

Syria & Iraq: November 2016

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Table of Contents

1. Chemical Weapons

Who used chemical weapons in [Syria](#)?

ISIL used mustard in [Iraq](#) (11 Aug 2015)

2. Syria

United Nations [Diverted](#) from Syria

[death toll in Syria](#) now over 309,500 (30 Nov)

[Turkey](#) is an ally from Hell

[U.S. troops](#) in Syria

Recognition that Assad is [Winning](#) the Civil War

[Peace Negotiations](#) for Syria

Future of [Assad](#) must be decided by Syrians

Peace [Negotiations](#) in Geneva died in April 2016

No Meeting of [ISSG](#) in Oct/Nov 2016

occasional reports of continuing civil [war](#) in Syria

abandon proposed 48-hour [ceasefires in Aleppo](#)

continuing civil [war](#) in Syria

[ceasefire](#) in Aleppo (4 Nov)

[bombing hospitals](#) in Syria

[U.N. Reports](#)

war crimes [prosecution](#)?

3. Iraq

[Atrocities](#) in Iraq

Iraq is a [failed](#) nation

U.S. [combat troops](#) in Iraq

Liberation of [Mosul](#) (began 17 Oct 2016)

4. Islamic public relations [problem](#)

my [proposal](#)

Need to kill [ideology](#) of Islamic terrorism

5. [ISIL](#) is *not* defeated

[cost](#) of U.S. war against ISIL

6. U.S.-led Coalition [Airstrikes](#) in Iraq & Syria

7. Islamic terrorism and migration in [Europe](#)
attack on [OSU](#) campus (28 Nov)
 8. [Conclusions](#)
[Syria, Iraq, Muslim Clerics Need to Condemn Islamic Terrorism, U.S. War on Terror](#)
-

Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 36 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 That webpage also includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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 6 November, the USA was on Standard Time, which makes Boston -5 hours from GMT. The U.K. went off summer time on 30 October. 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),
- the webpage for the [Spokesman](#) of the United Nations Secretary General and his daily press briefing,
- and *The Washington Post*

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

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

Terse Summary of Syria Fighters

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

1. The so-called "rebels" are moderates, many of whom are part of the Free Syrian Army. In 2011, these moderates wanted to continue a secular government in Syria, but without Assad.
2. The "jihadists" want to impose an Islamic government (i.e., Sharia law) on Syria. The Islamic Front is a large group of jihadists, formed on 22 November 2013. Ahrar al-Sham is one of the major organizations in the Islamic Front.
3. And two Al-Qaeda affiliated groups fighting in Syria:
 - a. the Nusra Front, which wants to establish an Islamic emirate in Syria. 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](#).

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. On 24 August 2016, the third report of the JIM (see below), United Nations Security Council document S/2016/738, at ¶58, said: "there was sufficient information to conclude that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was the only entity with the ability, capability, motive and means to use sulfur mustard in Marea on 21 August 2015."

During the battle for Aleppo that began in July 2016, there were occasional allegations that either the Syrian government or insurgents used chemical weapons in Aleppo city. For example,

- On 10 August 2016, "At least four people died and many suffered breathing difficulties when a gas, believed to be chlorine, was dropped alongside barrel bombs on a neighbourhood of the Syrian city of Aleppo on Wednesday [10 Aug], [the manager of Al Quds hospital in Aleppo] and [Syria Civil Defence] told Reuters." [Reuters](#).
- The Syrian Civil Defence said on 6 September 2016 "government helicopters had dropped barrel bombs containing chlorine on the Sukari neighborhood in eastern Aleppo." 80 people were wounded by the gas. [Reuters](#). The [Associated Press](#) reported: "In Tuesday's [6 Sep] attack, a medical report from one of the hospitals in the besieged eastern rebel-held part of Aleppo said at least 71 persons, including 37 children and 10 women, were treated for breathing difficulties, dry cough, and that their clothes smelled of chlorine."
- On 30 October 2016, "Syrian state media said militants had fired shells containing chlorine gas at a residential area of the government-held western part of the city, al-

Hamdaniya. Rebels denied that, and said government forces had fired poison gas [chlorine] on another frontline." [Reuters](#).

- On 20 November 2016, "Two medics said the al-Baytounji family [of 6 people] had suffocated to death because the barrel bomb, which fell in the Sakhour district at about midnight [on 19 Nov], had been laced with chlorine gas." [Reuters](#). [Al-Arabiya](#) published an unconfirmed photograph of these 5 corpses in eastern Aleppo city, who allegedly had been killed by chlorine gas. The sixth fatality was the mother, who died later "from shock." [CNN](#) reported that a rescuer took coins from a pocket of a victim and the coins were tarnished, apparently by chlorine gas.

On 27 November 2016, the Turkish government alleged that "Syrian opposition fighters had been exposed to chemical gas during a Daesh missile attack." Allegedly, "22 fighters ... were observed showing symptoms of chemical gas exposure in northern Syria's Khalidiyah region." [Anadolu Agency](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that dumbass government bureaucrats and journalists are too stupid to realize that *all* gases are composed of chemicals, including the normal atmosphere. They should have said "poisonous gas" or "chemical weapons".

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 2015, 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 2015, 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 2016. [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." But not only was it possible to deny, but also Russia denied that Assad had used chemical weapons, as mentioned below.

The third JIM report is United Nations Security Council document [S/2016/738](#).

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.

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](#).

The fourth JIM report is United Nations Security Council document S/2016/888.

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](#).

JIM extended until November 2017

On 17 November 2016, the United Nations Security Council extended the mission of the JIM until 17 November 2017. [U.N.](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Here is the bad news. The fourth report of the JIM says that "the Mechanism closed its office in The Hague on 23 September 2016" and "The Mechanism also closed its liaison office in Damascus". S/2016/888 at ¶43 (21 Oct 2016). This is really poor planning. The Security Council should have renewed the JIM in September, to avoid closing and then re-opening offices.

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](#).

Syria

Futile Peace Negotiations in Syria

Disorganization of the Syrian National Coalition

& Politics of the Peace Process

My [previous essays](#) on Syria explain why I believe peace negotiations are futile with the current conditions in Syria. The following information continues this history of frustrated negotiations.

Diversions

Various major problems in the world diverted attention of politicians and diplomats away from Syria, and also diverted resources that might have helped the crisis in Syria. There are *at least ten* of these major problems in the world:

1. Beginning in mid-February 2014, there has been a crisis in the **Ukraine**, including the annexation of the Crimea by Russia. 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.

Deaths in Syria

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

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented death of 3954 persons in the month of November 2016. The casualties are as follows:

- Civilian casualties: 1279 civilians, including 284 children under the age of eighteen, and 185 female citizens over the age of 18, they were killed as follows:
 - 675 citizens including 171 children and 101 citizen women killed in raids by Russian and Syrian warplanes' bombing and helicopters' barrel bombs,

- 193 people including 36 children and 26 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,
 - 32 persons including a woman were killed under torture in Syrian security prisons,
 - 173 persons including 53 children and 25 citizen women were killed in the fall of shells and targeting by the rebel and Islamic Factions and the “Islamic State” organization,
 - 17 including 2 children and 1 woman were killed in shelling by Turkish warplanes,
 - 6 including 1 child were killed by the gunshots of the Turkish border guards,
 - 7 persons including a child were executed by the “Islamic State” organization,
 - 60 including 3 children and 17 women were killed in bombing by warplanes of the international coalition,
 - 11 people 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,
 - 5 persons was killed by the Syrian Democratic Forces, and
 - 72 including 11 children and 9 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: 659
 - Defected soldiers and officers: 3
 - The regime forces: 475
 - Members from Popular Committees, NDF and militiamen loyal to the regime of Syrian nationality: 414
 - Militiamen from the Lebanese Hezbollah: 22
 - Non-Syrian Pro-regime mostly Shia militiamen: 95
 - Unidentified casualties: 13
 - 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: 994

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 200 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 1300 civilians between 4000 were killed in November 2016," [SOHR](#), 1 Dec 2016. [Formatting as indented list by Standler. Some typographical errors corrected by Standler.]

When I add the dead civilians, I obtain 1254, not 1279. Adding 1254 civilians to the dead fighters, I obtain 3929, not 3954. The discrepancy of 25 civilians is a trivial error, compared to the total dead during November.

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* 309,500 at the end of November 2016.

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.

November 2016: Turkish invasion of Syria

The U.S.-military has supplied and advised Kurdish fighters in northern Syria, and the Kurds have been effective in defeating ISIL there. U.S.-supported Kurds are part of what the U.S. calls the "Syrian Democratic Forces" (SDF). The SDF was contemplating liberating Raqqa, the capitol city of ISIL in Syria. Things were going well, until Turkey invaded northwestern Syria on 24 August 2016, in an effort to remove Kurds from near the Turkish border, and secondarily to remove ISIL from Syrian towns near the Turkish border.

On 22 October 2016, [Reuters](#) reported: "... Turkey would do what was necessary with its coalition partners in Syria's Raqqa, but would not work with the Syrian Kurdish fighters." The refusal of Turkey to cooperate with Kurds in liberating Raqqa gives the U.S.-military a choice between working with the Kurds or working with Turkey in the liberation of Raqqa.

On 25 October 2016, [Reuters](#) reported that the Kurds in northern Syria fear that if they move their fighters to the campaign to liberate Raqqa, Turkey will then invade Kurdish cities (e.g., Kobani or Tel Abyad).

On 31 October 2016, [Reuters](#) reported Turkey wants the Raqqa operation to start after both the Mosul and Euphrates Shield operations are completed. On 2 November, [Reuters](#) again reported the U.S. Military wants the Raqqa operation to be concurrent with the assault on Mosul, and also reported the U.S. wants the Kurds involved in the liberation of Raqqa. My comment is that the U.S. Military will prevail, and Turkey will appear foolish for its anti-Kurd dogma.

On 3 November 2016, [Reuters](#) reported that the Kurds in the SDF refuse to work with Turkey in the liberation of Raqqa. So it is mutual: the Turks refuse to work with the Kurds, and the Kurds refuse to work with the Turks. My opinion is that the U.S. should tell Turkey to retreat back to Turkey, and *not* to participate in the liberation of Raqqa.

On 6 November, the Kurds announced they had begun an assault on Raqqa. The U.S., U.K., and France will provide airstrikes to support the Kurds, but no foreign troops will be involved. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 22 November, Erdogan dismissed another 15,000 employees of the Turkish government, because of concern that they *may* have been involved in the coup attempt in July. The total number sacked is now more than 125,000. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

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 2016, Syria claimed that 150 U.S. soldiers entered Syria on 27 April. The Syrian Foreign Ministry called the U.S. troops a "blatant act of aggression that constitutes a dangerous intervention and a gross violation of the Syrian sovereignty." [SANA](#); [RIA-Novosti](#). On 29 April, Russian deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov agreed that the U.S. troops violate the sovereignty of Syria. [TASS](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that Obama's deployment of U.S. troops is not only a violation of Syria's sovereignty, but also a violation of U.S. law, because the U.S. Congress has *not* passed an authorization of force that specifically allows Obama to fight ISIL.

On 24 November 2016, a U.S. Navy explosive disposal expert, Senior Chief Petty Officer Scott C. Dayton, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Ayn Issa in northern Syria. He was the first U.S. citizen killed in Obama's war in Syria. [Reuters](#); [Pentagon](#)(26Nov); [Washington Post](#).

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 was 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 was 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.

After Assad began an assault on eastern Aleppo city on 15 November 2016, it is more clear than ever that Assad is slowly winning the Syrian civil war.

Let us recognize reality. Assad is firmly in command of the Syrian government. The rebels and jihadists have attempted for more six 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.

It is really quite remarkable that Assad — with the assistance of only Russia and Iran — has managed to defeat a large number of insurgents backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Kuwait, the USA, and Western Europe. The Russian veto in the U.N. Security Council has prevented the United Nations from doing anything significant to end the Syrian civil war. Assad's victory is partly a result of the disorganization of the rebels and jihadists, and the lack of consensus by the foreign meddlers who support these insurgents. Assad's victory is also a consequence of Russia has used their significant airpower to blast insurgents into oblivion (beginning 30 Sep 2015), and — quite properly — *no* one wants to challenge the Russian military involvement. It is *not* worth starting World War III over an insignificant nation like Syria.

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](#).

Peace Negotiations in Geneva Died in April 2016

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.

My essay for [October 2016](#) chronicled the failure of the United Nations to do something about Syria: a veto by Russia in the U.N. Security Council on 8 October, a unilateral Russian/Assad ceasefire in Aleppo on 20-22 October that was *not* reciprocated by insurgents, and on 20 October the U.N. Secretary General requested the U.N. General Assembly pass a resolution on Syria (but the General Assembly apparently ignored the request).

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.

U.N. does nothing

On 2 and 9 November, the words "Syria" and "Aleppo" do *not* appear in the transcript of the daily press briefing at noon at United Nations in New York City. Apparently, the United Nations is doing nothing for Syria. On 14 November, there was also nothing in the daily press briefing about the Syrian civil war.

On 3 November, the following terse remarks were all that was said about Syria at the daily press briefing at noon at United Nations in New York City.

Question: I have another question on Syria. There are more and more reports every day that Western Aleppo is attacked by different groups, and UN has its office in Western Aleppo. So what does UN staff says was going on, on the ground?

Spokesman: What we say is that, as you know, a tank shell hit our own office in Western Aleppo on [30] October. That, of course, is nothing compared to the suffering of the civilians in the city as a whole. We have condemned equally the actions of the Syrian Government and opposition armed groups who have been targeting civilians indiscriminately, and we are continuing to call for that to stop.

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

My comment is that this remark by the U.N. Secretary General's spokesman will have absolutely *no* influence on anyone in Syria.

6 Nov 2016: My Suggestions

The news from Syria was more of the same during the first two weeks of November 2016, which gave me time to reflect on the big picture. On 6 November, I wrote following comment.

I suggest two things. First, the United Nations should close the office in Geneva of the Special Envoy for Syria. Second, we need to view the rebels and jihadists in Syria as criminal gangs, *not* as pro-democracy freedom fighters.

After the insurgents in Aleppo rejected a fourth day of ceasefire, I wrote a comment [below](#) that mentions that the Syrian political opposition has refused to cooperate with the United Nations in the peace negotiations in Geneva during 2016, and the Syrian insurgents have refused to cooperate with humanitarian pauses in Aleppo. The United Nations *needs* cooperation from the people who it is trying to help. Given the refusal of the opposition to negotiate an end to the civil war, and the refusal of all parties to allow delivery of humanitarian aid, the United Nations should be forgiven if it ignores the Syrian problem.

As chronicled in my previous essays, de Mistura was mentioning during May to August 2016 that the negotiations in Geneva would resume soon. But the negotiations never resumed and there is currently *no* reasonable hope of resuming negotiations in the foreseeable future. On 18 September 2016, there was the colossal failure of the new ceasefire agreement in Syria. Then on the night of 21 September Assad and Russia began a new assault on Aleppo city. After those events in September, de Mistura stopped talking about resuming negotiations. So even de Mistura, who was full of optimism, probably realizes that the negotiations are dead for the foreseeable future.

I suggest that the United Nations announce that it will close the Geneva office of the Special Envoy for Syria (i.e., dismiss de Mistura and his deputy, Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy) unless the peace negotiations resume in the next two weeks. The failure to hold peace negotiations in 2015, and the failure of negotiations during January to April 2016 to accomplish anything, is mostly the fault of the opposition for refusing to negotiate. There is nothing that the United Nations can do to make the HNC willing to negotiate without pre-conditions.

Let me be clear: I am *not* criticizing de Mistura. The failure of his efforts are caused by leaders of insurgent groups or sometimes by Assad. But it is pointless to continue de Mistura's work when he is accomplishing nothing.

The United Nations and Western Civilization needs to stop believing in the fictitious dogma that negotiations can end the Syrian civil war. Closing the Special Envoy's office in Geneva would be a first step in recognizing reality.

My second point. Propaganda from the USA, France, United Kingdom and other Western European nations portrays the rebels and jihadists in the insurgency as pro-democracy freedom-fighters, against Assad the tyrant. That *may* have been true for the rebels during 2011 and 2012. But in 2013, Islamic terrorists (e.g., Nusra and ISIL) began to dominate the insurgency. Also beginning in 2013, the moderate rebels became the weakest part of the insurgency, as jihadists (e.g., Islamic Front, Ahrar al-Sham) eclipsed the moderate rebels. These jihadists seek to impose Sunni Islamic law on everyone in Syria, instead of Assad's secular government.

