

# Syria & Iraq: April 2017

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# Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 41 essays on Syria. That webpage also includes links to many historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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.

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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. On 12 March 2017, the USA went on daylight savings time. On 26 March 2017, the United Kingdom went on British Summer Time (BST). Eastern Daylight Time in Boston is -4 hours from GMT. Beirut and Damascus are +3 hours from GMT (summer time in effect). 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 webpage for the [Spokesman](#) of the United Nations Secretary General,
- 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.

On 12 April 2017, the Associated Press announced they would discontinue their BigStory website. That means that my many links to Associated Press news articles in my 41 previous essays on Syria will become dead links.

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

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### **Terse Summary of Syria Fighters**

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

1. The so-called "rebels" are moderates, many of whom are part of the Free Syrian Army. In 2011, these moderates wanted to continue a secular government in Syria, but without Assad.
2. The "jihadists" want to impose an Islamic government (i.e., Sharia law) on Syria. The Islamic Front is a large group of jihadists, formed on 22 November 2013. Ahrar al-Sham is one of the major organizations in the Islamic Front.
3. And two Al-Qaeda affiliated groups fighting in Syria:
  - a. the Nusra Front, which wants to establish an Islamic emirate in Syria. On 28 July 2016, Nusra voluntarily ended its affiliation with Al-Qaeda, but Nusra remains Al-Qaeda inspired. After July 2016, Nusra calls itself "Jabhat Fatah al-Sham".
  - b. the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) — also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On 3 Feb 2014, Al-Qaeda repudiated ISIL, but ISIL remains Al-Qaeda inspired. ISIL's goal since June 2014 is to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

[Stanford Univ.](#) has a website with descriptions of ten terrorist organizations in Syria (e.g., Nusra, ISIL, etc.). The U.S. Government National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) has a history of many international terrorist [groups](#).

On 29 June 2014, ISIL changed its name to "Islamic State" (IS), when it declared a caliphate. I continue to use the old name, ISIL, for consistency with my previous essays. Moreover, using the term "Islamic State" appears to give legitimacy to their so-called "State", which is only a few tens of thousands of terrorists. On 3 Dec 2014, John Kerry followed the lead of

the French Foreign Minister in calling ISIL "Daesh".

On 28 July 2016, Nusra voluntarily ended its affiliation with Al-Qaeda. [Reuters](#) reported Nusra's leader said the change was made: "to remove the excuse used by the international community — spearheaded by America and Russia — to bombard and displace Muslims in the Levant: that they are targeting the Nusra Front which is associated with al Qaeda". Henceforth, Nusra Front calls itself "Jabhat Fatah al-Sham". See also [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 28 July. Despite the change of name and loss of the Al-Qaeda franchise, Nusra is the same group of terrorists with the same ideology and same goals as before the change. The U.S. State Department spokesman, John Kirby, [said](#) "... we judge any organization, including [Nusra], much more by its actions, its ideology, its goals. Affiliations may be a factor, but ultimately it's their actions, ideology, and goals that matter the most. .... ... we certainly see no reason to believe that their actions or their objectives are any different, and they are still considered a foreign terrorist organization."

The USA and Western Europe would prefer that the rebels win, although military aid to the rebels has been withheld because of fears that donated weapons and munitions would eventually be acquired by either the jihadists or Al-Qaeda. The rebels are frequently described by two words: "fragmented" and "disorganized". Beginning in September 2013, the rebels are also frequently characterized as "disillusioned". Since October 2013, many smaller rebel groups have been leaving the Free Syrian Army and joining the jihadists.

While I use the words rebels, jihadists, and Al-Qaeda to indicate three different opposition groups, journalists routinely use the word "rebels" to refer to the entire opposition, or any part of the opposition. Thus, there is different word usage between my text and quotations from journalists. Worse, journalists commonly refer to the opposition as "rebels", "militants", or "extremists", without mentioning the name of the group. With the exception of the Free Syrian Army, *all* of the insurgents in Syria are some kind of radical Islamic extremist, so labels like "extremist" lack precision.

It is critically important to understand that the jihadists, Nusra, and ISIL want to overthrow the existing secular government of Assad and establish a new government based on their interpretation of Islam. These jihadists, Nusra, and ISIL are *not* part of a pro-democracy revolt in Syria. Presumably, these jihadists, Nusra, and ISIL will fight against *any* secular government in Syria, so removal of Assad will *not* end their battle to establish their religious government in Syria.

### Government

The Arab nations, Western Europe, and the USA recognize the Syrian National Coalition, an exile group in Turkey, as the *only* legitimate government of Syria. However, there are hundreds of rebel or jihadist groups operating in Syria, and the Coalition represents only some of the rebel groups and none of the jihadists. As explained in detail in my [second](#) and [third](#) essays on Syria, the Coalition is unable to make decisions, and — in my opinion — has no credibility as a future government of Syria. However, the Coalition is the least objectionable alternative government for Syria. Since October 2013, several commentators have noted that Assad is preferable to having Al-Qaeda control Syria. The topic of a future

government for Syria is discussed in my separate [review](#).

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## Chemical Weapons

Beginning in October 2013, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) issued monthly reports on chemical weapons on Syria. OPCW has also issued occasional fact-finding reports that report their conclusion whether or not chemical weapons were used in Syria at a specific place and time, but do *not* conclude *who* released the chemical weapons. My [webpage](#) has links to each of these reports at the United Nations Security Council.

For a history of recent releases of chlorine gas in Syria, see my essay for [December 2016](#).

### 4 April 2017: chemical weapons attack in Syria and U.S. retaliation against Assad

On 4 April, there was a chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhun — also spelt Khan Sheikhoun and Khan Shaykhun — in Idlib province. Initial reports said at least 58 people died. Witnesses saw Assad's jets drop bombs. Journalists said it was the most lethal chemical attack since August 2013, when Sarin was released in a Damascus suburb. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [SOHR](#)(5Apr); [CNN](#)(5Apr).

On 5 April, the Russian government announced the official excuse: the "terrorists" were manufacturing and storing chemical weapons in a warehouse, and when Assad's airplanes bombed the warehouse, toxic gases were released. "[Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor] Konashenkov said that from this warehouse, chemical weapons' ammunition was delivered to Iraq by militants." [RIA-Novosti](#); In my opinion, whoever created that excuse should receive an award for outstanding propaganda. The excuse fails to identify the specific "terrorist" group that operated the warehouse, so we can *not* check on the plausibility of chemical weapons in the insurgent's warehouse. ISIL is known to have some chemical weapons, but most of the insurgents in Syria do *not* have chemical weapons.

On 6 April, the Syrian foreign minister, Walid al-Moallem, claimed Assad's airstrikes targeted "an ammunition store of Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists that included chemical weapons." [SANA](#). Note the Russians claimed that the chemical weapons were intended to be sent to Iraq, but Nusra does *not* operate in Iraq. Moallem's propaganda *should* have claimed that ISIL was manufacturing the weapons.

On 5 April, [RIA-Novosti](#) published another excuse: "The Assad government has nothing to gain from launching chemical weapons attacks in Syria — and never more than now when it is winning the conflict, both on the ground and diplomatically. Indeed, launching such an attack now would be tantamount to insanity." That's a much better excuse than the previous two paragraphs, but this second excuse suffers from the assumption that Assad is acting rationally. In fact, Assad's military has released chlorine gas on dozens of occasions for *no* military advantage and immense public relations detriment. Assad's previous use of

chlorine shows that he is *not* acting rationally.

On 5 April, there are suggestions that the release of toxic agent(s) on 4 April 2017 included a nerve gas (e.g., Sarin), possibly in addition to chlorine. [World Health Organization](#); [MSF](#); [NY Times](#)(4Apr); [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#). The [Associated Press](#) reported: "U.S. officials said the gas was likely chlorine, with traces of a nerve agent like sarin. .... Early U.S. assessments show the attack most likely involved chlorine and traces of the nerve agent sarin, according to two U.S. [anonymous] officials, .... Use of sarin would be especially troubling because it would suggest Syria may have cheated on its previous deal to give up chemical weapons."

At a United Nations Security Council emergency meeting on 5 April 2017, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. announced that, *if* the United Nations failed to act to stop the use of chemical weapons in Syria, *then* U.S. President Trump would act unilaterally to stop the use of chemical weapons. Trump said Assad's use of chemical weapons had changed Trump's opinion on Assad. [U.N.](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [The Guardian](#). My reaction is that Trump's military threats are made *before* the beginning of any investigation into the cause and nature of the chemical weapons release on 4 April.

On the night of 7 April 2017, either Assad or Russia bombed Khan Sheikhoun *again*, this time with conventional explosives. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and the Local Coordination Committees reported that one woman was killed during the 8 April airstrike and her son was wounded. The SOHR reports the final toll in the chemical weapons attack on 4 April is 87 dead, "including 31 children under the age of eighteen and 20 women". [SOHR](#); [Associated Press](#); [The Telegraph](#); [CNN](#).

After eight days of discussion and revision, on the afternoon of 12 April the United Nations Security Council voted on a draft resolution that would support a United Nations/OPCW investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria on 4 April. The United Nations press release said: "the draft would have emphasized Syria's obligation to comply with the recommendations of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapon's (OPCW) Fact Finding Mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism by providing immediate and unfettered access to and the right to inspect any and all sites." The resolution failed, because Russia cast their *eighth* veto to protect Assad from responsibility for his alleged war crimes. [U.N.](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 13 April, there was a meeting at the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) at the Hague, to discuss OPCW's response to the likely use of chemical weapons at Khan Sheikhun. An OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) has already collected samples and "the FFM [will] complete its work within the next two to three weeks." [OPCW](#). Ten nations, including the USA, submitted PDF versions of their [statements](#) at the OPCW Executive Council meeting. The [Associated Press](#) reported that the U.S. Ambassador to OPCW "berated" Russia.

On 19 April, OPCW announced the "incontrovertible" findings of its laboratories that Sarin, or a similar chemical, had been used in Khan Sheikhun, Syria on 4 April. [OPCW](#); [Reuters](#); [BBC](#). The critical question now is *who* released the Sarin, and that question will be answered by the United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), *not* by OPCW.

On 20 April, the Russian defense ministry criticized the "hasty" OPCW conclusion about Sarin. [RIA-Novosti](#). In my opinion, the Russian government is like a zealous criminal defense attorney who attacks *every* piece of evidence that might adversely affect his client. But what really happens is that the credibility of the Russian government is eroded by their specious criticism.

### 5 April 2017: Trump's belligerence

Because Trump may be dragging the USA into a war in Syria, possibly also fighting against Russia and Iran, I am quoting Trump's initial declarations.

On 4 April, Trump issued a terse statement that said:

Today's chemical attack in Syria against innocent people, including women and children, is reprehensible and cannot be ignored by the civilized world. These heinous actions by the Bashar al-Assad regime are a consequence of the past administration's weakness and irresolution. President Obama said in 2012 that he would establish a "red line" against the use of chemical weapons and then did nothing. The United States stands with our allies across the globe to condemn this intolerable attack.

Trump, "Statement from President Donald J. Trump," [White House](#), 4 April 2017.

At a press conference on 5 April, Trump said:

Yesterday [4 April], a chemical attack — a chemical attack that was so horrific, in Syria, against innocent people, including women, small children, and even beautiful little babies. Their deaths was an affront to humanity. These heinous actions by the Assad regime cannot be tolerate.

The United States stands with our allies across the globe to condemn this horrific attack and all other horrific attacks, for that matter.

....

QUESTION [by Julie Pace of Associated Press]: Thank you, sir. I have questions on Syria for both leaders. But if I could start with you, Mr. President. You've condemned the chemical attacks in Syria, but you also appeared in your statement yesterday to pin some of the blame on the Obama administration. You are the President now. Do you feel like you bear responsibility for responding to the chemical attack? And does the chemical attack cross a red line for you?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Well, I think the Obama administration had a great opportunity to solve this crisis a long time ago when he said the red line in the sand. And when he didn't cross that line after making the threat, I think that set us back a long ways, not only in Syria, but in many other parts of the world, because it was a blank threat. I think it was something that was not one of our better days as a country.

So I do feel that, Julie. I feel it very strongly.



