in the eastern town of Deir Ezzor.
5. Assad's army continues to assault the city of Aleppo.

Not mentioned by the Associated Press was continued fighting in Idlib province.

### **7 October 2016**

[Reuters](#) reported that on 7 Oct, "Air strikes on rebel-held eastern Aleppo by the Syrian military and Russian jets remained significantly lighter than during the previous two weeks following an army announcement on Wednesday [5 Oct] that it would lessen its bombardment."

On 7 October, [Reuters](#) reports that "Russia has built up its forces in Syria since a ceasefire collapsed in late September, sending in troops, planes and advanced missile systems". Reuters concludes that there has been a "doubling of [Russian] supply runs [to Syria] by air and sea compared to the nearly two-week period preceding the truce." Amongst the newly delivered items is an additional S-300 anti-aircraft missile system, which is apparently intended to deter the U.S.-led coalition from attacking Syria army assets.

### **8 October 2016**

On 8 October 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights had documented the deaths of 497 civilians in the city of Aleppo beginning 19:00 on 19 September and ending on the night of 7 October. In eastern Aleppo city, 305 civilians were killed by airstrikes. [SOHR](#).

### **11-12 October 2016**

On 11 October, [Reuters](#) reported: "Russian jets resumed heavy bombing of rebel-held eastern Aleppo on Tuesday [11 Oct] after several days of relative calm, a rebel official and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said." Reuters continued to revise this news article on 12 October.

On 12 October, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported at least 79 civilians were killed in Aleppo city during the past 48 hours. [SOHR](#). In all of Aleppo province, "the Syrian Observatory for human rights since the early hours of the collapse of US-Russian truce at 7:00 pm of the 19th of September 2016 until 12th of October 2016, was able to document the death of 564 persons". [SOHR](#)

On 12 October, the Associated Press reported:

An airstrike hit the biggest market on the rebel-held side of Syria's Aleppo on Wednesday [12 Oct], killing at least 15 people and leveling buildings as rescuers were still sifting through the rubble from air raids that killed dozens the day before.

....

The latest strikes have shattered a relative three-day lull in the area, where hospitals, underground shelters and buildings had been targeted for weeks.

On Tuesday [11 Oct], Russian or Syrian aircraft bombed several neighborhoods, killing at least 41 people, including five children, according to the Syrian Civil Defense, a group of volunteer first responders, and the activist-run Aleppo Media Center.

....

The [Syrian Observatory for Human Rights] said Wednesday that at least 358 civilians have been killed in eastern Aleppo since a U.S. and Russian-brokered truce collapsed on Sept. 19.

Sarah El Deeb, "Airstrike hits market in Syria's Aleppo, killing 15," [Associated Press](#), 18:02 GMT, 12 Oct 2016.

### 13 October 2016

On 13 October, at the Daily Press Briefing at United Nations in New York City, the following was said about Syria:

On Syria, Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, the Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, convened a meeting of the Humanitarian Task Force in Geneva today [13 Oct] and told reporters afterwards that there had been no relief for the people of Aleppo, who continue to suffer from heavy air strikes and shelling. He added that the health situation there remains dire, with hospitals continuing to operate poorly in recent days. Mr. Ramzy reported that the Government of Syria had approved the October plan for humanitarian work in the country, but not in full. He added the approval of the plan is not sufficient, with other steps needed to be taken so that deliveries can be made, and he called on all parties to help to ensure that the UN will be able to deliver on the October plan as soon as possible. On the political front, he noted that there is going to be a meeting on Saturday [15 Oct] in Lausanne, and that the Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, had received an invitation and will be participating in the meeting. The [transcript](#) of his remarks will be available shortly.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 13 Oct 2016. [Link added by Standler.]

On the afternoon of 14 October, the United Nations Office in Geneva also posted a [transcript](#) of Ramzy's press briefing.

### 14 October 2016

On 14 October 2016, the Associated Press reported:

Syrian residents in the opposition-held eastern part of Aleppo hunkered under a fresh wave of airstrikes on Friday [14 Oct] amid intense clashes between government forces and rebels, while a senior opposition official warned that supplies of food and medicines were fast running out in the besieged city.

....

Syrian government forces have encircled the eastern half of Aleppo, besieging tens of thousands of people and pounding the territory with airstrikes on daily basis. The siege and deadly bombardment has caused an international outcry with a number of countries and groups accusing Syria and Russia of war crimes in connection with attacks on medical facilities and aid convoys.

Mohammad Fadelah, the head of the Aleppo Provincial Council, .... estimated there were around 275,000 people in the besieged, eastern Aleppo.

Bassem Mroue, "Fresh wave of airstrikes hit Syria's divided city of Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 16:44 GMT, 14 Oct 2016.

### 17 October 2016

On 17 October 2016, [Reuters](#) reported that a Russian airstrike today had killed 14 members of one family in rebel-held eastern Aleppo. "The [Syrian] Observatory [for Human Rights] said it had documented the deaths of 448 people in air strikes in eastern Aleppo since" 19 September.

On 17 October 2016, Russia announced a humanitarian pause by Russian and Assad's army on Thursday, 20 October, so civilians and rebels could leave Aleppo. [Reuters](#) quoted the Russian announcement: "On Oct. 20 from 0800 (0500 GMT) until 1600, a humanitarian pause will be implemented in the area of Aleppo. For that period, Russia's air force and Syrian government forces will halt air strikes and firing from other weapons." [RIA-Novosti](#) tersely reported the Russian humanitarian pause.

At midnight on 17 October in Syria, the English-language webpages of the Syrian Arab News Agency had *no* story about the humanitarian pause in Aleppo scheduled for 20 Oct. That suggests to me that Assad's government is *not* enthusiastic about the humanitarian pause. But early in the morning of 18 Oct, [SANA](#) posted a news article about the Russian announcement, with *no* information about the reaction of Assad's government.

At 17:59 GMT on 17 Oct, the [Associated Press](#) reported airstrikes "in and around" Aleppo had killed at least 36 people on 17 Oct.

At 22:30 GMT on 17 October, the English-language homepage of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has not been updated since 12 Oct, which is why I have not cited any SOHR reports since 12 Oct.

### 18 October 2016

Surprise! At 07:23 GMT on Tuesday, 18 October, RIA-Novosti announced that Russia had suspended flights of all warplanes in the Aleppo vicinity, two days earlier than planned. That gives a 2.3 day pause.

Russian Aerospace Forces and the Syrian air force halted strikes over Aleppo at 07:00 GMT, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Tuesday [18 Oct].

"Russian Aerospace Forces and Syrian Arab Air Force stop air strikes in the area of Aleppo today [18 Oct] from 10 a.m. [07:00 GMT]," Shoigu told reporters.

Earlier [17 Oct], the Russian General Staff has [announced](#) a humanitarian pause around Syria's besieged city of Aleppo from 08:00 to 16:00 local time [on 20 Oct].

"Russian combat planes and Syrian government forces will not carry strikes during this period," Lt. Gen. Sergei Rudskoy, chief of the Russian General Staff's Main Operational Directorate, told reporters on October 16 [17?].

According to Rudskoy, the militants could use two secure corridors to leave eastern Aleppo heading to Idlib.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that Russia appeals to countries with influence over rebels in the eastern part of the Syrian city of Aleppo to persuade them to leave.

"We appeal to the leadership of countries that have influence on the armed groups in eastern Aleppo with a proposal to persuade their leaders to cease hostilities and to leave the city," Shoigu said at the ministry's select session.

All those interested in stabilizing the crisis in the Syrian city of Aleppo need to engage politically instead of dragging their feet, Shoigu added.

"Anyone who is really interested in the early stabilization of the situation in the city of Aleppo need to embark on real political steps without continuing with political red tape," Shoigu told reporters at a select Defense Ministry session.

"Russia, Syria Halt Airstrikes in Aleppo 07:00 GMT Tuesday — Defense Minister," [RIA-Novosti](#), 07:23 GMT, 18 Oct 2016. [Link in original]

The Syrian Arab News Agency posted a news article at its English-language website that reported the Russian announcement, but with *no* information about the reaction of Assad's government. [SANA](#).

There are two problems with Russia's proposed 8-hour ceasefire on 20 Oct: (1) the duration is too brief to allow trucks to deliver humanitarian aid to eastern Aleppo and (2) there are no guarantees of the safety of the trucks by insurgents, Assad, and Russia. The following was said at the daily press briefing at United Nations headquarters:

The UN and its partners have been and remain ready to proceed with urgent medical evacuation, provide urgent life-saving assistance when all security assurances are provided. Again, we reiterate that assurances must be provided by all parties for safe and unimpeded access — humanitarian access, so that critical aid can get through. And we're not — what we need to see, I think as we've said from here, as our colleagues

have said in Geneva, we need at least a 48-hour pause in order to get the aid in. And we haven't been able to get aid into Aleppo and other hard-to-reach areas and besieged areas in quite some time.

....

At this point, we do not have the security guarantees we need, nor is there the long enough window for us to bring aid in.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," U.N., 18 Oct 2016.

[Reuters](#) and the [Associated Press](#) both reported on this early suspension of airstrikes on Aleppo.

With the Russian announcement on 17 Oct of the unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo on 20 Oct, and again with the Russian announcement on 18 Oct about immediately stopping airstrikes in Aleppo, I have the impression that Russia is making decisions about what Assad's military will do, and Assad's military is getting jerked around like a puppet.

Back on 6 October, de Mistura [proposed](#) that Nusra leave Aleppo. On 7 Oct, both Nusra and other insurgents refused to leave. Now, on 18 Oct, rebels/jihadists *again* refused to leave Aleppo. [Reuters](#).

My comment is that *if* insurgents leave Aleppo, then Russia and Assad will end airstrikes on Aleppo, which will end the destruction of Aleppo and stop the killing of innocent civilians. Obviously, that would be good for Aleppo and the civilians. But if insurgents leave, then Assad would take control of Aleppo, which would be a victory for Assad. Clearly, the insurgents care more about winning a battle than about the welfare of the civilian inhabitants and the continued existence of the city of Aleppo.

It appears that the temporary cessation of airstrikes on Aleppo will fail to bring a permanent ceasefire in Aleppo, simply because of the arrogance of Nusra and other insurgents in Aleppo.

### **18 October 2016 My Comment on *why* Russia offered this unilateral ceasefire**

There is an obvious question of *why* the Russians are offering this wonderful temporary cessation of airstrikes on Aleppo. On 6 Oct, de Mistura [proposed](#) to personally escort Nusra out of Aleppo, to stop the airstrikes by Assad and Russia. On 7 Oct, [Reuters](#) reported that Lavrov supported de Mistura's proposal. At least since 25 May 2016, Russia has asked the U.S. to separate the so-called moderate opposition (i.e., rebels and jihadists) from Nusra. De Mistura's proposal would do that in Aleppo, by having Nusra depart and some of the rebels/jihadists remain. Lavrov's quick endorsement of de Mistura's proposal is consistent with Russia's desire to separate Nusra from other insurgents. Unfortunately, Russia's 17 Oct offer of a unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo on 20 Oct gives only two days for foreign meddlers

to convince rebels/jihadists to separate from Nusra.

The temporary cessation of airstrikes on Aleppo may be a gamble by Russia, who is betting that both (1) Nusra will *not* depart from Aleppo, and (2) the rebels/jihadists will *not* separate from Nusra in Aleppo, thereby giving Russia an excuse to attack Nusra in Aleppo, and annihilate all of the insurgents in Aleppo. Further, Russia can blame the destruction of Aleppo on Nusra, who failed to depart from Aleppo when Russia made a cessation of airstrikes to allow the departure of Nusra. Of course, it is propaganda to blame the presence of Nusra fighters for Russia's destruction of eastern Aleppo, because destroying a city to kill fewer than 1000 Nusra fighters is a disproportionate use of force by Russia.

Some commentators have suggested that Russia is playing nice, because of the recent chorus of international criticism of Russia, especially by France, USA, and the United Kingdom. I disagree. Russia is currently moving 8 warships, including its only aircraft carrier, from Russia to waters near Syria. (See, e.g., [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).) The Russian Navy move is clearly intended to increase Russian firepower in Syria, which is definitely *not* playing nice. [Reuters](#) estimated this group of Russian warships would be ready for missions over Syria sometime around 3 November. Until then, Russia can play nice and see if Nusra departs from Aleppo.

### 19 October 2016

At 11:13 GMT on 19 October, [Reuters](#) reported: "Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Wednesday [19 Oct] that Russia ruled out extending a pause in bombing of Syria's Aleppo unilaterally".

On 19 October, Russia decided to extend the duration of the ceasefire on 20 Oct from 8 hours to 11 hours, by ending the ceasefire at 19:00 Syrian time. [Reuters](#).

At 15:41 GMT, [Reuters](#) reports that the Syrian foreign ministry claims "the Syrian army ... has pulled back to enable rebel fighters to leave the city via two designated corridors". [SANA](#) reported: "The source said that units of the Syrian army have withdrawn in some parts to allow the gunmen to leave the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo via two passages."

Then the Syrian Arab News Agency alleged that people were leaving eastern Aleppo during the pause in airstrikes. Their entire press release says:

A new batch of gunmen and a number of injured citizens, elderly and patients left the eastern neighborhoods in Aleppo via the humanitarian corridors set up by the Syria Arab Army in coordination with the Russian side for this purpose.

SANA reporter in Aleppo said a group of gunmen left without their arms and headed for the northern countryside of Aleppo city through the routes, while a number of elderly men, women and patients were also evacuated to the same place in order to be transported and treated in the hospitals in the western neighborhoods.

General Staff of the Russian army forces reiterated on Wednesday [19 Oct] that the humanitarian truce announced in Aleppo on Thursday [20 Oct] aims to evacuate the

civilians and the injured as well as to get the gunmen out of the city.

It affirmed that 8 corridors will be opened to evacuate the civilians, among them two corridors for the exit of gunmen.

"A number of gunmen, injured persons, elderly and patients get out of eastern neighborhoods in Aleppo," [SANA](#), 19 Oct 2016.

Note that this press release does *not* use numbers to describe how many people departed from eastern Aleppo. Obviously, there is a big difference if 3 people departed or 3000 people departed.

Of the 8 corridors, 6 go to western Aleppo, and 2 go to Idlib province. [Associated Press](#).

Assad's government finally publicly commented on the humanitarian pause announced by Russia on 17 Oct. The entire statement is:

General command of the Army and armed forces announced on Wednesday [19 Oct] that the decision of suspending the air strikes on gunmen in the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo came as a preparation for the humanitarian truce that will start in the morning of October 20th, 2016.

The general command said in a statement that the humanitarian truce in the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo on October 20, 21 and 22nd start at 8 a.m. until 16.00 p.m.

It called on all gunmen in the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo to throw their weapons and benefit from the amnesty decree.

"Army's general command: suspending air strikes on gunmen in eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo comes as a preparation for the humanitarian truce that will start Thursday," [SANA](#), 19 Oct 2016.

Note that the Syrian army used the old expiration time of 16:00 instead of the new expiration time of 19:00. But the Syrian army repeated the ceasefire on 21 and 22 Oct, while the Russians say *only* 20 Oct. Apparently, there is little coordination between the Russian military and Assad's military.

On 19 October, Agence France-Press quotes de Mistura as saying the 11-hour unilateral ceasefire is long enough to evacuate 200 wounded from Aleppo. [Al-Arabiya](#).

On 19 October, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says more than 640 people, including 128 children, have been killed in rebel-held parts of Aleppo and the surrounding rural areas since a truce brokered by the U.S. and Russia collapsed on September 19. It said 88 people, including 14 children, were killed in retaliatory shelling on government-held Aleppo."

On 19 October, there was a meeting in Geneva of Russia, U.S., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey about how to separate so-called "moderate rebels" from Nusra. This was the first meeting since the 15 Oct discussions in Lausanne. [RIA-Novosti](#); [Reuters](#); [ABC News](#). My comment is that the cessation of airstrikes on 18-20 Oct comes *before* the so-called "moderate rebels" have been separated from Nusra. So it is likely that the rebels will continue

to be commingled with Nusra, and Russia will resume airstrikes on eastern Aleppo, allegedly to defeat Nusra. I think Russia designed this cessation of airstrikes to fail, so Russia would have an excuse to annihilate eastern Aleppo. Part of the design to fail is the short duration and springing the cessation of airstrikes with little advance notice.

### 20 October 2016: ceasefire in Aleppo

De Mistura held a press conference in Geneva on 20 October. At that press conference, he clarified that his proposal of 6 Oct (see [above](#)) had four elements:

1. cease airstrikes, *all* parties stop fighting
2. *all* Nusra fighters depart from Aleppo with their weapons, other insurgents *may* also depart
3. "public assurances by the government of Syria to allow the local administration, in eastern Aleppo, to remain in place"
4. unhindered humanitarian aid to eastern Aleppo, including medical supplies

Here is the transcript of de Mistura's 20 October remarks:

**De Mistura:** Good afternoon everyone. Let me give you some few general comments. I will also take three questions, not more, because I am going to the airport straight from here, but Jan Egeland will be at your disposal to go much more into an analysis and answering points, in particular because we are just coming out from a humanitarian task force and as you know there is been an announcement of a humanitarian pause. So Jan will be elaborating on that, and on the unilateral humanitarian ceasefire, and the best way that the UN can actually make use of it during those 11 hours of unilateral humanitarian pause for medical evacuation and medical relief for those who have been wounded.