Repeatedly during 2016, Russia called on the USA to separate the so-called moderate rebels from Nusra, but the USA was unable to accomplish that. This willful commingling of rebels

and jihadists with terrorists shows that the so-called moderate rebels are cooperating with terrorists.

There was a time during 2014, when the Free Syrian Army was weakly controlled by the Syrian National Coalition, a political group of Syrian expatriates in Turkey. But that control disappeared after June 2015, when the Coalition was unable to form a new "High Military Command", sometimes called a "Supreme Military Council". (See my essay for [August 2016](#), in the section titled "Free Syrian Army is Leaderless".)

In my opinion, instead of the romantic notion that the rebels and jihadists are freedom fighters against Assad the tyrant, governments in the USA and Western Europe should view the rebels and jihadists as criminal gangs. These gangs of rebels and jihadists make their decisions without consulting the affected *people* in Syria. And these criminal gangs use mortars and artillery to kill civilians and destroy private property — a threat both to civilization in Syria and to peace in Syria. The monthly reports by the United Nations Secretary General chronicle serious misconduct, including likely war crimes, by the rebels and jihadists.

Foreign meddlers need to stop supplying weapons and ammunition to insurgents in Syria. The United Nations Secretary General during the years 2013-2014 repeatedly called for an end to sending weapons to Syria. (See my essay for [May 2016](#).)

11 Nov 2016

Trump may end funding of Syrian rebels

On Tuesday night, 8 November, Trump won the presidential election in the USA. On Friday, 11 November, Trump gave an interview to *The Wall Street Journal* in which the following was said about Syria:

Although he wasn't specific, Mr. Trump suggested a shift away from what he said was the current Obama administration policy of attempting to find moderate Syrian opposition groups to support in the civil war there. "I've had an opposite view of many people regarding Syria," he said.

He suggested a sharper focus on fighting Islamic State, or ISIS, in Syria, rather than on ousting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. "My attitude was you're fighting Syria, Syria is fighting ISIS, and you have to get rid of ISIS. Russia is now totally aligned with Syria, and now you have Iran, which is becoming powerful, because of us, is aligned with Syria. ... Now we're backing rebels against Syria, and we have no idea who these people are."

If the U.S. attacks Mr. Assad, Mr. Trump said, "we end up fighting Russia, fighting Syria."

Monica Langley & Gerard Baker, "Donald Trump, in Exclusive Interview, Tells WSJ He Is Willing to Keep Parts of Obama Health Law," [WSJ](#), 17:53 EST, 11 Nov 2016. [ellipses in original]

On 13 November, *Al-Arabiya* noticed the above interview:

President-elect Donald Trump will likely end military support to the Syrian Opposition — a stance that he took during his campaign trail — he said during an interview with the Wall Street Journal on Friday [11 Nov], claiming that “we [US] have no idea who these people are.”

“I’ve had an opposite view of many people regarding Syria,” Trump told the US based paper. “My attitude was you’re fighting Syria, Syria is fighting ISIS, and you have to get rid of ISIS. Russia is now totally aligned with Syria, and now you have Iran, which is becoming powerful, because of us, is aligned with Syria.”

Trump reiterated his stance by stating that if the US fights the Syrian government, it ends up “fighting Russia.”

"Trump to stop funding Syrian Opposition," [Al-Arabiya](#), 08:03 GMT, 13 Nov 2016.

My comment is that I do *not* believe that Trump understands the complex situation in Syria that has taken six years to evolve, with many foreign meddlers and complicated groups of insurgents in Syria. Trump says "we have no idea who these people [rebels] are". If we want to know, all we need to do is go to Turkey and meet with some of their leaders. Senator John McCain did that back in 2011. But I suggest that, regardless of who the rebels are, the USA should *not* be involved in the sectarian Syria civil war against Assad.

Trump seems more focused on the relationship between the U.S. and Russia than on whether the Assad government is worthy of support. On 14 November, Putin and Trump spoke by telephone and they pledged "constructive cooperation". [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#).

Trump seems to have stumbled on what I believe is the correct foreign policy: concentrate on fighting ISIL (and Nusra), and let the Syrian people decide whether Assad remains the leader of Syria.

Since September 2014, when Obama began airstrikes against ISIL in Syria, Obama has recognized that fighting ISIL has a higher priority than fighting against Assad. Nonetheless, Obama also continued his earlier policy: Obama continued to call for the defeat of Assad, Obama continued clandestine aid to the anti-Assad rebels via the CIA, and Obama refused to partner with Assad in fighting ISIL.

20 Nov 2016 de Mistura visits Damascus

Back on 6 October 2016 and again on 20 October, de Mistura proposed terms for an end to fighting in eastern Aleppo city:

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

(See long quotations of de Mistura in my essay for [October 2016](#).) On Sunday, 20 November 2016, de Mistura met with the Syrian Foreign Minister in Damascus, to negotiate some relief for Aleppo.

The Syrian Arab News Agency reported:

Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign and Expatriates Minister Walid al-Moallem reaffirmed that it is the duty of the Syrian state to save the citizens from being taken hostages by terrorists in Aleppo city, stressing that the idea of “self-administration” in eastern Aleppo is categorically rejected because “it is a reward” for terrorists.

“We held talks Sunday morning with UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and his delegation, and we expected to hear from him that a date was set for resuming the intra-Syrian dialogue, but we did not,” al-Moallem said in a press conference, adding that de Mistura focused on what he called “ideas” about eastern Aleppo.

“In fact, we told him that we are in agreement about the need to get terrorists out of the eastern part of Aleppo, regardless of our differences about their numbers, but it makes no sense at all to leave 275,000 of our fellow citizens remain hostages by five or six or seven thousand militants. No government in the world would allow that,” al-Moallem added.

Al-Moallem pointed out that de Mistura talked about “self-administration” in eastern Aleppo is which is categorically rejected.

....

The Minister reaffirmed that the idea of “self-administration” is totally rejected “because it undermines Syria’s national sovereignty and gives a reward for terrorism,” adding “Syria gave three truce opportunities for evacuating the residents from the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo, but terrorist organizations did not allow them to get out through the safe corridors, and they bombed the corridors with mortar shells and prevented civilians from leaving despite all the preparations carried out by Aleppo Governorate to secure them out safely.”

....

The Minister asserted that the state security and service institutions must be returned to east Aleppo after the withdrawal of gunmen because “this area cannot be different from the rest of areas where settlements and reconciliations took place, most recently in al-Moaddamieh.”

"Updated — Al-Moallem: The idea of “self-administration” in eastern Aleppo categorically rejected," [SANA](#), 20 Nov 2016.

On 20 November, de Mistura held a press conference in Damascus after his meeting with al-Moallem and also after al-Moallem talked to journalists. The transcript of de Mistura's remarks was not posted until 21 November.

I started frankly by expressing serious concern and indeed shared the general international outrage for the news coming from eastern Aleppo as reported by WHO and others of several hospitals being heavily bombed by aerial bombs.

I also frankly expressed concern, which is only fair about the shelling which has been recently taking place here in Damascus and some of the bombing which has been killing the civilian victims, children actually, in western Aleppo as well.

It is fair to say that Minister Mouallem denied that any bombing of eastern Aleppo hospital had taken place. I frankly insisted in expressing my concern based on the reports that we have been receiving from WHO and other sources and requested that this aerial bombing of hospitals stop and that any military activity by all sides affecting civilian targets should be stopping not only in east or west Aleppo but everywhere else civilians are.

Since it is clear that the opinion or the point of view between Minister Mouallem and myself and many of my colleagues on the issue about the aerial bombing of hospitals exist a difference of opinion I would on second thoughts, in consultation actually with the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Ali Al-Za'tari make a recommendation frankly, and the recommendation will come after you have done your interpretation.

Well, since we do have a difference of opinion between the Mister Mouallem saying that there is total denial of any aerial bombing of hospitals in eastern Aleppo and our point of view that indicates that there has been tragic bombing of hospital in eastern Aleppo and elsewhere frankly, then perhaps we should be allowed to send a verification team on the UN side and made by the UN and other partners to verify the damage of the hospitals in both east and west Aleppo.

This was not discussed, this whole point, it came after when we thought this might be a good initiative in order to verify whether our concerns and the denial by Minister Mouallem can be solved on this.

Another point, we also discussed the general humanitarian plan for eastern Aleppo. Let me summarize which points are they:

1. First medical evacuation of an average estimate of 200 severely wounded or sick people from eastern Aleppo particularly in view of the fact that the hospitals, according to our information, have been effected.
2. Second, entry of medicine supplies, access to some medicine supplies in order to treat those who cannot be evacuated.
3. Third, entry some food supplies to a city of 250,000 estimated people who since now several months have at least not received any humanitarian convoys.
4. Last, a small but consistent rotation of doctors who have been either wounded or exhausted and can be rotated in order to take care of those who are in the city.

Where are we on that? We still do not have an OK from the government on all those four points, and in all fairness we so far have a generic, in principal, OK, from the armed opposition. Meanwhile in eastern Aleppo and in western Aleppo people are

suffering, and they are all Syrian people.

And now let me address another issue concerned with eastern Aleppo which is so called the UN proposal which we did discuss.

Now regarding Aleppo, The UN proposal [from de Mistura on 6 October], let me remind you and I did Minister Mouallem of it,

1. first, stop bombing on both sides,
2. second all al-Nusra fighters to leave the city, with their weapons and leave to where they go, and those who want to follow them could do that of course, both fighters or civilians. Those who want to remain should be allowed to remain, except al-Nusra.
3. Three, humanitarian access,
4. four, local administrations should be respected and left.

And here we had a major disagreement, you must have heard from Minister Mouallem.

As you heard from Minister Mouallem, and I respect his point of view, but I can maintain mine, we have a substantial difference. The government through government through Minister Mouallem categorically rejected the idea of maintains the current local administration. My answer was I respect the total principal which no one inside or outside the UN should put in doubt, of the national sovereignty of Syria. On the other hand, Aleppo is a special case, eastern Aleppo is a special case, and all this can be temporary but needs to be having a creative formula. And that is exactly where we left it. In other words by discussing the fact that there could be some type of creative formula because there is a need to find a solution to this disagreement.

Regarding now, the other subject, which is the political, Intra-Syrian talks, before that there was a request from the Minister whether there was any guarantees for the proposal we had in eastern Aleppo, the one I just described, and in this context I just want to remind all of us that at the very time when we were talking here, five countries are actually discussing, in the context of the so-called Lausanne format, in Geneva, how to actually find a guaranteed formula for what I had described as a proposal.

So we don't have guarantees, but those countries are working on possible guarantees in order to make sure that the proposal we made about eastern Aleppo, temporarily, could be working. And that is why, we left it there with disagreement, but with the intention we wish to find a creative formula.

Now on the political process, again, the Intra-Syrian talks, the Minister was asking when we could resume those talks as he said the government is ready, and we explained that we are evaluating the various options for renewing the Intra-Syrian talks bearing in mind the current highlight militarized environment.

We shared some of the ideas that we have in mind about the possible vision horizon for some type of creative UN proposals regarding a political solution or a political process and we left it with them. We did not pursue further than that, because we are in the

process of consultations. That's why I have been to Ankara, I have been to Tehran, Ramzy has been to Moscow, I have been here, I am on my way to Brussels also, to Geneva to London and then New York and then Washington. For the Security Council, so that we can listen to everyone's point of view also in the region, which we will continue doing so that we can be better prepared for political Intra-Syrian talks, which are necessary.

Now, last point which I raised with Minister Mouallem was, because he reminded us that one of the priorities should always be fighting terrorism and we agree, and for us terrorism, according to the UN, Daesh and al-Nusra. To fight terrorism, to win it, there is only one way, a political solution, credible, all-inclusive and connected and linked to resolution 2254 and in the spirit of the Geneva communiqué.

Thank you very much now questions.

....

QUESTION: After all what you have said, what is the purpose of autonomy in Aleppo? The Syrian government and the Russian government announced two times ceasefires in Aleppo so that anybody who wants to leave can leave, but no one left, and the reconciliation people said that civilians in eastern Aleppo want to leave but al-Nusra prevent them from that, but why the autonomy in eastern Aleppo?

SdeM: We are not proposing autonomy in Aleppo, we are only proposing that there should not be a radical dramatic change in the administration of Aleppo until there is a political solution. Particularly once al-Nusra would have left, the local administration, in our opinion, could be considered through some creative formula as a transition on what could be returning then to total normality.

Thank you very much.

Staffan de Mistura, "Note to Correspondents: Transcript of Press Conference by United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura," [U.N.](#), 20 Nov 2016. [Two indented lists added by Standler.]

Also posted at [U.N. Geneva](#).

De Mistura's proposal to continue the local administration of eastern Aleppo city simply continues the current status. Because insurgents would view this as a continuation of their victory in eastern Aleppo, and *not* as a surrender to Assad, de Mistura's proposal would make it easier for insurgents to agree to depart from eastern Aleppo. But al-Moallem rejected that proposal, instead demanding that eastern Aleppo immediately revert to the control of Assad's government.

al-Moallem's assertion that Assad is *not* bombing hospitals is a false "fact". Of course, one would expect war criminals to deny their criminal acts. I remind the reader that the situation in Syria is *not* merely an occasional airstrike on a hospital, but is a deliberate series of at least 126 attacks on hospitals in Syria so far in 2016. On 19 November, *all* of the hospitals in eastern Aleppo city are out-of-service after airstrikes. (See [below](#).) Further, the hospitals have nearly exhausted their stock of medicine, are low on fuel for electric generators, and are

short on food.

In my opinion, de Mistura had a reasonable proposal to end the catastrophe in Aleppo city. al-Moallem refused to implement de Mistura's proposal. Worse, al-Moallem offered *no* alternative proposal.

For the first time since August, de Mistura mentions resuming the political negotiations in Geneva (i.e., "Intra-Syrian talks"): "we are evaluating the various options for renewing the Intra-Syrian talks bearing in mind the current highlight militarized environment."

When the HNC walked out of negotiations in April 2016, they issued four pre-conditions (i.e., demands) that must be satisfied before the HNC would return to negotiations. The United Nations can satisfy *none* of HNC's four demands. One of the HNC's demands was an end to airstrikes in Syria. But on 15 November, the intensity of Russian airstrikes in Idlib and Homs provinces increased, and Assad resumed bombing eastern Aleppo city. The situation on the ground in Syria is now more worser than in April 2016, as both Assad and the insurgents pursue a military victory. Unless the HNC repudiates their four demands, there is *no* reasonable hope of HNC returning to negotiations in the foreseeable future.

So I do not understand why de Mistura thinks negotiations can resume in "the current highlight militarized environment". Perhaps de Mistura has information that is *not* publicly available. But even if the HNC changes their position, Assad is now successfully pursuing a military victory, and so Assad should be unwilling to create a new Syrian government that is free of Assad and his cronies.

Meanwhile, on 20 November, Obama met with Russian President Putin and talked for *four minutes* about Syria and the Ukraine. [Reuters](#). Later, Obama — whose disastrous foreign policy helped create the debacles in Iraq and Syria — gave a press conference in which he said: "I am not optimistic about the short-term prospects in Syria." [White House](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

22-30 Nov 2016

Obama's government is expected to do nothing in Syria, while waiting for Trump to become president on 20 January 2017.

On 23 November, de Mistura told a group of German legislators "We are very concerned (about the possibility of Assad) ... taking over in a brutal aggressive way what is left of eastern Aleppo" before Trump becomes president of the USA on 20 January. [Reuters](#).

On 23 November, the French Foreign Minister proposed a conference of anti-Assad governments sometime in "early December". [Reuters](#). It is not clear what the French hope to achieve by excluding the people who are causing the problem (i.e., Assad and the leaders of insurgent groups). The Friends of Syria group that Hillary Clinton created in February 2012 was embarrassingly insignificant, and there is *no* need for more meetings of that ineffective group.

On 24 November, Jan Egeland — the senior adviser to de Mistura for humanitarian aid to Syria — announced that the insurgents in Aleppo had given "written approval in principle" to allow delivery of humanitarian aid to eastern Aleppo city and to allow evacuation of wounded from eastern Aleppo city. Russia had given verbal approval, but Assad had *not* responded.