QUESTION: So you feel like you now have the responsibility to respond to the chemical attack?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: I now have responsibility, and I will have that responsibility and carry it very proudly, I will tell you that. It is now my responsibility. It was a great opportunity missed. As you know, I'll be meeting with the President of China very soon, in Florida, and that's another responsibility we have — and that's called the country of North Korea. We have a big problem. We have somebody that is not doing the right thing. And that's going to be my responsibility. But I'll tell you, that responsibility could have been made a lot easier if it was handled years ago.

QUESTION: Before I move on to the King, could I just quickly ask you if the chemical attack crosses a red line for you?

PRESIDENT TRUMP: It crossed a lot of lines for me. When you kill innocent children, innocent babies — babies, little babies — with a chemical gas that is so lethal — people were shocked to hear what gas it was — that crosses many, many lines, beyond a red line. Many, many lines.

....

PRESIDENT TRUMP: .... And I will tell you, that attack on children yesterday had a big impact on me — big impact. That was a horrible, horrible thing. And I've been watching it and seeing it, and it doesn't get any worse than that.

And I have that flexibility, and it's very, very possible — and I will tell you, it's already happened that my attitude toward Syria and Assad has changed very much. And if you look back over the last few weeks, there were other attacks using gas. You're now talking about a whole different level.

Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference," [White House](#), press conference began 13:10 EDT, 5 April 2017.

Trump explicitly blamed Obama for the current mess in Syria. I have been critical of Obama's foreign and military policies in Iraq and Syria, but it needs to be said that Obama did minimize the U.S. Military involvement in Syria. My essay for [September 2013](#) documented Obama's "red line" on 20 August 2012 and Assad's apparent violation of that red line a year later, on 21 August 2013. Obama was intending a military strike against Assad, but Obama cancelled the planned strike on 31 August 2013, only nine hours before the USA/French military strike was scheduled to begin. Kerry and Lavrov subsequently negotiated a diplomatic deal in which Assad agreed to surrender *all* of his chemical weapons and destroy all of his facilities for manufacturing chemical weapons.

Trump appears to believe that if Obama had attacked Assad on 31 August 2013 then the situation would be much better in April 2017. But — as usual — Trump offers *no* reasons to support his opinion. Obama did successfully manage to keep the U.S. Military out of Syria, until Obama began airstrikes against ISIL in Syria on 22 September 2014, and until Obama sent a small number of U.S. troops into Syria in November 2015 to advise Kurdish fighters against ISIL.



If Trump genuinely believes his "america first" rhetoric, then Trump should be very reluctant to get involved in a sectarian civil war in Syria. Obama already wasted US\$ 21 billion on Syria (see [below](#)), without any benefit to the USA. In an era of massive U.S. Government debt, Trump should be looking for ways to *reduce* U.S. Military spending in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, ....

In his 5 April press conference, Trump clearly expressed a motivation of saving the lives of "innocent children, innocent babies". But in an escalation of the Syria civil war, the rate at which women, babies, and children die will increase. Instead of escalating the war, Trump might look for ways to choke the flow of weapons and munitions to the insurgents. But Trump now appears outraged with Assad, which probably means more U.S. support for insurgents, a longer civil war, more dead children, and more dead babies.

On 5 April, the death toll from the chemical weapons attack increased to at least 70. Before the U.S. escalates the Syrian civil war over an incident with 70 dead people, including 20 children, let us be rational — instead of emotional. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has documented the deaths of *more than* 323,000 people during the Syrian civil war, but that huge death toll has little effect on Trump, who emotionally focused on a few dead babies. Strangely, Trump believes that it is acceptable to kill babies and children with conventional explosives (or by starvation in sieges), but *not* acceptable to kill babies with chemical weapons.

Syria is *not* the only military crisis facing the USA. The rogue government in North Korea is continuing to develop nuclear weapons and will soon have long-range missiles that could hit the western coast of the USA. On 31 March 2017, the U.S. Secretary of Defense said North Korea's weapons development program has "got to be stopped". [Associated Press](#). In a 2 April 2017 interview with the [Financial Times](#), Trump said the U.S. Government would act unilaterally to solve the North Korean problem if China declined to help solve the problem: "Well if China is not going to solve North Korea, we will. That is all I am telling you." In an interview with *The Times* of London on 4 April, retired U.S. General Jack Keane said: "A pre-emptive strike against launch facilities, underground nuclear sites, artillery and rocket response forces and regime leadership targets may be the only option left on the table. We are rapidly and dangerously moving towards a military option." [The Australian](#). In the previous Korean War during 1950-54, more than 33,000 U.S. Military personnel died. Does Trump really understand the consequences of wars in *both* North Korea *and* Syria? China would intervene to protect North Korea (i.e., protect China from a flood of Korean refugees), while Russia would likely protect Assad.

As I mention [below](#), and also in my previous essays beginning in October 2013, it is highly probable that war crimes and other violations of international law have occurred in Syria. Because of the Russian veto on the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations has been unable to refer the Syrian problem to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution. Given this inability to refer the matter to the International Criminal Court, the United Nations has essentially abandoned efforts to bring war criminals in Syria to Justice, with the exception of the continuing the collection of evidence by a U.N. Human Rights commission.

## 7 April 2017: Trump's military response

At 01:15 GMT on 7 April 2017, [NBC News](#) reported breaking news that the U.S. Military had launched 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at Shayrat airbase 40 kilometers southeast of the city of Homs, Syria. The Pentagon believes the 4 April chemical weapons attack was launched from the Shayrat airbase. See also: [RIA-Novosti](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

After his airstrike in Syria, Trump read the following speech from a Teleprompter:

My fellow Americans: On Tuesday [4 April], Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad launched a horrible chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians. Using a deadly nerve agent, Assad choked out the lives of helpless men, women, and children. It was a slow and brutal death for so many. Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack. No child of God should ever suffer such horror.

Tonight, I ordered a targeted military strike on the airfield in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched. It is in this vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons. There can be no dispute that Syria used banned chemical weapons, violated its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and ignored the urging of the U.N. Security Council.

Years of previous attempts at changing Assad's behavior have all failed, and failed very dramatically. As a result, the refugee crisis continues to deepen and the region continues to destabilize, threatening the United States and its allies.

Tonight, I call on all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria, and also to end terrorism of all kinds and all types. We ask for God's wisdom as we face the challenge of our very troubled world. We pray for the lives of the wounded and for the souls of those who have passed. And we hope that as long as America stands for justice, then peace and harmony will, in the end, prevail.

Goodnight. And God bless America and the entire world. Thank you.

"Statement by President Trump on Syria," [White House](#), 21:40 EDT, 6 April 2017.

It is important to note that Trump read the above-quoted speech from a Teleprompter. [Los Angeles Times](#); [Politico](#). My comment is that when Trump speaks extemporaneously, Trump runs off the rails, and he begins making irrelevant comments, blatantly false statements of fact, and inflammatory remarks.

Trump asserts with little explanation that his airstrike is in the "vital national security interest of the United States". Those magic words legally justify any act of aggression that the U.S. Government desires to take. But those words are a conclusion, which should have the consensus of the U.S. Congress. The [Associated Press](#) quoted Justin Amash (R-Mich.) as saying "The idea this chemical weapons attack affects the national security of the United States is fairly tenuous. It's a rather flimsy argument."

My comment is that Trump's unilateral military response can be criticized for at least six

different reasons:

- At a United Nations Security Council emergency meeting on 5 April 2017, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. threatened unilateral action by the U.S., *if* the United Nations failed to take action. But, without waiting for an investigation to begin and without giving the Security Council an opportunity to act, the U.S. launched its unilateral military response — approximately 34 hours after the U.S. threat of unilateral action. I suggest that Trump's strike was too hasty.
- There is *no* Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Syria, so Trump's 7 April airstrike on Assad's airfield near Homs is unlawful under U.S. law. (The continuing airstrikes against ISIL in Syria, as well as the U.S. soldiers in Syria, are also unlawful.)
- This airstrike is a blatant violation of the sovereignty of Syria and a violation of international law. The U.S. Government has again appointed itself as the world's policeman, instead of working through the United Nations. The fact that Western Europe — along with Australia, Israel, Canada, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE — subsequently approved of Trump's unilateral action is expected because they all oppose Assad. Moreover, the approving nations did *not* need to spend any money, but they received whatever benefits Trump's airstrike provided.
- *The New York Times* reminds us that, back on 5 Sep 2013, Trump [tweeted](#): “The only reason President Obama wants to attack Syria is to save face over his very dumb RED LINE statement. Do NOT attack Syria, fix U.S.A.” *The Times* mentions that Trump issued more than a dozen tweets in 2013 and 2014 urging Obama to avoid intervening in Syria. Some of those old tweets are displayed at [FactCheck.org](#). Trump's new opinion about intervening in Syria appears erratic and definitely *not* consistent with either Trump's prior public opinions or "america first" values. When Trump ordered the U.S. attack on Assad's airfield on 7 April 2017, Trump did what Obama intended to do 43 months earlier. But Obama had previously declared a "red line", while Trump just reacted without any warning.
- Trump's administration has *no* long-term plan for Syria. [The Guardian](#); [Reuters](#); [Roll Call](#); [Associated Press](#)(10Apr); [Politico](#)(14Apr). Trump will apparently continue making erratic and inconsistent ad hoc decisions about Syria. However, note that it is essentially impossible to make a realistic long-term plan for Syria, given so many different foreign meddlers and so many different insurgent groups in Syria, as well as an essentially sectarian civil war in Syria. The absence of a realistic long-term plan is a reason why the U.S. Government should *not* intervene in the Syrian civil war.
- Assad's government claims its warplanes that Trump destroyed were sometimes engaged in bombing ISIL. (See, e.g., [SANA](#).) So Trump just inhibited Assad's fight against ISIL, despite Trump previously saying his major foreign policy goal was to defeat ISIL. In the larger view, Trump may have destroyed any possibility of cooperation with Assad in the fight against ISIL, which the [Associated Press](#) called "the most profound impact of all."

### Military Effect of U.S. Airstrike

On 6 April, the Pentagon issued a statement about the airstrikes on Shayrat Airfield.

At the direction of the president, U.S. forces conducted a cruise missile strike against a Syrian Air Force airfield today at about 8:40 p.m. EDT (4:40 a.m., April 7, in Syria). The strike targeted Shayrat Airfield in Homs governorate, and was in response to the Syrian government's chemical weapons attack April 4 in Khan Sheikhoun, which killed or injured hundreds of innocent Syrian people, including women and children.

The strike was conducted using Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) launched from the destroyers USS Porter and USS Ross in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. A total of 59 TLAMs targeted aircraft, hardened aircraft shelters, petroleum and logistical storage, ammunition supply bunkers, air defense systems, and radars.

....

Russian forces were notified in advance of the strike using the established deconfliction line. U.S. military planners took precautions to minimize risk to Russian or Syrian personnel located at the airfield.

"Statement from Pentagon Spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis on U.S. strike in Syria," [Pentagon](#), 6 April 2017.

See also paraphrase in Pentagon news article, "Trump Orders Missile Attack in Retaliation for Syrian Chemical Strikes," [Pentagon](#), 6 April 2017.

On 7 April, the Pentagon issued a press release that tersely reported the military effect of the U.S. airstrikes on Shayrat Airfield.

The U.S. strike was a "proportional response" to the chemical attack, the officials said. The airfield is in an isolated area and the strike was conducted in the early morning hours in Syria [04:40 local time], to minimize the risk to civilians, according to the officials.

The U.S. was not tracking the airfield as an active chemical site, an official said, but the military did take precautions not to hit anything that could possibly lead to the inadvertent release of chemical munitions or chemical substances.

....

The U.S. military action is believed to have destroyed approximately 20 aircraft, the officials said. Other damage includes the destruction of surface-to-air missile systems, and the destruction or damage of targeted hangars, an official pointed out.

"U.S. Strike Designed to Deter Assad Regime's Use of Chemical Weapons," [Pentagon](#), 7 April 2017.

At 06:31 GMT on 7 April 2017, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported: "The Ash Sha'irat military airfield near Homs in Syria has been destroyed and its aircraft damaged in US missile strikes, the airfield staffer told Sputnik on Friday [7 April]. Syrian television reports that flames continue to engulf the airfield following the attack."