One comment about Lausanne because I was having the opportunity of being there, my own analysis is that it was useful because it did put around the table those directly involved in the region and Russia and the US, who, as you know, were not meeting bilaterally, but can and were meeting in multilateral context on top of it among those who actually around the small table had a direct involvement.

So it was useful, but so far inconclusive, and the good news is that there was a decision anyway, and the decision was to have follow-up meetings, particularly on the issue, as you know of al-Nusra, and at the experts' level. Those meetings are ongoing and I am not in a position of elaborating further on this.

Now, on today's 11-hour humanitarian unilateral pause, potentially set out for lasting some few days, and Jan, you will be elaborating on what you heard today, let me clarify the following, I think it is an important thing because otherwise it gets confusing.

We, the UN, consider this pause as a direct response to an urgent request for medical evacuation and relief for those who have been wounded or are heavily sick victims inside eastern Aleppo, particularly in connection with the destruction of medical

facilities. This request from the UN has been on the table for few weeks actually and preceded the so-called Special Envoy's plan or proposal. So we, as the UN as such, we welcome definitely this humanitarian, unilateral pause, because any ceasefire or pause in fact is a unilateral one, is always welcomed. But let me be clear, because there has been sometimes some interpretations which have been confusing. This is not the beginning of the so-called "Special Envoy's plan" or the "de Mistura plan" to produce a permanent cessation of hostilities in Aleppo. The plan is not yet implemented. We are talking about a medical humanitarian operation here and we intend to make the best use out of it.

Let me remind you of the plan so that we are not confusing the two things. The plan says: Stop bombing and fighting from both sides. Second, voluntary departure of al-Nusra fighters, with their weapons, to any location they want, and any other fighter who wants to leave, but the others are not compelled to do so.

This has not yet been accepted by al-Nusra. So that is why the so-called de Mistura plan has not started to be implemented. Third, there is another element which is part of the package, it cannot be taken by pieces, public assurances by the government of Syria to allow the local administration, in eastern Aleppo, to remain in place, in charge, and all those non-al-Nusra fighters who accept the cessation of hostilities to stay behind in eastern Aleppo. And four, obviously, humanitarian access.

The third point, the one about public assurances from the part of the government of Syria, that the local administration will remain in charge and those fighters who accept the cessation of hostilities will be allowed to stay there, with their weapons, has not yet been obtained. So there are two points which are missing and therefore we should only look today at the so called medical evacuation plan of the UN which is linked, we want to make it as linked as possible, and as efficient as possible, to the unilateral decision by the Russian Federation and the government of Syria, for a pause of 11 hours, hopefully for several days.

So, let me clarify, since there is always a tendency for leaking papers, let me leak one to you, alright? This is the non-paper, explaining the so-called Special Envoy's plan or the de Mistura plan, if you want to say, and what the package is all about. I will give it to one of you on behalf of everyone, or perhaps to you, who can then give it to everyone else please. So I am officially leaking to you our own paper, so there is no misunderstanding of what the plan is all about and it is a package, nothing beyond that or below that.

Now three questions because I really have to go to the airport.

....

**QUESTION:** Just if I may clarify what you were saying. My understanding is that you are saying that the unilateral pause does not meet the criteria that you regard as necessary to do the deal where some militants would leave eastern Aleppo. The Russians have said that they will not prolong this deal, this unilateral ceasefire or pause in the fighting without some movement on bringing militants out of eastern Aleppo. So

where do we stand and how much hope is there that this pause will be continued beyond the 11 hours promised?

**De Mistura:** Well my immediate reply is what I just said, we consider and we are going to elaborate on that, the 11 hour unilateral pause, we welcome it, and we consider it a good decision, and we consider it part and in fact a response to a request by the UN weeks ago, following the bombing of hospitals and the fact that more than 200 people were estimated to be seriously wounded and needed to be evacuated. The rest depends on a package and the package is clear: al-Nusra needs to declare that they are ready to go, or others can do it on their behalf, and at the same time that there is a commitment by the government to respect the local administration. Having said that all this, the movement of al-Nusra and the stability in eastern Aleppo, needs to start with a stop of the bombing, you cannot evacuate the people without a stop of the bombing. So let us separate the two things, today, we consider this medical evacuation and medical support. The next steps are part of a larger package that needs to be there.

**QUESTION:** Just one question on eastern Aleppo too. This safe corridor offered by the Russians for the people and the fighters to get out, is it a part of an agreement or an arrangement between the UN and the Russians to control or to observe this safe corridor and how the people will get out? Or it is just a uni-side decision?

**De Mistura:** The short answer is, it is a unilateral decision by the Russian Federation and perhaps by the Syrian Government.

....

[De Mistura departed for the airport.]

**Jan Egeland:** On the 7th of July, the situation took a dramatic turn to the worse in Aleppo. East Aleppo became military encircled and it became much more difficult to get in, it became impossible to get relief in to east Aleppo and to do medical evacuations out.

We have tried since then to get pauses from the parties to be able to do our humanitarian work.

We hope we now have a window of opportunity to reach people in need in east Aleppo and evacuate those who are in urgent need of medical evacuations.

The Russian unilateral declaration of humanitarian pauses, as they call it, started today. We are not able to start our work today because we have not, until now, secured the green light from all parties on the ground to do medical evacuations, which would be the first phase of our humanitarian operations.

We believe we now have all of the green lights that we need, both from the Russians and the (Syrian) government, and from the armed opposition groups inside, and we hope that the first medical evacuations can take place tomorrow [21 Oct] and they will be organized by the UN, WHO, with Red Cross/Red Crescent partners, and with help

from NGOs.

These will be evacuations of critically wounded or sick people who will have a choice of either going to west Aleppo, which is government controlled, or Idlib, which is opposition controlled.

We hope to continue until we have been able to evacuate all of the cases that need such evacuations, and that will be in, hopefully be done in, the course of the pause days and it could be several hundred cases with their families.

We also seek to have medical supplies coming in to east Aleppo. It would be terrible to not be able to leave behind much needed medical relief in those remaining hospitals that still will have a lot of patients. So medical evacuation will be something that we will give priority to in our UN plan.

We also hope to provide, in the course of these coming four days, and we hope to get four days, an eleven hours per day in those four days, that we can also provide food and other much needed humanitarian supplies.

This UN effort with humanitarian partners — which we have tried to do now since the beginning of July — it has nothing to do either with the political initiative of the UN, or with the Russian unilateral initiative for evacuating wounded and possibly fighters. There is a firewall between our impartial, humanitarian, independent, neutral humanitarian plan, and those other initiatives.

We will do all we can to do as much as we can in this period. We are urging that not only do we get eleven hours per day, but that we can start the four days beginning tomorrow, Friday, it was not possible to go today.

We hope that we can have a full separation from any other activities in the so-called corridors and our own evacuation of medical cases. It would be wrong to have any mix-up of these parallel operations. But it would be also very wrong to not use this window of opportunity to help as much and as many as possible.

This will be a very dangerous operation, a lot of things could still go wrong, we have learned that from experience, but we hope and pray that the members of the Humanitarian Task Force, both Russia and its like-minded, the United States, and its like-minded, will enable us to undertake this much-needed operation.

Finally, we have only reached one besieged area this month so far, in this month of October, and that was Duma, which is symbolically very important for both sides, we reached that last night.

Forty-six trucks delivering assistance to 35,000 people. But shelling It came in the middle of the operation, everybody had to run and take shelter, as more and more frequently happens, because there was shelling just next to the convoy. And it's symptomatic of it having become increasingly difficult to do these cross-line operations, cross-front-line operations. So I feel it's sort of, it's unsustainable in the

long run. What we need is a real cessation of hostilities that can hold in this country of Syria. That is the only way we can really provide relief and protection to civilians in east Aleppo and across the country of Syria.

**QUESTION:** You are talking about a window of opportunity for getting people out for 11 hours a day over a period of four days, who's telling you that you are going to get that?

**Jan Egeland:** The Russian Federation has confirmed that we will have 11 hours per day. They first announced eight [hours]. We said it is not really possible, it's too complicated, too much can go wrong, the families need to be able to come in dignity with the wounded, we need more time. We appreciate that that has become 11 hours of no bombing, and armed opposition groups say they will enable this to happen. And we are still unclear whether we will have a fourth day from tomorrow, and can go on till Monday. But we hope so, because we need to gain experience in this very difficult and dangerous operation, which will be cross-line, possibly twice or more. .... They have said 11 hours per day and four days from today, Thursday [20 Oct]. We hope it is, that it can be four days from tomorrow, Friday. And this was a request to Russia today, and they will come back on that additional day.

**QUESTION:** So they told you that today?

**Jan Egeland:** Yes.

....

**Jan Egeland:** .... We are still not sure for example if we can get in food [to eastern Aleppo], but we're working on that. It is the medical evacuations that we will start with.

**QUESTION:** Just to pick up on your point about food, to be bureaucratic and clear about this, the Syrian Government did not give the green light for eastern Aleppo in its October plan, so is there a chance that they will say you do not have a permit to go to eastern Aleppo because you don't have the right piece of paper?

**Jan Egeland:** This is Syria, so everything can go wrong at every possible opportunity, but I cannot see that we, that anybody would not allow us to use this rare window of opportunity to provide much-needed relief to east Aleppo. And I can assure you that we are working around the clock to push every single door to get those permits. And we have everything ready, both in west Aleppo and in Turkey, so this will be a cross-line, cross-border operation.

"Note to Correspondents: Transcript of joint stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Adviser, Mr. Jan Egeland, on Syria," [U.N.](#), 20 Oct 2016.

My comment is that de Mistura cleverly misunderstands the Russian position, in order to gently push the Russians to do what de Mistura wants. The Russians created a unilateral ceasefire to give Nusra an opportunity to depart from Aleppo, which is only *one* of the four elements in de Mistura's 6 Oct proposal. De Mistura ignores Russia's motivation, and

pretends that Russia is attempting to implement de Mistura's 6 Oct proposal. But at least two elements of de Mistura's 6 Oct proposal are missing: Nusra has not agreed to depart, and Assad has not agreed to allow local administration of eastern Aleppo. So de Mistura says the unilateral Russian ceasefire is *not* an implementation of de Mistura's 6 Oct proposal. Instead, de Mistura says Russia's unilateral ceasefire is an implementation of the United Nations' earlier request to evacuate 200 wounded people from eastern Aleppo. De Mistura then asked Russia to repeat the unilateral ceasefire on 21, 22, 23, and 24 October.

At 10:04 GMT (noon Syria time) on 20 October, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported that *no* one has used the exit corridors to leave eastern Aleppo.

At 10:36 GMT on 20 October, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported a militia source said: "Some 2,000 — 2,500 civilians who wanted to use the corridors and flee eastern Aleppo gathered in Bustan al-Qasr. Al-Nusra [Front] militants opened fire and did not allow them to leave. Several people were wounded."

At 13:45 GMT on 20 October, Reuters reported that Russia had changed the temporary ceasefire to run from 08:00 to 19:00 Syria time on each of four days: 20, 21, 22, and 23 Oct. Russia has told the United Nations it will stop bombing eastern Aleppo for 11 hours a day for four days, but that is not enough to trigger a wider ceasefire deal under which militants would leave the Syrian warzone, the U.N. said on Thursday [20 Oct].

The Syrian military said a unilateral ceasefire backed by Russia had come into force to allow people to leave eastern Aleppo, a move rejected by rebels who say they are preparing a counter-offensive to break the blockade.

....

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said a pause in Russian air strikes on Syria's Aleppo may be extended, but not if rebels use the break to regroup or renew attacks.

Russia has said it stopped bombing because it expects fighters from the banned Jabhat Fateh al-Sham group, previously called the Nusra Front, to leave the city, under a ceasefire deal proposed by U.N. Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura.

But de Mistura said he regarded the pauses in the bombing as a response to the U.N. request for medical evacuations.

....

U.N. aid convoys are ready to move from western Aleppo and from Turkey, but there was still no deal to get food into the besieged zone and no guarantee that all would go smoothly.

"This is Syria, so everything can go wrong at every possible opportunity," Egeland said.

Tom Miles & Stephanie Nebehay, "Russia pauses Aleppo bombing 11 hours for four days, UN wants more." [Reuters](#) 13:45 GMT, 20 Oct 2016.

The frequent changes — e.g., surprise cessation of airstrikes announced on 18 Oct, extension of time to 11 hours/day announced on 19 Oct, repeating on each of four days announced on 19-20 Oct — suggest that this ceasefire was poorly planned. We know this ceasefire was hastily planned, because the ceasefire was first announced only on 17 Oct.

At night on 20 October, Reuters reported:

The 250,000 civilians trapped inside the besieged rebel held parts of the city have so far stayed away from the [exit] corridors. The army blames rebels opposed to President Bashar al-Assad for preventing them leaving and says they use civilians as human shields.

Rebels say the goal of Moscow and Assad is to empty rebel-held areas of civilians so they can take over the whole city.

"They talk about humanitarian corridors, but why are they not allowing food into besieged eastern Aleppo to alleviate our suffering? We only need the Russian bombers to stop killing our children. We don't want to leave," said Ammar al Qaran, a resident in Sakhour district.

State-owned Ikhbariyah television said rebels had fired a mortar barrage near to where ambulances had been heading to take patients from the besieged parts of the city for treatment in government-held areas.

....

The rebels, however, say they are preparing a large-scale offensive to break the siege of Aleppo and that the Russian air force has failed.

"The coming battle is not going to be like others. We are waiting for the signal of the start of a decisive battle which will surprise the regime and its militias," Abu Obeida al Ansari, a commander from Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the rebranded former al Qaeda affiliate Nusra Front, said in a statement on social media.

Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Syria says east Aleppo ceasefire has begun, promises 'safe exit'," [Reuters](#), 19:40 GMT, 20 Oct 2016.

At 16:11 GMT on 20 October, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported: "A RIA Novosti correspondent reported that militants have shelled Syrian army positions near the Castello road in Aleppo. .... Small arms and heavy machine guns fire has been heard. The Syrian soldiers responded with machine guns' fire, the correspondent reported."

At 17:45 GMT on 20 October, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported three Russian military officers had been wounded by insurgents at El Masharka in Aleppo.

The Russian Ministry of Defense reported:

Eight wounded insurgents took advantage of the offer and received medical assistance, hot meal and new clothes. After that they were transported by bus through the southern corridor away from the city to the territory, which had been controlled by illegal armed

groups.

Terrorists of Ahrar al-Sham grouping shot 14 representatives of local authorities of the eastern quarters of Aleppo for encouraging citizens and insurgents to leave the city area, which had been controlled by terrorists.

All humanitarian corridors were targeted permanently. Three officers of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides have been slightly injured by insurgents' firing against the southern corridor near Suk al-Hai market. The officers have been delivered to the Hmeymim airbase. Their lives are no longer threatened.

Within last 24 hours, 43 shellings performed by illegal armed formations have been registered in the provinces of Aleppo (18), Damascus (19), Latakia (2), and Hama (4). "Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (October 20, 2016)," [Russian MoD](#), 20:00 GMT, 20 Oct 2016.

The headline of a news article at [RIA-Novosti](#) says insurgents "constantly attacked" exit corridors from eastern Aleppo, which seems to be a better translation than "targeted permanently".

The [Associated Press](#) reported that Russia extended the unilateral ceasefire for a fourth day, as requested by de Mistura. The AP also repeated reports in Russian newsmedia about attacks in Aleppo by insurgents, without adding any interviews with people in Aleppo.

My comment is that the rebels, jihadists, and Nusra are too belligerent to accept what is a good opportunity to escape from Aleppo. Just as the HNC scuttled the peace negotiations in Geneva in April 2016, the insurgents in Aleppo are rejecting a wonderful opportunity to save the city from destruction, and to save lives of innocent civilians in eastern Aleppo. Note also that the insurgents are violating the ceasefire, and the insurgents are intimidating civilians so they do not leave eastern Aleppo. The anti-Assad governments in Western Europe and the USA focus on alleged war crimes committed by Assad and Russia, but overlook war crimes committed by insurgents.

### **21 October 2016: second day of ceasefire in Aleppo**

On 21 October, Russian foreign minister Lavrov lamented that Nusra was refusing to leave Aleppo, despite the opportunity offered by Russia and Assad.

"We are concerned that despite those goodwill gestures undertaken by Moscow and Damascus in regard to the situation in Aleppo seeking to normalize it, we see that al-Nusra Front militants are refusing to leave the city," Lavrov said at a press conference.

According to the Russian minister, other militant groups in Aleppo have also not left the city.

"Lavrov: Al-Nusra Front Still in Aleppo Despite Russian, Syrian Goodwill Gesture," [RIA-Novosti](#), 10:18 GMT, 21 Oct 2016.

On 21 October, there was supposed to be an evacuation of wounded people from eastern Aleppo, but insurgents prevented the evacuation. The Associated Press reported in their daily blog on the Syrian civil war:

A U.N. official says Syrian opposition fighters are blocking medical evacuations from Aleppo because the government and Russia are impeding deliveries of medical and humanitarian supplies into the city.

The official made the comments to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the United Nations was expected to make an official statement about the hold-up in medical evacuations later on Friday.

The official said intense efforts were under way in Damascus, Aleppo, Geneva and Gaziantep, Turkey, to try to move forward on the evacuations.