We just finished the meeting of the Humanitarian Task Force. It was another very somber report by our field personnel in Syria and outside, from Turkey. In the month of November, when we really needed to preposition a lot in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, cross-front line, we only could do one convoy so far in November. It went to Rastan in the Homs region; more than fifty large trucks with aid deliveries to more than 107,000 people. Numerous other convoys had to be aborted, could not move, could not be loaded at all because of either lack of facilitation letters by the Government, lack of security from the parties on the ground, lack of agreement on access roads, and endless problem on check points and with all of the many authorities in Syria that have to green-light even life-saving aid to those in greatest need.

We do hope to be able to go to the Four Towns this week-end, and it is urgent. In Madaya, I have seen images of stillborn babies because of malnutrition. According to these social media, the situation is also very bad in Foah and Kafraya, as it is in the other besieged areas.

We now have more than 900,000 people besieged in more besieged areas than at any time I can remember in this war in Syria. Why is there more besieged areas? Because the war has been changing, there have been offensives, there has been more encirclement of smaller areas and that means that they end up not only being hard-to-reach as they were, they end up being besieged, which is more than three months of no humanitarian access, no real freedom of movement for civilians, and full military encirclement.

These 16 areas besieged, with many sub-enclaves besieged, are in six governorates in Syria. But, more than in any other place, it is in Ghouta, east of Damascus city, where all of these new areas are located.

The largest besieged area is east Aleppo. We first presented our humanitarian plan to this Humanitarian Task Force that comprises all of the governments that are influential in and on Syria. We presented it on the 3 November, it is three weeks ago. About a week after, the detailed operational plan was prepared, and that one has been now with all of the parties for more than a week. We do now have written approval in principle by the armed opposition groups of east Aleppo. We have verbal support also from the Russian Federation on our four-point plan, we need written support, and we need unconditional support also from Russia, and we are waiting still for the answer from the Government of Syria. The trucks are ready. Humanitarian workers are ready. Courageous humanitarian workers will be able to go with hundreds of truckloads of medical equipment, food and all of the other things needed in eastern Aleppo city, and we are ready to evacuate hundreds of wounded to medical facilities in both west Aleppo and in opposition-held areas of Idlib. We are ready. We need approval of the parties and we need green light to locate back our staff that had to be taken out of west Aleppo city after the attack at our headquarters. I hope this can happen in the next few

days.

It needs to happen in the next few days, because the last UN food has been distributed, there is no food left from the World Food Programme and the United Nations in east Aleppo city. And there is no medical facility that has not been hit in this war, the needs could not be more urgent in the medical sector. That is why we also discussed protection of medical facilities in the Task Force today. We want to try to launch a system that could get us out of this horrific situation in which medical facilities, clinics, hospitals, are attacked again, and again, and again. What would be the elements? Of course, monitoring of medical facilities so that they are not used for anything else than civilian and humanitarian use for wounded and sick. Secondly, marking of buildings very clearly and fully, and third is notification of localities of such clinics and hospitals to all of the military actors that are using air warfare to avoid any more attacks. Of course there then also has to be accountability for attacks. Under humanitarian law it is a war crime to deliberately attack medical facilities. I think that is my introduction.

....

What is my Plan B? I mean, let us realize plan A really. In many ways Plan B is that people starve, and can we allow that to happen? No, we cannot allow it happen. And let me just say what I also said in the group, I feel an enormous personal responsibility here, we have been working day and night every single day since we presented the east Aleppo initiative on the third of November. Clarifying, urging, begging, all of the parties. And I hear the voices from the civilians in the besieged areas are increasingly desperate, and it is not just east Aleppo, it is all of the other areas as well, they are increasingly desperate. This fifth winter will be by far the worst for the civilian population of Syria, and many of these areas have now been besieged for a very, very long time.

Jan Egeland, "Transcript of press stakeout with Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N. Geneva](#), 24 Nov 2016.

On 24 November, Egeland said he hoped Assad would approve de Mistura's humanitarian plan "in the next few days." But on 30 November, Assad had *not* approved the plan, while more than 16,000 people had recently fled from eastern Aleppo city, to avoid death.

On 29 November, the [Associated Press](#) published a news article with the headline: "Time running out, Obama has no response to Aleppo siege". Bradley Klapper, a U.S. State Department correspondent for the AP, wrote: "U.S. officials concede they have little to no chance of securing a diplomatic breakthrough to halt the 5½-year civil war in President Barack Obama's last weeks in office. Given Donald Trump's promises of closer cooperation with Russia, the U.S. has lost what limited leverage it had."

On 30 November, the [Washington Post](#) reported that the Russian government was communicating with Trump's team, which suggests that Russia now sees Obama as irrelevant.

On 30 November the United Nations Security Council held an emergency [meeting](#) on

Aleppo. The meeting was requested by France and the United Kingdom. [De Mistura](#) briefed the Council via videolink from Geneva. De Mistura again called for adoption of his four-point proposal for Aleppo: "[1] an end to the violence, [2] the departure of Al-Nusra fighters from eastern Aleppo, and [3] the preservation of local administration [4] [humanitarian access] ... — this guaranteed by those with the power to guarantee it." De Mistura also repeated his 20 October proposal: "I addressed the issue of aerial attacks on hospitals in eastern Aleppo, ... and I publicly suggested that a verification mission be sent to eastern and western Aleppo to assess damage to hospitals". As expected, the U.N. Security Council did *nothing*.

No Meeting of the ISSG

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

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

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

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

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

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

My essay for [August 2016](#) says "It appears that the ISSG is dead."

On 20 and 22 September, there were meetings of the ISSG in New York City, on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly meeting, for a total of less than 3.5 hours. The ISSG failed to resuscitate the dead new ceasefire agreements that were announced by Lavrov and Kerry on 9 Sep. The ISSG also failed to issue any communiqué from the September 2016 meetings. See my essay for [Sep 2016](#).

The ISSG failed to meet during October and November 2016, despite a worsening crisis inside Syria. My conclusion is that the ISSG is dead.

I have collected the full-text of statements issued at ISSG meetings in my document at

rbs0.com These meaningless statements are now only of historical interest.

Continuing Civil War in Syria

Introduction

Full-text of agreements on a "cessation of hostilities" in Syria is posted at rbs0.com. These agreements collapsed before or during September 2016.

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. 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.

My essay for [October 2016](#) chronicles a unilateral Russian/Assad ceasefire in Aleppo on 20-22 October that was *not* reciprocated by insurgents.

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 previous essays. In the four months since Egeland first proposed the 48-hour pauses, they never happened. The reason for the failure is apparently that Assad *wants* to starve eastern Aleppo into submission.

In November 2016, de Mistura abandoned the proposed 48-hour pauses, and instead pursued his four-point humanitarian aid plan.

Continuing Civil War in Syria

2 November 2016

On the morning of 2 November, Russia agreed to extend their moratorium on airstrikes in Aleppo until Friday evening, 4 November. Reuters reported:

The Russian Defence Ministry, which is helping forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad to retake full control of Aleppo, said rebels would be allowed to exit the city unharmed and with their weapons between 0900 and 1900 local time on Nov. 4 via two special corridors. Civilians and the sick and wounded would be allowed to leave via six other corridors, it said.

....

A Kremlin spokesman said on Tuesday [1 Nov] the moratorium on air strikes [beginning 18 Oct] was still in force, but could not be extended if rebels in the city did not halt their attacks.

The Russian Defence Ministry said on Wednesday [2 Nov] that rebels inside Aleppo had taken heavy losses during fighting and were effectively trapped. "All attempts by the rebels to break through in Aleppo have failed," the ministry said. "The terrorists

have suffered heavy losses in lives, weapons and equipment. They have no chance to break out of the city."

"Russia tells rebels to leave Syria's Aleppo by Friday evening," [Reuters](#), 21:11 GMT, 2 Nov 2016.

See also [NY Times](#).

The Associated Press reported that insurgents had immediately dismissed the offer.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his forces to open humanitarian corridors to eastern Aleppo this Friday [4 Nov], along with two routes for rebels to leave the city "in order to prevent a senseless loss of life," the Defense Ministry announced Wednesday [2 Nov]. One exit leads to the Turkish border, the other to the city of Idlib, according to the ministry.

....

Rebel groups in Aleppo dismissed Russia's latest offer, with one of the groups describing it as a media stunt for "public consumption."

Yasser al-Youssef, a spokesman for the Nour el-Din el-Zinki rebel group, said Russia "is not serious" and its latest initiatives "don't concern us." He added that the Russian leader's comments do not reflect the reality on the ground.

"We need an international commission to check the Russian lies," al-Youssef said.

Molhem Ekaidi, deputy commander of Fastaqim group, one of the major rebel factions fighting inside Aleppo, also accused the Russians of lying. "The (Russian) shelling and crimes continue and their planes have not left the skies of Aleppo," he said.

Nataliya Vasilyeva & Sarah El Deeb, "Putin offers new pause, exits for Syrian's besieged Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 20:29 GMT, 2 Nov 2016.

Reuters contacted one insurgent group in Aleppo:

"This is completely out of the question. We will not give up the city of Aleppo to the Russians and we won't surrender," Zakaria Malahifji of the Fastaqim rebel group told Reuters.

John Davison, "Syria rebels reject Russian demand to withdraw from Aleppo - rebel official," [Reuters](#), 17:35 GMT, 2 Nov 2016.

On the night of 2 November, the most recent article at the English-language Syrian Observatory for Human Rights website is dated 27 October, which is why I have not cited the SOHR recently.

My comment is that predominantly Christian soldiers in Western Europe would surrender, instead of dying in a futile fight. But the Islamic fighters in Nusra and other insurgent groups apparently believe they go to Paradise if they die in battle, so they are willing to die in a futile battle. The problem is that, as the insurgents fight to the death in Aleppo, tens of thousands of civilians will also die, and buildings in eastern Aleppo will be destroyed. There is *no* way that either the United Nations or foreign meddlers can change the religious beliefs

of insurgents in Aleppo.

3 November 2016

The insurgents in eastern Aleppo city prepared for tomorrow's "humanitarian pause" by launching a series of attacks on Assad's military. The insurgents used artillery, tank, rocket fire, and suicide car bombs. The [Associated Press](#) report that Assad's media claim the insurgents killed 12 civilians on 3 Nov in Aleppo. The Associated Press also reported that there are battles between two insurgent groups: Nour el-Din el-Zinki and the Fastaqim groups. [Reuters](#) reported: "The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 15 civilians, including four children, had been killed in west Aleppo and around 120 injured."

4 November 2016: one-day ceasefire in Aleppo

At 11:54 GMT on 4 November, the [Associated Press](#) reported "a relative calm" in the city of Aleppo, but "By midday, however, the [Syrian] Observatory [for Human Rights] said no one had used the corridors."

But at 14:32 GMT, the Associated Press reported the insurgents had violated the "humanitarian pause" in Aleppo.

Two Russian soldiers and a Syrian journalist were injured in Syria's Aleppo Friday [4 Nov] when mortar rounds struck one of the exit corridors designated for the evacuation of rebels and residents from the eastern besieged part of the city during a temporary halt in fighting announced by Russia.

For several hours into the 10-hour halt, no one approached the corridors, where webcam footage shared by the Russian Defense Ministry also showed no activities there. By early afternoon however, about four hours before the halt expired, Syrian state media said seven mortar shells from the rebel-held side of the city hit one of the corridors in the northern part of the city.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the two Russian servicemen were lightly wounded during a rebel shelling of the humanitarian corridor in the western section of the Castello road in north Aleppo. They were evacuated and their lives are not in danger, the statement said.

....

Earlier, Syrian state TV showed footage from one of the designated corridors with buses parked to transport anyone coming out of eastern Aleppo. Police and an Islamic cleric were waiting at the crossing.

The Observatory said that by midday no one had used the corridors. A Civil Defense volunteer in Aleppo, Ibrahim al-Haj, said that no left in the early afternoon either.

....

Russia's offer of a 10-hour "humanitarian pause," announced earlier this week, has raised speculation that a major offensive may be planned once the pause expires on Friday evening.

Sarah El Deeb, "Russian-declared pause in Syria's Aleppo broken," [Associated Press](#), 14:32 GMT, 4 Nov 2016.

At 14:23 GMT on 4 November, Reuters reported:

A Syrian government official said he did not expect civilians or rebels to leave besieged eastern Aleppo on Friday during an evacuation window announced by Russia and accused insurgents of blocking any exit.

Moscow and the Syrian army told rebel fighters this week to leave opposition-held neighbourhoods with light weapons through two corridors by Friday evening, and said civilians would be allowed to evacuate by other exit points. There was no sign of any evacuations, however.

"I wish civilians would exit ... but I expect that won't happen, not under these circumstances," Fadi Ismail, an official based in Aleppo in Syria's reconciliation ministry, told Reuters via telephone.

Ismail said fighters from al Qaeda's former Syria branch were preventing both rebels and civilians who wished to leave from doing so, and that factions appeared determined to fight on.

"Jabhat al-Nusra is in control of all of the crossings. For civilians, it's impossible to leave as long as Nusra controls the area," he said, referring to the group which now calls itself Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.

....

Ismail said prospects for a deal with rebels looked bleak, and he expected military action to resume if no one left on Friday.

"All the messages (from rebels) that I used to receive were 'we're coming for you with car bombs'," he said. "There was nothing to suggest reconciliation would happen."

Kinda Makieh & Ellen Francis, "Aleppo evacuations to fall flat, rebels prevent any exit - Syria official," [Reuters](#), 14:23 GMT, 4 Nov 2016.

Both the [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#) report that civilians in eastern Aleppo expect renewed bombing by Russia and Assad to begin at the expiration of the ceasefire at 19:00 Syrian time on 4 November. However, this fear of more bombing did *not* motivate civilians to flee from their homes during the ceasefire.

On the night of 4 November, the most recent article at the English-language Syrian Observatory for Human Rights website is dated 27 October, which is why I have not cited the SOHR recently.

**My Comments on Lack of Cooperation with United Nations
by Assad, insurgents, and opposition political leadership**

The insurgents in Aleppo rejected a unilateral ceasefire by Russia and Assad on 20-21-22 Oct and again on 4 Nov. Specifically, the insurgents:

1. refused to allow wounded people to be evacuated from eastern Aleppo city,
2. refused to allow civilians to leave eastern Aleppo city,
3. refused to allow delivery of humanitarian aid to eastern Aleppo city, and
4. Nusra and other insurgents refused to leave eastern Aleppo, thereby defying de Mistura's plan of 6 October.

In my essay for [August 2016](#), in a section on why Western nations were indifferent to the problems in Syria, I remarked: "Before people deserve help, they need to stop making their problems worse."

The leadership of the insurgent groups repeatedly violated international humanitarian law and committed war crimes, showing that these insurgents are barbarians. The leadership of insurgent groups continues to intransigently cling to their demand that Assad resign, despite the fact that the insurgents have failed to remove Assad during a devastating five-and-a-half year civil war. And the leadership of opposition political groups — the Syrian National Coalition in Turkey and the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) in Saudi Arabia — repeatedly refused to negotiate with Assad's government. The HNC walked out of negotiations in Geneva in April 2016, which ended the indirect talks.

The *people* of Syria — who are suffering from malnutrition, lack of medical care, having their homes bombed or shelled, and having their places of employment destroyed — have the misfortune to have barbarians for leaders, regardless of whether the people support Assad or the opposition to Assad.

The United Nations *needs* cooperation from the people who it is trying to help, but neither Assad, nor the leaders of insurgent groups, nor the leadership of opposition political groups are cooperating with the United Nations. Given the refusal of the opposition to negotiate an end to the civil war, and the refusal of all parties to allow delivery of humanitarian aid, the United Nations should be forgiven if it ignores the Syrian problem.

I suggest that the United Nations has *no* obligation to help Syrians who refuse to cooperate with the United Nations.

The United Nations could help the Syrians end their civil war, but neither Assad nor the insurgents want to negotiate a surrender. Instead, both Assad and the insurgents are pursuing a military victory, which will result in the killing of more civilians and the destruction of more buildings and roads. Given the massive military support for Assad from Russia, it seems likely that Assad will annihilate the insurgents, together with destroying much of the remainder of Syria.