At 11:50 GMT on 8 April 2017, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported: “The Syrian military airfield near Syria's village of Ash Sha'irat, located in the vicinity of the Homs, which was attacked by US missiles on Thursday [6 April] night, is operating in a normal mode, a senior Syrian officer told Sputnik on Saturday [8 April].”

My comment is that airplanes may be using the runways, which were undamaged, but the airfield is *not* plausibly in a "normal mode" of operation. The Syrians and Russians have two choices:

1. they can whine about the significant damage done to the airbase by the U.S. airstrike that is allegedly a violation of international law, *or*
2. they can pretend there was little damage by the allegedly ineffective U.S. airstrike, so the airfield was quickly restored to normal operation.

They have chosen to do both, which exposes the false statements in their propaganda.

This is a good place to incidentally mention that, on 6 April, [Reuters](#) reported the Russian government's television news program showed images of the chemical weapons attack but without showing any victims.

At 20:19 GMT on 8 April 2017, [Reuters](#) reported that the governor of Homs province said the the Shayrat air base near the city of Homs was again operating, after being struck with 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles. Reuters reported: “The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based organisation that reports on the war, said warplanes had taken off from the base on Friday [7 April] and carried out air strikes on rebel-held areas in the eastern Homs countryside. An activist with an opposition air raid warning service said however that the first flight from the base was on Saturday [8 April] morning.”

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#### continuing chemical weapons use in Syria

It appears that Assad did *not* change his behavior as a result of the U.S. airstrike on the night of 6 April.

On 10 April 2017, [Reuters](#) reports that white phosphorus was used in Saraqeb. Phosphorus is a banned chemical weapon, although it is an incendiary agent, *not* a toxic gas. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that Russian airplanes dropped thermite bombs on 8-9 April 2017 in Hama and Idlib provinces, including the city of Saraqeb. [SOHR](#); [The Times](#) of London. A thermite bomb is an incendiary device composed of powdered aluminum and iron oxide.

#### 7 April 2017: Russian Retaliation Against USA

At 07:30 GMT on 7 April 2017, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported that the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement that said: "Russia suspends the memorandum on the prevention of incidents and ensuring air safety during operations in Syria reached with the US". That means

that U.S. airstrikes against ISIL in Syria will be more dangerous for U.S. pilots. The U.S. may no longer be able to provide air support for Kurdish fighters and U.S. advisers in the Raqqa vicinity.

But at 16:24 GMT on 7 April, the [Associated Press](#) reported that Russia had agreed to continue the air safety hotline in Syria.

Then at 17:49 GMT on 7 April, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported the Russian Defense Ministry would "suspend" the memorandum on flight safety in Syria, beginning 8 April.

On 12 April, Tillerson visited Moscow and [Reuters](#) reported: "Lavrov, addressing a news conference, said President Vladimir Putin had said Moscow was ready to restore an air safety agreement covering Syria which it had suspended after last week's U.S. missile strikes on Syria." [RIA-Novosti](#) reports the air safety agreement will be restored on 12 April.

On 13 April, the Acting Spokesman for the U.S. State Department, Mark C. Toner, [said](#) "Frankly, my understanding was that [the de-confliction channel] does remain intact. There was some question that it was going to be pulled down. That was a Russia claim, at least. Look, we consider that de-confliction channel to be very important, because it helps ensure that neither our pilots nor Russia's pilots are unduly or unnecessarily put in harm's way when we're carrying out military missions in that region. So I can't speak to how it may change. My understanding is that it does remain in effect."

On 29 April, [RIA-Novosti](#) and [Reuters](#) reported that Lavrov wants the USA to work together with Russia on Syria. My comment is that Russia rejected U.S. diplomacy in December 2016, when Russia began cooperating with Turkey on Syria. More likely, Russia now wants someone to blame for failures in Syria.

On 2 May, Putin and Trump had their first telephone conversation since the 7 April U.S. airstrike in Syria, and they are now again best buddies. [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#).

On 5 May 2017, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported Russia will discuss with the U.S. Military about "Moscow's return to full participation in the memorandum on the prevention of incidents in Syrian airspace (MOU)". That suggests the 12 April restoration was only partial.

On 6 May 2017, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported "The Russian chief of general staff [Valery Gerasimov] and the US chairman of the joint chiefs of staff [Joseph Dunford] confirmed the sides' readiness to fully restore the memorandum on preventing incidents in Syria's airspace...." See also [Reuters](#).

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### ***Who used chemical weapons in Syria?***

The final report from the United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) first year was submitted to the U.N. Security Council on 21 Oct 2016. That report surely ended any doubt about Assad's government releasing chlorine gas — a chemical weapon — in Syria. But the



Security Council was unable to punish anyone in Assad's military for releasing chlorine, because of the threat of a Russian veto in the Security Council.

Finally, on 28 Feb 2017, there was a vote in the Security Council on a resolution drafted by France and the United Kingdom to sanction Syria for using chemical weapons. Both Russia and China vetoed the draft resolution. This was the seventh time Russia has used its veto in the Security Council to protect war criminals in Syria. [U.N.](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

In a colossal instance of poor planning, the United Nations Security Council allowed the JIM to expire in September 2016, then renewed the JIM in November 2016, *after* the JIM had closed their offices in the Hague and Damascus, and after the JIM discharged employees. The OPCW monthly report for March 2017, U.N. Security Council document S/2017/260, says the JIM "continued to build up its capacity."

On 12 April, the head of the JIM (Virginia Gamba) was promoted to Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. [U.N.](#) On 27 April, Edmond Mulet of Guatemala was appointed to be the new head of the JIM. [U.N.](#) Neither press release mentioned anything about their knowledge of chemistry.

### **Failure of Russia to Influence Assad**

On the night of 6 April 2017, at a press conference *after* the U.S. airstrikes, U.S. Secretary of State, Tillerson, blamed Russia for allowing Syria to keep some of its chemical weapons that were supposed to be destroyed during 2014:

As you're well aware, Bashar al-Assad has carried out chemical attacks this past week [4 April] on civilians, including women and children, and carried out attacks earlier this — last month, March 25th and 30th, in Hama province as well. We have a very high level of confidence that the attacks were carried out by aircraft under the direction of the Bashar al-Assad regime, and we also have very high confidence that the attacks involved the use of sarin nerve gas. At least the past three attacks, we have fairly high — we have high confidence on that.

I think it's also clear that previous agreements that had been entered into pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2118, as well as Annex A agreements that the Syrian Government themselves accepted back in 2013 whereby they would surrender their chemical weapons under the supervision of the Russian Government, and the U.S. and the Russian Government entered into agreements whereby Russia would locate these weapons, they would secure the weapons, they would destroy the weapons, and that they would act as the guarantor that these weapons would no longer be present in Syria.

Clearly, Russia has failed in its responsibility to deliver on that commitment from 2013. So either Russia has been complicit or Russia has been simply incompetent in its ability to deliver on its end of that agreement.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Remarks With National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster," [State Dept.](#), 6 April 2017.



Tillerson used plain, clear language to say that Russia had "failed" to honor its international commitments in 2013 to remove *all* chemical weapons from Syria. During 2016, Russia also failed to ensure that Assad's military obeyed ceasefire agreements, which led some commentators to suggest that Russia had limited ability to influence Assad. The obvious conclusion is that the Russian government is both unreliable and untrustworthy in its ability to influence Assad. The unfortunate reality is that there is *no* other nation that can be trusted to influence Assad.

Three days later, Tillerson reiterated his view on a television interview program:

I will tell you I'm disappointed, because I think the real failure here has been Russia's failure to live up to its commitments under the chemical weapons agreements that were entered into in 2013 both by the Syrian Government and by Russia as the guarantor to play the role in Syria of securing chemical weapons, destroying the chemical weapons, and continuing to monitor that situation. And so the failure related to the recent strike and the recent terrible chemical weapons attack, in large measure, is a failure on Russia's part to achieve its commitment to the international community.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Interview With George Stephanopoulos of ABC This Week," [State Dept.](#), 9 April 2017.

On 11 April 2017, Tillerson reiterated again:

It is also clear Russia has failed to uphold the agreements that had been entered into under multiple UN Security Council resolutions. These agreements stipulated Russia as the guarantor of a Syria free of chemical weapons, that they would also locate, secure, and destroy all such armaments in Syria. Stockpiles and continued use demonstrate that Russia has failed in its responsibility to deliver on this 2013 commitment. It is unclear whether Russia failed to take this obligation seriously or Russia has been incompetent, but this distinction doesn't much matter to the dead. We can't let this happen again.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Remarks at a Press Availability [in Lucca, Italy]," [State Dept.](#), 11 April 2017.

In my opinion, Tillerson is wrong to say that the distinction between complicit and incompetent "does not matter much". Being complicit implies that Russia had knowledge of Assad's hidden chemical weapons, but did nothing. Being incompetent means Russia did *not* have knowledge of Assad's hidden chemical weapons. The issue of knowledge is related to intent, which is essential to moral culpability.

During 2014-2016, Obama was careful to boast that his administration had forced Assad to surrender *all* of his "declared" chemical weapons. But U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on 20 July 2014 boasted that "... [in] Syria we struck a deal where we got 100% of the chemical weapons out." [NBC News](#). More recently, Obama's National Security Adviser, Susan Rice, on 16 Jan 2017 said: "We were able to get the Syrian government to voluntarily and verifiably give up its chemical weapons stockpile." [NPR](#). [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#) declared that Kerry and Rice had made false statements. On 8 May 2015, [Reuters](#) reported that OPCW had found traces of undeclared Sarin and VX nerve gas in Syria, so it has been known for two years that Assad's government did *not* completely disclose their chemical weapons program. In conclusion, one of the major accomplishments of Obama's foreign policy — the removal of chemical weapons from Syria — is now seen as incomplete and inadequate.

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# Syria

## Futile Peace Negotiations in Syria Disorganization of the Syrian Opposition & Politics of the Peace Process

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

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### Diversions

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

1. Beginning in mid-February 2014, there has been a crisis in the **Ukraine**, including the annexation of the Crimea by Russia. By 30 May 2014, the crisis in the Ukraine appeared to be winding down, as Russia had withdrawn most of their troops from the border. But on 28 June 2014, the Ukraine government and pro-Russian separatists were again fighting a civil war. On 17 July 2014, someone in eastern Ukraine shot down a civilian airliner. On 28 Aug 2014, Russia sent troops into eastern Ukraine to aid rebels. On 5 Sep 2014, another ceasefire began. On 24 Jan 2015, Russian rebels violated agreements and began an offensive against Mariupol. From the end of April 2014 to 2 Feb 2015, the United Nations says 5358 people died in the war in the Ukraine. During the first two weeks of Feb 2015, the war in the Ukraine seemed to dominate the attention of diplomats in Europe, as another ceasefire was negotiated.
2. a continuing civil war in the **Central African Republic**
3. more violence in **South Sudan**, as ceasefires are violated
4. On 14 April 2014, the Boko Haram Islamic terrorists in **Nigeria**, kidnapped more than 230 girls from a boarding school. On 20 May 2014, an Islamic bomb in Jos, Nigeria killed at least 130 people. Approximately ninety people were kidnapped by Islamic terrorists on 21 June in Nigeria. On 10 Nov 2014, a suicide bomber killed at least 48 pupils at a high school in Nigeria. On 28 Nov 2014, Boko Haram attacked a mosque in Kano, killing more than 102 people. On 3-7 Jan 2015, Boko Haram attacked 17 towns and slaughtered approximately 2000 people, "too many to count". [Guardian](#).
5. On 18 May 2014, a former Libyan general led an assault against the Libyan Parliament building, causing another crisis in **Libya**. Various parts of the government and military supported the general's anti-Islamist campaign. On 16 July, Islamic rebels attacked the airport at Tripoli, destroying airplanes and damaging the terminal building. On 31 July,

Islamic extremist rebels seized control of Benghazi. On 23 Aug 2014, Islamic extremists captured the airport at Tripoli.