The U.N. humanitarian aid agency [OCHA spokesman Jens Laerke] told reporters in Geneva earlier that planned medical evacuations from Aleppo had not started as planned Friday [21 Oct] because of a lack of security assurances from the warring sides. But it did not elaborate, citing only an "astronomically difficult situation."

Jamey Keaten, "The Latest: ...," [Associated Press](#), 13:15 GMT (15:15 Syrian time), 21 Oct 2016.

See also [Associated Press](#), which reported at 18:50 GMT: "But by Friday [21 Oct] evening, no evacuations were seen along the corridor, reflecting the intractable nature of Syria's civil war, now in its sixth year."

My comment is that Syrian civilians are suffering because Assad and Russia are blocking deliveries of humanitarian aid to eastern Aleppo. Because of that blocking, the insurgents in eastern Aleppo retaliate by refusing to allow wounded people to leave, which *increases* the suffering of Syrians. The insurgents are *not* making a rational decision, moreover the insurgents show themselves as barbarians.

At the daily press briefing at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, the following was said about Syria:

I also have a [statement](#) on the Syria Board of Inquiry. As earlier announced, the Secretary-General has established an internal and independent UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry into the incident that involved a United Nations - Syrian Arab Red Crescent relief operation in Urum al-Kubra (Big Orem), Syria, on 19 September 2016. The Board will be led by Lieutenant General Abhijit Guha and will begin its work on the week of 24 October of this year. It is to ascertain the facts of the incident and report to the Secretary-General upon the completion of the work. The Secretary-General will review the report and decide what further steps to take. He urges all parties concerned to extend their full cooperation with this Board of Inquiry.

And also on Syria, our humanitarian colleagues inform us that medical evacuations of sick and injured people could not begin this morning in eastern Aleppo as planned, because the necessary conditions were not in place to ensure safe, secure and voluntary evacuation of the sick and critically wounded people and their families. The UN humanitarian partners are present in Aleppo and ready to carry out medical evacuations



Calm prevailed across the divided Syrian city of Aleppo on Saturday [22 Oct], the third day of a unilateral ceasefire announced by Russia, but medical evacuations and aid deliveries have yet to take place, [the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights] and the United Nations said.

....

But rebels have said they cannot accept the ceasefire, which they say does nothing to alleviate the situation of those who choose to remain in rebel-held Aleppo, and believe it is part of a government policy to purge cities of political opponents.

....

"Nobody has left through the corridors. The small number of people which who tried to leave were faced with shelling around the (corridor area) and could not leave," said Zakaria Malahifji, a rebel official with the Fastaqim group, which is present in the city.

....

The United Nations had hoped that the ceasefires would allow medical evacuations and aid deliveries, but said a lack of security guarantees and facilitation were preventing aid workers taking advantage of the pause in bombing. "The U.N. remains hopeful that parties will provide all necessary guarantees and is actively working to that end," U.N. humanitarian spokesman Jens Laerke said on Saturday. He said humanitarian workers were ready to proceed as soon as conditions allowed. "The situation on the ground remains volatile as exchanges of fire and clashes continue. Just today bullets struck the hotel where the U.N. hub is based and critically injured one hotel staff," Laerke said.

Lisa Barrington, "Aleppo city quiet on third day of ceasefire, no aid yet," [Reuters](#), 15:11 GMT, 22 Oct 2016.

On 22 October 2016 at 18:00 GMT, the Associated Press had *not* posted any news articles about the situation in Aleppo on 22 Oct. Perhaps this is a sign that the Americans are fatigued with bad news from Syria. Or perhaps the Associated Press believes there is nothing newsworthy in Aleppo, since the situation there is the same as on 21 Oct.

RIA-Novosti, a Russian news source, reported:

Terrorists in Aleppo are continuing to shell humanitarian corridors. Since a humanitarian pause came into effect on Thursday [20 Oct], the corridors have been under frequent shelling and sniper fire.

On Saturday, it was reported that al-Nusra Front terrorist group and Ahrar al-Sham rebels what are considered to be "moderate" by the West are [not letting](#) the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) mission to evacuate the wounded from eastern Aleppo.

....

All humanitarian corridors that should be used by civilians and militants to leave

Aleppo are blocked by militants. The corridors are constantly under militants' fire, Lt. Gen. Sergei Rudskoy, the chief of the Russian General Staff's Main Operational Directorate, said.

"'Western-Backed' Syrian Rebels Not Letting Aleppo Civilians Leave Conflict Zone," [RIA-Novosti](#), 14:37 GMT, 22 Oct 2016.

RIA-Novosti, a Russian news source, reported:

The UN was not able to begin the medical evacuation from eastern Aleppo as the warring sides did not provide the necessary security guaranties, UN humanitarian office (UNOCHA) spokesman Jens Laerke told RIA Novosti Saturday [22 Oct].

According to Laerke, it was impossible to begin the evacuation on Saturday morning, but the UN was working actively on obtaining the necessary security guarantees and was hoping for everybody's cooperation.

"Medical evacuations of sick and wounded people and their immediate family members have still not been able to proceed this morning from eastern Aleppo. The UN remains hopeful that parties will provide all necessary guarantees and is actively working to that end," the spokesman said.

"UN Unable to Start Evacuation From Aleppo due to Security Issues," [RIA-Novosti](#), 15:25 GMT, 22 Oct 2016.

On 22 October the Russian Ministry of Defense reported:

Since October 18, Russian Aerospace Forces and Syrian government troops have stopped performing strikes on terrorists. By the start of the 'humanitarian pause', Syrian troops have withdrawn at the distance allowing insurgents and citizens to leave eastern areas of the city through 8 special corridors.

Within last 24 hours, no civilians or insurgents have left quarters of Aleppo.

Within last 24 hours, 44 shellings performed by illegal armed formations have been registered in the provinces of Aleppo (20), Damascus (20), Latakia (1), and Hama (3).

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (October 22, 2016)," [Russian MoD](#), 20:00 GMT, 22 Oct 2016.

At night on 22 October, Reuters reported:

The first Syrian or Russian air strikes on Aleppo since Russia began the pause in hostilities on Thursday [20 Oct] hit a key front line in the city's southwest, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Clashes and shelling which had continued throughout the day on front lines intensified late in the day, a witness and the Observatory said.

Air strikes had continued to target areas outside the city throughout the ceasefire.

Russia has been announcing daily that it will abide by the next day of the series of daytime ceasefires, which it said it called to allow civilians and rebels to leave the besieged city, but no announcement was made on Saturday [22 Oct].

There have been night-time clashes as each day of the ceasefire has ended, but Saturday saw much fiercer fighting plus the first air strikes.

....

Once again, no medical evacuations or aid deliveries to rebel-held areas were possible on Saturday, the United Nations said.

Lisa Barrington, "Air strikes, fighting break Russian-declared ceasefire in Syria's Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 21:08 GMT, 22 Oct 2016.

My comment is that Russia's unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo is finished. It was spoiled by insurgents who refused to allow wounded to leave eastern Aleppo, and who refused to allow civilians to leave eastern Aleppo. Nusra refused to depart from Aleppo, which frustrated Russia's main reason for offering the ceasefire. And finally, the insurgents repeatedly violated the ceasefire.

The Russians proved one point: the insurgents in Aleppo are barbarians.

### **23 October 2016: *no* ceasefire in Aleppo**

At 13:00 Moscow time (10:00 GMT) on Sunday, 23 October, RIA-Novosti had *no* news about the ceasefire in Aleppo on 23 Oct.

At 10:08 GMT on 23 October, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported: "Syrian army regained full control over the air defense military base in the south of Aleppo, following the heavy fighting with terrorists, according to a [local military] source."

The Associated Press reported:

A leading northern Syrian rebel coalition warned civilians in Aleppo to stay away from government positions around the contested city early Sunday [23 Oct] as rebels and pro-government forces clashed along the city's outskirts.

Fighting broke out along the city's southern neighborhoods and countryside and its central districts after a cease-fire to allow rebels and civilians to evacuate the city's eastern quarters expired Saturday night [22 Oct]. No evacuations were seen during the three-day window [20-21-22 Oct] arranged by the Russian and Syrian military commands.

"The Latest: ..." [Associated Press](#), 11:30 GMT (14:30 Beirut time), 23 Oct 2016.

At 14:27 GMT on 23 October, RIA-Novosti made clear that the ceasefire in Aleppo expired yesterday.

The Syrian army and militia units launched on Sunday [23 Oct] a massive offensive on positions of militants in southern Aleppo after having seized strategic heights with an air defense base and a cell phone tower, a RIA Novosti correspondent reported.

....

The offensive was launched several hours after the end of the three-day humanitarian pause [20-21-22 Oct] when militants as well as civilians were given an opportunity to leave eastern parts of Aleppo. Militants, however, refused to do that and forced civilians to stay in the besieged part of the city.

"Syrian Army Conducts Massive Offensive on Militants' Positions in South Aleppo," [RIA-Novosti](#), 14:27 GMT, 23 Oct 2016.

On 23 October 2016, the Russian Ministry of Defense made *no* mention of a ceasefire in Aleppo. They reported violations of the February cessation of hostilities agreement by insurgents:

Within last 24 hours, 71 shellings performed by illegal armed formations have been registered in the provinces of Aleppo (48), Damascus (18), Hama (4), and Latakia (1).

....

In the Aleppo city, armed formations of terrorist groupings have fired improvised MLRS, mortars and small arms against Shurfa, al-Khader, Bakirtaya and Benyamin inhabited areas, Ramusi, al-Khalidiyah, 3000, Hai al-Antari, Hai al-Ansari, al-Masharqa and 1070 quarters, cement plant, Castello trade center in Aleppo, checkpoint 1 on the Castello road, checkpoint 1 in Bustan Basha quarter, checkpoints 5 and 6 in Sheikh Khader, checkpoint 8 near Bakirtaya, highway near Aradu Zeidun inhabited area.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (October 23, 2016)," [Russian MoD](#), 20:00 GMT, 23 Oct 2016.

On the night of 23 October, the most recent article at the English-language Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is dated 18 October, which is why I have not cited the SOHR recently.

#### **24 October 2016**

On Monday, 24 October 2016, government employees returned to work and commented on the end of the unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo on 22 October.

At 09:02 GMT, [Reuters](#) cited Russian news agencies: "Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said an 'humanitarian pause' in air strikes on Syria's Aleppo had ended on Saturday [22 Oct] and Moscow was not currently considering a return to the ceasefire".

On Monday, 24 October, at 14:54 GMT, the Associated Press reported:

Fighting resumed in Aleppo over the weekend, following a days-long lull announced by Moscow that was meant to allow rebels and civilians to leave the eastern districts. The rebels rejected the Russian offer and none of the civilians left.

....

In Moscow, Russia's deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov said Russia wasn't

planning another humanitarian pause in Aleppo anytime soon.

"In order to resume it, our opponents need to make sure the anti-government groups behave properly," he said in comments carried by Russian news agencies, blaming the rebels for the fact that medical evacuations from eastern Aleppo, planned during the pause, were scrapped at the last moment.

"What needed to happen didn't happen ... that's why resuming a humanitarian pause is not on the agenda," Ryabkov said. He also said that Moscow doesn't expect any new round of Syria peace talks in the Swiss city of Lausanne until after the U.S. elections. Bassem Mroue, "In renewed Aleppo attacks, Syrian troops capture high ground," [Associated Press](#), 14:54 GMT, 24 Oct 2016.

At the United Nations Daily Press Briefing in New York City, the following was said about Syria:

... I can say that we regret that adequate guarantees have not yet been provided for humanitarian and medical assistance into besieged areas in eastern Aleppo and urge all parties to facilitate immediate and urgent medical evacuations of the sick and wounded and their family members. These are basic requirements under international humanitarian law and human rights law, and compliance is an obligation for all parties.

....

... we're obviously disappointed that none of the evacuations that we were planning to have over the weekend were able to take place.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 24 Oct 2016.

Stephen O'Brien, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, released the following statement:

I am deeply frustrated and saddened that the UN and its humanitarian partners have been forced to abort current plans to evacuate critically injured and sick people from eastern Aleppo city. The UN and partners were ready to evacuate critically injured people over the last few days. They engaged in long and demanding negotiations, and endless rounds of clarifications on conditions and guarantees with all parties. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Syrian medical NGOs joined in the meticulous planning of the evacuations.

It is deeply regrettable that no patients or accompanying family members could be moved. The evacuations were obstructed by various factors, including delays in receiving the necessary approvals from local authorities in eastern Aleppo, conditions placed by non-State armed groups and the Government of Syria's objection to allowing medical and other relief supplies into the eastern part of the city.

After three days of lull, parties to the conflict have still not agreed, military operations have resumed and violence is now escalating. The political and military paths are trumping basic humanity once again in Syria.

I am outraged that the fate of vulnerable civilians — sick and injured people, children and the elderly, all in need of critical and life-saving support — rests mercilessly in the hands of parties who have consistently and unashamedly failed to put them above narrow political and military interests. All parties to the conflict have a duty to protect civilians and ensure that the sick and wounded have access to medical care. These obligations are not favours to be granted; they are fundamental tenets of international humanitarian law and must be met by each party regardless of the actions of the other.

Stephen O'Brien, "Statement on Syria, 24 October 2016," [OCHA](#), 24 Sep 2016.  
Reported by [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#).

At 20:00 GMT, the Russian ministry of defense reported violations of the February cessation of hostilities agreement by insurgents:

Within last 24 hours, 51 shellings performed by illegal armed formations have been registered in the provinces of Aleppo (24), Damascus (18), Hama (7), and Latakia (2).

....

In the Aleppo city, armed formations of terrorist groupings have fired improvised MLRS, mortars and small arms against Shurfa, Ansar, Hananu Shimaliyah, and Bakirtaya inhabited areas, al-Maidam (twice), Arian (twice), 1070 (twice), 3000, Ramusi, Sheikh Maqsood, and Dahiya al-Assad quarters, al-Assad military academy (twice), cement plant, positions of the government troops near 1070 quarter (twice), cement plant, Kastello trade center, checkpoint 1 on the Kastello road in the Aleppo city.

"Bulletin of the Russian Centre for reconciliation of opposing sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (October 24, 2016)," [Russian MoD](#), 20:00 GMT, 24 Oct 2016.

## 25 October 2016

On Tuesday, 25 October 2016, the Russian government claimed it has suspended all airstrikes in Aleppo since the morning of 18 Oct, and was continuing to suspend airstrikes in Aleppo on 26 Oct. However, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and some insurgents say there have been some airstrikes in Aleppo during the past week. Reuters reported:

Russia said on Tuesday [25 Oct] it would extend a moratorium on air strikes on Syria's Aleppo into a ninth day [26 Oct], but a monitor and a civil defence official said that rebel-held parts of the divided city had been struck in recent days.

Defence ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov said Russian and Syrian planes had not even approached, let alone bombed, the devastated city since last Tuesday [18 Oct] when Russia suspended air strikes ahead of a pause in hostilities.

That moratorium on air strikes was being extended, Sergei Rudskoi, a defence ministry official, said separately on Tuesday [25 Oct], without specifying for how long.

Rudskoi said that meant planes from Syria and Russia, which has been Damascus's most powerful ally in its six-year-old civil war, would continue to stay out of a 10-km (six-mile) zone around Aleppo.

But the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said air strikes had resumed since the lull in fighting ended on Saturday [22 Oct], focusing on major front lines, including in the city's southwest. There had been no civilian deaths from air strikes inside eastern Aleppo, however, the monitor said.

....

Rudskoi said around 50 women and children had managed to leave Aleppo late on Monday [24 Oct] despite the dangers and were escorted by Russian military officers. Andrew Osborn & Lisa Barrington, "Russia says it extends moratorium on Aleppo air strikes," [Reuters](#), 02:04 GMT, 26 Oct 2016.

Earlier, the Associated Press reported:

Russia's Defense Ministry says that humanitarian corridors out of Syria's Aleppo are still open and that there have been no Russian or Syrian airstrikes on the besieged city for seven days now.

The ministry's spokesman, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, said on Tuesday [25 Oct] that a total of 48 women and children left eastern Aleppo the previous evening [24 Oct].

....

Konashenkov says the six humanitarian corridors out of the eastern part of the city continue to function "around the clock." He says that Russian and Syrian warplanes "are not approaching the city and are not carrying out attacks." "Russia: Humanitarian corridors in Syria's Aleppo still open," [Associated Press](#), 09:15 GMT, 25 Oct 2016.

### 26-27 October 2016

Either Russia or Assad had airstrikes on a school in the village of Haas (also spelled Hass), in Idlib province, killing at least 26 people, mostly children. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says at least 35 dead "in the massacre that was carried out by warplanes believed to be Russian". The Observatory also notes that at least 90 civilians were killed by airstrikes in Idlib province during the last 7 days. [SOHR](#). My comment is another day, another war crime.

The following day, 27 October 2016, the Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary General released the following statement about the bombing of the school in Idlib province.

The Secretary-General is appalled by reports of attacks that killed students and teachers in a school complex in Haas village, Idlib governorate, Syria on 26 October. If deliberate, this attack may amount to a war crime.

The Secretary-General calls for immediate and impartial investigation of this and other similar attacks against civilians in Syria. If such horrific acts persist despite global

outrage, it is largely because their authors, whether in corridors of power or in insurgent redoubts, do not fear justice. They must be proved wrong.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Statement attributable to the Spokesman of the Secretary-General on Attack on schools in Syria," [U.N.](#), 27 Oct 2016.