Given the continuing support of foreign meddlers (Russia and Iran supporting Assad; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and the USA supporting the insurgents), the civil war in Syria seems

likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

5 November 2016

The expected resumption of airstrikes on Aleppo city did *not* occur. However, insurgents in Aleppo continued to try to break the siege of eastern Aleppo city. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said insurgents had killed at least 74 civilians in the battles beginning 28 October. [Associated Press](#).

7-12 November 2016

On 7 November, Russia said the moratorium on airstrikes in Aleppo would continue, "if militants don't start combat action". [Reuters](#).

On 8 November, insurgents continued to battle Assad's forces in Aleppo. [Reuters](#).

On 8 November, the Russian defense ministry said that airstrikes on Aleppo would resume "in coming hours". [Reuters](#).

But on 10 November, the Russian foreign ministry said the moratorium on airstrikes in Aleppo would continue. The Associated Press hints that the Russian defense ministry is concerned about insurgents in eastern Aleppo regrouping during the pause in airstrikes, but the Russian foreign ministry wants the pause to continue. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 10 November, Obama ordered the Pentagon to begin airstrikes against Nusra in Syria. The [Washington Post](#) says "The move underlines the extent to which Obama has come to prioritize the counterterrorism mission in Syria over efforts to pressure President Bashar al-Assad to step aside, as al-Nusra is among the most effective forces battling the Syrian government." I doubt this, because mainstream news media are *not* reporting this order by Obama, and neither the White House nor the Pentagon have issued a press release on this important change in policy.

On the morning of 12 November, [Reuters](#) reported that "a unilateral moratorium on Russian air strikes on rebel targets inside Aleppo ... remains in place for now."

On 12 November, the [Associated Press](#) reported "Syrian government forces regained control Saturday [12 Nov] of areas they lost over the past two weeks to a rebel offensive on the edge of the northern city of Aleppo, ending a major attempt by insurgents to break the siege on eastern parts of the city". That means the insurgent's offensive that began on 28 October has failed.

10 November 2016: Egeland

On 10 November, Jan Egeland, the chair of the U.N. Humanitarian Task Force in Geneva, gave a press conference.

The fifth war winter is starting in Syria. There is no doubt it will be the worst in this cruel war, and I fear it will be a real killer in too many places. Because in spite of a massive humanitarian operation, the largest in the world, ongoing in and around Syria at the moment, with hundreds and hundreds of trucks every single month to civilians in need in Syria, there are hundreds of thousands of people we have not reached, as we should have, in preparation for winter.

Some of the areas are freezing cold, horrible conditions, and people will be in need of digging themselves down in the ground in extreme cases, because we cannot reach them, and we are not reaching them because we are being blocked physically or administratively, or because of cross-fire or insecurity. No place are we as worried at this time as for the quarter of a million civilians in east Aleppo. The last time east Aleppo was reached with significant humanitarian supplies was in the beginning of July, in the middle of the summer. The reports we have now from within east Aleppo is that the last food rations are being distributed as we speak. There will not be more to distribute next week. Some families have not had any distributions, families in need of relief, have not had any distributions for several weeks already. So prices are now skyrocketing on the market, food-wise, in east Aleppo. We have reports of desperation in families and within communities. It is a horrendous situation. It is also bad in west Aleppo, where we can reach with humanitarian supplies, but also there people are dying every single week, civilians, from the continued fighting.

That is why we have a UN initiative for east Aleppo that has four parts. We have gone to the parties and translated our initiative into Arabic, so it is now with the parties, the Russian, Syrian Government side, as well as with the armed opposition groups. We are urging the following four things:

1. medical supplies in to the kneeling medical facilities in east Aleppo;
2. medical evacuations out of east Aleppo for the estimated 300 or so patients that are in urgent need of medical evacuation, together with their families;
3. the third element is food and other urgent supplies, humanitarian relief in to east Aleppo, and the
4. fourth element is more medical personnel in to provide medical relief in east Aleppo.

None of the four elements are conditional on the other, and should not be dealt with as such. Having heard back in the task force today, we are hopeful that both sides will, since the situation is so horrendous as it is, grant us the opportunity to both come with supplies into east Aleppo, and evacuate wounded and others out of east Aleppo.

It has not gotten better in the other besieged areas, and it got worse in east Aleppo. The Four Towns that are under the special arrangement made by Iran and Ahrar al-Sham, all relief into the Four Towns and medical evacuations out of the Four Towns have been paralyzed because of the conditioning between the two parties. So one of the issues we faced is that since students cannot go out for exams from two of the towns, medical evacuations cannot happen from the other two towns. I am mentioning this total paralysis because of the conditioning of aid between the parties to the Four Towns agreement in the context of also east Aleppo. I have not seen a place where there has

been so much politicization, manipulation of aid, as we have seen in Syria in recent months. It has to stop. Parties and members of the Task Force, which are the countries that are sponsoring the parties on the ground, have to help us more, help the civilian people in the cross fire in Syria. Thank you.

[Questions deleted]

....

I do indeed fear [the situation in Aleppo] could become much worse. It is terrible as we speak, it could get much worse. There has been a very good pause in air attacks on east Aleppo as you know. But there has been tremendous ground fighting, and I repeat it is also into west Aleppo from east, and the UN is at the moment relocated from west Aleppo, we do not have international staff there because the hotel where we had our well-known headquarters was directly targeted in west Aleppo. I am fearing it could get much worse; I am hopeful that we could get our UN initiative going again. I do not think anybody wants a quarter of a million people to be starving in east Aleppo. I cannot see anyone wishing to see so many civilians bleed to death in both east and west Aleppo because of indiscriminate war. I hope and believe we will be able to begin a new phase in our humanitarian work in Aleppo, both sides.

....

We are as disappointed as you would be that we were not able to do neither evacuations [out of] nor convoys of supplies into east Aleppo during the last pause. And there are many lessons drawn, and one of them is that it becomes too complicated when there are so many conditions, so many preconditions given. We are not giving up, we are trying again, but am just telling you, yes, I have not seen a place where it is so difficult to do basic humanitarian work and supplies because of political and military and strategic conditions, and here I would say all sides could help us more.

Jan Egeland, "Note to Correspondents: Transcript of press stakeout by Mr. Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N.](#), 10 Nov 2016. [Four-element indented list added by Standler.] Copy at [U.N. Geneva](#).

Egeland eloquently describes how the leadership of both the insurgents and Assad's government continually refuse to cooperate with the United Nations attempt to distribute humanitarian aid to civilians.

De Mistura was absent on 10 November. De Mistura has not spoken in public since 27 October, despite the crisis in Syria.

15-22 November 2016

On 15 November 2016, Russia and/or Assad resumed airstrikes on eastern Aleppo, as Assad's army began a major offensive to defeat the insurgents in the city of Aleppo. The bombing ended the unilateral moratorium on airstrikes that began on 18 October 2016.

[Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Aircraft from Russia's aircraft carrier participated in the

bombing. [Reuters](#).

My comment is that insurgents and civilians in eastern Aleppo had multiple opportunities to leave, but they refused. Now they get bombed and shelled into oblivion.

On 16 November 2016, the Kremlin claims it will continue the moratorium on bombing the city of Aleppo. [Reuters](#). If that is true, then Assad alone is bombing eastern Aleppo city. Russia claims to be conducting airstrikes in Idlib and Homs provinces. [Associated Press](#).

On 16 November 2016, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said said 11 people died from airstrikes in eastern Aleppo on 15 Nov, and an additional 21 people died on 16 Nov. [Reuters](#).

On 17 November, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "The Syrian Civil Defense said 28 people were killed in and around Aleppo on Thursday [17 Nov]. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of local activists, put the death toll at 25." [Reuters](#) reported: "the mayor of the besieged sector [of Aleppo] warned of an acute lack of fuel and food as winter encroaches. The siege and intense bombardment of east Aleppo have created a dire humanitarian crisis, aggravated by frequent air strikes on hospitals and the disruption and pollution of water supplies. Medicines, food and fuel are severely depleted."

On 17 November, de Mistura's office in Geneva issued a terse statement. I am quoting the entire press release:

The members of the Humanitarian Task Force (HTF) met today to review progress on humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas of Syria, notably in relation to the UN's inter-agency convoy plan for November.

The meeting, chaired by the Deputy Special Envoy [Ramzy], took note of the humanitarian impact of the intensified violence in various parts of northern Syria over the past week, such as in Aleppo, Raqqa and Idlib governorates, among others. It was regretted that no UN inter-agency cross-line convoys were able to proceed so far in November.

HTF members reiterated their commitment to enabling the UN and partners to reach all those in need with humanitarian assistance in a safe, sustained, unconditional and unimpeded manner, including in besieged eastern Aleppo city.

"Note to Correspondents — Office of the Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N.](#), 17 Nov 2016.

My sarcastic comment is that starving people in the city of Aleppo should eat the "reiterated commitment", because it is very nutritious. One week of bureaucratic press releases can feed tens of thousands of people. My serious comment is that I [suggest](#) closing the office of the Special Envoy for Syria, because of lack of cooperation from Assad and insurgents. This failure to deliver food and medicine to Aleppo city during 5 months is a colossal failure by the United Nations.

On 18 September 2016, at the daily press briefing at U.N. headquarters in New York City, the following was all that was said about Syria:

The UN is deeply concerned by the hostilities in Aleppo city in Syria, including reports of intensified aerial bombardment and indiscriminate shelling. These attacks reportedly continue to result in death, injury and displacement to scores of civilians, as well as damage to civilian infrastructure.

The eastern part of the city remains inaccessible to humanitarian workers, where an estimated 275,000 people remain trapped under horrific conditions. UN food stocks have finished and health and other stocks are running dangerously low in the city. The UN has not been able to reach the eastern part of the city since July.

Farhan Haq, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 18 Nov 2016.

My comment is that people in eastern Aleppo who have been maimed by Assad's Islamic bombs will feel much better knowing that the United Nations is "deeply concerned" about Assad's airstrikes. Given that the United Nations is *not* going to do something to alleviate the situation in Aleppo, I think the United Nations should quit Syria and stop issuing these pathetic statements to journalists.

On 19 November 2016, [Reuters](#) reported: "the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said at least 27 people, including children, had been killed in eastern Aleppo on Saturday [19 Nov] by dozens of air strikes and barrel bombs and dozens of artillery rounds."

On the night of 19 November, the most recent document at the English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is dated 9 November, which is why I am not citing that website.

On 20 November, the Associated Press reported:

At least 172 civilians have been killed since the government renewed its assault on the besieged enclave six days ago [on 15 November], according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The U.N. estimates 275,000 people are trapped inside [eastern Aleppo city]. By Saturday [19 Nov], the government had damaged or destroyed every hospital in the east, according to the Syrian American Medical Society, which supports hospitals in Syria.

Philip Issa, "Syrian government refuses UN truce terms for Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 23:19 GMT, 20 Nov 2016.

On 20 November, [CNN](#) reported: "The Syrian regime resumed heavy bombardment over eastern Aleppo on Tuesday [15 Nov] after a three-week lull, killing at least 289 people by Saturday [19 Nov], according to the Syrian Civil Defense, also known as White Helmets."

On 20 November 2016, de Mistura traveled to Damascus to meet with the Syrian Foreign Minister about relief for eastern Aleppo. See [above](#).

On 21 November, at the Daily Press Briefing at United Nations headquarters in New York City, the spokesman noted what insurgents had done in Aleppo city.

... [Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen] O'Brien [told the U.N. Security Council]

that more than 350 mortars and rockets have been reportedly launched by non-State armed groups indiscriminately into western Aleppo since 1 November, killing over 60 people, including women and children, and injuring more than 350 more.

Stéphane Dujarric, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 21 Nov 2016.

On 22 November, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that insurgents had prevented civilians from fleeing from eastern Aleppo city. The [Associated Press](#) was able to corroborate the report by interviewing "a resident of Aleppo's frontline Sheikh Maqṣoud neighborhood." Preventing civilians from leaving is a form of kidnapping or taking hostages. Worse, the insurgents are using civilians as human shields, and exposing those civilians to death and maiming by airstrikes and artillery.

26-30 November 2016 Assad begins to liberate Aleppo city

As mentioned above, on 15 November 2016, Assad resumed airstrikes on eastern Aleppo city.

On 26 November, Assad's army captured the Hanano housing district in eastern Aleppo city. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 27 November 2016, Assad's military campaign appears to be slicing eastern Aleppo city into northern and southern halves, which will disrupt insurgents. The [Associated Press](#) reported "a swift collapse of rebel defenses inside" eastern Aleppo city, as Assad fights to capture the Sakhour neighborhood. Simultaneously, hundreds of civilians in eastern Aleppo city are fleeing to either other parts of rebel-controlled eastern Aleppo city, or to Assad-controlled western Aleppo city. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

Beginning in February 2014, various towns in Syria have surrendered to Assad. On 27 November 2016, the town of Khan al-Shih, near Damascus, surrendered. Insurgents will depart for Idlib province with their small arms, but give their heavy weapons to Assad's army. [Reuters](#).

On the night of 27 November, the most recent document at the English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is dated 9 November, which is why I am not citing that website.

On the morning of 28 November, the [BBC](#) said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported "the district of Sakhour had fallen to the Syrian army" and Assad now controlled 1/3 of eastern Aleppo city. The capture of Sakhour split eastern Aleppo city into two parts. The [Associated Press](#) reported "rebel defenses in the country's largest city rapidly collapsed." See also [Reuters](#). The flood of refugees from parts of eastern Aleppo city, which began on 27 November, reached several thousand on 28 November. [Reuters](#). The refugees are fleeing from not only airstrikes and fighting, but also from hunger caused by the Assad besieging Aleppo since July 2016. On 28 November, the [U.N.](#) Daily Press Briefing in New York City said: "The last remaining WFP (World Food Programme) rations ran out on 13 November

and supplies from other partners are close to being depleted, effectively leaving eastern Aleppo city without food."

On 29 November 2016, the [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#) reported approximately 16,000 to 20,000 people had fled from their homes in eastern Aleppo city. [Reuters](#) reported Stephen O'Brien, the United Nations head of humanitarian aid, said 16,000 people had already fled, and "the area had no functioning hospitals left, food stocks were nearly exhausted and it was likely that thousands more people would flee their homes if fighting persisted in the coming days."

On the night of 30 November, Reuters reported:

Syrian rebels on Wednesday [30 Nov] vowed to fight on in east Aleppo in the face of sudden government advances that have cut the area held by the opposition by a third in recent days and brought insurgents in the city to the brink of a catastrophic defeat.

....

The [Syrian] army and its allies said they had taken the Sheikh Saeed district in the south of the city on Wednesday. Rebels denied this, saying the government's advance had been repelled. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitoring group, said the insurgents retained a third of Sheikh Saeed.

....

Russia, Assad's most powerful international ally whose air force has pounded rebels for more than a year, [said](#) it hoped the Aleppo situation could be resolved by the end of the year. Rebels in the city have vowed no surrender.

While rebel lines collapsed unexpectedly in parts of eastern Aleppo at the weekend [26-27 Nov], sources on the government side say the next phase could be more difficult as they try to take more densely populated areas of the city.

Angus McDowall & Tom Perry, "Syrian rebels vow to resist army advances in Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 20:10 GMT, 30 Nov 2016. (Link added by Standler.)

On the night of 30 November, the most recent document at the English-language website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is dated 9 November, which is why I am not citing that website.

17 Sep 2016 mistake by U.S. Military

Back on 17 Sep 2016, there was an accidental airstrike by the U.S.-led Coalition that killed 83 Syrian soldiers who were fighting against ISIL. This accidental airstrike occurred at the same time that the U.S. Government was condemning violations of the ceasefire by Assad and Russia inside Syria. Both Assad and Russia threw a snit and used the accidental airstrike as propaganda, to divert attention from the many violations of the ceasefire by Assad and Russia. On 29 November, the U.S. Central Command's investigation concluded that a series of "unintentional, regrettable error primarily based on human factors" caused the accidental

airstrike. [CENTCOM](#); [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

CENTCOM's investigation *could* have said "We're sorry about our mistake." Instead, the Pentagon press secretary defiantly asserted: "... the strikes were conducted under a good faith belief that the strikes were targeting ISIL, in accordance with the law of armed conflict and the applicable rules of engagement." [Pentagon](#). My comment is that defiant statement appears to be the result of hiring a lawyer to concoct a defense, instead of hiring a sincere human being to apologize. Reading the public reports on this investigation gives me the impression that the U.S. Military not only refuses to apologize for the deaths of 83 Syrian soldiers who were fighting against ISIL, but also seeks multiple excuses to avoid responsibility for the U.S. mistake.