6. On 10 June 2014, ISIL — an Al-Qaeda inspired group that operates in both Iraq and Syria — captured Mosul, the second-largest city in **Iraq**. On 11 June, ISIL captured Tikrit. (See my essays for [June](#), [July](#), and [August](#) 2014.) The crisis in Iraq pushed Syria out of the news in Western newsmedia. Moreover, the capture of Mosul, Iraq by ISIL — as well as the declaration of ISIL's caliphate on 29 June 2014 — [changed](#) the Western view of the insurgency in Syria.
  7. On 12 June 2014, palestinians kidnapped three boys in **Israel** and killed them. Their dead bodies were found in a field on 30 June. After terrorists in Gaza fired hundreds of rockets and mortar shells into Israel, the Israeli military began a military campaign in Gaza on 8 July. Despite the blatant provocations by the palestinians, the Arab newsmedia pushed Syria and Iraq out of the news in order to hysterically report the so-called "Israeli aggression" in Gaza. On 14 July 2014, Egypt proposed a ceasefire in Gaza, which Israel accepted but Hamas in Gaza rejected. After more than 1300 rockets and mortar shells were fired from Gaza into Israel since 8 July 2014, the Israeli Army invaded Gaza on the evening of 17 July. On 26 August 2014, a ceasefire of indefinite duration was arranged in Gaza.
  8. Ebola hemorrhagic fever in western Africa (e.g., Liberia and Sierra Leone), which had killed approximately 2800 people by 23 Sep 2014. On 23 Sep 2014, the U.S. Government forecasts between 0.5 and 1.4 million people infected by 20 Jan 2015, killing perhaps half of those infected. After massive intervention by the USA and other nations, the death toll on 14 Jan 2016 was only 11,300.
  9. For many years, **Yemen** has been an impoverished, failed nation, infested by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. In 2012, longtime president Saleh was deposed. On 19 Jan 2015, Houthi (Shiite) rebels surrounded the home of the president (a Sunni) who is supported by the U.S.-government. On 22 Jan 2015, the president and cabinet resigned, plunging Yemen deeper into anarchy. On 10 Feb 2015, the U.S. [State Department](#) closed the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, because of rapidly deteriorating security. On 20 March, ISIL attacked two Shiite mosques in Yemen during Friday prayers, killing at least 137 people. [AP](#). On 26 March 2015, Saudi Arabia began airstrikes in Yemen, with the intent to defeat Iranian-sponsored Houthi Shiite rebels. [Associated Press](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).
  10. On 6 January 2016, **North Korea** detonated a fourth nuclear weapon, in another blatant violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions. On 7 February 2016, North Korea apparently launched a nonfunctioning satellite into orbit in a forbidden test of ballistic missile technology. On 5 September 2016, North Korea launched three missiles that landed in the ocean near Japan. And on 9 Sep 2016, North Korea detonated a fifth nuclear weapon, which was more energetic than any of their previous weapon tests. Each time, the United Nations Security Council condemns the violations by the North Korean government, but these condemnations are clearly *not* effective in stopping the belligerent behavior of the North Koreans.
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## Deaths in Syria

On 1 May 2017, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published a death toll for the month of April.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the death of 2786 persons during the month of April 2017, they were distributed as following:

**Civilian casualties: 938**, including 291 children under the age of eighteen, and 151 citizen women over the age of eighteen, and they were killed as follows:

- 543 including 140 children and 83 citizen women were killed in raids by Syrian and Russian warplanes and by regime's helicopters on several areas of Syria.
- 52 including 18 children and 9 citizen women were killed in shelling by the regime forces using rocket and artillery shells, missiles believed to be ground-to-ground, targeting and sniper bullets.
- 4 citizens were killed under torture in Syrian security prisons.
- 25 including a child and 8 citizen women and 10 children were killed in targeting and the fall of mortar shells launched by the rebel and Islamic factions.
- 1 girl child was killed in earlier bombing by Turkish warplanes.
- 3 were killed by the fire of the Turkish border guards.
- 52 including 2 women were executed by the "Islamic State" organization.
- 17 including 7 children and 2 citizen women were killed in the fall of shells launched by the "Islamic State" organization and by the fire of its machineguns.
- 2 citizens were killed by Islamic factions.
- 108 including 24 children and 21 citizen women were killed in airstrikes by the warplanes of the international coalition.
- 128 including 68 children and 15 citizen women were killed in the detonating of cars and booby trapped vehicles.
- 9 including 2 children were killed by Syria Democratic Forces.
- 62 including 17 children and 6 citizen women were killed in landmines explosions.
- 22 including 4 children and 5 citizen women were killed in unknown circumstances.

[**Military casualties: 1848 dead**, distributed as follows:]

- Syrian fighters of the rebel and Islamic Factions and the Syria Democratic Forces and other movements and organizations: 449
- The regime forces: 215
- Members of popular the committees, NDF and gunmen loyal to the regime of Syrian nationality: 308
- Fighters of the Lebanese Hezbollah: 5
- Fighters loyal to the regime of non-Syrian nationalities, most of them are of the Shiite sect: 23
- Unidentified: 15
- Fighters of the rebel and Islamic factions, the "Islamic State" organization,

Jabhat Al-Nusra (Al-Qaeda organization in the Levant), Jaysh al-Mohajereen Wa al-Ansar and the Islamic Turkestan Party of non-Syrian nationalities: 833

"About 2800 persons including 938 children, citizen women and men were killed in April 2017," [SOHR](#), 1 May 2017. [Formatting of military deaths as indented list by Standler.]

When I add the civilian casualties, I obtain a total of 1028, which is 90 more than the SOHR total.

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SOHR [reported](#) a total of 49,742 people killed during the year 2016, which is an average of 4145/month. This number should be compared with the average of only 2617/month during the first four months of 2017 — during the ceasefire that began at the end of December 2016. The imperfect ceasefire has reduced fatalities by approximately 37% from the average during 2016.

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a [table](#) of death tolls announced by SOHR, beginning 31 Aug 2013. The total number of people who have died during the Syria civil war that began in March 2011 is now *more than* 326,000.

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## **Turkey is an ally from Hell**

### **Introduction**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My essay for [August 2016](#) chronicles the beginning of the Turkish invasion of Syria during 24-31 August, and tersely mentions Erdogan's purge after the failed coup.

My essays for [September 2016](#), [October 2016](#), and [November 2016](#) tersely chronicle the continuing Turkish invasion of Syria, as well as Erdogan's continuing purge of alleged coup supporters. My essay for September also mentions slow progress on constructing a wall along the Turkish-Syrian border, which wall has been needed since mid-2013.

My essays since November 2016 continued to tersely chronicle the Turkish invasion of Syria.

Here is a terse summary of Erdogan's recent dictatorship in Turkey:

1. After an inconclusive presidential election, in July 2015 Erdogan ended a ceasefire with ethnic Kurds in Turkey, to boost Erdogan's popularity.
2. On 4 March 2016, the Turkish government seized control of the *Today's Zaman* newspaper in Turkey.
3. After a failed coup on 15 July 2016, Erdogan purged more than 125,000 people from the Turkish government, including military officers, professors, and judges. Erdogan also closed more than 140 newspapers and magazine publishers.

Basic civil liberties in Turkey, such as freedom of the press and freedom to criticize president Erdogan, have been suppressed. Criticism of Erdogan by Europe was muted, probably because the Europeans did *not* want Erdogan to unleash a flood of refugees from Syria to Europe. Similarly, criticism of Erdogan by the USA was muted, probably because the U.S. Military wants continued use of the Incirlik air base in Turkey.

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### **April 2017: Turkish invasion of Syria**

On 25 April 2017, Turkish warplanes bombed the Kurds in both Iraq and Syria, allegedly to stop the Kurds from sending weapons to the PKK in Turkey. [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#); [Washington Post](#). The Turkish military boasted they had killed 70 Kurds. [Reuters](#); [Hurriyet](#).

Turkey's bombing of Kurds in Syria and Iraq accomplished something really special: Russia, the USA, the U.S.-led Coalition to defeat ISIL, Iraq, *and* Syria *all condemned* the Turkish airstrikes. [Reuters](#)(USA criticized); [Reuters](#)(Russia criticized); [Associated Press](#)(Iraq/USA criticized); [Associated Press](#)(Russia criticized). This may be the first time in many years that Syria and the USA are in agreement.

On 28 April 2017, the U.S. Military sent armored vehicles to the northern border of Syria, to prevent Turkey from killing more Kurds. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

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### **U.S. troops in Syria**

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

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

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

On 28 April 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](#).

On 10 December 2016, the U.S. Secretary of Defense announced the deployment of an additional 200 U.S. Military personnel to Syria, to assist in the liberation of Raqqa from ISIL. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 8 March 2017, anonymous sources in the U.S. Defense Department told journalists that "hundreds" of U.S. Marines would be "temporarily" deployed to Syria to aid in the liberation of Raqqa. Additionally, fewer than 1000 U.S. troops are going to Kuwait, as a resource in the fights against ISIL. These two deployments are "temporary" and are *not* an increase in the 503 personnel limit approved by Obama in December 2016. [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

On 9 March 2017, Colonel John Dorrian clarified that the "hundreds" of U.S. troops who recently entered Syria was approximately 400. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#). There was *no* mention of the "temporary" deployment of 400 troops at the Pentagon website, showing the Pentagon is trying to avoid discussion of this evasion of limits on U.S. combat troops in Syria.

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## Recognition that Assad is Winning the Civil War

### Introduction



Beginning on 10 March 2014 and continuing through October 2014, journalists reported that Assad is winning the civil war in Syria. Some of these reports by journalists are cited in my previous essays.

On 7 May 2014, the rebels and jihadists withdrew from Homs. Assad then moved to take control of the city of Aleppo. But Assad's assault on Aleppo stalled, raising the possibility that Assad 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](#). But in December 2016, ISIL recaptured Palmyra in a surprise attack. On 2 March 2017, Assad again took control of Palmyra. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

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 liberated Aleppo city in December 2016, it is more clear than ever that Assad is slowly winning the Syrian civil war.

On 22 February 2017, [Agence France-Presse](#) reported: "The ground has shifted since the last round broke up in April 2016 and the rebels find themselves in a significantly weaker position." Also on 22 Feb 2017, [Reuters](#) reported: "And with Assad militarily stronger than he has been for years, [Assad] has the option of pressing home its advantage on the ground if it doesn't get its way at the negotiating table."

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, U.K. prime minister David Cameron, 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.

On 3 April 2017, Assad gave an interview to a Croatian newspaper, *Vecernji List*, in which Assad declared near the end of the interview: "we do not have any other option except victory." See also the transcript at [SANA](#). In Assad's reply to Question 2, Assad said "we cannot, practically, reach any actual result with this part of the opposition" because the opposition groups are Jihadi terrorists "in the perverted sense of Jihad of course." [Reuters](#) reported on the interview after it was published on 6 April. *The Independent* newspaper in London repeats what Reuters said: "... Assad appears militarily unassailable in the areas of western Syria...." My comment is Assad's military superiority will make Assad less likely to compromise in negotiations in Geneva.

#### 4 April 2017: Chemical Weapons Attack

On 4 April 2017, there was a release of chemical weapons in Idlib province in Syria that Western nations immediately blamed on Assad, without waiting for an investigation to begin. (See [above](#).) In particular, this release of chemical weapons caused U.S. president Trump to change his opinion of Assad *before* Trump had decided on a foreign policy in Syria.

Zeina Karam, the Associated Press news director for Lebanon and Syria, wrote an insightful analysis of why Assad might have used chemical weapons.

President Bashar Assad took an enormous gamble if his forces were behind the chemical weapons attack that killed dozens in northern Syria: committing an overt war crime just as the Trump administration and most Western leaders had made clear they are no longer seeking his immediate removal.

Although Assad can count on the backing of his top allies, Russia and Iran, the attack has revived international outrage at a time when U.S. President Donald Trump is still formulating his policy on Syria.

So why do it? Especially when Syrian government troops have the upper hand in the 6-year-old civil war?

There is a military rationale, as well as a political one, analysts say.

Politically, Assad may have been emboldened to act to crush his opponents, thinking he could do so with impunity after recent statements from Washington, along with Trump's inclination to align with Russia.

On a visit to Turkey last week [30 March], Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Assad's future was up to the Syrian people to decide, while Nikki Haley, the American ambassador to the United Nations, said the United States isn't ruling out cooperation with Assad to defeat the Islamic State group.