My comment is *who* will investigate this possible war crime? Will Assad's government cooperate with the investigation? Will Russia cooperate with the investigation? The school is located in an area controlled by insurgents, so will those insurgents allow an investigation? The Spokesman is correct to say the perpetrators "do not fear justice", because there will *not* be a prompt, thorough investigation and because the International Criminal Court has *no* jurisdiction over the perpetrators.

On 27 October, at the Daily Press Briefing at the United Nations in New York City, the following was said about Syria:

... on Wednesday [26 Oct], an inter-agency humanitarian convoy delivered much needed humanitarian assistance to the Al-Waer neighbourhood in the Syrian city of Homs. The teams delivered food, health, water and sanitation and other emergency supplies for 70,000 people in the besieged neighbourhood. This is the tenth convoy to Al Waer this year, which was last reached with inter-agency humanitarian delivery on 26 September of this year.

Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien made a plea yesterday [26 Oct] for the Security Council members to act to save the people of Aleppo, at a time when no UN assistance has entered the eastern part of the Syrian city in nearly four months. Mr. O'Brien told the Council yesterday afternoon that Aleppo has essentially become a kill zone, with 400 people having been killed and nearly 2,000 wounded in eastern Aleppo just in the past few weeks. The Emergency Relief Coordinator noted that the UN was ready to launch operations for medical evacuations from eastern Aleppo this past Sunday [23 Oct]. However, objections by two non-State armed opposition groups, namely Ahrar as Sham and Nureddin Zenki, scuppered these plans. His remarks were made available to you and should be online.

....

**Question:** Stéphane, maybe I missed this, but the [Secretary General] is calling for investigations on the attack on the school in Idlib, right? So does this mean that he's calling... he's going to take an initiative and establish an entity to do these investigations, or is he calling other UN bodies to do that, the Security Council?

**Spokesman:** I think there are various options, whether it is a mandate... an investigation mandated by the Security Council, one under the umbrella of the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry, but the primary responsibility, obviously, lies in the... with the country in which this attack happened. I think we'll have to wait and see not too long how this pans out, but it is clear that we need to get to the bottom of who did this, and those people will need to face... need to be accountable for what is... can be tantamount to a war crime if it's a deliberate attack.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 27 Oct 2016. [ellipses in original]

My comment is that the U.N. Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry has been investigating and collecting evidence of war crimes in Syria since 2011, but *no* one has done anything with this huge collection of evidence. Further, Assad's government has repeatedly refused to cooperate with the investigation by the Commission of Inquiry.

At 06:03 GMT on Thursday, 27 October, [Reuters](#) reported: "Russian and Syrian warplanes have not flown closer than 10 kilometres (6.21 miles) of Syria's Aleppo for nine days [18-26 Oct], the Russian defence ministry said on Thursday."

On 27 October 2016, de Mistura and Jan Egeland held another press conference. I am quoting only a little bit of the transcript, because their sincere efforts have consistently failed in Syria, owing to the intransigence of both Assad's government and the insurgents, who are both barbarians.

**de Mistura:** Good afternoon. We had just now the Humanitarian Task Force, and I must say, it was particularly focused on what has been the lessons learned from the medical evacuation that did not, unfortunately, take place from eastern Aleppo.

Regarding the political aspect, political security, you are probably aware that the so-called Lausanne [15 Oct meeting] follow-up is ongoing and is still working and I cannot go into much more details until there is a clear outcome from it, but you should know that.

We ourselves are going next week also and the week after through a review of what the political options and initiatives are, in the context of a political process, while as you can see, many things are still fluid, such as the situation in Aleppo and elsewhere in the Lausanne process.

I am, like Jan Egeland is, quite disappointed frankly by the fact that the medical evacuations did not take place, but one thing I wanted to make clear, and I did last time, is that medical evacuations initiative was and has to be considered separate from the so-called UN or de Mistura initiative for eastern Aleppo, because there was a danger that sometimes the two things get mixed up. The so-called initiative of the UN regarding east Aleppo is a much more packaged one, this was supposed to be just evacuation of wounded people, hopefully with some additional items, such as medicines and food.

.... This is a dirty, ugly, horrible war, so we should never be surprised when things go wrong, over lack of trust, or pre-conditions that are put by either side. ....

....

There is one point, the Cessation of Hostilities Task Force, although as you know, cessation of hostilities is not really a major issue at the moment, but needs to be kept alive, in order to be able to make sure when and if it can be utilized, ....

....

**Jan Egeland:** Exactly a week ago, I stood here and optimistically said that I thought we would be able to use the unilateral Russian pause to do three things:

Evacuate wounded, an estimated 200 sick and wounded, with family members, perhaps a 1,000 people all together; Secondly, to get in medical supplies to the overwhelmed and severely curtailed medical sector in east Aleppo; And thirdly, also take advantage of the calm to bring in food and other humanitarian supplies.

We, in the next hours, had humanitarian workers deployed to west Aleppo, working from Gaziantep in Turkey, working from Damascus, working from Geneva and elsewhere together with humanitarian partners, the ICRC, the Syrian Arab and Red Crescent, numerous NGOs, including many medical.

We had a large number of ambulances for the sick and wounded, buses for the family members, trucks with medical supplies, and trucks with food and other supplies ready to go into east Aleppo. And we worked day and night, a lot of humanitarians, in Syria and outside, and with a lot of diplomats that support the opposing sides in this war to make it happen and we all failed.

We all failed at least up until now. There has not been a single organized medical evacuation, nor a single truck going in with supplies. There simply was too little trust, there simply was too much fear, there was too many misunderstandings, there was too many confusing messages for this very complex and very dangerous operation that included people going both to government and opposition controlled territory to take place.

So a major lessons learned process is now underway because we are not giving up. We are starting again today to try to do the three things. Evacuate those who have very high expectations, had very high expectations, to finally get out to get proper treatment, to have them evacuated, to get the medical supplies in, and to get the food and the other supplies in.

....

What we hope is that this can change. The conditioning of humanitarian operations on all sorts of other things, it has gotten worse of late. A bitter war has become more bitter, a cruel war has become more ruthless. We need for the parties and the sponsors of the parties to help humanitarians do our work, if not this winter will be terrible, it will be the worst winter in now, the sixth winter that we have had in the conflict. We have just issued an appeal for more supplies for winterization. Shelter support and to keep the population warm. I fear it will be a very very cold winter for too many.

....

... I forgot one thing here, UNICEF intervened in the [Humanitarian Task Force] meeting just as we were breaking up that they had two more cases of schools being hit in Syria. So five schools attacked in a week, in Dara'a, in Aleppo, east and west, in Idlib, and in Duma, today. So the war is getting worse, it's getting more ruthless and

it's affecting more and more the children and the civilians. So my appeal is again, can please well-fed men with uniform, and ties and suits like me, with political and military positions allow us to reach children, women, and protect them better, assist them better. The trend is worsening, it is not improving.

"Note to correspondents: Transcript of joint stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Advisor, Mr. Jan Egeland," [U.N.](#), 27 Oct 2016.

### 28 October 2016

On Friday, 28 October 2016, insurgents in eastern Aleppo began their long-promised military campaign to break the siege imposed by Assad. Reuters says most of the insurgents are Nusra Front and "and groups fighting under the Free Syrian Army (FSA) banner." [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#).

The Russian military asked Russian president Putin for permission to resume bombing the city of Aleppo ([Reuters](#)), but Putin refused. So the Russian moratorium on bombing the city of Aleppo continues. [Reuters](#).

### 29 October 2016

Russia did *not* bomb Aleppo city for 11 days, 18-28 October. But on 29 October, Assad's military and Russia conducted airstrikes on the western and southern parts of the city of Aleppo, in an attempt to claw back areas lost to insurgents yesterday. The Associated Press says that "Fatah al-Sham [formerly Nusra] and the ultraconservative Afnan al-Sham and Ahrar al-Sham militias" were involved in the fighting yesterday, and insurgent artillery killed 15 people in western Aleppo city yesterday. [Associated Press](#).

### 30 October 2016

Fighting continued in western part of Aleppo city on 30 October. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports at least 38 civilians killed by insurgents in western part of Aleppo city, since insurgents began their campaign to break the siege of eastern Aleppo on 28 Oct. [Associated Press](#).

On the night of 30 October, the most recent article at the English-language Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is dated 27 October, which is why I have not cited the SOHR recently.

On 30 October 2016, de Mistura released the following statement:

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, is appalled and shocked by the high number of rockets indiscriminately launched by armed opposition groups on civilian suburbs of western Aleppo in the last 48 hours.

Credible reports quoting sources on the ground indicate that scores of civilians in west Aleppo have been killed, including several children, and hundreds wounded due to relentless and indiscriminate attacks from armed opposition groups.

“Those who argue that this is meant to relieve the siege of eastern Aleppo should be reminded that nothing justifies the use of disproportionate and indiscriminate weapons, including heavy ones, on civilian areas and it could amount to war crimes,” Mr. de Mistura said.

In the same vein, the Special Envoy reiterates the Secretary General’s condemnation of recent attacks on schools on both sides, as well as the use of heavy airpower on civilian areas that has characterized the fighting in Aleppo.

“The civilians of both sides of Aleppo have suffered enough due to futile but lethal attempts of subduing the city of Aleppo,” he said.

“They now need and deserve a stable ceasefire covering this ancient city of Syria.” Staffan de Mistura, "Statement by the Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N.](#), 30 Oct 2016.

On 30 October, an unspecified group fired a tank shell into the building in western Aleppo city that contains the office of the United Nations. [Reuters](#).

On 1 November, at the daily press briefing at the United Nations in New York City, the following was said about Syria.

Turning to the situation in Syria, the UN strongly condemns an attack on the building where UN offices and staff are based in west Aleppo city. The UN presence in the building is long established and well known. The top floors of the building were damaged by a tank shell on that day. Ali Al-Za’tari, the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, said that it is appalling that the building that houses the UN offices was directly targeted. He strongly condemned the increased violence in all of Aleppo, east and west, which has resulted in the deaths and injury of scores of civilians, including children.

The Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted reports over the weekend [29-30 Oct] of intensified shelling by armed opposition groups of civilian-populated areas in Government-controlled western Aleppo. More than 30 civilians, including at least 10 children, were reportedly killed and dozens injured as a result of the attacks on 29 and 30 October in western Aleppo. Such high numbers of civilian casualties suggest that armed opposition groups are failing to follow the fundamental prohibition under international humanitarian law on the launching of indiscriminate attacks, and the principles of precaution and proportionality.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 1 Nov 2016.

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### **Airstrikes on Hospitals in Syria and airstrikes on other prohibited targets**

There is a long history of airstrikes by Russia or Assad on hospitals in Syria:

- My essay for [October 2015](#) says "Médecins Sans Frontières complained that airstrikes

in Syria during October had hit at least 12 hospitals, killing at least 35 people, including hospital staff."

- My essay for [February 2016](#) mentions Russian airstrikes on two hospitals in Aleppo and one school on 15 February. My essay for [March 2016](#) cited the United Nations for saying four hospitals and one school were bombed in Syria on 15 February.
- My essay for [April 2016](#) mentions bombing of a hospital in Aleppo on 28 April, killing 50 people.
- My essay for [June 2016](#) mentions bombing of three hospitals in Aleppo on 8 June.
- My essay for [July 2016](#) mentions Assad's airplanes bombed five hospitals in Aleppo province on 24 July. Then on 29 July a maternity hospital in Idlib province was bombed.

On 3 May 2016, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2286, which is titled "protection of civilians in armed conflict". This meaningless and unenforceable resolution is actually concerned with protecting hospitals and medical clinics during warfare. Attacks on medical personnel are already a violation of international law, since the the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

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On 3 August 2016, [Reuters](#) reported Assad's military attacked six hospitals in Aleppo province during 23-31 July 2016. Further: "[Physicians for Human Rights] said it has documented more than 370 attacks on 265 medical facilities during the war, and the deaths of 750 medical personnel."

My essay for [August 2016](#) quotes Jan Egeland who said on 4 August: "We received reports of 44 hospitals, clinics and health posts being attacked in the month of July alone."

On 4 August 2016, [Reuters](#) reported Russian airstrikes hit civilians in two different refugee camps in Syria.

[Reuters](#) reported that an airstrike on a hospital in Meles, in Idlib province, on 6 August, killed 10 people.

On 6 August 2016, a pediatric hospital in Millis, in Idlib province, was bombed. A total of 13 people died at the hospital that was supported by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [MSF](#).

On 12 August 2016, the [Associated Press](#) tells us that airstrikes "hit the only hospital for women and children in the town of Kafr Hamra" in the city of Aleppo, killing a nurse and an anesthetic technician. Then "airstrikes hit a market in the nearby town of Urem al-Kubra", where at least 6 people died.

On 19 August, [Reuters](#) reported: "Local communities in Syria are refusing aid agencies permission to open new hospitals out of fear the facilities will draw more bombings to the

area, [Mazen Kewara of the Syrian American Medical Society] said on Friday [19 Aug]."

On 20 September at 20:00 GMT, there was an airstrike on a medical clinic in the village of Khan Tuman (also spelled Khan Touman), near the city of Aleppo. Union des Organisations de Secours et Soins Médicaux (UOSSM), which operates the clinic, reported that four personnel (2 nurses and 2 drivers) in two ambulances were killed, and a nurse was injured. The Associated Press reported "three nurses and two ambulance drivers died". The two-story clinic building collapsed. Later, UOSSM announced that 10 patients have died. [UOSSM](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Associated Press](#); [Al-Bawaba](#).

On 28 September 2016, warplanes from either Assad or Russia did it again: bombed two hospitals in Aleppo. The Associated Press reported:

Medical officials say airstrikes have severely damaged two hospitals in eastern rebel-held Aleppo, leading to the death of two seriously ill patients.

The airstrikes early Wednesday hit the M2 and M10 hospitals, knocking out generators and cutting off water supplies, putting them temporarily out of service.

Mohammed Abu Rajab, head of M10 hospital, the largest of eight hospitals in eastern Aleppo, says two patients died because they could not be kept alive. He says the intensive care unit was severely damaged.

Adham Sahloul, of the Syrian American Medical Society, based in Gaziantep, Turkey, confirmed the strikes and described them as deliberate. He says government forces know the location of both facilities.

The closures leave eastern Aleppo with six functioning hospitals, only three of which are capable of dealing with emergencies.

"The Latest: .....", [Associated Press](#), 08:30 GMT (11:30 Beirut time), 28 Sep 2016.

Agence France-Presse reported:

Air raids hit the two largest hospitals in rebel-held parts of Syria's Aleppo early Wednesday, putting them temporarily out of service, the medical organization that supports them said.

"The attack happened at 4:00 am (0100 GMT). One warplane targeted both of them directly," said Adham Sahloul of the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS).

"There are only six hospitals currently operational now that the M2 and M10 have been temporarily taken out of service," he said.

"Raids hit two largest hospitals in rebel-held Aleppo: NGO," [Al-Arabiya](#), 09:41 GMT, 28 Sep 2016.

Médecins San Frontières issued a news release that said:

Two hospitals in east Aleppo, supported by MSF and other organisations, have been severely damaged in Tuesday [27 Sep] night's indiscriminate bombing of the city and have been forced to halt all activities. The two attacks caused the death of at least two patients and injured two medical staff.

Out of the eight hospitals left in east Aleppo, there were four with surgical capacity and now there are only two left.

“According to different medical sources, there are only seven surgical doctors left in the area, serving an estimated population of 250,000”, says Carlos Francisco, MSF’s head of mission for Syria. “And this comes at a time when east Aleppo has been under siege since July and is suffering the bloodiest indiscriminate bombing since the beginning of the war. We don’t know how to say it anymore: This has to stop.”

"Syria: Two surgical hospitals bombed in east Aleppo," [MSF](#), 28 Sep 2016.

Reuters reported:

Only about 30 doctors are believed to be left inside the besieged zone, coping with hundreds of wounded a day.

"The warplane flew over us and directly started dropping its missiles ... at around 4 a.m.," Mohammad Abu Rajab, a radiologist at the M10 hospital, the largest trauma hospital in the city's rebel-held sector, told Reuters.

"Rubble fell in on the patients in the intensive care unit."

M10 hospital workers said oxygen and power generators were destroyed and patients were transferred to another hospital.

Photographs sent to Reuters by a hospital worker at the facility showed damaged storage tanks, a rubble strewn area, and the collapsed roof of what he said was a power facility.

....

Asked by a reporter at the United Nations whether Syria had bombed the two hospitals hit on Wednesday, the Syrian ambassador to the world body, Bashar Ja'afari, appeared to laugh.

Ellen Francis & Tom Perry, "Warplanes knock out Aleppo hospitals as Russian-backed assault intensifies," [Reuters](#), 01:51 GMT, 29 Sep 2016.

On 28 September 2016, the United Nations Security Council met for two hours to discuss attacks on hospitals in war zones. A [summary](#) of the meeting was prepared by the United Nations.

On 30 September 2016 at 17:14 GMT, [Reuters](#) reported: "An aerial bombardment of rebel-held areas [in Aleppo] continued on Friday [30 Sep], with heavy air strikes in the Shaar district where incendiary material struck a complex of medical buildings, the complex's director and other medical workers said."

On Saturday, 1 October 2016 at 10:30, airstrikes closed the M10 hospital in the Sakhour neighborhood of rebel-held eastern Aleppo city, after two patients were killed. It was the third attack on this one hospital during the past week. [SAMS](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 3 October 2016, the Syrian-American Medical Society reported that five airstrikes in one week had permanently closed the M10 hospital in Aleppo.