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.

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.

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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](#).

On 15 November, Russia and Assad bombed three hospitals in or near the village of Awaijel, west of Aleppo city. [Reuters](#).

In his 15 November 2016 report on Syria to the U.N. Security Council, Ban said:

[¶15] In blatant disregard for the protected status of medical facilities under international humanitarian law, as further articulated by the Security Council in its resolution 2286 (2016), such facilities continued to be damaged or destroyed by fighting. The United Nations and health partners received credible reports, some of which are being verified, of 25 attacks against medical facilities in October. In total, 13 of the confirmed attacks were against hospitals (6 in Aleppo governorate, 1 in Idlib governorate, 1 in Hama governorate and 3 in Rif Dimashq governorate) and a primary health-care centre in Kafr Zayta, Hama governorate, was struck twice within 72 hours.

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[¶36] The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Horrific attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure continue unabated. Schools, hospitals and basic services have been mercilessly pummelled. Violations of the most basic tenets of international human rights and humanitarian law are rife.

Ban Ki-moon, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," S/2016/962 (15 Nov 2016).

On 16 November, the Daily Press Briefing at United Nations headquarters in New York City said:

The World Health Organization (WHO) condemns the attacks on five hospitals that took place in Syria between 13 and 15 November, including three hospitals in Western Rural Aleppo and two hospitals in Idlib. At least two people were reportedly killed as a

result of the attacks and 19 people were wounded, including six medical staff. Shockingly, such attacks on health in Syria are increasing in both frequency and scale. Throughout 2016, WHO and partners have documented 126 such attacks across the country.

WHO once again demands that all parties in the conflict respect the safety and neutrality of health workers, health facilities and medical supplies. The pattern of attacks indicates that health care is being deliberately targeted in the Syrian conflict. Such targeting would be a major violation of international law.

Farhan Haq, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," [U.N.](#), 16 Nov 2016.

My comment: 126 attacks in 11 months, and all the United Nations does is whine about war crimes! This is a pathetic response by the United Nations.

On 16 November, the Syrian-American Medical Society reported:

Earlier today [16 Nov], two hospitals, including a children's hospital, and the Central Blood Bank in eastern Aleppo City were reportedly hit by 10 barrel bombs, killing more than 19 people, including children, and injuring many. In the past five days, there have been 13 attacks on medical facilities across northern Syria — that's one attack every 9 hours. Six of these attacks targeted SAMS-supported facilities in the countryside of Aleppo, Idlib, and Hama. At least nine medical personnel, including three doctors, were injured over the course of the weekend, and 5 civilians were killed. Khaled Abu Ibrahim, an ambulance driver was killed by an airstrike in eastern Aleppo earlier this morning. This is an unprecedented volume of attacks on healthcare facilities.

The deliberate targeting of medical facilities and personnel has become the new normal in Syria, with 54 incidents in the past three months, 19 of which occurred in November alone. The 138 attacks since July — occurring at the rate of one attack per day — have been perpetrated by the Syrian government and its ally, Russia.

Half of the hospitals targeted this weekend suspended operations, with some reporting major destruction to their facilities and equipment. Additionally, at least five ambulances were destroyed. A SAMS-supported hospital in the western Aleppo countryside reported that the hospital incurred destruction beyond immediate repair. Most of the attacks were reportedly by air-to-surface missiles. Another two aerial attacks in the Idlib countryside reportedly involved the use of cluster bombs, which are internationally outlawed yet have been used across Syria with impunity.

"Medical Facilities Face an Unprecedented Number of Attacks as the Offensive in Aleppo Escalates," [SAMS](#), 16 Nov 2016.

On 17 November, Médecins San Frontières (MSF) issued a press release:

MSF has been able to confirm that two hospitals in besieged east Aleppo were hit by airstrikes on 16 November, one day after airstrikes were re-launched on the opposition-held area of the city.

The two hospitals which came under attack on 16 November were a children's hospital

and a hospital specialising in surgery. That morning, the neighbourhood was reportedly struck more than 50 times. The paediatric hospital that was hit is the only specialised hospital for children in the besieged area of Aleppo. Hospital staff managed to move children, including premature babies, from cots and incubators to the basement of the building to shelter from the bombing.

This means that since the siege began in July, functioning hospitals in east Aleppo have been damaged in 29 separate attacks. Some hospitals have been hit multiple times and have been forced to close as a result. Both hospitals which were hit are supported by MSF, among other organisations.

"Syria: Hospital bombings in east Aleppo force staff to move children and premature babies to basement for shelter," [MSF](#), 17 Nov 2016.

On 18 November, there were more airstrikes on hospitals in eastern Aleppo city, including a pediatric hospital and a neighboring hospital that were struck on 16 November. Babies in incubators were transferred from the pediatric hospital to another hospital. [Al-Jazeera](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 19 November 2016, *all* hospitals in eastern Aleppo city were out-of-service, owing to recent airstrikes. [Reuters](#); [MSF](#).

On 20 November 2016, the [Associated Press](#) obtained video of Assad's war criminals bombing a children's hospital in eastern Aleppo city. The head of the children's hospital told the Associated Press: "Currently we have suspended operations as we search for an alternative location for the hospital."

On 25 November 2016, there were airstrikes on two hospitals for women in Syria, one in Idlib province and the other in the eastern part of Aleppo city. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

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.

U.N. Reports

On 22 Feb 2014, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2139, which

required parties in Syria to allow humanitarian aid and to stop targeting civilians. Although this Resolution was effective immediately, *all* of the parties in Syria ignored it. The U.N. Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, issued monthly Reports on the situation in Syria, beginning March 2014.

A list of all of the Secretary General's reports on Syria can be found at my [webpage](#), which has links to the original reports.

Prosecution for War Crimes ?

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

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

My essay for [October 2016](#) contains my comments on possible prosecution for war crimes.

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 Syrian civil war, because the U.N. Security Council had failed. Ban specifically mentioned prosecution for war crimes:

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 am appalled that the Syrian parties continue to place their faith in rockets, guns and barrel bombs.

There is no military solution to the Syrian crisis.

....

No country's destiny should rest on the fate of any single individual. [reference to whether Assad resigns or stays, as insurmountable obstacle in Geneva negotiations]

My Special Envoy continues to work intensively to re-convene formal talks. We must be ready to move quickly, in a concerted manner.

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 of 27 November 2016, the U.N. General Assembly has failed to take on the Syria problem. Apparently, the General Assembly is going to ignore Ban's 20 October request. Ban was wrong when he said: "There is no military solution to the Syrian crisis." Assad is clearly winning the Syrian civil war, with the assistance of Russia and Iran, and with the impotence of the United Nations. Ban's 20 October request to the General Assembly seems to be a last gasp by a departing Secretary General. Perhaps the new U.N. Secretary General in January 2017 will make a new request of the General Assembly.

In his cover letter for the October 2016 report on the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, Ban said:

The use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic is a matter of grave concern. I am alarmed by the weakening taboo against the use of such weapons and by the possibility of their use becoming normalized in this or any conflict, present or future. In order to avoid this intolerable outcome and to ensure that there is no impunity, it is imperative that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable. I look forward to the deliberations by the Security Council on this report.

Ban Ki-moon, "Letter dated 2 November 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/2016/928, 2 Nov 2016.

In his 15 November 2016 report on Syria to the U.N. Security Council, Ban said:

[¶36] The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Horrific attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure continue unabated. Schools, hospitals and basic services have been mercilessly pummelled.

Violations of the most basic tenets of international human rights and humanitarian law are rife. The senseless killing on 26 October of scores of children in a school complex in Has, Idlib governorate, is just one of the many tragic reminders that Syrians are being robbed of their future by this conflict and those fuelling it. If such horrific acts and tactics persist despite global outrage, it is largely because their authors, whether in the corridors of power or in insurgent redoubts, do not fear accountability and justice. They must be proved wrong.

....

[¶38] I have repeatedly called for accountability and effective investigations into allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law, including through a referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court.

[¶39] In many of my reports to the Security Council I have made the point that what is most needed in the Syrian Arab Republic is an end to the violence, in Aleppo and elsewhere, and the restoration of a nationwide cessation of hostilities. I have urged those with influence to ensure full and unimpeded humanitarian access to all civilians throughout the country. I regret that in October the Council again failed to discharge its responsibilities to uphold peace and security for the Syrian Arab Republic.

Ban Ki-moon, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," S/2016/962 (15 Nov 2016).

On 15 November 2016, Assad began a new series of airstrikes on eastern Aleppo city. On 20 November, the Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary General issued the following statement about Aleppo city:

The Secretary-General condemns the reported intense air assault over the last several days that has killed and maimed scores of Syrian civilians, including children, and left eastern Aleppo without functioning hospitals. He also condemns the indiscriminate shelling that has been reported in areas of Aleppo governorate and the western parts of Aleppo city, including strikes on schools said to have killed a number of children.

The Secretary-General reminds all parties to the conflict that targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure is a war crime. He calls on all sides to immediately cease any such attacks. Those responsible for these and other atrocities in Syria, whoever and wherever they are, must one day be brought to account.

The Secretary-General also calls on all the parties to ensure freedom of movement of civilians and immediate unhindered access to humanitarian assistance.

"Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on Syria," U.N., 20 Nov 2016.

My comment is that this U.N. statement on 20 November will be ignored by everyone in Syria. The Secretary General apparently does *not* understand that Assad is successfully pursuing a military defeat of insurgents in Aleppo city, and also starving civilians in Aleppo into submission. Why should Assad stop? Assad is slowly winning the battle for Aleppo city. Ban's call to prosecute Assad's government for war crimes at some vague future time again shows the impotence of the United Nations.

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 2885 Iraqis killed in terrorism, violence, and armed conflict during November 2016. [UNAMI](#).

Atrocities in Iraq

Introduction

My previous [essays](#), beginning in June 2014, documented numerous atrocities by Islamic terrorists:

- ISIL executed hundreds of captured Shiite soldiers in Mosul and Tikrit during 11-14 June 2014.
- ISIL *crucified* eight rebels near Aleppo in Syria on 28 June 2014.
- ISIL threatened genocide of Yazidis in Iraq during August 2014 and 20-22 Oct 2014.
- an attack on a Sunni mosque in Iraq on 22 Aug 2014.
- ISIL executed captured Syrian soldiers in Raqqa, Syria in August 2014.
- Shiite militias in Iraq are murdering innocent Sunnis (reports: 14 Oct 2014, 26 Jan 2015).
- ISIL burned alive al-Kasasbeh, a pilot in the Jordanian Air Force, (see my essay for [Feb 2015](#)).
- ISIL in Libya beheaded 21 Christians on 15 Feb 2015.
- and — beginning with my essay for [Oct 2014](#) — I documented some of the car bombs in Iraq that killed large numbers of people, most commonly in or near Baghdad.

November 2016: Islamic Terrorism in Iraq

On 1 November, the United Nations Human Rights spokesperson announced that ISIL "killed 40 former members of the Iraqi Security Forces near Mosul on Saturday [29 Oct] and threw their bodies in the Tigris river". [Reuters](#).

On 2 November, ISIL murdered "180 former Iraqi government employees" in the town of Kokjali, near Mosul, according to the United Nations Human Rights spokesperson. [Reuters](#).

On 5 November, four roadside bombs exploded in Baghdad, killing at least 10 people. [Associated Press](#).

On 6 November, ISIL detonated suicide car bombs in Samarra and Tikrit. In Samarra, ISIL packed explosives in an ambulance in a parking lot. The [Associated Press](#) at 17:35 GMT says at least 20 dead in the two attacks. At 01:00 GMT on 7 Nov, [Reuters](#) reported the bombs in both cities were in ambulances, and there were a total of 21 dead.

I do *not* have the time to chronicle every ISIL atrocity reported by journalists, so this discussion is incomplete. ISIL is detonating at least one bomb every day in Iraq.

On 8 November, the Iraqi army discovered a mass grave created by ISIL south of Mosul. There are approximately 100 corpses in the mass grave. [Associated Press](#).

On 11 November, the [Associated Press](#) reported that ISIL had killed 70 civilians in Mosul during the past week, allegedly for sending information to the Iraqi army.

On 14 November, ISIL detonated three suicide bombs in Iraq: one suicide bomber targeted "Shiite pilgrims in the holy city of Karbala", while two car bombs targeted security personnel at a checkpoint in Fallujah. A total of 12 people were killed by the three bombs. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) reported a total of 14 dead.

On 15 November, ISIL detonated multiple bombs in Baghdad, killing at least 14 people. [Associated Press](#).

On 18 November, a suicide car bomb killed 12 people at a wedding in the town of Ameriyat Falluja, west of Baghdad. [Reuters](#).

On 23 November 2016, the [Associated Press](#) tersely reported: "more than a dozen small-scale attacks in and around Baghdad killed at least 31 people and wounded 103".

On 24 November 2016, an ISIL truck bomb detonated at a gasoline station in Hilla, which is south of Baghdad. The [Associated Press](#) said at least 56 people died, while [Reuters](#) reported approximately 100 dead. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The following day, the [Associated Press](#) reported a total of 73 dead.

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.

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.

My essay for [October 2016](#) mentions that Iraq's Supreme Court ruled it was unconstitutional for Abadi to abolish three of the highest level positions in the Iraqi government. Also, the Iraqi parliament banned the sale of alcoholic beverages.

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).

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. On 28 November 2016, Iraqi prime minister Abadi told the [Associated Press](#) "The success of liberating a huge area indicates that Daesh does not have the gut now or the motivation to fight as they were doing before." The AP also reported: "Al-Abadi stood by previous pledges that Mosul would be retaken this year, despite increasingly slow progress on the ground." That means the Iraqi army has one month in which to liberate the remaining 90% of Mosul.

10.

On 1 June 2015, Abadi announced the operation to liberate Mosul had begun. But Iraqi soldiers did not arrive at the edge of Mosul until 1 November 2016, 17 months later.

November 2016: Mosul

My essay for [October 2016](#) has the previous history. This essay is a spare-time project for me, so I am *not* able to chronicle every detail reported by journalists during the liberation of Mosul.

On 1 November 2016, Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service forces captured the state television station in eastern Mosul. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 3 November 2016, the ISIL leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, released a recording in which he said: "This raging battle and total war, and the great jihad that the state of Islam is fighting today only increases our firm belief, God willing, and our conviction that all this is a prelude to victory." The current location of Baghdadi is unknown, he may have fled from Mosul. [Reuters](#).

Despite the arrival on 29 October of Shiite militias in villages at the western edge of Mosul, on 3 November the road between Mosul and Tal Afar (55 km west of Mosul) is still *not* under control of Iraqi forces. [Reuters](#).

On 5 November, the Iraqi army south of Mosul has entered Hammam al-Alil, the last town south of Mosul. [Reuters](#).

My essay for October 2016 mentioned some of the defenses erected by ISIL in Mosul. On 5 November, the Associated Press reported:

The advance of the Iraqi forces was also slowed by fortifications erected by the extremists in the more than two years since they captured the city. Trenches and berms have turned the streets and alleyways of a neighborhood once named after former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein into a maze.

Satellite images show rows of concrete barricades, earthen mounds and rubble blocking key routes into the city center. The images, taken Monday [31 Oct] by Stratfor, a U.S.-based private intelligence firm, showed that IS fighters have cleared terrain and leveled buildings around Mosul airport and a nearby former military base on the west bank of the Tigris.

Susannah George & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Human shields, barricades slow Iraqi advance into Mosul," [Associated Press](#), 19:02 GMT, 5 Nov 2016.

On 10-12 November, there were reports of stiff resistance by ISIL as Iraqi special forces slowly entered deeper into eastern Mosul. ISIL deployed suicide car bombs, snipers, and explosives to slow the liberation of Mosul. [Associated Press](#)(10 Nov); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 13 November, Iraqi troops entered the 3300 year old ruins of the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud, which is 30 km south of Mosul. During their more than two-year occupation, ISIL

severely damaged these ruins. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 14 November, the [Associated Press](#) reminds us that in June, July, and August 2016 ISIL set fire to oil wells near the town of Qayara. Those fires are still burning, creating heavy black smoke and pollution. [Reuters](#) tells us that the smoke causes breathing problems for children. The more than three-month old fires are a symbol of the incompetence of the Iraqi government.