Militarily, Tuesday's [4 April] attack took place in an area of Idlib province where rebels recently launched a heavy offensive against government troops. The assault

brought insurgents to within miles of the key, government-held city of Hama. Khan Sheikhoun, the town targeted by Tuesday's attack, is right up the road from Hama, and although Syrian forces have since launched a counter-offensive and regained some ground, there is a clear government incentive to rid the area of insurgents.

"These weapons are frightening and disorienting to the targeted populations, and they also highlight to the local population and the rebels that there is no international limitation on regime behavior and that resistance is therefore futile," said Faysal Itani, a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East.

Zeina Karam, "Analysis: Toxic attack could wreck Assad's political gains," [Associated Press](#), 12:08 GMT, 6 Apr 2017

Let me add that when Assad used chlorine gas in Syria beginning in April 2014, the only consequence for Assad was that OPCW began fact-finding missions and then in September 2015 the United Nations Security Council created the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). This lack of adverse consequences for Assad surely emboldened Assad.

When Trump ordered the U.S. attack on Assad's airfield near Homs on 7 April 2017, Trump did what Obama intended to do 43 months earlier. As explained above, during 2013-2016 Trump opposed U.S. attacks on Assad's military. This kind of inconsistent, erratic U.S. policy makes it difficult for leaders of nations to rely on the U.S. Government.

Assad *ought* to understand that his use of chemical weapons on 4 April makes it more difficult for diplomats to say Assad is the least-worst leader for Syria. Because the military benefit of using chemical weapons is much less than the public-relations detriment, Assad's decision to use chemical weapons was irrational.

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## Peace Negotiations for Syria

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

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

On 16 December 2015, Ban Ki-moon reiterated what he said on 31 October: "It is unacceptable that the whole Syrian crisis and the solution to the crisis has to be dependent on

the fate of one man.” [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP).

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

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

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

Here I notice a little detail. The Vienna Communiqué of 30 Oct 2015 (at ¶2, item 7) calls for elections in Syria "with all Syrians, including the diaspora, eligible to participate." This inclusion of the diaspora was copied into the ISSG Statement of 14 Nov 2015 at ¶10. This inclusion of the diaspora was copied into United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 at §4. The little detail was included by John Kerry, in an attempt to influence the result of the election — assuming that the majority of the diaspora would vote against Assad. (See [NY Times](#): "... Mr. Kerry, who is betting that if Syrians around the world can participate in the vote, Mr. Assad will not be able to win.") I agree with Kerry — but for different reasons — that Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey should be able to vote in Syrian elections, because those refugees are only temporarily outside of Syria. However, some of the Syrian refugees in Europe will apply for citizenship in an European nation, which effectively renounces their Syrian citizenship. Other Syrian refugees in Europe may lack a Syrian document that conclusively proves they are Syrian citizens.

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

On 26 January 2017, there was a significant change in the United Kingdom's foreign policy, when the U.K. foreign minister said Assad could be a candidate in Syrian elections. [The Guardian](#); [The Times](#); [BBC](#).

On 30 March 2017, Rex Tillerson (the new U.S. Secretary of State) said the status of Assad would be decided by the Syrian people in an election.

QUESTION [by Lesley Wroughton from Reuters]: The other question I have is the previous administration said that Syrian President Assad must go. Nikki Haley said yesterday that the fight in Syria cannot move forward without the issue of Assad being resolved. How do you see that issue being moved forward as you move more aggressively on Raqqa? .... About President Assad, should he stay or should he go?

TILLERSON: I think the status and the longer-term status of President Assad will be decided by the Syrian people.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Press Availability With Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu," [State Dept](#), 30 Mar 2017.

See also: [Reuters](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP). Not only is Assad what former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker called the "least-worst leader" for Syria, but also the U.S. should *not* be telling foreign nations that their leader is unacceptable. Since 2013, I have been critical of Obama's colonial-era policy of demanding the resignation of Assad. See my [review](#).

On 30 March 2017 it appeared that Assad might have a future as a long-term leader of Syria, but on 4 April 2017 Assad allegedly released nerve gas on civilians. As explained [above](#), that alleged war crime changed Trump's opinion of Assad and caused Trump to order an airstrike on Assad's airbase from which the alleged chemical weapons attack was launched. Although it is *not* entirely clear (Trump's government has *no* plan for Syria), on 6 April it appeared that Trump and Tillerson want Assad to resign as leader of Syria.

On 4 April 2017, Tillerson issued a statement that said:

... it is clear that this is how Bashar al-Assad operates: with brutal, unabashed barbarism. Those who defend and support him, including Russia and Iran, should have no illusions about Assad or his intentions. Anyone who uses chemical weapons to attack his own people shows a fundamental disregard for human decency and must be held accountable.

Tillerson, "Chemical Weapons Attack in Syria," [State Dept.](#), 4 April 2017.

My comment is that if Assad is on trial in court for war crimes, then Assad is *not* available to lead Syria.

On the afternoon of 6 April, Trump held a press conference aboard Air Force One, en route to Florida. During that press conference, Trump made an amazingly inarticulate statement about Assad's future:

QUESTION: Mr. President, two questions. Do you think Assad should leave power? And will you discuss the Syria —

THE PRESIDENT: What Assad did is terrible. I think what happened in Syria is one of the truly egregious crimes and it shouldn't have happened and it shouldn't be allowed to happen.

....

QUESTION: Just to follow on that, though, do you think that Assad should leave power in Syria?

THE PRESIDENT: I think what happened in Syria is a disgrace to humanity. And he's there, and I guess he's running things, so something should happen.

Thanks, folks, I'll see you in a little while.

[End of press conference]

"Remarks by President Trump to the Press — Aboard Air Force One En Route West Palm Beach, Florida," [White House](#), end at 14:12 EDT, 6 April 2017.



On the afternoon of 6 April 2017, at a press conference *before* the U.S. airstrikes, Tillerson said clearly:

QUESTION: Sir, does Assad have to go?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Assad's role in the future is uncertain, clearly. And with the acts that he has taken, it would seem that there would be no role for him to govern the Syrian people.

QUESTION: And so what steps is the United States prepared to take in order to remove him from power?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, the process by which Assad would leave is something that I think requires an international community effort, both to first defeat ISIS within Syria, to stabilize the Syrian country, to avoid further civil war, and then to work collectively with our partners around the world through a political process that would lead to Assad leaving.

QUESTION: So will you and President Trump organize an international coalition to remove Assad?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Those steps are underway.

[End of press conference]

Rex W. Tillerson, "Remarks on China Summit," [State Dept.](#), approximately 15:00 EDT, 6 April 2017.

(Approximately six hours later, this press conference was overshadowed by the U.S. airstrikes in Syria. An ephemeral Associated Press news article on this press conference is *not* archived at the AP BigStory website. See news articles at, e.g., [The Hill](#); [Politico](#); [Voice of America](#).)

On the night of 6 April 2017, at a press conference *after* the U.S. airstrikes, Tillerson said:  
... through the Geneva process, we will start a political process to resolve Syria's future in terms of its governance structure. And that ultimately, in our view, will lead to a resolution of Bashar al-Assad's departure.

Tillerson, "Remarks With National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster," [State Dept.](#), 6 April 2017.

*The Wall Street Journal* published a collection of quotations showing how Trump's administration changed their view of Assad from 29 March to 6 April 2017. [WSJ](#); copy at: [The Australian](#).

But, on 9 April 2017, Tillerson again said it was for the Syrian people to decide the fate of Assad, but that decision would occur *after* ISIL was defeated.

... I think our strategy in Syria, as you know, our priority, is first the defeat of ISIS, remove them from access to the caliphate, because that's where the threat to the homeland and to so many other homelands of our coalition partners is emanating from.

Once we can eliminate the battle against ISIS, conclude that — and it is going quite



well — then we hope to turn our attention to achieving ceasefire agreements between the regime and opposition forces.

And in that regard, we are hopeful that we can work with Russia and use their influence to achieve areas of stabilization throughout Syria and create the conditions for a political process through Geneva in which we can engage all the parties on a way forward. And it is through that political process that we believe the Syrian people will ultimately be able to decide the fate of Bashar al-Assad.

....

QUESTION: But you accept that right now the Syrian people have no way to remove Assad; that's going to take greater pressure from the United States, from an international coalition, perhaps military pressure?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, ultimately, it could, George. But we've seen what that looks like when you undertake a violent regime change in Libya. And the situation in Libya continues to be very chaotic, and I would argue that the life of the Libyan people is not all that well off today. So I think we have to learn the lessons of the past and learn the lessons of what went wrong in Libya when you choose that pathway of regime change.

So we know this is going to be hard work, but we think it's also a process that will lead to a durable and lasting stability inside of Syria. Anytime you go on and have a violent change at the top, it is very difficult to create the conditions for stability longer-term.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Interview With George Stephanopoulos of ABC This Week," [State Dept.](#), 9 April 2017.

On 11 April 2017, Tillerson again said the Syrian people would decide Assad's future role, but, later in the same press briefing, Tillerson came close to Hillary Clinton's position in July 2011 — almost six years ago — in which she declared that Assad must resign because he had lost his legitimacy to govern Syria.

Many nations look to the Geneva process to resolve the Syrian conflict in a way that produces stability and gives Syria and the Syrian people the opportunity to determine their own political future. And our hope is Bashar al-Assad will not be a part of that future.

....

In terms of the future of Bashar al-Assad, it is important to us that we undertake a political process that leads to the final conclusion of how Syria will be governed. It is our policy for a unified Syria that is governed by the people of Syria. I think it is clear to all of us that the reign of the Assad family is coming to an end; but the question of how that ends and the transition itself could be very important, in our view, to the durability, the stability inside of a unified Syria, and its stability and durability of the outcome going forward.

So that's why we are not presupposing how that occurs, but I think it is clear that we

see no further role for the Assad regime longer-term given that they have effectively given up their legitimacy with these type of attacks.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Remarks at a Press Availability [in Lucca, Italy]," [State Dept.](#), 11 April 2017.

My comment is that Tillerson's two positions on 11 April seem inconsistent, and therefore add to the confusion about evolving U.S. Government policy.

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## History of Negotiations in Geneva during 2016-2017

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 until 9 December).

My essay for [November 2016](#) chronicled the total failure of the United Nations to do something about the crisis in Syria.

My essay for [December 2016](#) chronicled the end of the Kerry-Lavrov negotiations on Syria (14 Dec), two U.N. General Assembly Resolutions on Syria (9, 21 Dec), two U.N. Security Council Resolutions on Syria (19, 31 Dec), and de Mistura's plan to resume negotiations in Geneva on 8 Feb 2017. Also during December 2016, the U.S. Government and the United Nations suddenly became unimportant in Syria, while Russia and Turkey took the lead in negotiations with Assad and the insurgents.

My essay for [January 2017](#) described the total failure of negotiations in Astana, and de Mistura's postponement of the resumption of Geneva negotiations from 8 Feb to 20 Feb.

My essay for [February 2017](#) described the total failure of negotiations in Astana. After 5 days of negotiations in Geneva, each of the two delegations refused to agree on de Mistura's agenda.

My essay for [March 2017](#) described the last 3 days of negotiations in Geneva during 1-3 March, during which time an agenda was finally agreed. The insurgents failed to attend a 14-15 March 2017 meeting in Astana, making that meeting a total failure. I also described 9 days of negotiations in Geneva during 23-31 March, but, as expected, nothing was accomplished.

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## **Failed Negotiations in Astana, Kazakhstan**

Previous negotiations in Astana on the Syrian ceasefire during 23-24 January, 15-

16 February, 14-15 March 2017 were a complete and total failure. The Syrian delegations accomplished absolutely nothing. In February, the insurgents arrived one day late and then refused to negotiate. In March, the insurgents failed to attend any of the two-day meeting. There was *no* meeting during April. The fourth round of so-called "negotiations" in Astana is scheduled for 3-4 May 2017.

On 1 May, [de Mistura](#) announced that he would attend the negotiations in Astana on 3-4 May.