Today [3 Oct] at approximately 2:30 in the afternoon, another attack targeted SAMS's largest trauma hospital, known as M10, in eastern Aleppo City. The hospital has been attacked more than four times in one week. Today, a bunker buster bomb landed in front of the entrance, killing three maintenance workers and injuring a nurse and ambulance driver. The workers, along with medical staff, had been working to repair damage from the previous attacks, which had forced the hospital out of operation. The hospital has now been completely destroyed. Only five hospitals remain operational in besieged Aleppo to care for a population of 300,000 civilians, including more than 85,000 children. There remain only 29 doctors to treat the overwhelming number of wounded.

"Press Release: Aleppo's Largest Trauma Hospital Completely Destroyed Following Five Attacks in One Week," [SAMS](#); 3 Oct 2016.

My comment is that five attacks in one week on one hospital is strong evidence that the attacks are intentionally targeting that hospital.

Because of repeated airstrikes on hospitals in Syria, a hospital in Hama province was built under 17 meters of rock in the side of a mountain, to protect the hospital from airstrikes. But airstrikes on 2 Oct 2016 stopped the operation of that underground hospital. [Reuters](#) reports: "massive bombs wrecked the emergency ward near the entrance, caved in interior ceilings, crumbled cement walls and destroyed generators, water tanks and medical equipment, knocking the underground hospital out of service." [UOSSM](#) reports: "One of Syria's most secure hospitals was put out of service today [2 Oct], after two waves of airstrikes caused major damage to the building. The 'Dr. Hasan Al-Araj' or 'Cave Hospital' in rural Hama, supported by UOSSM and other NGOs, is a hospital built inside a cave 50 feet (17 meters) deep inside a mountain. The hospital was directly targeted by two separate waves of airstrikes, one in the afternoon at approximately 3 p.m. and one in the evening, causing massive damage to the emergency room and major damage to other parts of the hospital, resulting in its closure. No casualties were reported, only minor injuries."

Beginning on 2 October 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights suggested that Assad and Russia were targeting hospitals in rebel-controlled eastern Aleppo, to force civilians to move to areas of Aleppo that are controlled by Assad. [SOHR](#)(2 Oct); [SOHR](#)(3 Oct); [SOHR](#)(4 Oct).

On 7 October, [MSF](#) reported that "at least 23 recorded attacks on eastern Aleppo's eight remaining hospitals since the siege began in July [2016]."

On 14 October, there were airstrikes on four hospitals in Aleppo. Two physicians were wounded and an ambulance driver was killed. [MSF](#).

On 18 October, Russian warplanes bombed the al-Iman hospital in Idlib province. After the bombing, this hospital is *no* longer in service. [SOHR](#).

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**My comments:** Not only are hospital and medical clinic buildings being destroyed, and physicians killed, but also there are *no* deliveries of drugs and medical supplies, because of the failure to allow deliveries of humanitarian aid.

There can be *no* doubt that a military attack on a hospital is an atrocity. If deliberate, such attacks are a clear violation of international law, and a war crime. After some of the larger attacks on hospitals in Syria, the diplomats at the United Nations issue a statement condemning the attack and reminding the perpetrators that they just committed another war crime. But because there are *no* adverse consequences for the perpetrators, the military attacks on hospitals in Syria continue again and again. This lack of consequences exposes not only Assad's willingness to commit more atrocities, but also exposes the impotence of the diplomats who fail to enforce international law.

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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 on Syria issued on 20 July 2016, Ban Ki-moon noted:

The plight of those in Aleppo and elsewhere across the country underscores that civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic are as much at risk as they have ever been owing to the continued blatant disregard for humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. Ongoing sieges are depriving civilians of the most basic items necessary for their survival, such as water and food, and strikes are launched on heavily populated areas from both air and ground, without regard for civilian presence. Parties to the conflict must immediately abide by international humanitarian law and individuals who fail to do so should be brought to account. Civilians must not and cannot ever be a target and all efforts should be made to protect civilian lives, including at the expense of gaining a

military advantage.

"Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," S/2016/631 at ¶62 (20 July 2016).

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?

In his monthly report on Syria issued on 16 August 2016, Ban Ki-moon noted:

In blatant disregard for the special protected status of health-care facilities under international humanitarian law and Security Council resolution 2286 (2016), adopted on 3 May, medical facilities continued to be damaged or destroyed as a result of fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations and health partners received credible reports, which are in the process of being verified by the United Nations and partner organizations, of 44 attacks against health facilities in July alone.

"Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," S/2016/714 at ¶42 (16 Aug 2016).

The conduct of hostilities [in Aleppo] continues to be characterized by a prevailing disrespect for the fundamental rules of international humanitarian law. All parties to the conflict are failing to uphold their obligation to protect civilians. The fight for territory and resources is being undertaken through indiscriminate attacks on residential areas,

....

S/2016/714 at ¶51 (16 Aug 2016).

In his 16 August 2016 report, Ban did *not* call for referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court. Ban did *not* call for any punishment for the violators of international law. Ban simply wanted the fighting to stop.

Again, in his 16 September 2016 report, Ban neither called for referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court, nor called for punishment for violators of international law. He did *not* mention war crimes.

... what is most needed is for the conflict to end. As world leaders come together for the seventy-first session of the General Assembly in late September, there should be no greater goal than to put the collective power of the world's leaders together to end the world's greatest humanitarian tragedy. I call upon all Member States, on those who are engaged in the conflict, on those who are engaged in the International Syria Support Group, on any who have influence, to act. The world is watching.

Ban Ki-moon, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," S/2016/796 at ¶41 (16 Sep 2016).

On 10 October, France publicly announced it was exploring how to refer Assad *and* Russia to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for investigation of alleged war crimes.

Reuters reported:

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry also called for a war crimes investigation last week [7 Oct].

It is unclear how the ICC could proceed given that the court has no jurisdiction for crimes in Syria because it is not a member of the ICC.

It appears the only way for the case to make it to the ICC would be through the U.N. Security Council referral, which has been deadlocked over Syria. Moscow vetoed a French resolution in May 2014 to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC.

John Irish, "France to seek ICC options for war crimes investigation in Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 10:44 GMT, 10 Oct 2016.

See also [Associated Press](#).

At a press conference on 10 October 2016, Ban Ki-moon said he was again urging that the Security Council refer Syria to the International Criminal Court.

**QUESTION:** If I could ask you, Secretary-General, you have mentioned violations of international law in Yemen. In the past, you have mentioned possible war crimes in Syria. And yet on both subjects, both wars, the Security Council has no agreement at all. They can't even come up with a statement on Yemen. They can't even agree the words of a statement. What is your message to the Security Council about their duty?

**Secretary General:** I have raised and urged the Security Council already on several times that the situation in Syria should be referred to the International Criminal Court. I am urging this message again. As far as the Yemen situation is concerned, ....

....

**QUESTION:** My question is about the ICC, about referring the question of Syria to the ICC. Are you willing to use your Article 99 authority and bring this issue to the International Criminal Court?

**Secretary General:** I already answered. I asked and urged the Security Council to bring this matter to the ICC. I am urging again.

"Secretary-General's press encounter," [U.N.](#), 10 Oct 2016.

Again, in his 18 October 2016 report, Ban called for referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Recent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including on a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy in Urum al-Kubra on 19 September, are absolutely and utterly unacceptable. There simply can be no explanation or excuse, no reason or rationale for waging war on civilians, on doctors, on children, on teachers, on humanitarian workers trying to reach those in desperate need of assistance. For the world not to pursue the perpetrators of such brutality would be a grave abdication of duty. It would deny Syrians justice and healing. It would shred the credibility of an international community that claims to be concerned about upholding our common humanity. As I have made clear in recent statements, I am gravely concerned that some of these acts of brutality are war crimes. I am therefore, once again, urging the Security Council to refer the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to the International Criminal Court.

Ban Ki-moon, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," S/2016/873 at ¶36 (18 Oct 2016).

On 20 October 2016, Ban Ki-moon addressed the United Nations General Assembly, and asked them to solve the problem of the civil war, because the U.N. Security Council had failed. Ban specifically mentioned prosecution for war crimes:

Grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed in Syria. Some of these may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. I call on all of you to cooperate and fulfil your collective responsibility to protect.

Accountability is a responsibility we must all uphold. Failing to do so would deny Syrians justice and healing.

Members of the Government who gave orders or were part of the chain of command must be brought to account. Others on the battlefield must also be brought into the halls of justice.

Most immediately, I have established an internal United Nations Board of Inquiry to investigate the tragedy involving a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent relief operation to Urum al-Kubra on 19 September.

Ban Ki-moon, "Secretary-General's remarks to Informal Meeting of the General Assembly on the Situation in Syria [as delivered]," [U.N.](#), 20 Oct 2016.

As mentioned above, as of 31 October 2016, the U.N. General Assembly has failed to take on the Syria problem.

On 27 October, the Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary General called for an investigation of airstrikes on a school in Idlib province that killed at least 20 children. (See [above](#).) He said: "If such horrific acts persist despite global outrage, it is largely because their authors, whether in corridors of power or in insurgent redoubts, do not fear justice."

### **My Comments on War Crimes Prosecution**

My comment is that diplomats have been making futile threats about war crime prosecution for the Syrian civil war since October 2013, and perhaps earlier. On 2 Dec 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said she had evidence that Assad had committed war crimes. (See my [second essay](#).)

In May 2014, the French submitted a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council that would have referred the Syrian civil war to the ICC for investigation and prosecution, but both Russia and China vetoed the French proposal. (See my essay for [May 2014](#).)

My essay for [April 2015](#) discusses jurisdiction of the ICC. In short, the only way to get Syria before the ICC is for the U.N. Security Council to refer the matter to the ICC, but Russia will surely veto the referral. In other words, you can't get there from here.

In my previous essays, I have repeatedly commented that empty threats to prosecute Assad and others in Syria for war crimes does *not* improve the situation in Syria, and also makes the United Nations appear weak and ineffective.

- In [December 2013](#), I commented: "Repeated — and futile — calls for war crimes prosecution does *not* create respect for international law."
- In my essay for [August 2014](#), I commented: "... *repeatedly threatening* Assad and insurgents with prosecution for war crimes is an ineffective way to obtain compliance with international law, and only exposes the weakness of the United Nations."
- In my essay for [March 2015](#), I commented: "Humanitarians and politicians have been bleating about 'war crimes' by Islamic terrorists for more than two years, but the threats of war crime prosecutions have *zero* effect on the perpetrators. Futile threats are ineffective in changing behavior, and expose that the threatener is impotent, feeble, and ignorable."

Because the U.N. Security Council will *not* refer Syria to the ICC, we need to look at alternatives to the ICC. I can envision the USA, Western Europe, and allies (e.g., Canada, Australia, and maybe some Arab nations in the Gulf) creating an ad hoc court to investigate and prosecute Assad, the insurgents, and Russia for war crimes in Syria. Such a court should be operated by lawyers and jurists from nations that are *not* part of the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, and also *not* expatriates from Syria, in order to be impartial and unbiased.

However, there are two huge problems with any court that considers war crimes in Syria while Assad's government continues:

1. The criminal suspects will *not* voluntarily submit to the jurisdiction of the court. That means they will need to be tried in absentia — which makes a zealous defense unlikely and increases the probability of an unfair verdict.
2. After a guilty verdict, any punishment will be *unenforceable*, because any absent guilty parties will ignore the judgment of the court.

Ignoring the judgment of the court actually happened on 12 July 2016 when the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague declared that China was unlawfully asserting territorial claims in the South China Sea. China simply ignored the verdict, defied the court, and continued its military presence on islands in international waters. [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

These two problems can be solved by waiting until after the end of the Syrian civil war. The new government in Syria might hand over some of the former members of Assad's government and some of the insurgents, so the defendants would be physically present in court and also available for punishment.

But it is more likely that any new government in Syria will want to try Assad and cronies, and then execute them. The same thing happened in Iraq with the trial and hanging of Saddam Hussein.

Finally, it is a nonstarter to threaten Russia with prosecution for war crimes. History shows that only defeated parties are prosecuted for 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 1792 Iraqis killed in terrorism, violence, and armed conflict during October 2016. There were 1120 civilians killed and 672 dead in the Iraqi security forces (e.g., army, federal police, Peshmerga and militias). This was the highest number of dead civilians since August 2014. [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.
- 

#### October 2016: Islamic Terrorism in Iraq

On 3 October 2016, three attacks in Baghdad killed a total of at least 16 civilians. ISIL claimed credit for the two deadlier attacks. [Associated Press](#).

On 10 October 2016, the [Associated Press](#) published a news article about politics in Iraq, which article contained the terse remark: "... attacks are still a near-daily occurrence in Baghdad, and on Monday [10 Oct] alone a string of seven bomb attacks across the city killed

14 people and wounded at least 33."

On 15 October 2016, an ISIL suicide bomber exploded at a funeral in northern Baghdad, killing at least 35 people. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) reported 41 dead at the funeral, plus 8 policemen died in an attack on a checkpoint in the town of Mutaibija. Also gunmen invaded the house of a Sunni paramilitary leader opposed to ISIL in the town of Ishaq, killing his wife and three children.

On 16 October 2016, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in a group of Shiites, killing 4 and wounding 12. [Associated Press](#).

On 17 October 2016, an ISIL suicide car bomber detonated the explosives in his vehicle as Shiite militia convoy drove past a checkpoint 15 km south of Baghdad, killing at least 10 people. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 21 October, three ISIL suicide bombers killed 13 employees at an electricity generating plant in Dibis, a town north of Kirkuk. [Associated Press](#); [Associated Press](#)(blog).

Also on 21 October, a group of ISIL terrorists attacked Kirkuk. [Associated Press](#). On 22 Oct the [Associated Press](#) reported that "at least 80 people, mostly security forces" had been killed yesterday by 56 ISIL terrorists in Kirkuk.

On 23 October, ISIL sent a group of terrorists to attack the town of Rutba, in Iraq and near the border with Syria and Jordan. Details are sketchy, but the fighting in Rutba was continuing on 25 Oct. [Associated Press](#)(25 Oct). After a four-day battle, ISIL was defeated in Rutba. [Reuters](#)(26 Oct).

On 24 October, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "In Baghdad, meanwhile, a series of small bombings killed 11 people and wounded another 35, according to police and hospital officials, ...."

On 24 October, ISIL sent a group of 15 terrorists to attack the town of Sinjar in Iraq. Peshmerga killed all of these ISIL attackers. [Reuters](#). The attacks in Dibis, Kirkuk, Rutba, and Sinjar may be attempts by ISIL to encourage the Iraqi government to move some troops away from Mosul, to protect other towns from ISIL attacks.

On 25 October, it was announced that ISIL had murdered 50 former Iraqi policemen who were held by ISIL in Mosul. [Associated Press](#).

On 29 October 2016, the [Associated Press](#) reported that in Baghdad an ISIL "suicide bomber targeting an aid station for Shiite pilgrims killed at least seven people and wounded more than 20".

On 30 October 2016, a car bomb exploded at "a popular fruit and vegetable market" in a Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad. That one bomb killed at least 10 people. There were four other bombings in Baghdad on 30 Oct, and the total of all five bombings was 17 dead. [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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## 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.

My essay for [July 2016](#) mentioned Abadi finally banned the use of bogus bomb-detector wands, and a protest demonstration in Baghdad on 15 July. Apparently, the dysfunctional Iraqi parliament failed to meet during July, the third consecutive month of no meetings.

My essay for [August 2016](#) mentioned that the Iraqi parliament sacked the Defense Minister, after he accused several members of parliament of corruption.

My essay for [September 2016](#) mentioned that the Iraqi parliament sacked the Finance Minister. That essay also contained my final text on the absence of criminal prosecution for corrupt Iraqi army officers who hired "ghost soldiers", as well as the lack of criminal prosecution of Iraqi army officers who gave orders to flee from Mosul in 2014 and from Ramadi in 2015. Although criminal prosecution had been promised by Prime Minister Abadi, the prosecution never occurred.

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### October 2016

Back in August 2015, prime minister Abadi proposed to abolish the two vice-presidents of Iraq and the deputy prime minister of Iraq. On 10 October 2016, the Iraqi supreme court declared it would be unconstitutional for the government to abolish positions that are mentioned in the constitution. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Although Abadi explained his proposal would reduce costs, one of the two vice-presidents is Nouri al-Maliki — the previous prime minister, who has frustrated many of Abadi's proposed reforms.

Iraq has a corrupt and dysfunctional government. ISIL terrorists run amok inside Iraq, killing more than 600 people each month. So what does the Iraqi parliament do? On 23 Oct, the Iraqi parliament passed legislation banning the sale of alcoholic beverages! [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Note that ISIL also bans the sale of alcoholic beverages in towns controlled by ISIL, so now Iraq and ISIL have something in common.

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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."

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](#).

On 28 September 2016, the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced that an additional 615 U.S. troops would be sent to Iraq, to assist Iraqis with the assault on Mosul. The additional troops makes a total of 5262 U.S. military personnel in Iraq. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).

On 20 October 2016, Jason Finan was killed by an ISIL roadside bomb near Mosul. He was the fourth U.S. military person to be killed in combat in Iraq. [CENTCOM](#)(20 Oct); [Associated Press](#)(night of 20 Oct); [Pentagon](#)(21 Oct); [San Diego Union-Tribune](#)(21 Oct); [Washington Post](#)(22 Oct).