On 15 November, [Reuters](#) reported the Iraqi army claims to have liberated 1/3 of eastern Mosul.

On 16 November, the [Associated Press](#) reported "extensive cultural damage" by ISIL in the ruins of the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud, mostly back in April 2015. It is well known that ISIL has been obliterating historic buildings and ancient ruins.

On 17 November, cloudy skies interfered with airstrikes in and near Mosul. The Iraqi army paused their advance into Mosul. ISIL continued to use mortar shells and suicide car bombs to attack the Iraqi army. [Associated Press](#).

On 17-18 November, Shiite militias captured the Tal Afar military airfield from ISIL. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 22 November, the [Associated Press](#) had a news article with the headline: "Iraqis finally put out some oil fires set months ago by IS". Eight burning oil wells were extinguished recently, but at least five wells remain on fire. Not only are these fires a major source of air pollution, but also they waste crude oil. The Associated Press says: "More than 1,500 people have sought medical treatment for respiratory problems."

On 23 November, airstrikes destroyed a bridge across the Tigris River in Mosul, which helped to disrupt supplies to ISIL, as well as complete the besieging of western Mosul. A total of four bridges in Mosul have been destroyed in October and November. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 28 November, the Iraqi army is wondering if it was a good idea to allow civilians to remain in Mosul, after approximately 600 civilians have been killed. ISIL is "intentionally targeting civilians". Further, the Iraqi army can not use heavy weapons or airstrikes, out of concern for killing civilians. But if the approximately one million civilians in Mosul fled from the city, Iraq is unable to provide housing for those refugees. [Washington Post](#).

On 28 November 2016, the Associated Press reported:

Six weeks into the battle, the force made up of 50,000 troops, Shiite and Sunni tribal militias and Kurdish fighters is a long way from winning back the country's second-largest city. The fight is showing the limitations of Iraq's military and security forces, suggesting it has still not fully recovered from the collapse it suffered two years ago in the face of the militants' blitz across much of northern and western Iraq.

As expected, IS militants are tenaciously defending their last major foothold in Iraq, and the 1 million civilians who remain inside prevent the use of overwhelming

firepower.

But what is alarming, according to Iraqi field commanders, is that the progress so far has been lopsided. The battle-seasoned special forces are doing most of the fighting and slowly advancing inside the city. Other military outfits are halted outside the city limits, unable to move forward because of resistance, battle fatigue, inexperience or lack of weaponry suited for urban warfare.

....

The special forces have driven IS militants from about 15 of eastern Mosul's estimated 39 neighborhoods, some of which are no more than a handful of blocks. Their progress to date places them about 3 kilometers (nearly 2 miles) from the Tigris River, which divides the city in half.

Hamza Hendawi & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "In drawn-out battle of Mosul, limits of Iraqi military show," [Associated Press](#), 22:45 GMT, 28 Nov 2016.

On 30 November, the [U.N.](#) reported that fighting in eastern Mosul had destroyed one of three major water pipes, disrupting the water supply to "almost half" of the civilians in Mosul. Approximately 650,000 residents of Mosul are now without pipe water. [Reuters](#)

On 30 November, the [Associated Press](#) reports an Iraqi general said the Iraqi special forces have liberated "19 neighborhoods[, which] constituted less than 30 percent of the part of the city east of the Tigris [river]."

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.

My Proposal

There are genuine cultural differences between mainstream Islam and Christianity. For example, Saudi Arabia does *not* issue driver's licenses to women. Women in Afghanistan wear a burqa. The effort here should *not* be to impose orthodoxy and make mainstream Islam more like Christianity. Instead, the effort here should be for Muslim clerics and other Muslim opinion leaders to cite their holy book and other theological documents to show that it is forbidden for Muslims to:

- invade nations in an attempt to spread an interpretation of Islam on other Muslims
- invade nations in an attempt to spread Islam on non-Muslims
- kill civilians (i.e., noncombatants)
- kill unarmed military prisoners
- deny water, food, and/or medical supplies to besieged cities

- impose a tax (i.e., Jizya) on non-Muslims
- sell captured women as sex slaves

In other words, the focus should be on defeating Islamic terrorism (e.g., Al-Qaeda and ISIL), and *not* on attacking mainstream Islam.

On 8 May 2015, I suggested creating hundreds of small companies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere to hire Arabs to counter propaganda from ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

I suggest that the U.S. government fund a hundred small companies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab nations to hire native speakers of Arabic-language to counter ISIL propaganda. Some of these employees could monitor social media and post counter-propaganda. Other employees could design websites that explain why ISIL is violating teachings of Islam, violating Fatwas, and list atrocities committed by ISIL. Using small companies (e.g., 30 employees per company) ensures that they are quickly adaptable to changing conditions. Using native speakers of Arabic adds authenticity. A few thousand Arabs might be able to swamp ISIL's propaganda operation.

There are millions of Arabs who have fled from their homes in Syria and Iraq, because of Islamic terrorists. Many of these refugees are either unemployed or have minimal income. Putting them to work countering propaganda on the Internet from Al-Qaeda or ISIL would not only help defeat Islamic terrorism, but also provide much needed income to refugees.

Standler, [Syria & Iraq: May 2015](#), 1 June 2015. See end of the section on the Terror Attack in Garland, Texas.

A manager would recognize that there are economies of scale, by having *one* central office to handle payroll, benefits, etc. And I have no problem with consolidating payroll in one central office that serves all of the small companies.

A manager would also recognize cost savings by purchasing equipment and Internet access in large quantities in *one* central office, to provide *all* of the small companies. Whoa! I want managers in each small company to be able to use a credit card to *quickly* purchase whatever they need, without going through a central bureaucracy. There are security advantages when different companies use different computer operating systems, different webbrowsers, different antivirus and firewall software, and different Internet service providers. That way one computer virus, or one denial of service attack, will not affect all of the different companies.

I want the small companies to maximize creativity in attacking ISIL's message, and to maximize productivity. To do that, equipment costs would not be minimized.

I envision these small companies attacking ISIL and Al-Qaeda in four ways:

1. **Collect and display truth about Islamic terrorism:**

Create and operate websites that

- A. explain why ISIL and Al-Qaeda are violating teachings of Islam,
- B. collect and display Fatwas against ISIL and Al-Qaeda,
- C. list atrocities committed by ISIL and Al-Qaeda,

- D. hire Muslim clerics to write blogs or essays about how terrorism is evil. Each website to have versions for Arabic, French, and English languages.
2. **Social media:** Monitor social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and refute propaganda. Cite URLs of websites that display truth about Islamic terrorism.
 3. Produce press releases that can be published by newspapers or reported by radio/television stations.
 4. Use ridicule and parody to humiliate ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

I have seen calls for Internet Service Providers to shut down websites that espouse Islamic terrorism. (See, e.g., plan for Europol to shut down ISIL's social media accounts. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); 22 June 2015.) I am opposed to shutting down websites for three reasons:

1. First, if we shut down a website, the terrorists will move their webpages to a new location, making the shut-down efforts futile. The goal here is *not* to inconvenience Islamic terrorists, but to defeat Islamic terrorists. Shutting down websites only inconveniences the terrorists.
2. Second, shutting down websites that we do not approve is censorship. The terrorists will respond by saying Western Civilization can not win the debate in the marketplace of ideas, so Western Civilization simply censors unapproved messages.
3. Third, as Justice Brandeis famously said: "... the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence." *Whitney v. California*, 274 U.S. 357, 377 (1927) (concurring opinion).

In summary, Western Civilization *can* refute the arguments of Islamic terrorism. Winning the debate is the right way to defeat Islamic terrorism.

Need to Kill *Ideology* of Islamic Terrorism

The U.S. has killed several influential Islamic terrorists:

- In June 2006, a U.S. airstrike killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (the predecessor of ISIL).
- In May 2011, the U.S. Military killed Osama bin Laden.
- In September 2011, a U.S. drone strike killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an Islamic cleric and Al-Qaeda terrorist in Yemen.
- On 9 June 2015, a U.S. drone strike killed Nasir al-Wuhayshi (aka al-Wahishi), head of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen). He was also the apparent successor to current Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

- On 13 June 2015, U.S. fighter jets may have killed Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Libya. He is/was a leader in Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.
- On 16 June 2015, an airstrike in Syria smote "a senior ISIL leader", Tariq bin Tahar al-'Awni al-Harzi. [Reuters](#); [AP](#).
- On 11 July 2015, Abu Khalil al-Sudani, an Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan, was killed by a U.S. airstrike. The [Pentagon](#) boasted of the accomplishment. See also, [NY Times](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 18 August 2015, a U.S. drone strike near Mosul killed the Nr. 2 leader of ISIL, Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali, also known as "Hajji Mutazz", "Abu Muslim al-Turkmani", or "Abu Mutaz Qurashi". [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#). On 13 October, [Reuters](#) reports ISIL has confirmed his death.
- On 15 October 2015, a U.S. Coalition airstrike in Syria killed Abdul Mohsen Adballah Ibrahim al Charekh — also known as Sanafi al-Nasr — who was the leader of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Khorasan Group. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 12 November 2015, a U.S. drone airstrike in Syria apparently killed Mohamed Emwazi — a U.K. citizen also known as "Jihadi John" — who had executed at least 6 hostages (e.g., Steven Sotloff, James Foley, Abdul-Rahman Kassig, David Haines, Alan Henning, Kenji Goto) beginning in August 2014. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 13 November and 2 December 2015, U.S. airstrikes killed al-Qaida leaders in Libya and Somalia. [Pentagon](#).
- In "late November" 2015, a U.S. airstrike in Iraq killed Abu Salah, the financial minister of ISIL. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 29 December 2015, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S.-led Coalition airstrikes had killed 10 senior ISIL leaders during 7-27 December. Some of the dead leaders were involved in the terrorist attack in Paris on 13 Nov. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 29 Dec; [Reuters](#) on 30 Dec.
- On 25 March 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S. Military had killed Haji Imam, "who was an ISIL senior leader, serving as a finance minister and who is also responsible for some external affairs and plots." Imam is also known as Abdul-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) spells the dead man's name as "Haji Iman — an alias for Abd ar-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli".
- On 4 May 2016, Australia announced that a Cambodian immigrant who had joined ISIL had been killed by a U.S. airstrike in Mosul on 29 April. His name was Neil Prakash, also known as Abu Khaled al-Cambodi. Neil had been featured in ISIL recruiting videos. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [ABC](#); [Sydney Morning Herald](#).

- On 9 May 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that an airstrike on 6 May had killed "Abu Wahib, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's military emir for Iraq's Anbar province". [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 21 May 2016, the leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, was killed by an airstrike from a U.S. drone in Pakistan. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#). [Reuters](#) reported: "The death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour ... could further fracture the Taliban — an outcome that experts cautioned might make the insurgents even less likely to participate in long-stalled peace efforts." And [Reuters](#) reported the Pakistani government is wailing about the U.S. violation of Pakistani sovereignty. [Obama](#) was pleased that Mansour — also spelled Mansur — was killed by the U.S. military. Four days after Mansour was killed, the Taliban elected a new leader. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
- 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](#).)

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

As of October 15, 2016, the total cost of operations related to ISIL since kinetic operations started on August 8, 2014, is \$10 billion and the average daily cost is \$12.6 million for 800 days of operations. A further breakdown of cost associated with the operations is [here](#).

"Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 17 Nov 2016.

Note that the numbers in the previous paragraph do *not* include the clandestine CIA program to train and equip rebels in Syria. On 12 June 2015, the [Washington Post](#) reported that the CIA program had cost about one billion dollars a year to support approximately 10,000 rebels. The U.S. Government has probably spent a total of about three billion dollars in 2014, 2015, and 2016 to provide clandestine military support to the rebels in Syria (i.e., the U.S. proxy army in Syria).

Furthermore, the U.S. taxpayers pay for humanitarian aid for the people of Syria, who are starving as a result of the civil war that is supported by 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.](#)

In a little noticed request for supplemental funding, on 10 November 2016 the White House asked Congress to approve an additional US\$ 5,800,000,000 for the war in Afghanistan and the war against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Obama also asked for an additional \$5.8 billion in funding for the State Department's anti-ISIL operations. [The Hill](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#)(AP).

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.

1 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Oct. 31, Coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted two strikes using attack 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 and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed two ISIL oil tanker trucks and two oil pump jacks.

Iraq

- Near Al Baghdadi, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED.
- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL improvised weapons facility.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units; destroyed nine vehicles, a VBIED, and a VBIED facility; damaged 20 vehicles; and damaged a tunnel.
- Near Rawah, three strikes engaged an ISIL vehicle and destroyed four VBIEDs and a front end loader.

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

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

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

2 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 1, Coalition military forces conducted eight 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.

Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL supply boat and a weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units; destroyed four vehicles, a mortar system, and a fighting position; damaged two fighting positions; and suppressed three tactical units, two heavy machine guns, and a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two front-end loaders.
- Near Sinjar, one strike destroyed an ISIL fighting position.

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

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

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

3 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 2, Coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted eight strikes using attack and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery 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, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an oil pump jack and a vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed two ISIL oil well heads and an oil tanker truck.
- Near Idlib, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed five vehicles and two fighting positions.
- Near Mar'a, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a heavy machine gun.

Iraq

- Near Bashir, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit, and destroyed an ISIL headquarters building and a tunnel entrance, and suppressed two mortar systems.
- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, seven strikes engaged two tactical units; destroyed an ISIL headquarters building, five storage containers, two mortar systems, two fighting positions, an IED factory, a supply cache, a sniper position, an observation post, and a culvert; and damaged two tunnels, a bridge, and a supply route.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL VBIED factory.
- Near Sinjar, one strike suppressed an ISIL mortar system.

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

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

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

4 November 2016: airstrikes

On Friday, 4 November 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and

Syria:

On Nov. 3, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted five strikes using attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike engaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mar'a, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two mortar systems and two fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed five mortar systems, four vehicles, three ISIL-held buildings, two VBIEDs, two fighting positions and an ISIL headquarters building; and damaged two fighting positions and a front end loader.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Sinjar, two strikes engaged an ISIL VBIED factory.
- Near Tal Afar, two strikes engaged an ISIL headquarters building and a weapons cache.

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

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

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

5 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 4, Coalition military forces conducted 23 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted eight strikes using attack and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, bomber, fighter, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three

vehicles and an unmanned aerial vehicle.

- Near Mar'a, five strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL generator.
- Near Mosul, nine strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and four staging areas; destroyed five vehicles, three weapons caches, three mortar systems, a storage facility, a VBIED, and an ISIL-held building; and damaged an ISIL supply route, a bridge, and a tunnel.
- Near Tal Afar, five strikes engaged an ISIL vehicle depot, a headquarters building, and a weapons production facility, and destroyed a mortar system.

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

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

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

6 November 2016: airstrikes

On Sunday, 6 November 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq and Syria:

On Nov. 5, Coalition military forces conducted 24 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 9 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, one strike engaged oil processing equipment.
- Near Ayn Isa, seven strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed a vehicle and four fighting positions.
- Near Mar'a, seven strikes engaged seven ISIL tactical units and destroyed three vehicles, an artillery system, and a fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed two rocket systems and a front-end loader, and engaged two fighting positions.
- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles.
- Near Kirkuk, one strike engaged two ISIL tactical units and two staging areas and destroyed a weapons cache and an observation post.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units, a mortar system and a fighting position; destroyed four vehicles, three mortar systems, a VBIED, a

command and control node, an artillery system, and a weapons cache; and damaged three tunnel systems and a vehicle.

- Near Rawah, one strike engaged an ISIL-held building.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL VBIED facility.

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

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

Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 6 Nov 2016.

7 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 6, Coalition military forces conducted 30 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 12 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike damaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Ayn Isa, 16 strikes engaged 12 ISIL tactical units and destroyed six fighting positions, five vehicles, two VBIEDs, and a communications node.
- Near Mar'a, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle and a heavy machine gun.

Iraq

- Near Mosul, seven strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and three staging areas; destroyed 16 vehicles, seven mortar systems, three weapons caches, two ISIL-held buildings, an ISIL headquarters building, and a training facility; damaged two ISIL supply routes; degraded three ISIL tunnels; and suppressed two ISIL tactical units.
- Near Rawah, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed 11 storage containers, a vehicle, and a weapons cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed nine ISIL vehicles.