My comment is that there are several important conclusions:

1. The ceasefire in Syria that began on 30 Dec 2016 has unraveled, owing to repeated and continuing violations by Assad, Russia, and insurgents.
2. Russia and Turkey — the so-called guarantors of the ceasefire — have completely failed to punish violators of the ceasefire. (We have been here before — in May 2016, when the ISSG failed to enforce a ceasefire.)
3. The third round of negotiations in Astana is a complete and total failure. *All* of the negotiations in Astana have been a complete and total failure.
4. De Mistura made a miscalculation when he allowed Russia and Turkey to take control of negotiations concerning the ceasefire and delivery of humanitarian aid. While his decision reduced the number of agenda items in the Geneva negotiations, one can expect the opposition in Geneva to resume whining about the continued fighting and *no* deliveries of humanitarian aid. In this way, the failure in Astana can contribute to a failure in Geneva.

On 25 March 2017, de Mistura wrote to the three guarantors asking them to "undertake urgent efforts" to improve the ceasefire. They ignored de Mistura — there was there was *no* change in Astana meeting dates.

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

On 5 April 2017, [TASS](#) reported that de Mistura would schedule the next round of negotiations in Geneva for sometime in May 2017. One wonders why there is at least a four-week pause with *no* negotiations, after a ten-month pause caused by the HNC's refusal to negotiate and then *no* accomplishments during 9 days of negotiations in March 2017.

A year ago, de Mistura at least twice referred to the need to achieve concrete results:

1. Back on 7 April 2016, de Mistura [said](#) “But frankly the next round of the talks need to be quite concrete in the direction of a political process leading to a real beginning of a political transition — political process leading to a concrete or real beginning of a political transition.” But, at the next round, the HNC walked out of negotiations and did not return for ten months.

2. Back on 9 June 2016, de Mistura [said](#) "... we are aware that a third round needs to be a concrete one. I have been told by my own predecessors that anything we should do, we should do avoid the Geneva 3 with no concluding points. We want to give maximum chances for a concrete outcome." Now the fifth round of negotiations has finished and there is still *no* concrete outcome from the negotiations in Geneva.

It would appear desirable to have more frequent meetings in Geneva in an attempt to obtain these elusive "concrete steps". But my essay for [July 2016](#) said: "I am tired of hearing de Mistura talk about 'concrete steps', making an analogy to constructing solid steps at the entrance to a building. Until de Mistura gets rid of the obstructionist HNC, I predict nothing concrete will come from negotiations in Geneva."

On 3 April 2017, Assad gave an interview that is summarized [above](#), in which Assad makes clear that he is pursuing a military victory, and that he will not reach "results" with terrorists in negotiations. That clearly stated position makes negotiations in Geneva futile. But the opposition is also pursuing a military victory and is intransigently demanding that Assad resign — so negotiations are also futile because of the rigid positions of the opposition.

On the morning of 12 April 2017, de Mistura briefed the United Nations [Security Council](#) on problems with the negotiations in Geneva. The U.N. press release said: "The guarantors of the ceasefire in Syria must 'step up and deliver now', [de Mistura] emphasized." "The fragile [Geneva] progress already made was in grave danger, he warned, noting that the talks had been overshadowed by intensified fighting on the ground and the continued lack of unimpeded humanitarian access."

After the Security Council meeting, de Mistura briefed journalists:

Let me summarise it with, or summarise my own message based on what we have heard with the seven points:

1. Point number one, stakes are high, no doubt, after the recent developments stakes at high.
2. Point number two, this is time for clear thinking and a diplomatic surge not the military surge, and corporation. If there was one common point among all speakers in spite of obvious differences, it was the urgency for supporting a political process. None of the participants was in doubt of that.
3. Point number three, we don't need to reinvent the wheel here, we have a framework, the goal is clear, it is 2254, it is political transition, there is a political package to work on, there are the four baskets, nothing of that is in doubt, so if anyone is ready for a political process, learning from what has been happening in the last few days and wanting to escalate, the package is ready.
4. Point number four, what is happening while we are talking in Moscow at the moment, at this very moment, in the discussion between the United States and the Russian Federation is very important. What we were doing here was in fact constantly being aware of the importance of what is currently, taking place in Moscow.

5. Point number five, they is new echelance, new moments. One is the meeting in Tehran, which is going to take placed regarding re-launching the ceasefire, which is urgently needed, and the Astana meeting. And then following that we are ready to re-launch the intra-Syrian talks in order to make sure that there is at least a serious attempt to have a ceasefire, and that could be in May. I will not indicate today a date, because we want to frankly maintain the pressure for the Astana delivery on that, because ceasefire would make a big difference for the perception of positive intra-Syrian talks.

So the priorities are, restoring the ceasefire, humanitarian access and re-launching the Geneva talks, and the diplomatic surge, these are the main points.

"Special Envoy for Syria Mr. Staffan de Mistura's Stakeout after Briefing the Security Council," [U.N. Geneva](#), 12 April 2017. [Numerous transcription errors in original. De Mistura promised seven points, but the text has only five points.]

My comment is that it is *very unlikely* that the guarantors of the ceasefire (i.e., Russia, Turkey, and Iran) will do anything that results in a more durable ceasefire. As chronicled in my previous essays, *all* of the meetings of Syrians in Astana have been a complete failure. So de Mistura should expect *nothing* from Astana.

Suspending negotiations in Geneva during all of April and part of May — in the hope that the ceasefire will miraculously resume — is not reasonable. Moreover, de Mistura repeatedly cites the agenda in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254. That Resolution also contains deadlines, and, as I mentioned in my essay for March 2017, "at the end of March 2017 the Syrians have four months remaining in which to write a new constitution and hold elections." De Mistura appears *not* to be serious about meeting these deadlines when he fails to schedule negotiations during April.

De Mistura is *wrong* to say there is no military solution in Syria. Assad's siege of towns and vicious airstrikes on civilians is forcing the insurgents to agree to be evacuated to Idlib province, which is a military victory for Assad.

On 20 April, de Mistura gave a press briefing. Here are a few sentences:

Regarding Astana, it is still on as forecasted [i.e., 3-4 May]. We would be involved again at the senior technical level in order to support what at the moment doesn't seem to be working, which is a cessation of hostilities. Regarding the Geneva talks, our target date is still in May but we are certainly watching very carefully the developments on the ground in order to make sure to give it the best possible chances.

Now I would stop and the give you the floor for some questions.

Staffan de Mistura, "Note to Correspondents: Transcript of press encounter by Staffan de Mistura and Jan Egeland on Syria," [U.N.](#), 20 April 2017.

### — April 2017: Day Nr. 19

I am including the above centered heading as a symbolic reminder of what could have been the 19th day of negotiations in Geneva. Instead, de Mistura is waiting for a better ceasefire to come from Astana.

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Toward the end of this essay in March 2017, I added a new concluding [section](#) on why the negotiations in Geneva were futile.

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## Continuing Civil War in Syria

### Introduction

Full-text of agreements on a "cessation of hostilities" in Syria is posted at [rbs0.com](#). The first two agreements collapsed during April 2016 and September 2016. The third agreement began on 30 Dec 2016, as described below.

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.

My essay for [November 2016](#) mentions a one-day ceasefire by Russia and Assad in Aleppo city on 4 November, which was *not* reciprocated by insurgents. I also chronicled Assad's renewed military campaign to liberate Aleppo, beginning on 15 November. The United Nations failed to deliver any food or medicine to Aleppo city since early July 2016, so starvation began in late November. This section of my essay was previously titled "Reports of Violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement". But on 6 October 2016, de Mistura correctly said: "we don't have any more a cessation of hostilities".

My essay for [December 2016](#) chronicles a 13 December Russian-Turkish agreement to evacuate insurgents from eastern Aleppo city. Owing to numerous violations of the agreement, the evacuation was not completed until the night of 22 December. On 22 December 2016 insurgents ended the water supply to the city of Damascus. On 30 December 2016, a nationwide ceasefire in Syria began. Also during December 2016, the U.S. Government and the United Nations suddenly became unimportant in Syria, while Russia and Turkey began negotiations with Assad and the insurgents. December 2016 was the final month for the section in my essays on bombing hospitals in Syria.

My essay for [January 2017](#) explained that on 28 January Assad captured the water supply for Damascus, and more insurgents were transported to Idlib province.

My essay for [February 2017](#) mentioned more violations of the ceasefire, *zero* deliveries of humanitarian aid in Syria, and reductions in military supplies to insurgents from foreign meddlers.

My essay for [March 2017](#) mentioned the withdrawal of insurgents from Al-Waer suburb of Homs, and the planned withdrawal of insurgents from the Four Towns (i.e., al-Foua, Kefraya, Zabadani, and Madaya). During March, there was *no* United Nations press briefing on humanitarian aid to Syria.

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### **Nationwide Ceasefire in Syria**

I notice during April that the mainstream news media is concentrating on the chemical weapons attack in Syria on 4 April, the several Islamic terrorist attacks in Europe, the sour relations between Russia and the USA, and the crisis in stopping North Korea from developing ICBMs and nuclear weapons. That means the mainstream news media is ignoring what is happening in Syria, despite important events in Syria.

The 4 April 2017 release of chemical weapons in Idlib province is mentioned [above](#).

On 21 April 2017, the most recent webpage linked on the homepage of the English-language

website of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights is dated 11 April.

My essay for [December 2016](#) included a section on bombing of hospitals in Syria, and the ineffective bleating by the United Nations to stop bombing hospitals. On 22 April 2017 "bunker buster" missiles hit an underground hospital in Abdin village, in Idlib province, putting the hospital out-of-service, and killing at least 3 physicians. [Associated Press](#); [Syria Direct](#). On 25 April, an airstrike on a hospital in Kafr Takharim, Idlib province, put the hospital out-of-service and may have killed 14 people there. [Reuters](#). On 27 April, Russian airstrikes on a hospital in the village of Deir Sharqi killed 6 people, and a Russian airstrike on a dispensary in Maarzita killed 4 medical staff. Both buildings hit on 27 April are in Idlib province. [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Reuters](#).

#### **Al-Waer**

On 13 March 2017, an agreement was reached to evacuate insurgents from the Al-Waer suburb of Homs.

On 18 March, [SOHR](#) reported the first convoy from Al-Waer transported 2000 people, including about 450 insurgents.

On 1 April, [SOHR](#) reported that a third convoy of 1900 insurgents and civilians had been bussed from Al-Waer.

#### **Four Towns**

On 4 April 2017, evacuations were scheduled to begin in the Four Towns, but those evacuations were postponed until 6-9 April. [SOHR](#).

On 8 April, the evacuations from the Four Towns were postponed until 11-12 April, "after confusion about how to implement the agreement". [SOHR](#).

On 11 April, [Reuters](#) reports that preparations are being made to evacuate the Four Towns. On 12 April, [SOHR](#) reports that "tens of buses have arrived to the outskirts of the towns of Madaya and Zabadani northwest of Rif Dimashq" in preparation for the evacuation. On 13 April, [SOHR](#) reports "about 120 buses and ambulances have entered the towns of Al-Fu'ah and Kafriya which are inhabited by Shiite citizens in the northeastern countryside of Idlib". SOHR refers to the evacuation of besieged towns as "demographic change".

On 14 April 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "more than 2,350 people were bused out of the twin rebel-held towns of Madaya and Zabadani near Damascus, and another 5,000 from the pro-government towns of Foua and Kfraya in the country's north." [SOHR](#) reports more people will be bused from the Four Towns "in the coming weeks". SOHR says a "convoy of 60 buses with ambulances" departed from Madaya, while "75 buses and 20 ambulances" departed from Al-Fu'ah and Kafriya on 14 April.

On 15 April 2017, an Islamic car bomb exploded at the edge of Aleppo city, near buses that

were carrying people evacuated from Foua and Kfraya on 14 April. At 18:00 local time, it was reported that at least 39 people were killed. At 21:30 local time, the death toll had increased to more than 100. The [Associated Press](#) reported: "... thousands of Syrians evacuated from their besieged towns have spent the night on buses at an exchange point as a much criticized population transfer deal stalls." The AP also quotes a resident as saying "no evacuation has taken place from [Zabadani]." At night on 15 April, the transfer resumed and the buses moved again. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [SANA](#).

On 15 April, the spokesman for the United Nations Secretary General issued a statement that condemned the bombing of the buses. The [statement](#) concludes: "Those responsible for today's attack must be brought to justice." My comment is that the damned bureaucrats at the United Nations have been *talking* about prosecuting war crimes in Syria since 2013, but done absolutely nothing. Assad, ISIL, Nusra, and the jihadists *know* they can commit atrocities without being "brought to justice".