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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](#).)
7. On 20 September 2016, the chairman of the U.S.military's Joint Chiefs of Staff publicly said that the Iraqi army would be ready to liberate Mosul in October 2016. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
8. On 4 October 2016, Iraqi prime minister Abadi said "victory is near" in Mosul. [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).
- 9.

### October 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](#).

On 22 September 2016, the Iraqi army captured the northern district of Shirqat, which put the Iraqi army a little closer to Mosul. [Reuters](#).

On 9 October 2016, [The Telegraph](#) in London reported "a massive international offensive expected to begin later this month" to liberate Mosul.

On 14 October 2016, a few hundred Iraqi special forces arrived at the front line near Mosul. This was one of many troop movements in preparation for the liberation of Mosul. [Associated Press](#).

When the Iraqi army was fighting to liberate Qayara in June 2016, the fleeing ISIL fighters set at least 15 oil wells on fire. The [Washington Post](#) reported on 15 October that many of those fires are still burning, four months later. My comment is that this is testimony to the incompetence, waste, and environmental disaster of the Iraqi government. Meanwhile, the black smoke obscures the sky downwind from Qayara.

On Monday, 17 October 2016, at 01:45 Iraqi time, Abadi announced the beginning of the battle to liberate Mosul from ISIL. The army assault began at sunrise, about 06:00 Iraqi time. (Iraq is *not* on daylight savings time.) Only the Iraqi army and police will enter Mosul, because Shiite militias would anger the Sunni residents of Mosul. [Rudaw](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Pentagon](#).

ISIL captured Mosul in June 2014. In the 28 months since then, ISIL has fortified Mosul to withstand the expected invasion by the Iraqi army. One of the ISIL measures is a trench surrounding the city, 2 meters wide and 2 meters deep. The trench will be filled with crude oil and ignited, to prevent infantry from crossing the flaming trench. Also, the black smoke from the burning crude oil will obscure the sky, making air surveillance and airstrikes more difficult. [Reuters](#)(20 Sep); [Reuters](#)(12 Oct). Other ISIL defensive measures in Mosul include:

2. tunnels in which to hide from airstrikes, and move without being seen by aerial surveillance
3. install roadside bombs
4. booby-trap buildings
5. rig each of Mosul's five bridges with explosives
6. manufacture chemical weapons to use on invaders.

The battle to liberate Mosul from ISIL will be especially difficult because of the delay by the incompetent Iraqi army, which allowed ISIL to fortify Mosul.

There are an estimated 1.5 million civilians currently in Mosul. ISIL will use them as human shields, for example, digging tunnels under residential neighborhoods. Civilians who escape from Mosul are expected to overwhelm the already strained refugee camps in Iraq.

Beginning in April 2015, the Iraqi army liberated the cities of Tikrit, Baiji, Ramadi, and Fallujah from ISIL, and some ISIL fighters from those cities fled to Mosul. So ISIL has experienced fighters in Mosul.

On 18 October, the second day of the assault on Mosul, the Iraqi army paused, after yesterday encountering stiffer resistance from ISIL than expected. The Associated Press reports: "The front line east of Mosul is now some 30 kilometers from the city [of Mosul]." [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#).

On 19 October, Peshmerga found that ISIL had fled from some villages surrounding Mosul, but ISIL left explosives in abandoned buildings. After booby trapping the buildings, ISIL retreated to Mosul. [Reuters](#).

On 20 October, Abadi boasted that the liberation of Mosul is going faster than planned. Abadi said: "The forces are pushing towards the town more quickly than we thought and more quickly than we had programmed." [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). But the Iraqi army is still tens of kilometers from the outside edge of Mosul, so the liberation of Mosul has really *not* yet begun.

On 21 October, the Iraqi army liberated the Christian town of Bartella, about 15 km east of

Mosul. [Associated Press](#).

On 22 October, the Iraqi army pushed into the town "of Hamdaniyah, also known as Qaraqosh and Bakhdida", 20 km from Mosul. Separately, on 20 Oct ISIL set a sulfur mine south of Mosul on fire, which released a cloud of toxic smoke. The wind shifted on 22 Oct and the smoke affected 250 Iraqi people in towns and U.S. personnel at the Qayara West airbase. [Associated Press](#); [Associated Press](#)(blog); [Washington Post](#).

On 24 October, the Associated Press summarized the first week of the Iraqi campaign to liberate Mosul from ISIL.

Iraqi special forces captured Bartella, a historically Christian town some 15 kilometers (9 miles) east of Mosul, and celebrated victory by raising the Iraqi flag over its church and ringing the church bell.

The Iraqi army's 9th Division pushed into the nearby town of Hamdaniyah and said it captured the main government compound. To the north, Kurdish forces known as the peshmerga have driven IS out of several villages and, along with Iraqi special forces, have encircled the town of Bashiqa.

Progress has been slower to the south of Mosul, where troops have only advanced to around 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the city. They were hampered over the weekend after IS torched a nearby sulfur plant, sending a cloud of toxic fumes into the air that mingled with smoke from oil wells the militants had lit on fire.

Susannah George & Joseph Krauss, "Limited gains in first week of Iraq's Mosul offensive," [Associated Press](#) 07:30 GMT, 24 Oct 2016.

My comment is that civilians and ISIL have abandoned many villages surrounding Mosul, it is still necessary for the Iraqi forces to secure those villages before entering Mosul.

Also on 24 October, Reuters reported:

CTS [Counter Terrorism Service] forces took a handful of villages west of the Christian town of Bartella in an early morning attack on Monday [24 Oct] and are now six kilometres (about four miles) east of Mosul.

The areas taken so far have been largely empty of civilian populations, but civilians could be living in the two villages lying ahead, Bazwaia and Gogjali, bordering Mosul proper.

....

The army's press office said a total of 78 villages and town have been recaptured between Oct. 17, when the Mosul operation started, and Sunday evening [23 Oct], more than 770 Islamic State fighters have been killed.

Maher Chmaytelli & Stephen Kalin, "Islamic State steps up counter-attacks as fighting edges closer to Mosul," [Reuters](#), 07:46 GMT, 24 Oct 2016.

On the night of 25 October, Reuters reported more progress in the campaign to liberate Mosul from ISIL:

An elite unit of the Iraqi army [the U.S.-trained Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)] paused its week-long advance on Mosul as it approached the city's eastern edge on Tuesday [25 Oct], waiting for other U.S.-backed forces to close in on Islamic State's last major urban stronghold in Iraq.

....

About 90 Islamic State-held villages and towns around Mosul have been retaken so far into the offensive, according to statements from the army. The distance from the frontlines to the city ranges from just a couple of kilometres in the east, to 30 kilometres (nearly 20 miles) in the south.

Stephen Kalin & Maher Chmaytelli, "Iraqi army's elite force pauses advance near Mosul," [Reuters](#); 00:27 GMT, 26 Oct 2016.

On 26 October 2016, the Iraqi army and federal police have stalled in Shora, Iraq, approximately 30 km south of Mosul. The CTS continues to pause a few kilometers east of Mosul, waiting for the Iraqi campaign south of Mosul to catch up. [Reuters](#).

On 29 October, Shiite militias joined the Mosul battle, fighting at villages near the western edge of Mosul. One goal is to prevent ISIL fighters from escaping from Mosul to Syria. Another goal is to complete the besiegement of Mosul. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Also on 29 October, the Iraqi army took control of Shura, a small town south of Mosul. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 31 October, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Iraqi special forces were "poised to enter Mosul in an offensive to drive out Islamic State militants after sweeping into the last village on the city's eastern edge Monday [31 Oct] .... By evening, the fighting had stopped and units took up positions less than a mile from Mosul's eastern border and about 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the center" of Mosul. The Associated Press says that the Iraqi army south of Mosul is still 35 kilometers away from the southern edge of Mosul. [Reuters](#) reported that Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) entered the eastern part of Mosul on 31 Oct.

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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](#).
- On 4 August 2016, an Egyptian military airstrike killed the leader of ISIL in Egypt, Abu Doaa al-Ansari. [Ahram](#); [Associated Press](#); [Ahram](#)(18 Aug confirmation); [Al-Arabiya](#)(19 Aug).
- On 30 August 2016, a U.S. airstrike near Al Bab, Syria, splatted Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani. He is said to be the head of external operations of ISIL (i.e., in charge of attacks in Europe, etc.), a tactician, and their chief spokesman. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#)(31Aug); [Associated Press](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Pentagon](#)(12Sep).
- On 8 September 2016, Abu Hajer al Homsy, also known as Abu Omar Saraqeb, the top military commander of Nusra Front (now called "Jabhat Fateh al-Sham") was killed by an airstrike in the village of Kafr Naha, Syria. [Reuters](#); [Middle East Eye](#). On 9 Sep, [FRANCE24](#)(AFP) and [Al-Arabiya](#) reports that the Pentagon denied a U.S.-airstrike killed him.
- On 7 September 2016, a U.S. airstrike splatted Wa'il Adil Hasan Salman al-Fayad, a senior leader of ISIL and the ISIL minister of information, who prepared terrorist videos. [Pentagon](#); [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#); [Reuters](#)(10 Oct).
- On 3 October 2016, a U.S. airstrike in Idlib province of Syria killed Sheikh Abu al Faraj al-Masri (real name = Sheikh Ahmad Salamah Mabrouk), an Egyptian terrorist who in the 1980s fought in Afghanistan with Ayman al-Zawahri (the current Al-Qaeda leader). [Reuters](#) says the dead Sheikh was a "prominent member" of Nusra Front in Syria. [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 (maximum of 8 years).

Indeed, the following section [section](#) of this essay gives examples of major attacks by ISIL after May 2015, to show that ISIL has *not* been defeated.

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.

On 25 September 2016, the Associated Press

Five years after Anwar al-Awlaki was killed by an American drone strike, he keeps inspiring acts of terror.

Investigators say a bomb that rocked New York a week ago, injuring more than two dozen people, was the latest in a long line of incidents in which the attackers were inspired by al-Awlaki, an American imam who became an al-Qaida propagandist.

....

Terror experts say al-Awlaki remains a dangerous inciter of homegrown terror. He spoke American English, and his sermons are widely available online. And since he was killed in Yemen on Sept. 30, 2011, martyred in the eyes of followers, those materials take on an almost mythic quality. His primary message: Muslims are under attack and have a duty to carry out attacks on non-believers at home.

Among the attackers who investigators and terror experts say were inspired by al-Awlaki and his videos: the couple who carried out the San Bernardino, California, shootings, which left 14 people dead in December [2015], and the brothers behind the Boston Marathon bombing, which killed three people and injured more than 260 others in April 2013.

....

The director of the Center on National Security at Fordham Law School, Karen Greenberg, .... noted her center's study of the first 101 Islamic State group cases in federal courts, updated through June, showed more than 25 percent of the cases' court records contained references to al-Awlaki's influence.

Larry Neumeister, "US terror attacks' common denominator: Anwar al-Awlaki," [Associated Press](#), 25 Sep 2016.

The Internet serves as a giant library, which is continuously available to everyone. It should be *no* surprise that the Internet gives ideas an immortality beyond the life of their author. Just as the Internet continues to spread the terrorist messages of Anwar al-Awlaki, the Internet *could* also spread the message of mainstream Islam that condemns terrorism.

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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## **ISIL is *not* defeated**

Politicians love to give speeches claiming that the enemy is being defeated. In response to Obama's speech on 6 July 2015, I wrote a rebuttal that documents that ISIL is not only functional, but also ISIL has spread to other nations where it engages in terrorism. For example:

1. On 10 June 2014, ISIL captured Mosul (the second largest city in Iraq), but the Iraqis have been unable to begin the liberation of Mosul.
2. My essay for [Jan 2015](#) chronicled the spread of ISIL to Egypt, Libya, and Afghanistan.
3. On 23-24 Feb 2015, ISIL abducted more than 220 Assyrian Christians in Syria. As of 30 Aug 2015, only approximately 46 have been released by ISIL.
4. On 17 May 2015, ISIL captured Ramadi in Iraq. After seven months of procrastination and delay, on 27-28 Dec 2015, the Iraqi army captured the government center in downtown Ramadi, as explained in detail in my essays.
5. On 20 May 2015, ISIL captured Palmyra in Syria. [Reuters](#); [BBC](#).

6. On 22 May 2015, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in a Shiite mosque in Saudi Arabia, killing 21 people. [Washington Post](#); [Arab News](#)(AFP).
7. My essay for [June 2015](#) cited that an ISIL suicide bomber killed 27 people at a Shiite mosque in Kuwait on 26 June.
8. On 26 June 2015, an ISIL terrorist killed 38 people on a beach in Tunisia. [Associated Press](#).
9. On 1 July 2015, ISIL attacked Egyptian army posts in the Sinai, killing at least 64 Egyptian soldiers. [Associated Press](#).
10. On 11 July 2015, an ISIL car bomb damaged the Italian consulate in Cairo, killing 1 pedestrian. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Casualties were few because the bomb exploded at 06:30 local time, when few people were on the street. The attack shows that ISIL can strike anywhere.
11. On 16 July 2015, ISIL in the Sinai Province of Egypt launched a missile that caused a fire on an Egyptian Navy ship. [Ahram](#) in Egypt; [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
12. On 17 July 2015, the last day of the Ramadan month, an ISIL suicide truck bomb at a market in the Diyala province of Iraq killed at least 115 people.
13. On 6 August 2015, ISIL captured the town of Qaryatain in Syria. [Associated Press](#); [SOHR](#). Also on 6 August, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated at a mosque used by Saudi Arabian police, killing at least 15 people. [Associated Press](#); [Arab News](#).
14. On 12 August 2015, ISIL in Egypt beheaded a hostage from Croatia, who was an oil and gas surveyor and who was kidnapped by ISIL on 22 July. It was the first time ISIL in Egypt had killed a foreigner. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
15. On 7 September 2015, ISIL captured the final Syrian oilfield. ISIL now controls *all* of the oilfields in Syria. [SOHR](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).
16. On 22 October 2015, IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center reported that the number of terrorist attacks by ISIL in the Middle East and Africa increased by 42% from the second quarter of 2015 to the third quarter of 2015. [Associated Press](#); [Voice of America](#).
17. On 31 October 2015, ISIL put a bomb aboard a Russian airplane carrying tourists from Sharm el-Sheikh airport in Egypt to St. Petersburg, killing 224 people. [The Guardian](#) (crash); [NY Times](#) (crash); [NY Times](#) (blame ISIL); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#) (bomb in soda can); [Reuters](#) ("Schweppes bomb").
18. On 12 November 2015, ISIL claimed responsibility for a bombing in Beirut that killed at least 43 people. [Telegraph](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).

19. On the night of 13 November 2015, ISIL masterminded multiple attacks in Paris that killed 130 people. See my essay for [November 2015](#).
20. On 19 December 2015, the [Associated Press](#) has a headline: "Islamic State expands Afghan footprint with terror campaign". The previous day [Reuters](#) reported: "U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter warned of the threat from Islamic State in Afghanistan during a surprise visit days after the Pentagon painted a grim picture of worsening security there."
21. On 12 January 2016, a Syrian ISIL suicide bomber exploded in Istanbul, killing 10 tourists. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Anadolu](#); [Hurriyet](#). This was apparently an attack on Turkey's tourist industry. [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).
22. On 29 January 2016, the United Nations Secretary General said there are now 34 terrorist groups who have pledged allegiance to ISIL. Ban Ki-moon said: "it is expected that ISIL affiliates will increase in number and that its membership will grow in 2016." [U.N. Report](#); [Associated Press](#).
23. On 21 February 2016, ISIL detonated two car bombs in Homs, Syria that killed at least 57 people. [Reuters](#). Two ISIL car bombs and two suicide bombers in the Sayeda Zeinab district of Damascus killed at least 87 people. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). At night on 22 Feb, [SOHR](#) claims a total of 190 dead in Homs and Zeinab.
24. On 22 March 2016, three ISIL suicide bombers killed 32 people at the airport and one subway station in Brussels. See my essay for [March 2016](#).
25. On 12 June 2016, an Islamic terrorist perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, killing 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando Florida. The terrorist pledged allegiance to ISIL, although there is *no* evidence that ISIL communicated with him. See 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 my essay for [July 2016](#).
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. On 14 July 2016, an ISIL terrorist drove a truck through a crowd of people in Nice, France, killing 85 people. See my essay for [July 2016](#).
32. On 18, 24, and 26 July 2016, there were ISIL terrorist attacks in Würzburg in Germany, Ansbach in Germany, and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in France. See my essay for [July 2016](#).
33. On 2 August 2016, [NBC News](#) published an exclusive report of a classified National Counterterrorism Center briefing to the White House, that showed a "fully operational" ISIL had spread to 18 nations during Obama's presidency. ISIL is "aspiring" in six additional nations.
34. On 6 August 2016, an Islamic terrorist — and illegal immigrant from Algeria — used a machete to slash the faces of two policewomen in Charleroi, Belgium. See my essay for [August 2016](#).
35. On 20 August, ISIL sent a suicide bomber to a wedding party in Gaziantep, Turkey, where at least 54 people were killed. Early reports said the suicide bomber was between 12 and 14 years old. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#)(21Aug); [Associated Press](#)(22Aug).

36.

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

As of August 31, 2016, the total cost of operations related to ISIL since kinetic operations started on August 8, 2014, is \$9.3 billion and the average daily cost is \$12.3 million for 755 days of operations. A further breakdown of cost associated with the operations is [here](#).

"Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 20 Oct 2016.

Something is wrong at the Pentagon. My essay for September 2016 cited cost data from 15 August. Now, a month later, the accountants at the Pentagon have only advanced by 16 days.

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 Russia, Iran, USA, and Syria's neighbors. On 27 Sep 2016, the U.S. Government has spent a total of US\$ 5.9 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 daily press releases into my monthly essays, to chronicle these airstrikes.

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## 1 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Sept. 30, coalition military forces conducted 23 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted, and rotary aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, three strikes destroyed six oil tanker trucks, two vehicles, and an oil pump jack and damaged a vehicle and another oil tanker truck.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed three oil tanker trucks, two oil pump jacks, a bulldozer, and an oil well head.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed 24 oil tanker trucks and two oil well heads.
- Near Manbij, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions, a command and control node, a mortar system, and a vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a vehicle, a command and control node, a fighting position, and a heavy machine gun.
- Near Washiyah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles.

### Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Hit, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL-held buildings, two vehicles, two front-end loaders, two weapons caches and three tunnels entrances.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building and a weapons cache.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three vehicles.

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

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

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

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## 2 October 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 2 October 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and

**Syria:**

On Oct. 1, coalition military forces conducted 19 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 10 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, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

**Syria**

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed two oil pump jacks and damaged two supply routes.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed four oil well heads and four oil tanker trucks.
- Near Manbij, five strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions and a vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed four fighting positions and a vehicle.

**Iraq**

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL modular oil refinery.
- Near Al Qaim, one strike destroyed an ISIL homemade explosives cache.
- Near Bayji, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a mortar system and a supply cache.
- Near Hit, one strike destroyed a mortar system and a weapons cache.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a staging area.
- Near Mosul, two strikes destroyed two ISIL tactical units and destroyed six ISIL-held buildings, four tunnel entrances, and a command and control node.
- Near Ramadi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed a mortar system; and suppressed a mortar firing position.

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

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

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

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### **3 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 2, coalition military forces conducted 34 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against

ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed seven ISIL oil storage tanks and two oil well heads.
- Near Al Shadaddi, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, five strikes destroyed two ISIL oil pump jacks, two oil well heads, a crane, and an oil tanker truck, and damaged four supply routes.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes destroyed an ISIL oil tanker truck and damaged four supply routes.
- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Mar'a, seven strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions, two VBIEDs, a heavy machine gun, and a vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL weapons cache and damaged a vehicle.
- Near Hit, one strike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed two tunnel entrances and suppressed a mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL headquarters buildings and a front-end loader.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and a staging area and destroyed four vehicles, a fuel truck, three ISIL-held buildings, a weapons cache, a supply cache, and a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle storage area.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed five ISIL-held buildings, and four repeater tower generators; and suppressed a light machine gun.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units; destroyed two tunnel entrances, two ISIL-held buildings, and a vehicle; and suppressed a sniper firing position.

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

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

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

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## 4 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 3, coalition military forces conducted 26 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition

military forces conducted 10 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed three oil well heads and two oil tanker trucks.
- Near Al Shadaddi, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions and a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed three ISIL oil well heads, an oil storage tank, and an oil drum cache.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes destroyed 11 ISIL petroleum, oil and lubricant equipment assets, nine oil tanker trucks, and two oil well heads.
- Near Idlib, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Manbij, one strike destroyed an ISIL machine gun.
- Near Mar'a, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions and a command and control node.

### **Iraq**

- Near Hit, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 11 vehicles, five ISIL-held buildings, four weapons caches, two VBIEDs, and a heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units, two staging areas, a VBIED factory, a weapons factory, and a weapons logistics facility and destroyed four vehicles, two weapons caches, two supply caches, a command and control node, and two ISIL-held buildings.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed two ISIL vehicles.
- Near Ramadi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a heavy machine gun.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL repeater tower power supply system.

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

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

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

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## **5 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 4, coalition military forces conducted [30] strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted [16] strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government

of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, four strikes destroyed three ISIL oil well heads, six supply routes, and an oil pump jack.
- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed three ISIL oil well heads and an oil pump jack and damaged six supply routes. [added 6 Oct]
- Near Al Shadaddi, two strikes destroyed two ISIL front-end loaders.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed four ISIL oil collection pools, three oil well heads, and two vehicles.
- Near Mar'a, five strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed three fighting positions and a mortar system; and suppressed a heavy machine gun firing position.

### Iraq

- Near Hit, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kisik, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed a vehicle, a tunnel, and a weapons cache; and suppressed a mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed three fighting positions, an oil tanker truck, an ISIL-held building, an explosives cache, a weapons cache, a command and control node, and a vehicle; and damaged an oil tanker truck.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit, destroyed an ISIL-held building, and damaged a repeater tower power generator.
- Near Ramadi, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed a tractor, a vehicle, a VBIED, a supply cache, a tunnel, and an ISIL-held building; and damaged a second ISIL-held building.

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

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

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

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## 6 October 2016: airstrikes

On Thursday, 6 October 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On Oct. 5, coalition military forces conducted 27 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted nine strikes using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes destroyed nine ISIL oil tanker trucks, seven oil truck trailers, four oil pump jacks, an oil storage tank, and a front-end loader.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a front-end loader.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed an ISIL oil well head and damaged two supply routes.
- Near Manbij, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units, destroyed three fighting positions and two heavy machine guns, and suppressed a mortar position.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

## **Iraq**

- Near Al Huwayjah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Baghdad, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL staging area.
- Near Hit, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed two ISIL-held buildings, a vehicle, and a weapons cache; and damaged a second ISIL-held building.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed three vehicles, a weapons cache, two supply caches, a command and control node, a mortar system, and an anti-air artillery system.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system and a fighting position.
- Near Ramadi, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles, two bunkers, and a tunnel entrance.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings and a vehicle.

Additionally, due to a delayed strike assessment two strikes near Dayz Ar Zawr conducted on Oct. 4 were not reported on the Oct. 5 strike release. The correct assessment reads:

- Near Abu Kamal [Syria], two strikes destroyed three ISIL oil well heads and an oil pump jack and damaged six supply routes.

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

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

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 6 Oct 2016.

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## **7 October 2016: airstrikes**

Monday, 10 October, is a federal holiday, so both CENTCOM and the Pentagon failed to

post any press releases on airstrikes during 7-9 October.

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

On Oct. 6, coalition military forces conducted 24 strikes against 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 15 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed eight ISIL oil tanker trucks, two oil tanker truck trailers, and two oil well heads.
- Near Al Shadaddi, five strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed three vehicles, a fighting position, and inoperable coalition equipment.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED facility.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Qaim, one strike destroyed an ISIL homemade explosives cache.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker, a mortar system, and an anti-air artillery system.
- Near Hit, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and two staging areas and destroyed four ISIL-held buildings, two supply caches, two vehicles, a homemade explosives cache, and an artillery system.
- Near Kisik, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed three weapons caches and a mortar system; and damaged a tunnel.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units, a staging area and destroyed a tunnel, a vehicle, a VBIED factory, a weapons factory, and an ISIL-held building.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building and a mortar system.

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

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

Not posted at the Pentagon.

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## **8 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 7, coalition military forces conducted 24 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets. Additionally in

Iraq, coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, three strikes destroyed an ISIL oil well head, an oil storage tank, and an oil pump jack and damaged five supply routes.
- Near Al Shadaddi, four strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions, two ISIL-held buildings, and a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes destroyed four ISIL oil pump jacks and two oil well heads.
- Near Mar'a, one strike damaged an ISIL VBIED facility.
- Near Washiyah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building and a command and control node.

### **Iraq**

- Near Hit, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five vehicles and a weapons cache.
- Near Kisik, two strikes destroyed two ISIL tunnel entrances, a bunker, and a mortar system and suppressed a mortar firing position.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed four ISIL-held buildings and two vehicles.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed a mortar system and a watercraft; and suppressed a mortar firing position.
- Near Ramadi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building, a tunnel, and a vehicle.

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

[Central Command](#), 8 Oct 2016.

Not posted at the Pentagon.

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## **9 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 8, coalition military forces conducted 26 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery 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 and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike damaged three supply routes.

- Near Al Hawl, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position and a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil well head and two oil pump jacks.
- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions, a mortar system, and a vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike damaged three ISIL supply routes.
- Near Mar'a, five strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions and three vehicles.

### **Iraq**

- Near Hit, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed six ISIL-held buildings, two vehicles, and a fighting position; and damaged four ISIL-held buildings.
- Near Mosul, seven strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units, a staging area, and 10 T-wall retainers and destroyed three tunnels, two bunkers, a command and control node, a VBIED facility, a mortar position, and an ISIL-held building.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes destroyed ten ISIL rocket rails, five rocket systems, and a vehicle.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building, a vehicle, a command and control node, and a checkpoint.

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

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

Not posted at the Pentagon.

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## **10 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 9, coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight strikes using attack, bomber, and fighter 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, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike damaged two supply routes.
- Near Al Shadaddi, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three fighting positions and a vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes damaged four ISIL supply routes.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle

and a fighting position.

- Near Palmyra, one strike destroyed an ISIL headquarters facility.

### **Iraq**

- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and a staging area; destroyed a training camp, a mortar cache, a logistical node, a sniper position, a supply cache, and a tunnel; and damaged another tunnel.
- Near Sinjar, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions, two vehicles, a mortar system, and a logistical node.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.

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

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

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

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## **11 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 10, coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, coalition military forces conducted eight strikes using attack, bomber, and fighter 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 Abu Kamal, one strike damaged a supply route.
- Near Al Hawl, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes destroyed three ISIL oil well heads and an oil tanker truck and damaged two supply routes.
- Near Manbij, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed six fighting positions and two vehicles.

### **Iraq**

- Near Bayji, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three fighting positions, two weapons caches, two bunkers, and a tunnel entrance.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed three ISIL vehicles.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed an ISIL-held building, a fighting position, a heavy machine gun, and three tunnels; damaged a trench and another tunnel; and suppressed a second tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit, a staging area, six headquarters buildings, two media centers, a VBIED facility, and a weapons facility and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings, a command and control node, an

anti-air artillery system, and a weapons cache.

- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five fighting positions.

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

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

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

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## 12 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 11, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against 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 seven strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a VBIED.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, four strikes destroyed 11 ISIL oil tanker trucks, six oil well heads, three vehicles, a front-end loader and a crane.
- Near Manbij, one strike suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mar'a, four strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions and a vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Fallujah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, four strikes destroyed two ISIL mortar systems, an ISIL-held building, a weapons cache, a supply cache, and a tunnel.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and a staging area and destroyed two command and control nodes.

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

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

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

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## 13 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 12, coalition military forces conducted 19 strikes against 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 10 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed four ISIL oil well heads, four oil collection tanks, and a vehicle.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike destroyed seven fighting positions.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes engaged an ISIL supply route and destroyed an oil well head.
- Near Mar'a, four strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed a vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL boat and a VBIED.
- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three vehicles.
- Near Bashir, one strike engaged an ISIL staging area and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings, two fighting positions, two tunnels, a storage cache, and an ammunition cache.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed two ISIL ammunition caches, two vehicles, a mortar system, and a tunnel entrance.
- Near Kisik, two strikes destroyed three ISIL tunnel entrances and damaged another tunnel.
- Near Mosul, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three supply caches, two vehicles, two mortar systems, two rocket systems, and a heavy machine gun.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed five ISIL homemade explosive caches, two vehicles, and an artillery system and suppressed a mortar position.

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

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

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

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## 14 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 13, coalition military forces conducted 22 strikes against 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 nine strikes coordinated with and in support of the

Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Al Shadaddi, six strikes engaged six ISIL tactical units and destroyed four fighting positions, two supply caches, and a vehicle.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, four strikes destroyed seven ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Palmyra, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles.

### **Iraq**

- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL staging area and destroyed two tunnels.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and a chemical weapons facility; destroyed three tunnel entrances, a tunnel, a rocket rail, a vehicle, and a trench; and damaged a trench network.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes engaged an ISIL weapons factory and destroyed two boats.

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

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

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

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## **15 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 14, coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against 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 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed 19 ISIL oil tanker trucks and two oil well heads.
- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Ar Raqqah, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil pump jack.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building and a staging area.

- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL improvised explosive device.
- Near Palmyra, one strike destroyed two ISIL vehicles.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and a media center; destroyed five rocket rails, four fighting positions, two supply caches, two vehicles, an anti-air artillery system, an ISIL-held building, a mortar system, and a headquarters building; damaged two T-walls; and suppressed another mortar system.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building, an ISIL vehicle, and a weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL media center.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes engaged an ISIL weapons storage facility and a headquarters building.

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

[Central Command](#), 15 Oct 2016.

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

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## **16 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 15, Coalition military forces conducted 19 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft again at ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted six strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Ar Raqqa, four strikes engaged three ISIL supply routes and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike engaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position
- Near Mar'a, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two tactical units.
- Near Palmyra, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a heavy machine gun.

### **Iraq**

- Near Haditha, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed 11 rocket rails, six rocket systems, two vehicles, a weapons cache, and a mortar system; and damaged a tunnel system.
- Near Mosul, one strike destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed an ISIL-held building, a command and control node, an artillery system, and a remotely piloted aircraft; and suppressed a rocket system.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL weapons factory.

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

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

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

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## 17 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 16, Coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted six 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 attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed six oil tanker trucks and an oil pump jack.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike destroyed two oil pump jacks.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes engaged four ISIL supply routes.
- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

### Iraq

- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed an ISIL artillery system and a tunnel.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units, two staging areas, 12 assembly areas, and a bridge; destroyed six tunnel entrances, five supply caches, four repeater tower generators, four mortar systems, a repeater tower, four repeater antennas, four solar panels, two artillery systems, two vehicles, two tunnels, and an anti-air artillery system; damaged a trench tunnel network; and suppressed three mortar systems.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings and two mortar systems.
- Near Rawah, two strikes engaged an ISIL VBIED factory and destroyed a vehicle and a VBIED.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit, two staging areas, and a

headquarters building; destroyed a mortar system; and suppressed two mortar positions.

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

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

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

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## 18 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 17, Coalition military forces conducted 25 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes using attack, bomber, 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, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, three strikes destroyed six oil well heads, two oil tanker trucks, and an oil pump jack.
- Near Al Shadaddi, eight strikes engaged eight ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven fighting positions and two vehicles.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL staging area.
- Near Idlib, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mar'a, four strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions and a vehicle.
- Near Palmyra, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

### Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and two staging areas; destroyed 10 mortar systems, five artillery systems, four ISIL-held buildings, four fighting positions, four vehicles, two supply caches, two repeater tower generators, a VBIED facility, and a VBIED; and suppressed four tactical units and three rocket positions.
- Near Qayyarah, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and a mortar position; destroyed an ISIL-held building, a mortar system, an oil tanker truck, and a rocket-propelled grenade; and damaged a vehicle.

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

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

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

On 17 October 2016, the Iraqi army began its long-awaited assault on Mosul, as described

[above](#). The battle in Mosul is expected to take at least a few weeks, maybe months.

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## 19 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 18, Coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes against 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 six strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed two oil tanker trucks and an oil pump jack.
- Near Al Shadaddi, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed four vehicles and a fighting position.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed eight oil tanker trailers and an oil well head.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Washiyah, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two vehicles.

### Iraq

- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles, two weapons caches, an artillery system, and an ISIL-held building.
- Near Mosul, two strikes destroyed an ISIL-held building and a command and control node.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building and a vehicle.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike suppressed ISIL small arms fire.

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

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

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

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## 20 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 19, Coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes against ISIL terrorists in

Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted six strikes using attack, bomber, 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 attack, bomber, fighter, remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged three ISIL supply routes.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes engaged two ISIL supply routes and destroyed two oil well heads.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged two ISIL staging areas.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil well heads.
- Near Washiyah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

### **Iraq**

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike engaged an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and two staging areas; destroyed four vehicles, four ISIL-held buildings, four fighting positions, three containers, two mortar systems, a tunnel entrance, a bunker, an artillery system, a front end loader, a weapons cache, a heavy machine gun, and a tanker trailer; damaged a VBIED; and suppressed three mortar positions and a fighting position.
- Near Sinjar, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two heavy machine guns and a VBIED, and suppressed mortar fire.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three weapons caches.

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

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

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

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## **21 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 20, Coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes against 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 seven strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Al Shadaddi, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions, a mortar system, and a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes engaged an ISIL supply route and destroyed an oil well head, an oil collection tank, and an oil pump jack.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Manbij, six strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions, two vehicles, and a VBIED.
- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an artillery system.

## **Iraq**

- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and two staging areas; destroyed an ISIL headquarters building, 23 fighting positions, eight ISIL VBIEDs, six ISIL-held buildings, six vehicles, five mortar systems, three heavy machine guns, a tanker truck, and a command and control node; damaged a VBIED; suppressed nine heavy machine gun positions, five sniper positions, four mortar positions, an artillery system position and 11 ISIL tactical units.
- Near Rawah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a VBIED, a vehicle and an ISIL-held building.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two checkpoints.