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

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

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

8 November 2016: airstrikes

On Tuesday, 8 November 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq

and Syria:

On Nov. 7, Coalition military forces conducted 27 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes using attack, bomber, 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, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ayn Isa, 15 strikes engaged seven ISIL tactical units, destroyed five fighting positions, three vehicles, two bridges, an artillery system, and damaged three supply routes.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a VBIED.
- Near Palmyra, one strike engaged two ISIL tactical units, destroyed a vehicle, and damaged a fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed an ISIL rocket rail, a generator, and a bulldozer.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and a staging area; destroyed six fighting positions, six mortar systems, four VBIEDs, two vehicles, two rocket systems, two ISIL-held buildings, a command and control node; suppressed a heavy machine gun, a sniper position, a rocket system; damaged an ISIL vehicle; and degraded three tunnels.
- Near Rawah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL weapons production facility.
- Near Taji, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL VBIED factory.

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

[Central Command](#), 8 Nov 2016.

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

9 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 8, Coalition military forces conducted 18 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 6 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack and fighter aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamak, one strike destroyed ISIL oil production equipment.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed two ISIL oil well heads and an oil pump.
- Near Ayn Isa, seven strikes engaged six ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions, a vehicle, and a VBIED facility.
- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a heavy machine gun.
- Near Mar'a, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed six ISIL-held buildings, four fighting positions, three mortar systems, a heavy machine gun, and a sniper position; suppressed two tactical units; and damaged a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, two strikes engaged an ISIL VBIED factory and destroyed two storage containers and a vehicle.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.

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

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

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

10 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 9, Coalition military forces conducted 28 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike damaged an ISIL supply route.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a fighting position and a vehicle.
- Near Ayn Isa, 13 strikes engaged eight ISIL tactical units and destroyed seven fighting positions, a vehicle, a cave, a bridge and an IED.

Iraq

- Near Baghdad, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, seven strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed five ISIL-held buildings, four vehicles, three mortar systems, three medium machine guns, four tunnels, two VBIEDs; damaged two supply routes, a solar panel, a

- rocket-propelled grenade, a VBIED facility, and a fighting position.
- Near Rawah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit, destroyed an oil tanker, and damaged a tunnel.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL VBIED facility.

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

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

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

11 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 10, Coalition military forces conducted 24 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes using attack, bomber, 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 and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike destroyed three ISIL oil production machines and an oil storage tank.
- Near Ayn Isa, 11 strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units; and destroyed three fighting positions, two vehicles, a command and control node, a storage facility, a heavy weapons system, a bulldozer; and damaged three supply routes and a tunnel system.
- Near Manbij, one strike destroyed an ISIL vehicle, a heavy machine gun, and a fighting position.
- Near Palmyra, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles.
- Near Baghdad, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Mosul, seven strikes engaged six ISIL tactical units and a staging area; destroyed six mortar systems, three vehicles, two weapons caches, an artillery system; and damaged a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL storage container.

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

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

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

12 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 11, Coalition military forces conducted 23 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 14 strikes using attack, fighter and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted nine 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 six oil well heads.
- Near Ayn Isa, 10 strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units; destroyed two fighting positions, two vehicles, and a rocket system; and damaged a supply route.
- Near Manbij, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three fighting positions, a heavy weapons system, and a vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed five mortar systems, four vehicles, two tunnel entrances, two heavy machine guns, a VBIED, a weapons cache, and a fighting position.
- Near Tal Afar, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL headquarters building and destroyed a VBIED.

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

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

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

13 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 12, Coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted nine strikes using attack, fighter, bomber, 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, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a

fighting position and a vehicle.

- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes destroyed two mortar systems and a vehicle.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes destroyed 15 oil tanker trucks and five oil well heads.
- Near Idlib, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed four mortar systems, four ISIL-held buildings, a VBIED, a weapons cache and a fighting position; and damaged a vehicle.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed a bunker.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an IED production facility.

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

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

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

14 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 13, Coalition military forces conducted 21 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 13 strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, bomber, rocket artillery, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil well head.
- Near Ayn Isa, six strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed a vehicle, a mortar system, a fighting position, and an anti-aircraft weapons system.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed an ISIL oil well head.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and staging area and destroyed a heavy machine gun, a vehicle, and a rocket cache.
- Near Mosul, 10 strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units; destroyed three mortar systems, three storage containers, two vehicles, two ISIL-held buildings, two VBIEDs, two heavy machine guns, a bulldozer, a communications tower; damaged a fighting position, a command and control node, three tunnels; and suppressed an ISIL tactical unit.

- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed an ISIL-held repeater tower.

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

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

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

15 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 14, Coalition military forces conducted 20 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 11 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, fighter, bomber, rocket artillery, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed an ISIL vehicle.
- Near Ayn Isa, five strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes damaged an ISIL supply route and destroyed three oil well heads.
- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

- Near Baghdad, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed an ISIL mortar system.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and a staging area; destroyed five storage containers, five mortar systems, two vehicles, a VBIED, and a weapons cache; damaged five tunnels; and suppressed two ISIL tactical units.
- Near Qayyarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a mortar system and an ISIL-held building.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL bunker.

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

[Central Command](#), 15 Nov 2016.

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

16 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 15, Coalition military forces conducted 22 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 10 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 fighter, remotely piloted aircraft, rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; damaged a supply route; and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Al Shadaddi, two strikes damaged two ISIL supply routes.
- Near Ayn Isa, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units, and damaged two fighting positions, a vehicle, and a supply route.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed six oil tanker trucks and three oil well heads.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an anti-aircraft artillery system.
- Near Haditha, two strikes destroyed three bunkers.
- Near Mosul, eight strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed three VBIEDs, three mortar systems, two vehicles, two ISIL-held buildings, a weapons cache, an anti-aircraft artillery system, a front-end loader, a VBIED facility, and a command and control node; damaged a supply route and two tunnels; and suppressed a tank.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed an ISIL armored personnel carrier.

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

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

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

17 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 16, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted seven strikes using 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, fighter, remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Al Shadaddi, one strike damaged four supply routes.
- Near Ayn Isa, four strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units; destroyed an artillery

- system, a mortar system, and damaged a supply route.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed an oil well head.
- Near Dayr Palmyra, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, two strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed nine ISIL compounds and a command and control node.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed inoperable coalition equipment.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed six mortar systems, four watercraft, three storage containers, two fighting positions, two vehicles, a bunker, a trench, and an ISIL-held building; degraded two tunnels; and suppressed two tactical units and a rocket-propelled grenade system.
- Near Rawah, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and an ISIL-held building; and destroyed two bunkers, two buildings, an IED storage facility, and an IED cache; and damaged another IED cache.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Sultan Abdallah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position.

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

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

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

18 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 17, Coalition military forces conducted 28 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 16 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted 12 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 Al Raqqa, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings, a fighting position, and oil production equipment.
- Near Ayn Isa, 10 strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed seven fighting positions, two vehicles, a VBIED, a checkpoint, a bunker; and damaged a supply route.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes destroyed three oil well heads, three oil tanker trucks, and oil production equipment, and damaged two supply routes.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two ISIL-held buildings, two tunnels, and a vehicle.
- Near Al Qaim, two strikes destroyed an ISIL weapons cache.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed a mortar system and suppressed a bunker.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units; destroyed five mortar systems, two ISIL-held buildings; damaged a fighting position, a tunnel, and a bunker; and suppressed a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed a bunker.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

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

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

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

19 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 18, Coalition military forces conducted 27 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 19 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 using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an oil well head.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes engaged an ISIL storage facility and destroyed seven oil storage tanks and four oil transfer compressors.
- Near Ayn Isa, 13 strikes engaged 10 ISIL tactical units; destroyed five fighting positions, an IED facility, a VBIED, and an artillery system; and damaged a supply route.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed four oil well heads.
- Near Tamakh, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building and a mortar system.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed an ISIL headquarters building, a weapons cache, five ISIL-held buildings, three mortar systems, two vehicles, and a watercraft; and suppressed a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed a bunker.

Strike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
[Central Command](#), 19 Nov 2016.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 19 Nov 2016.

20 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 19, Coalition military forces conducted 23 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes using attack, bomber, 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, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Ar Raqqa, six strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units; destroyed seven oil production machines, one vehicle; and damaged a supply route and an ISIL training camp.
- Near Ayn Isa, nine strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units; destroyed two artillery pieces, two fighting positions, and a tank; and damaged a supply route.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strikes destroyed one oil well head.
- Near Manbij, one strike destroyed an armored vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, two strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and a VBIED.
- Near Mosul, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed five ISIL-held buildings, two VBIEDs, an IED, a VBIED facility, and a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two bunkers and a vehicle.

Strike assessments are based on initial reports. All aircraft returned to base safely.
[Central Command](#), 20 Nov 2016.
Also posted at the [Pentagon](#), 20 Nov 2016.

21 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 20, Coalition military forces conducted 21 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 eight 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 destroyed two tunnels.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes destroyed 13 vehicles and damaged a supply route.
- Near Ayn Isa, six strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions, a weapons storage facility, and an artillery system.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, three strikes destroyed six oil tanker trucks and four oil well heads.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed an ISIL IED factory.
- Near Bayji, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles and a sniper position.
- Near Kisik, one strike destroyed an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed five mortar systems, five ISIL-held buildings, four VBIEDs, four tunnels, two vehicles, and an artillery system; damaged a bridge and a supply route, an ISIL-held building; and suppressed three tactical units.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

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

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

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

22 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 21, Coalition military forces conducted 24 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 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, two strikes destroyed an oil rig and an oil well head.
- Near Ar Raqqa, seven strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed 2 VBIEDs, an IED factory, two oil well heads and two oil tanker trucks.
- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a vehicle, and a mortar position.

- Near Manbij, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, two strikes destroyed an ISIL-held building and a VBIED factory.
- Near Bayji, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles and a bunker.
- Near Kisik, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units; destroyed six boats, four vehicles, three ISIL-held buildings, three VBIEDs, two mortar systems, and a VBIED facility; damaged two supply routes; and suppressed two artillery pieces.

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

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

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

23 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 22, Coalition military forces conducted 17 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 11 strikes using attack, bomber, 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, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an oil rig.
- Near Ar Raqqa, four strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed two vehicles, an oil tanker truck, an oil pump, and a VBIED; and damaged a road.
- Near Ayn Isa, two strikes destroyed a vehicle and an anti-air artillery system.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, four strikes destroyed three oil well heads, three vehicles, and two oil tanker trucks.

Iraq

- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed six ISIL-held buildings, a mortar system, a vehicle, a weapons cache, a supply cache, and an artillery system; and damaged five supply routes, and a bridge.
- Near Rawah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle, a mortar system, and a weapons cache.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed inoperable coalition equipment.

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

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

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

24 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 23, Coalition military forces conducted 21 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery 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, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed an oil pump jack.
- Near Al Shadaddi, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a VBIED.
- Near Ar Raqqa, four strikes engaged two ISIL headquarters buildings; and destroyed eight oil storage tanks, five oil tanker trucks, and an oil refinement system.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike destroyed a vehicle storage facility.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike engaged an ISIL headquarters building.
- Near Manbij, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle, a fighting position, and an ammunition depot.

Iraq

- Near Bayji, one strike destroyed a mortar position.
- Near Haditha, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit area and destroyed a heavy machine gun.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units and a sniper position; destroyed six mortar systems, three vehicles, two heavy machine guns, two VBIEDs, and two command and control nodes; damaged four supply routes and two bridges; and suppressed a tactical unit and a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed a VBIED factory.

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

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

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

25 November 2016: airstrikes

On Friday, 25 November 2016, the U.S. Central Command reported more airstrikes in Iraq

and Syria:

On Nov. 24, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, bomber, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted six 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 an oil well head and oil production equipment.
- Near An Tanf, one strike destroyed two rockets and a rocket launcher.
- Near Ar Raqqa, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a fighting position and a front-end loader.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed two oil well heads and two oil tanker trucks.
- Near Manbij, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed a weapons storage facility and a fighting position.

Iraq

- Near Al Asad, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mosul, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units; destroyed three ISIL-held buildings, two mortar systems, two vehicles, a VBIED, an artillery system, and a weapons cache; damaged a supply route; and suppressed a mortar system.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed a VBIED factory.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike destroyed a VBIED factory.

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

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

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

26 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 25, Coalition military forces conducted 23 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 15 strikes using attack, fighter, bomber, 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, fighter, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft, and against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, three strikes destroyed four oil well heads and an oil pump jack.
- Near Ar Raqqa, six strikes engaged five ISIL tactical units and a storage facility; destroyed two vehicles, a command and control node, and a fighting position.
- Near Ayn Isa, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes destroyed three oil refinement equipment pieces, three oil storage tanks, and an oil well head.
- Near Manbij, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed three fighting positions.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike engaged a VBIED facility.
- Near Haditha, one strike destroyed a VBIED.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed three vehicles, three ISIL-held buildings, three mortar systems, a VBIED facility, a VBIED, a supply cache, a watercraft, and a fighting position; degraded a VBIED facility and seven roads; and suppressed a mortar system.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

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

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

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

27 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 26, Coalition military forces conducted 28 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 18 strikes using attack, fighter, bomber, 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, bomber, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft, and against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, one strike destroyed oil production equipment.
- Near Al Shadaddi, seven strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units; destroyed eight vehicles, a VBIED; and damaged a tunnel.
- Near Ar Raqqa, five strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions, two vehicles, three well heads, and an oil tank.
- Near Al Tanf, one strike destroyed an IED and an ISIL fighting position.
- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units, destroyed a VBIED and a VBIED storage facility, and damaged a fighting position.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed a well head.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike destroyed a vehicle.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units; destroyed four mortar systems, three vehicles, three weapons caches, and an ISIL-held building; damaged 17 supply routes and a tunnel; and suppressed a fighting position.
- Near Rawah, three strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed three vehicles and a bunker.
- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle.

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

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

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

28 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 27, Coalition military forces conducted 21 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted 12 strikes using attack, fighter, bomber, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets. Additionally in Iraq, Coalition military forces conducted nine strikes coordinated with and in support of the Government of Iraq using attack, fighter, and remotely piloted aircraft, and rocket artillery against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two oil tanker trucks, an oil tanker trailer, and a vehicle.
- Near Al Shadaddi, four strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle and an anti-air artillery system.
- Near Ar Raqqah, two strikes destroyed three vehicles, two oil well heads, an oil tank, and an oil pump jack.
- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a VBIED facility and a fighting position.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, one strike destroyed four oil tanker trucks and two oil tanker trailers.

Iraq

- Near Bashir, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles, two weapons caches, an ISIL-held building, engineering equipment, and a tunnel.
- Near Bayji, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building.
- Near Mosul, five strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed four mortar

systems, two vehicles, two ISIL-held buildings, two VBIEDs, two front end loaders, a command and control node, and a heavy machine gun; suppressed a mortar system; and degraded 11 roads and a bridge.

- Near Tal Afar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an unmanned aerial vehicle.
- Near Rawah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit.

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

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

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

29 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 28, Coalition military forces conducted 21 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 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 Al Shadaddi, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two vehicles.
- Near Ar Raqqa, two strikes destroyed three oil well heads, two oil pump jacks, two oil refinement equipment pieces, an oil tank, and construction equipment.
- Near Ayn Isa, three strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units and destroyed four fighting positions and a mortar system.
- Near Dayr Az Zawr, two strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a vehicle, construction equipment, and an oil rig.
- Near Manbij, three strikes engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a fighting position and a vehicle.

Iraq

- Near Al Huwayjah, one strike destroyed a VBIED facility.
- Near Bayji, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed an ISIL-held building.
- Near Mosul, six strikes engaged four ISIL tactical units; destroyed five mortar systems, three ISIL-held buildings, three vehicles, three VBIEDs, two front-end loaders, a VBIED factory, and a command and control node; suppressed three tactical units; and damaged five supply routes and two pieces of road construction equipment.
- Near Rawah, one strike destroyed a bunker.

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

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

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

30 November 2016: airstrikes

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

On Nov. 29, Coalition military forces conducted 13 strikes against ISIL terrorists in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, Coalition military forces conducted five 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 using attack, bomber, fighter, rotary, and remotely piloted aircraft against ISIL targets.