On 16 April, approximately 3000 people were scheduled to be evacuated from Foua and Kfarya, but that evacuation was postponed indefinitely. The [Associated Press](#) tells us why there were so many dead children: "A wounded girl, who said she lost her four siblings in the blast, told Al-Manar TV from her hospital bed that children who had been deprived of food for years in the two villages were approached by a man in the car who told them to come and eat potato chips. She said once many had gathered, there was an explosion that tore some of the children to pieces." Also on 16 April the [SOHR](#) reported that the death toll in the bus bombing in Aleppo on 15 April had increased to at least 126 dead, including "68 children under the age of eighteen and 13 woman". The remaining 17 dead are presumedly insurgents who were guarding the pro-Assad civilians at Aleppo.

My comment is that the delay in implementing the Four Towns agreement of 29 March 2017 shows the kinds of problem that will occur *if* the negotiations in Geneva produce an agreement: local gangs of insurgents will refuse to honor the agreement, forcing a re-negotiations of the agreement. (Remember on 26 Jan 2014 when the negotiators in Geneva agreed to allow women and children to leave the city of Homs, but the actual departures began on 7 Feb 2014, because local insurgents demanded a re-negotiation of the agreement from Geneva.) Worse, the insurgents will continue to kill people after a ceasefire agreement, because — let's be honest — the insurgents *enjoy* killing people. The malicious killing of 68 children is the work of Evil.

On 17 April 2017, [Reuters](#) reports that evacuees are leaving their homes, without any compensation for their land, building(s), and personal property that they have abandoned. The advantage to the evacuees is that they escape a siege (i.e., starvation) and they escape from artillery shells and airstrikes. Because the final destination of each evacuee is *not* known in advance, they can not send boxes of personal property to their new address.

On 19 April 2017, [Reuters](#) reported that *all* of the insurgents in Zabadani (near Damascus) had been evacuated in a final convoy of 11 buses. Evacuations also resumed from villages of al-Foua and Kefraya near Idlib, where "about 45 buses carrying 3,000 people" departed for "government-controlled Aleppo".

On 21 April, [Reuters](#) reported: "The evacuation of Syrian civilians and fighters from four

besieged towns was completed on Friday [21 April] after a 48-hour halt.... A witness told Reuters that 100 prisoners released by the government as part of the swap had also arrived in the rebel-held territory outside Aleppo." The [Associated Press](#) clarifies that today was the end of the first phase of the evacuation. The Associated Press reported: "Under the deal, an estimated 30,000 people will be transferred from their hometowns over 60 days, most of them from the pro-government villages in northern Idlib."

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### **April 2017: Briefings on Humanitarian Aid**

There has been a tradition of weekly briefings by de Mistura and/or Egeland on each Thursday, after the weekly meeting of the Humanitarian Task Force in Geneva. However, the most recent briefings were on 19 Jan and 16 Feb 2017, at which a dismal and worsening situation for delivery of humanitarian aid was described. There were *no* briefing on humanitarian aid during March 2017. The failure of the United Nations to deliver humanitarian aid is *not* a good reason to cancel press conferences. In fact, press conferences that describe illegal conduct *might* embarrass the Syrian government or insurgents into obeying international law. I say *might* because the Syrian barbarians have shown contempt for international law.

On Thursday, 6 April, Egeland gave a press briefing on humanitarian aid:

I thought 2017, the seventh year of war in Syria would be better. It is not. What changed was that the battle moved from Aleppo city, from Homs city, to eastern Damascus to Idlib, to Hama, to Ar-Raqqa. What did not change is that the civilian population is in the middle of this battle, the civilian population is suffering more than anyone else in this war. So a war when more children and women die than grown armed men is a very dirty one. A war where children suffocate to death because of chemical and toxic chemicals is a very, very dirty war.

This was of course again the theme of the humanitarian task force of the International Syrian Support Group, where we as humanitarians appealed for a rebirth of effective humanitarian diplomacy in the absence of a cease-fire and cessation of hostilities that will last for this country.

We have in Syria an effective large humanitarian operation. It is probably the largest humanitarian operation in the world. It's also probably the best funded humanitarian operation in the world, with \$6 billion pledged yesterday in Brussels for this year alone. And still there are nearly 5 million people that are in so-called hard to reach and besieged areas which is actually a euphemism for civilians suffering alone. There are many millions we do reach but there are 4.7 million people that largely suffer alone, and in the besieged areas we're making very little progress. Only one area besieged by government forces has been reached, Khan al-Shieh in this last month. In addition, four areas besieged under the Four Towns agreement were reached.

In one week we were able to recently reach 250,000 people with cross-line convoys, which again is an example of this very large operation that can reach all of the 5 million in hard to reach and besieged areas if were given access. So this is not the

story of an operation that is not succeeding due to tsunamis or mudslides or natural disasters or lack of global generosity. Those are other places, this is the story of armed men supported by powerful men outside that sabotage, block, deny humanitarian access while the civilian population is attacked, gassed and bombed.

More than 300 medical facilities were attacked last year. I fear this year may be equally bad. The medical facilities are particularly protected under international humanitarian law because they are there for civilians and for the wounded, and therefore particularly protected. In Syria, it seems they are particularly targeted, so we asked today for a number of things from the members of the International Syria Support Group, including the Astana guarantors, Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the US, which is co-chair of the ISSG, but all of the other members as well, we asked for the following: number one, we need green light for the full April/May plan of the UN which aims to reach more than 1 million civilians in the hardest to reach and besieged areas of Syria. Only one third of these were approved in full by the government, when we got answer back a few days ago, some 40 percent were approved only conditionally, because they do not agree with our beneficiary figures. They disagree with how many civilians there are in an area. That is in violation of what the International Syria Support Group agreed on in the Vienna meeting. It is up to the UN humanitarians as neutral intermediary to decide who and how many are beneficiaries.

We need green light to go to all of the places from the government and from the armed opposition groups. Secondly, we need 72 hour ceasefire in the areas where the battle is now raging among the civilians and against the civilians. For eastern Ghouta, with 400,000 people within an hour drive from Damascus centre, these 400,000 people are now suffering alone in the sense that they have a shortage in medical supplies, their hospitals have been bombed, and they are running out of food and other supplies. We need a 72 hour pause for eastern Ghouta and we need it in the coming days. We need a special arrangement for hospitals, we cannot anymore have a situation where armed actors do not, cannot or will not guarantee that medical facilities will not be attacked. We will urge now again such notification system to be established and I have hope that this year it will for the first time be established and will work.

And finally, we are urging that the local agreements happening now in many places, ensure that evacuations are voluntary, safe, protected and to places of the choosing of the civilian population.

When we are not part of the agreement as we mostly are not, we cannot guarantee these things. We urge, I urged in the meeting today, the members of the task force, who are facilitators for agreements, to enable such agreements to be under humanitarian standards and according to international law. We hope that will change now because so far they have not.

....

.... We also need however all the other actors on the ground and there are many in the Task Force to also contribute. There are too many who are bringing fuel to this fire and too few who are pulling the parties to the negotiating table.

....

Well, what happens in each meeting is that members refer to violations or bad actions on the other side than the other one that they are supporting. However, I do take some comfort in us agreeing now to sit down with both co-chairs and with others to look specifically at the Eastern Ghouta situation. Everybody agrees, including the Russians, that the situation there is very dire and that a special arrangement, a special agreement is needed for Eastern Ghouta. Nobody wants another Eastern Aleppo to be happening on our watch. We should learn from the horrific inability to help civilians there and I am still hopeful yes that we will have arrangements for 400,000 people in the Eastern Ghouta besieged areas. So there are more people besieged in east of Damascus city than there were in the east Aleppo besieged enclave.

"Transcript of stakeout by Jan Egeland, UN Special Adviser to the Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N. Geneva](#), 6 April 2017.

I comment that Egeland is angry because Assad's government has violated the ISSG agreement in Vienna, but remember that *no* one from Assad's government was invited to that meeting in Vienna. The ISSG had *no* authority to limit Assad's actions. Furthermore, the last meeting of the ISSG was in September 2016 — 7 months ago — at which it accomplished nothing, not even issuing a communiqué. The ISSG died in 2016 and its agreements are now worthless pieces of paper.

There was *no* briefing on humanitarian aid 13 April.

On 20 April, Jan Egeland held another briefing on humanitarian aid.

We took stock at this Humanitarian Task Force (HTF) meeting. As you will see from this sheet of paper we will distribute, we have up until now (mid-April) reached 564,000 people across front lines to besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Comparing that with last year, we have reached even fewer people in the besieged areas this year compared to last year. Total of 160,000 people reached, but we have reached more people in the hard-to-reach areas, that are not necessarily fully militarily encircled for a long period of time and therefore not besieged. Of course in these areas situation is often as bad as it would be in many of the besieged areas, and we reached two of them the last week, al-Houla and Harbanifsa. Harbanifsa is in Hama, it has never before been reached by the United Nations, it was reached last week. Altogether, we reached nearly 90,000 people in need, in the two places.

So 30% less access to besieged areas, 35% more [access?] to hard-to-reach areas. I think it basically shows us the following, there are resources for relief in Syria, there are courageous humanitarian workers, there are trucks, we have warehouses, but the military logic is ruling on and for, and in and around the besieged areas these days. We are not able to go there, in too many of the areas.

Of course, this is part of the larger picture that 2017 is a year where the painful stalemate of the three previous years ended, the battle scene shifted, the frontlines changed, but the only thing that remained the same was a civilian suffering, in some areas it got worse. And imagine the families who came out of Fouaa and Kefraya after

years of suffocating besiegement only to see them being destroyed, children and mothers, by the terror bomb five days ago. The large humanitarian operation that came for the victims afterwards is also a sign that we have the resources, we have the will in Syria, we do not yet have the access.

Syrians on both sides often come together to help us, civilians come together to help us, civilians inside the besieged areas on opposing sides appeal for help to the other side, it's the men with guns and power who hold us back.

Now agreements also come more frequently, local and military agreements, come more frequently this year than the previous years. There is now agreement for the four towns; there is a tit-for-tat agreement as you all know for Fouaa and Kefraya, Madaya and Zabadani. UN was not part of those negotiations, I know of no humanitarian organisations that were part of those talks. They seem to follow a military logic, they do not seem to put the civilians at the heart of the agreement. Even though these civilians are affected because the civilians are the greatest number of people evacuated in the end. What should an agreement of that kind consist of, well always consultation with the civilians, voluntary evacuation and evacuation to places of their free choosing, then protection standards, safety standards. When we were not part of the agreement, we do not know whether these guarantees are there. We don't even know whether civilians were consulted and we do not know whether they are voluntary. So our appeal is to those countries who facilitate agreements, who host agreements, who spur agreements: Bring in experts on protection of civilians because they do not seem to be there now.

Besiegement should end by being lifted, not by places being emptied from people. Daraya was emptied last year, and went off our list, Zabadani seems now to be emptied for people, it's the twin place to Madaya, so of course it's not going to be besieged anymore because there is no people there, and its going off the list, in the end for the wrong reasons. Besiegements should be lifted[,] not places emptied from people.

Eastern Ghouta was again discussed in detail; it's the greatest concentration of the besieged people where we do not have access to.

I hope we have a breakthrough now, we have declarations from all sides that they want us to send convoys to Douma, and later to the other places in eastern Ghouta, and we will work to implement that. It is long overdue we haven't been to Douma since last autumn of last year, half a year ago, and then only with insignificant quantities.

The besiegement [in Ghouta?] has become much worse of late, the prices are going through the roof in these places, or we get report that there was no bread or wheat even on the market at all, so it's very very urgent that we get to eastern Ghouta.

QUESTION: Two days ago, we were told following the bombing, civilians, injured civilians had been missing, and taken allegedly to locations held by rebel groups. What kind of information do you have regarding these civilians, have you been able to locate them to know who is holding them and are there any kind of negotiations or



discussions or mediations ongoing to do something for them?