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

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

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

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## **22 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 21, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted six strikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, rotary and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

## **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged two ISIL-held buildings and destroyed two fighting positions.
- Near Washiyah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

## Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three vehicles.
- Near Al Qaim, one strike destroyed an ISIL anti-air artillery system.
- Near Bashir, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit, 14 mortar systems, an artillery system, a rocket system and two staging areas; destroyed 17 fighting positions, 10 vehicles, eight tunnel entrances, six mortar systems, five VBIEDs, three heavy machine guns, two command and control nodes, two artillery systems, two assembly areas, an ISIL-held building, a VBIED facility, a weapons cache, and a training camp; and damaged a fighting position.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three vehicles.

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

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

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

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## 23 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 22, Coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted five 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 attack, bomber, fighter, rotary and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two oil well heads and a vehicle.
- Near Al Shadaddi, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed six fighting positions.
- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL artillery system.

### Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and a vehicle.
- Near Kisik, one strike damaged an ISIL tunnel.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units, 12 staging areas, six mortar systems, a rocket position and a heavy machine gun; destroyed 21

- fighting positions, 10 mortar systems, eight vehicles, eight command and control nodes, seven ISIL-held buildings, five bunkers, four anti-aircraft guns, four artillery systems, three tunnels, three VBIEDs, two supply caches, two heavy machine guns, a VBIED facility and a front end loader; and damaged three VBIEDs, two tunnels, a fighting position, a repeater tower and a vehicle.
- Near Rawah, two strikes destroyed two ISIL tunnels and a bunker.
  - Near Sultan Abdallah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed seven vehicles, an ISIL-held building, and a checkpoint, and damaged 16 vehicles.

Strike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely. [Central Command](#), 23 Oct 2016.  
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 23 Oct 2016.

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## 24 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 23, Coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted four 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 attack, bomber, fighter, rotary and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes engaged two ISIL supply routes and destroyed an oil pump jack.
- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Palmyra, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

### Iraq

- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five vehicles.
- Near Bashir, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED and a vehicle.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units, two rocket systems, two anti-aircraft artillery systems and two staging areas; destroyed 19 fighting positions, 17 vehicles, 10 heavy machine guns, nine mortar systems, eight command and control nodes, six repeater towers, and four tunnels; and damaged four fighting positions, two vehicles, a mortar system, and a tunnel.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and a staging area, and destroyed three vehicles, an ISIL-held building and a weapons cache.

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

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

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

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## **25 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 24, Coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted three strikes using 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, bomber, fighter, rotary and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike produced inconclusive results.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two fighting positions, a mortar system, and a vehicle.

### **Iraq**

- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 11 vehicles.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and two rocket positions; destroyed 22 fighting positions, eight vehicles, eight tunnels, seven mortar systems, six rocket rails, three heavy machine guns, three rocket systems, two light machine guns, two command and control nodes, a VBIED, a communications tower, an ISIL-held building and a mortar cache; and damaged a mortar system.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged four staging areas.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles and a weapons cache.

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

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

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

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## **26 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 25, Coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted three strikes using attack, bomber and fighter 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, bomber, fighter, remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a fighting position.

### **Iraq**

- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL trench system.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and a mortar system and destroyed seven vehicles, seven tunnels, seven mortar systems, four fighting positions, four supply caches, three staging areas, three ISIL-held buildings, a communications facility, and a VBIED.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed six vehicles, two buildings, a weapons system and a front end loader.

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

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

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

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## **27 October 2016: airstrikes**

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

On Oct. 26, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted seven strikes using attack and bomber aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, rotary and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### **Syria**

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil well head and an oil pump jack.
- Near Al Shadaddi, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions and an anti-air artillery system.
- Near Ar Raqqah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike destroyed an ISIL heavy machine gun.

## Iraq

- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike destroyed five ISIL bunkers.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a tunnel.
- Near Mosul, seven strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed eight anti-air artillery systems, seven fighting positions, five tunnels, four mortar systems, three weapons caches, two VBIEDs, two vehicles, a VBIED facility, a command and control node, a tunnel entrance, a heavy machine gun and an artillery system; and damaged two ISIL tunnels.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL dump truck.

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

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

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

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## 28 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 27, Coalition military forces conducted 9 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted three strikes using 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 attack, bomber, fighter, rotary and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike damaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles and a heavy machine gun.

### Iraq

- Near Ar Rutbah, one strike engaged an ISIL bunker.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and four fighting positions; destroyed four vehicles, four tunnels, two VBIEDs, two mortar systems, a mortar cache, and a weapons cache; and damaged a tunnel.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

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

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

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

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## 29 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 28, Coalition military forces conducted four strikes against ISIL terrorists in Iraq with and in support of the Government of Iraq using bomber, fighter and rotary aircraft.

### Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed two ISIL VBIEDs and a command and control node and damaged four staging areas and two tunnels.
- Near Mosul, one strike destroyed two tunnel entrances, an artillery system, an ammo cache, a mortar system, and a vehicle.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.

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

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

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

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## 30 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 29, Coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes against 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 attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and four supply routes and damaged a vehicle.
- Near Ayn Isa, four strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a heavy machine gun, a fighting position, a vehicle, and an anti-aircraft weapon system.
- Near Manbij, one strike produced inconclusive results.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

### Iraq

- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed a VBIED.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed five fighting positions, three mortar systems, two ISIL-held buildings, two vehicles, a weapons storage facility, a command and control node, a tunnel entrance, a

front-end loader, and an artillery system; damaged two fighting positions; and suppressed two tactical units and a heavy machine gun.

- Near Rawah, three strikes destroyed three ISIL storage containers, a bunker, and a supply cache and damaged an excavator.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings, two vehicles, a VBIED and a heavy machine gun.

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

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

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

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## 31 October 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 30, Coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes against 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 attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

### Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Al Shadaddi, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed two fighting positions, two vehicles, and a command and control node; and suppressed a tactical unit.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed an ISIL oil drilling rig and an oil well head.

### Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Kisik, two strikes destroyed an ISIL checkpoint and a tunnel entrance, and suppressed a tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed three fighting positions, three ISIL-held buildings, two tunnel entrances, two mortar systems, a vehicle, an artillery system, and a forklift; damaged three fighting positions; and suppressed a mortar system and a tactical unit.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL excavator and an oil tanker.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED factory.

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

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

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

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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.
- My essay for [July 2016](#) describes four ISIL attacks in Europe: 84 dead in Nice, France on 14 July; immigrant from Afghanistan or Pakistan uses axe in Würzburg, Germany on 18 July; refugee from Syria detonates bomb in Ansbach, Germany on 24 July; two ISIL attackers murder Catholic priest in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, France on 26 July.
- My essay for [August 2016](#) describes an ISIL attack on two policewomen in Charleroi, Belgium and how Canadian police prevented one ISIL bombing in London, Ontario.

- My essay for [September 2016](#) describes how (1) French police arrested a group of women before they could detonate a bomb, (2) series of bombings in New Jersey and New York City, and (3) an attack in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

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](#).

On 9 August 2016, the [Associated Press](#) reported that approximately 263,600 immigrants arrived in Europe between 1 January and 7 August 2016.

## **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.

On 13 September 2016, [Reuters](#) reported that only 63 refugees have been employed by the top 30 companies in Germany, because of refugees' weak knowledge of the German-language and because of refugees' lack of job skills.

### **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](#).

On 24 October 2016, the French government began demolishing the shanty-town migrant camp in Calais. The approximately 6500 immigrants will be moved to other locations in France. Reuters reported that some immigrants threw rocks at police. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). On 26 October, the last of the immigrants were bussed out of Calais. Some of the immigrants set fire to part of the shanty town. The Associated Press reports that four immigrants from Afghanistan were arrested for arson. [Reuters\(fire\)](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

### **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](#).

On 4 September 2016, there was an state parliament election in Angela Merkel's home state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) captured 30.6% of the vote. In an upset, anti-immigrant party, Alternative für Deutschland, came in second place with 20.8% of the vote. Merkel's party, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), came in third place with 19.0% of the vote. [dpa](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

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### **Arrest in Chemnitz Germany**

In August 2016, police in Canada thwarted a bombing by an Islamic man. In September 2016, police in Paris thwarted a bombing by Islamic women. On 8 October 2016, police in Germany began searching for a Syrian refugee who had explosive material in his apartment.

On 8 October at 07:00 German time, after receiving a tip from Germany's domestic intelligence service, police searched the apartment of Jaber al-Bakr, a 22 year old refugee

from Syria. Police found 1500 grams of highly explosive material hidden in his apartment in Chemnitz. The explosives were too dangerous to transport, so they were detonated in a pit outside Jaber's apartment building. On the morning of 9 Oct, police admitted they did *not* know Jaber's current location.

Deutsche Welle reported: "German police said [previously](#) they had identified 523 people who posed a security threat to the country, around half of whom were known to be currently in the country." My comment is that finding a few hundred terrorists amongst more than one million refugees and other immigrants is an extraordinarily difficult task for police. There are enough terrorists that a suspect wanted by police can find friends or associates who will hide the wanted suspect. For example, Salah Abdeslam — one of the Islamic terrorists who attacked Paris on 13 Nov 2015 and "the most wanted man in Europe" — fled to Belgium, where he was arrested in March 2016. [NY Times](#). As another example, one of the attackers at the Brussels airport on 22 March 2016 was arrested on 8 April 2016.

Late at night on 9 Oct, Jaber approached three Syrian immigrants in the Leipzig train station and asked to sleep in their apartment. The three Syrians agreed and took Jaber to their apartment. When the three recognized Jaber from photographs in the news, they bound him. One of the three Syrians then informed police, who came and arrested Jaber. German chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel thanked the three Syrians. The three Syrians were not publicly identified, to prevent retaliation by Islamic terrorists.

The three Syrians who captured Jaber and gave him to police will help assure Germans that *not all* Syrian immigrants are terrorists. [Associated Press](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

Khalil A., a suspected accomplice of Jaber, was arrested on 8 Oct and remained in police custody on 10 Oct. Khalil arrived in Germany in November 2015.

On 14 October 2016, *Der Spiegel*, a weekly German newsmagazine, published a report on their website about how Jaber had been radicalized in Germany. Worse, Jaber traveled from Germany to Syria and then returned to Germany without the German government noticing.

But what about the man who had been plotting the attack? In an effort to find out more about him, SPIEGEL contacted his brother Alaa, who is 10 years older, by telephone. He lives in Saasaa, a town not far from Damascus, with his parents, three sisters and four brothers. Their father is a prosperous building contractor who is loyal to the regime and has contacts to Syrian President Bashar Assad's Baath party.

....

Prior to fleeing Syria in November 2014, his brother says Jaber stole 5 million Syrian pounds, worth around 24,000 euros at the time, from his father. ....

Alaa regularly spoke to Jaber on the phone. He says: "My brother radicalized in Germany." Jaber, he says, watched horrific videos from Syria in the internet and an imam in Berlin brainwashed him, telling Jaber to return to Syria and fight. In September 2015, he says, al-Bakr traveled via Istanbul to the Islamic State stronghold of Raqqa to join the extremist group.

He informed his family that he was now fighting for IS. Alaa tried to talk him out of it, saying it was better to fight for the other side, but Jaber answered that the only independent power in Syria was Islamic State. Shortly thereafter, the family broke off contact. Jaber al-Bakr returned to Germany, but his brother says he doesn't know when, exactly. "At some point in the last two months."

The two haven't spoken to each other since August. ....

....

[On 11 Oct 2016, after his arrest and confinement in Leipzig prison] al-Bakr had an appointment with his lawyer, Hübner, who brought an interpreter along with him from Dresden. They didn't have a detailed discussion but Hübner said his client seemed stable, but he noticed that al-Bakr refused to consume any food and didn't want to drink anything either. "That made it clear that my client was putting his life on the line," says Hübner.

....

At 5:50 p.m. that same day [11 Oct], though, al-Bakr began exhibiting peculiar behavior: He climbed onto his bed and tore down the ceiling lamp. It was later discovered that an electrical plug had also been torn out in the cell. The officers believed it to be vandalism, which, they say, isn't uncommon among agitated new arrivals. And yet, they had found al-Bakr to be rather calm. Was this, perhaps, an initial attempt to kill himself?

....

[Al-Bakr suicided at about 19:45 on 12 October.]

"A Terrorist, Three Heroes and a Bumbling Judiciary, Part 3: Radicalized in Germany," [Der Spiegel](#), 16:16 GMT, 14 Oct 2016.

Reuters called Alaa Al-Bakr on the telephone, and Alaa confirmed that his brother had been brainwashed by imams in Berlin. But Alaa contradicted some of what he had told *Der Spiegel*:

Alaa Albakr told Reuters by phone that his brother said he went to Syria to volunteer with emergency rescue workers, but Alaa believes he was radicalised by imams in Berlin who "brainwashed him" into returning to his country for jihad.

"This is why we believe he returned to Syria," Alaa told Reuters by phone from the village of Sa'sa' southwest of Damascus.

"He went to Turkey seven months ago and spent two months in Syria. He called us and told us 'I'm volunteering with the White Helmets (emergency teams) in Idlib'."

Pressed to say if his brother had joined Islamist militant groups in Syria, Alaa Albakr said he could neither confirm nor deny if that was the case.

....

But Alaa said that despite the Facebook postings, [Jaber] showed no sign of intent to commit acts of violence during a phone conversation several weeks before his arrest on Monday [10 Oct].

"He called me six weeks ago to tell me that he wanted to finish his studies," [Alaa] said. "He tried to convince me to bring my wife and five children to Germany."  
Joseph Nasr, "Berlin bombing suspect radicalised by imams in Germany, brother says," [Reuters](#), 21:14 GMT, 14 Oct 2016.

Notice *Der Spiegel* says Alaa last talked to Jaber in August, while Reuters says they talked several weeks ago. *Der Spiegel* says Jaber fought with ISIL in Raqqa, while Reuters says Jaber claimed to work with the White Helmets in Idlib. Either the translation from Arabic to German to English was bad, or Alaa changed his story.

[Reuters](#) points out, "Albahr's death makes it more difficult for investigators to track down the network behind his radicalisation, a government spokesman said." See also [Associated Press](#). However, one wonders how much information could be obtained from someone who was on a hunger strike since being arrested. Jaber Al-Bakr was clearly *uncooperative* with German authorities.

### **Bibliography for Chemnitz Germany**

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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 planned 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 a radical 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. 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. Sadly, there was *no* reasonable hope of satisfying any one of the demands of the HNC and other opposition groups, so the peace negotiations in Geneva were dead.

The new agreements between Russia and the USA on 9 September 2016 for a nationwide ceasefire and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid everywhere in Syria gave another glimmer of hope. But there were hundreds of violations of the new ceasefire during the first week, and the ceasefire collapsed on 18 Sep. On the night of 21 Sep, Assad and Russia began a ferocious new assault on Aleppo that extinguished the ceasefire. A major goal of the 9 Sep agreements was delivery of humanitarian aid to Aleppo, but there were *no* deliveries to Aleppo during September 2016, as another indicator of the failure of the new agreements. During 20-30 Sep, international diplomats frantically attempted to resuscitate the dead ceasefire, but failed.

On 18 October 2016 Russia unilaterally suspended airstrikes on Aleppo, and Russia/Syria had a unilateral ceasefire in Aleppo on 20-21-22 October 2016, to allow Nusra to depart from Aleppo, and to evacuate wounded from eastern Aleppo. This wonderful opportunity was another glimmer of hope, but was quickly rejected by insurgents in eastern Aleppo. Nusra refused to depart from Aleppo, which frustrated Russia's main reason for offering the ceasefire. The insurgents refused to allow wounded to leave eastern Aleppo, and the insurgents refused to allow civilians to leave eastern Aleppo. And finally, the insurgents repeatedly violated the three-day ceasefire. History shows the insurgents *again* prevented peace in Syria.

### **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 October 2016, the Geneva negotiations about Syria were dead, with the last meeting in April 2016. There was a brief cessation of hostilities in March and April, but then the situation in Syria became worse and worse, with *no* reasonable hope of 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, and again on 12 Sep 2016. On the night of 21 Sep 2016, Assad — with the assistance of Russian warplanes — began a ferocious assault on the city of Aleppo.
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.

Note that there is *no* single villain who is responsible for the continuing Syrian civil war. Assad is blameworthy. The rebels/jihadists who refuse to negotiate are blameworthy. Russia is blameworthy, especially for airstrikes in Syria beginning 30 Sep 2015. Other foreign meddlers have also enabled the civil war to continue.

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. My essay for [March 2016](#) (see section titled "Why wait for Assad to leave before fighting terrorist groups?") explains why ISIL and Nusra will persist after Assad is removed.

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 305,000 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,
  - C. desertion at Mosul on 10 June 2014,
  - D. fleeing from Ramadi on 17 May 2015, and
  - E. terrorists who kill innocent civilians in frequent bombings in or near Baghdad.(See my essay for [September 2016](#).)
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 Islamic terrorists to attack targets in their local nation in Western Europe, USA, etc. (See, e.g., [Associated Press](#)(22May); [Reuters](#).) 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.
- President Obama at 4 Aug 2016 press conference at Pentagon: "In fact, the decline of ISIL in Syria and Iraq appears to be causing it to shift to tactics that we've seen before

— an even greater emphasis on encouraging high-profile terrorist attacks, including in the United States.” [Pentagon](#). See also [Associated Press](#).

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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begun 2 October 2016, revised 1 November 2016.

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