Syria

- Near Abu Kamal, two strikes destroyed two oil well heads and two oil pump jacks.
- Near Al Shaddadi, two strikes engaged two ISIL tactical units and destroyed two fighting positions and a vehicle.
- Near Ar Raqqa, one strike engaged an ISIL chemical weapons storage facility.

Iraq

- Near Al Qaim, one strike engaged ISIL military equipment and a defensive position.
- Near Bayji, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed a tunnel.
- Near Mosul, four strikes engaged three ISIL tactical units; destroyed four VBIEDs, four mortar systems, three ISIL-held buildings, two vehicles, two weapon caches, and an ISIL compound; suppressed a mortar system; and damaged 22 supply routes and a tank.
- Near Qayayarah, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit; destroyed two vehicles, two ISIL-held buildings, a weapons cache, and a VBIED; and suppressed a heavy machine gun.
- Near Sinjar, one strike engaged an ISIL tactical unit and destroyed two vehicles.

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

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

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

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.
- My essay for [October 2016](#) describes the arrest in Germany of an immigrant from Syria, before he could detonate a bomb at an airport in Berlin. The suspect committed

suicide in jail.

Some of these previous essays also mention concerns by governments in Europe and Russia that Islamic terrorists will return from Syria and engage in terrorism in Europe and Russia.

Islamic Migration into Europe numbers

One of the major news stories during September 2015 was the flood of approximately 100,000 migrants into Europe, mostly from Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan.

During the migration crisis in September 2015, accurate numbers were sparse. Instead, politicians and journalists spoke of "thousands" per day, "tens of thousands" per week, and at least a hundred thousand per month. On 7 October, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "An Austrian Interior Ministry official says nearly 200,000 migrants transited Austria" during September 2015. The actual number was higher, because some migrants boarded trains outside of Austria and then traveled through Austria. Also the [Associated Press](#) reported: "German authorities say 164,000" migrants arrived in Germany during September 2015.

On 7 December 2015, the German government announced that a total of 965,000 migrants had registered in Germany during the first 11 months of 2015. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 6 January 2016, the German government announced that a total of 1,091,894 migrants had registered in Germany during the 2015 year. Of these, 428,468 (39%) were from Syria. [Associated Press](#).

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 disenchanted with their new home". This has already happened. On 19 October 2015, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Syrians who arrived in Uruguay in November 2014 have complained, and "many Uruguayans ... have come to see the refugees more as rude, ungrateful guests." And on 29 October 2015, [The Guardian](#) reports that 14 migrants from Syria refused to leave a bus at their destination in Sweden because it was "too cold". On 1 January 2016, the [Washington Post](#) reported that some migrants to Europe were returning home to Iraq, more than 779 Iraqis in November 2015 alone. Reasons for returning include: "disillusioned with the lack of opportunities or homesick, while others were forced to go when their asylum claims were rejected." On 11 January 2016, [Reuters](#) reports the Iraqi embassy in Berlin issued 1400 passports for migrants to return to Iraq since the end of October 2015. On 7 March 2016, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Iraqis were "disappointed" in Europe and were returning to Iraq.

On 1 October 2015, the [Washington Post](#) quoted the director of a migrant camp in Greiz, Germany: "I do not have any skilled workers living here. I know the labor market in this region; it is not so simple to find work here." That foreshadows the migrants being unable to find work in Germany.

On 14 April 2016, Germany demanded that immigrants learn the German language *and* seek employment, or the immigrants would lose welfare benefits. [Reuters](#). Learning the German language is difficult for native speakers of English, and must be harder for native speakers of Arabic that has a different alphabet.

On 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](#).

Somali-born student attacks OSU

At 09:52 EST on Monday, 28 November 2016, Abdul Razak Ali Artan — a Somali-born, legal U.S. resident and student at Ohio State University — plowed his car into a group of pedestrians on the sidewalk on the University campus, then he got out of his car and began hacking people with a butcher knife. A policeman shot Artan dead. A total of 11 people went to hospitals with injuries inflicted by his car or his knife. By the early afternoon on 28 November, the FBI had joined the criminal investigation, on suspicion of terrorism.

On the evening of 28 November 2016, ABC News reported on Artan's FaceBook webpage: Appearing three minutes before the beginning of the rampage that left 11 people injured, the post reads: "I can't take it anymore. America! Stop interfering with other countries, especially the Muslim Ummah. We are not weak. We are not weak, remember that."

The post also invokes the name Anwar Al-Awlaki, a radical American-born al-Qaeda cleric, describing him as a "hero." Al-Awlaki was killed in 2011 but his propaganda has been linked to several domestic terrorist attacks in the years after his death.

"If you want us Muslims to stop carrying lone wolf attacks, then make peace," the post reads. "We will not let you sleep unless you give peace to the Muslims."

The post, which was on a page that appears to have since been disabled, takes the form of a photo of a computer screen displaying a text document.

"Officials Investigating Anti-US Facebook Rant Believed Linked to OSU Attacker," [ABC News](#), 19:41 EST, 28 Nov 2016.

On the night of 28 November, NBC News reported some details that were overlooked by other journalists.

Abdul Razak Ali Artan, 18, wrote on what appears to be his Facebook page that he had reached a "boiling point," made a reference to "lone wolf attacks" and cited radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.

"America! Stop interfering with other countries, especially Muslim Ummah [community]. We are not weak. We are not weak, remember that," the post said.

....

Law enforcement officials told NBC News that Artan was a Somali refugee who left his homeland with his family in 2007, lived in Pakistan and then came to the United States in 2014 as a legal permanent resident.

He lived briefly in a temporary shelter in Dallas before settling in Ohio, according to records maintained by Catholic Charities.

"Suspect Identified in Ohio State Attack as Abdul Razak Ali Artan," [NBC News](#), 20:04 EST, 28 November 2016.

Note that the "boiling point" quotation is actually part of a reference to the alleged mistreatment of Muslims in Myanmar, as explained by *The Washington Post*, see bibliography below.

About 28 hours after Artan's attack, ISIL took responsibility for his attack. (See Reuters report in bibliography below.) But there is *no* evidence that ISIL was in contact with Artan, and *no* evidence that Artan pledged allegiance to ISIL. On the other hand, Artan's methods are consistent with methods recommended by ISIL for single terrorists, and Artan did call on his FaceBook page for the U.S. Government to "make peace" with ISIL.

My essay for [September 2016](#) describes how another immigrant from Somalia stabbed 10 people at a shopping mall in St. Cloud, Minnesota. My comment is that if immigrants are unhappy in the USA, they should move to another nation, instead of attacking innocent U.S. citizens in a murder spree (e.g., San Bernardino, California on 2 Dec 2015; Orlando, Florida on 12 June 2016).

On 30 November, Trump tweeted that Artan "should not have been in our country." [Associated Press](#). My comment is that seems like hindsight, unless one wants to stop immigration from *all* nations with a Muslim majority. Trump was unclear about whether the U.S. Government failed to properly vet Artan as an individual, or whether *every* Muslim should be denied entry into the USA. As of 30 November, there is *no* publicly disclosed evidence of a failed vetting process. Obviously, even a perfect vetting process can *not* predict how immigrants might change years after they are allowed into the USA. And even a perfect vetting process of immigrants can *not* evaluate children who will be born in the USA of immigrant parents (e.g., Omar Mateen).

Bibliography for OSU attack

While I wait for the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights to post its death toll for Syria during the month of November, I will continue to add more news here about Artan in early December. On all other topics, December news goes in my essay for December.

- "Ohio State community shaken following violent attack on campus," [OSU Lantern](#), 28 Nov 2016. (Gives time of attack as 09:52. "Artan was shot and killed by University Police officer Alan Horujko within about a minute of the attack, University Police Chief Craig Stone said during a news conference....")
- "Officials recap details of campus incident," [OSU](#), 28 Nov 2016. (Official OSU press release gives time of attack as 09:52.)
- "Ohio State University: Attacker killed, 11 hospitalized after campus attack," [CNN](#), 22:31 EST, 28 Nov 2016 (03:31 GMT 29 Nov).
- "Terrorism suspected in car-and-knife attack at Ohio State," [Associated Press](#), 22:42 EST, 28 Nov 2016. ("A campus officer nearby because of a gas leak arrived on the scene and shot the driver in less than a minute, [Ohio State University police Chief Craig] Stone said.")
- "Ohio State: Campus pulls together with 11 injured, assailant dead after attack," [Columbus Dispatch](#), 23:54 EST, 28 Nov 2016. ("Yet Artan didn't say a word as he attacked, [witness Student Armand] Ghazi said.")
- "'I can't take it anymore': Ohio State attacker said abuses of Burma's Muslims led to 'boiling point'," [Washington Post](#), 03:42 EST, 29 Nov 2016. (" 'Seeing my fellow Muslims being tortured, raped and killed in Burma has led to a boiling point,' Abdul Razak Ali Artan allegedly wrote on his Facebook page...." "Artan's Facebook post throws a little-known and long-persecuted Muslim community in western Burma, also

known as Myanmar, into the spotlight.")

- "Official: Ohio attacker was angry about treatment of Muslims," [Associated Press](#), 13:26 EST, 29 Nov 2016. (Artan "... railed on Facebook against U.S. interference in Muslim lands and warned, 'If you want us Muslims to stop carrying lone wolf attacks, then make peace' with the Islamic State group, a law enforcement official said Tuesday [29 Nov].")
- "Ohio State attack echoes Islamic State group's brutal calls," [Associated Press](#), 14:26 EST, 29 Nov 2016. ("In chillingly detailed articles in a slick online magazine, Islamic State extremists exhorted English-language readers this fall to carry out attacks with knives and vehicles.")
- "Islamic State claims responsibility for Ohio University attack," [Reuters](#), (14:44 EST), 19:44 GMT, 29 Nov 2016. ("The Islamic State news agency AMAQ posted a photo of Abdul Razak Ali Artan wearing a blue shirt and sitting with greenery in the background. It described him as a soldier of the group. 'Brother Abdul Razak Ali Artan, God accept him, implementer of the Ohio attack, a student in his third year in university,' the caption read.")
- "ISIS Calls Ohio State University Attacker a 'Soldier'," [NY Times](#), 29 Nov 2016. (" 'I never heard the assailant say anything,' Professor Clark said." Clark was hit by Artan's car. "The statement on Amaq, the Islamic State's news agency, said the attacker had acted 'in response to calls to target the citizens of the international coalition.' ")
- "FBI: Islamic State group might have inspired OSU attacker," [Associated Press](#), 15:23 EST, 30 Nov 2016. (" 'We only believe he may have been inspired' by [ISIL] and Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born cleric who took a leadership role in al-Qaida before being killed in 2011, said Angela Byers, the top FBI agent overseeing federal investigations in the southern half of Ohio.")
- "Ohio State attacker buried; family still looking for answers," [Columbus Dispatch](#), 10:27 EST, 2 Dec 2016. (Dozens of people attend funeral on 1 December. Artan's mother says he was innocent and "I know they kill you for no reason." This shows that some relatives can *not* detect signs of radicalization.)
- "Ohio State attacker buried amid shock from family over death," [Associated Press](#), 09:36 EST, 2 Dec 2016.
- "Campus attack could be latest terror case in heartland state." [Associated Press](#), 16:29 EST, 3 Dec 2016.

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, 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.

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 309,500 people in Syria,
- the destruction of the Syrian economy and infrastructure — costing Syria approximately US\$ 200 billion [Reuters](#).
- the destruction of a secular Syria government,
- the rise of Islamic terrorists (e.g., ISIL, Nusra Front) in Syria, and
- more than four million refugees from Syria in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, and a flood of one million migrants to Europe in August-December 2015.

The Syrian government — regardless of who leads it — does *not* have the resources to repair buildings, electricity supply, and other infrastructure that was destroyed during the five years of civil war in Syria.

Conclusion for Iraq

The Syrians have an effective government and an effective military. In contrast, Iraq — only slightly better than Yemen, Somalia, and Libya — is now a failed nation. These facts make the Iraqi government weaker than the Syrian government.

There are several huge problems in Iraq:

1. The Iraqi government is corrupt. (See my essays for [June 2015](#) and [January 2016](#))
2. The Iraqi government is dysfunctional. During July-October 2014, the Iraqi Parliament *slowly* formed a new government — during an existential crisis. My essays for July

2014 through February 2015 summarized the infrequent meetings, and low attendance in the Iraqi Parliament. (See the summary for July through October 2014 in my [webpage](#).)

3. The Iraqi army was unable to stop the ISIL invasion during the first six months of 2014. In June 2014, the Iraqi army was exposed as at least partly cowardly, corrupt, and incompetent by its rout in Mosul and Tikrit, which abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles to be captured by ISIL. Astoundingly, in May 2015 the Iraqi army *again* fled and abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles during a rout in Ramadi. This shows that the Iraqi government learned nothing from the rout in Mosul, 11 months before the similar rout in Ramadi.
4. The criminal justice system in Iraq is apparently incompetent and dysfunctional. The Iraqi government is unable or unwilling to prosecute:
 - A. corrupt politicians or corrupt government officials,
 - B. army officers who hired ghost soldiers,
 - 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.

Need for Muslim Clerics to Continually Condemn Islamic Terrorism

Beginning in August 2014, my essays on Syria and Iraq have had a section titled "[Islamic Public Relations Problem](#)", in which I have chronicled reaction by Muslim clerics and the need for these clerics to *continually* condemn Islamic terrorism.

Leaders of Al-Qaeda and ISIL clearly and repeatedly invoke their concept of Islam in justifying or explaining their actions. Individual Islamic terrorists shout Islamic slogans as they commit their terrorist acts, and the individual terrorists are endorsed by Islamic terrorist

organizations. Further, Al-Qaeda and other jihadists seek to establish Sharia law in Syria and/or Iraq — instead of a secular government. ISIL is even more extreme with its caliphate. These Islamic governments are part of the attraction of young Muslims to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and jihadist groups.

These facts clearly show that an interpretation of Islam is central to the ideology of the terrorists who have infested Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, The problem is "Islamic terrorism" — the *use of terrorism* to further goals that are justified by an interpretation of the Islamic religion.

To defeat the *idea* of Islamic terrorism, and to stop young Muslims from joining terrorist organizations, it is essential that mainstream Muslim clerics consistently and continually publicly condemn the use of terrorism in the name of Islam, and especially condemn the use of terrorism to impose any Islamic government. Instead, Muslim clerics have only sporadically condemned Islamic terrorism, typically after some atrocity committed by Islamic terrorists.

Instead of writing only in the Arabic language, websites of major Islamic organizations (e.g., Al-Azhar University in Egypt) should also post webpages in French and English languages to discourage Europeans and non-Arabs from joining Islamic terrorist organizations.

Just to be clear, Western Civilization is *not* at war with *all* Muslims. I suggest that Western Civilization — *and* also mainstream Muslims everywhere — *should* be at war with Islamic terrorists. Indeed, mainstream Muslims are most affected by Islamic terrorism, as death tolls in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq show.

U.S. War on Terror

Al-Qaeda attacked two U.S. embassies in Africa in August 1998. Then, on 11 Sep 2001, Al-Qaeda flew airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon. The response of the U.S. Government to these unprovoked attacks by Al-Qaeda was to begin a war against Islamic terrorists.

The phrase "war against terrorism" was first used by U.S. President George W. Bush in a [speech](#) to the nation hours after the attacks on 11 Sep 2001. In his speech to the U.S. Congress on 20 Sep 2001, Bush said: "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."

On 7 October 2001, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations notified the U.N. Secretary General that the U.S. would attack Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan, invoking the legal right of "self-defense" after the terror attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 Sep 2001. Note that most of the hijackers on 11 Sep 2001 came from Saudi Arabia and *none* came from Afghanistan. Further, Osama bin Laden, who ordered the attacks on the USA, was in Pakistan, *not* Afghanistan.

On 23 Sep 2014, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations notified the U.N. Secretary General that the U.S. was bombing ISIL in Syria. The U.S. Government invoked the legal right of "self-defense" to justify the U.S. bombing of ISIL in Syria, despite the fact that ISIL had *not* attacked the USA.

The premise behind the U.S. war on terrorism seems to be that if the U.S. Military kills Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, etc., then there will be no Islamic terror attacks inside the USA.

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.

This document is at <http://www.rbs0.com/syria39.pdf>
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