Egeland: The situation for those being evacuated on the 19th of April, which is yesterday, is still unclear. Many of them have not reached the places of destination yet, and again we are only observing this from a far. For the people in the big evacuation that was hit, partially hit by the terror bomb on the 15th of April, also there are question marks and I do not know that all people have been accounted for, but the vast majority have, and then been treated, attended, supported and helped by dozens of humanitarian organisations that rushed to the place. We were there in the first place, colleagues from SARC, risked their lives to help those who were victims of the attack. Some of the injured ended up in Turkey and many others in other places, hospitals in Idlib and elsewhere. I think that piecing this together now, but it would have been much better if this was an ordinary evacuation according to humanitarian law, where people had been consulted, helped, protected in an orderly and voluntary manner.

QUESTION: Why in the first place UN was out of this process, why you were not there, what is the reason?

Egeland: We were never invited by the parties to that agreement to be part of that agreement. The parties, to start with is Iran and Ahrar al-Sham and associated armed groups. There has been talks later on facilitate by member states and the UN was not invited to those talks we were not contributing to those talks. It is also controversial that this cannot be considered voluntary evacuations, these people evacuated after years of besiegement, so these are also controversial agreements. Would the UN have participated, yes I think we would have participated if it was to secure the situation for the civilians, but we were not.

QUESTION: Are these evacuations going to continue, do you know anything?

Egeland: The other evacuation yesterday, I think there will be more phases, yes, and there are elements regarding fighters and their families, general civilian population, wounded, detainees, it seems to be a complex agreement all together, and it's done mostly by military men on both sites. Similar evacuations have taken place from al-Waer, I know of five evacuations taking place, the last one was on the 18th, two days ago, and it is a similar kind of an evacuation spurred by military logic not by humanitarian principles.

QUESTION: Now with this four towns agreement didn't really work out so well and ended in such a tragedy, how do you think that will affect future evacuations, will they even dare to leave now seeing what happened, and you also seem to imply that people were actually forced to leave, it was not voluntary, do I interpret you right? And the last question I have on eastern Ghouta, how many people are there in Douma that have not been reached for, I think you said, half a year?

Egeland: Well in Douma, I believe there are about 70,000 people may be more. In eastern Ghouta, there are nearly 400,000 people that are now besieged. They are in crossfire and they are without supplies. They are in a desperate situation, the whole battle moved from Aleppo to Damascus really. It is a good question, what is a

voluntary evacuation, is it voluntary if people in the end have only one option, starve and be bombed or go on a bus to an uncertain future. I think that most people wanted to go on those buses, I think those families who left Fouaa and Kefraya wanted to leave Fouaa and Kefraya. They went into the buses and ended up being killed in the terror bomb, but of course it is the premise is that they were and suffocated by besiegement, and we do not know to which extent they were consulted at all. I would have wanted to be there and consult with them, that is the golden principal in humanitarian work, you consult with people and you ask what do you and how can we help you.

If they follow a military logic, I think they will continue, if they follow a humanitarian logic I think a breather could be wise to ensure that there are sufficient protection guarantees. I want to lift sieges tomorrow, they belong in the Middle Ages, they do not belong in 2017, they could be lifted, you can still choose to fight a war, but without suffocation of civilians.

QUESTION: What analysis and conclusions that the meeting here about who was responsible for 15th of April attack?

Egeland: No one could say who was responsible. We only know that they were terrorists. I think many are trying to find out, and many would like to see that these horrible murderers are brought to justice but I we don't know, I don't know who did it. What we know that they disguised as a charity, it couldn't have been worse.

Jan Egeland, "Note to Correspondents: Transcript of press encounter by Staffan de Mistura and Jan Egeland on Syria," [U.N.](#), 20 April 2017.

There was *no* briefing on 27 April 2017.

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## U.N. Reports

On 22 Feb 2014, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2139, which required parties in Syria to allow humanitarian aid and to stop targeting civilians. Although this Resolution was effective immediately, *all* of the parties in Syria ignored it. The U.N. Secretary General issued monthly Reports on the situation in Syria, beginning March 2014.

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

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## Prosecution for War Crimes ?

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

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

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).

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.

On 14 December 2016, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued his final monthly report on Syria before the end of his term as Secretary General. In S/2016/1057, he did *not* call for prosecution of war crimes and he did *not* mention referral to the International Criminal Court.

On 20 January 2017, the new U.N. Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, issued his first monthly report on Syria, S/2017/58. At paragraph 45, he said: "... I also reiterate the call that my predecessor made many times, namely, for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court."

On 16 February 2017, the U.N. Secretary General issued his monthly report for January, of which one paragraph says:

The Syrian conflict continues to feature attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure with seeming impunity. I strongly believe that the lack of respect for international human rights and humanitarian law must be brought to an end. I note, in this regard, the importance of the establishment, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/248, of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious

Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. I also reiterate my call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court. Efforts to ensure a proper framework for transitional justice and reconciliation are elements necessary for durable peace and for the Syrian Arab Republic to overcome the horrors of war.

Antonio Guterres, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016)," S/2017/144 at ¶50 (16 Feb 2017).

On 22 March 2017, the Secretary General issued another monthly report on Syria:

¶42 .... I am concerned, however, at ongoing and seemingly indiscriminate attacks that result in civilian deaths and injuries. All parties to the conflict must respect the multiple and clear obligations that they have to protect civilians. Month after month, my reports continue to highlight the attacks against and destruction of schools, hospitals and other parts of civilian infrastructure. Such attacks and wanton destruction not only cause suffering for civilians in the conflict today, but will also slow any future recovery and negatively impact the lives of Syrians for years to come. The deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure and the use of starvation as a weapon of war constitute war crimes. I firmly believe that there must be accountability for crimes committed in this long and terrible conflict. I reiterate my previous call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

¶43 Widespread destruction is particularly painful because it is unnecessary. It has been emphasized countless times that there will be no military solution. Yet military action continues nonetheless, resulting in meaningless death and destruction. The United Nations remains committed to seeking a lasting political solution to the Syrian conflict through an inclusive and Syrian-led political transition process based on the Geneva Communiqué and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2254 (2015). The recent round of talks in Geneva saw some initial progress on an agenda and methodology for substantive talks. I have asked my Special Envoy to continue to seek forward momentum towards a political agreement, and I call on the parties to engage fully in the process to work to end this war at long last.

Antonio Guterres, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016)," S/2017/244 (22 March 2017).

But in his 19 April 2017 monthly report, S/2017/339, the United Nations Secretary General did *not* mention referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court, and he did *not* mention any accountability for war crimes in Syria.

### **U.N. General Assembly Resolution 71/248**

On 21 December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 71/248 that directs the Secretary General to create a team to investigate war crimes in Syria. (See my essay for [December 2016](#).)

This important resolution was *not* publicly posted at the U.N. website until 20 Jan 2017, 30 days after it was passed.



Resolution 71/248 contains two deadlines.

1. §5 of 71/248 says: "Requests the Secretary-General, in this regard, to develop, within 20 working days of the adoption of the present resolution, the terms of reference of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and also requests that the Secretary-General undertake, without delay, the steps, measures and arrangements necessary for the speedy establishment and full functioning of the Mechanism, ...."
2. §8 of 71/248 says: "Requests the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the present resolution within 45 days of its adoption,...." (i.e., 4 Feb 2017)

On 26 January 2017, the U.N. Secretary General met both deadlines in Resolution 71/248. The Secretary General promised to appoint a head of the Mechanism by the end of February 2017. [U.N.](#) Not only did Guterres fail to meet his end of February deadline, but also there was *no* head appointed by the end of April 2017.

I suggest — instead of creating a new Mechanism according to Resolution 71/248 — increased funding and a broader mandate be given to the existing "Commission of Inquiry" under the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Notice that there is still *no* forum in which to try suspected war criminals.

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## Debacle in Iraq

### Death Toll in Iraq

I posted an HTML webpage that contains a [table](#) of monthly death tolls announced by United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) during 2013-2015.

I am no longer listing the Iraqi death toll on my HTML webpage, because the statistics from the Iraqi government are seriously incomplete and *not* credible. But, for what it is worth, the United Nations reported 317 Iraqi civilians killed in "terrorism, violence, and armed conflict" during April 2017. [UNAMI](#).

On 3 December 2016, UNAMI announced it would stop reporting casualty numbers for the Iraqi army, because the Iraqi army wanted to keep those numbers secret to prevent loss of morale. [UNAMI](#); [Associated Press](#). That change in reporting means that future UNAMI casualty numbers will be smaller than past numbers, making it difficult to compare monthly numbers before and after the month of November 2016.

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## Atrocities in Iraq

### Introduction

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

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

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### April 2017: Islamic Terrorism in Iraq

On the morning of 5 April 2017, ten ISIL terrorists attacked in Tikrit, killing at least 31 people. Tikrit was "liberated" from ISIL in April 2015, but ISIL continues terror attacks in and near Tikrit. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Back on 16 December 2015 — 16 months ago — Shiite groups kidnapped more than two dozen Qatari hunters. On 21 April 2017 the hunters were released after long negotiations and payment of ransom to the Shiites in Iraq. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 28 April 2017, an ISIL suicide car bomb killed four policemen in Baghdad. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

During April 2017, most of the civilian casualties were in or near Mosul, *not* Baghdad. There were only 55 killed in Baghdad during April. [UNAMI](#).

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### Conclusion to Atrocities in Iraq

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

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## Iraq is a Failed Nation

### Introduction

During an existential crisis — the invasion of Iraq by ISIL — the Iraqi parliament held infrequent meetings, had small attendance when they met, and made glacially slow progress on solving Iraq's problems. This abysmal performance of parliament was chronicled in my essays for [July 2014](#) through [February 2015](#). The data for July through October 2014 are summarized in my [table](#).

My essay for [June 2015](#) mentions corruption in Iraq, and criticism of the Iraqi government by journalists. The Iraqi parliament — which has failed to end corruption in the Iraqi army, and failed to create a nonsectarian National Guard that integrates Sunni tribesmen and Shiite militias under the firm control of the federal government in Baghdad — was on vacation beginning 31 May until 1 July 2015. My essay for [July 2015](#) mentions that the Iraqi parliament was on vacation again from 6 July to 25 July 2015.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My essay for [September 2016](#) mentioned that the Iraqi parliament sacked the Finance Minister. That essay also contained my final text on the absence of criminal prosecution for corrupt Iraqi army officers who hired "ghost soldiers", as well as the lack of criminal

prosecution of Iraqi army officers who gave orders to flee from Mosul in 2014 and from Ramadi in 2015. Although criminal prosecution had been promised by Prime Minister Abadi, the prosecution never occurred.

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.

My essay for [February 2017](#) mentions that corruption in the Iraqi government is allowing ISIL to return to Ramadi and other liberated places.

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## U.S. combat troops in Iraq

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On 29 April 2017, U.S. Army 1st Lieutenant Weston C. Lee, an infantry platoon leader, was killed by an ISIL "explosive device" near Mosul. He was the fifth U.S. military person to be killed in combat in Iraq. [CENTCOM](#); [Reuters](#)(29Apr); [Associated Press](#)(29Apr); [WRAL](#)(30Apr); [Pentagon](#)(1May); [Associated Press](#)(1May).

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## Future liberation of Mosul

### More Empty Promises

My previous essays — see my monthly essays for [December 2015](#) to [March 2016](#) — list a series of *10 promises* by Iraqi politicians or senior army officers from 25 May 2015 to 8 December 2015 that Ramadi would be liberated within the next few days. All of those promises were exposed as false. And those false promises have led to greatly diminished confidence in the Iraqi army and Shiite militias. That adds to what U.S. Defense Secretary Carter said on 24 May 2015: the Iraqi army "showed no will to fight."

A similar series of false promises appeared 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.

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.

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 27 December 2016, Abadi said: "the data indicate that eradicating ISIS is possible in a mere three months' period". Note that it took more than two months for Iraq to capture approximately 1/4 of Mosul. [Al-Arabiya](#); [Reuters](#).
11. On 11 January 2017, the top Iraqi commander in Mosul said "the operation to retake the city of Mosul from the Islamic State group could be complete in three months or less." [Associated Press](#). That would mean complete liberation of the entire city before 15 April 2017.
12. On 30 April 2017, the Iraqi army's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Othman al-Ghanmi, was quoted by [Reuters](#) as saying the battle to liberate Mosul should be completed "in a maximum of three weeks" (i.e., no later than 21 May).

*All* of the first eleven promises quoted above were unfulfilled by the Iraqi army.

### **April 2017: Mosul**

My previous monthly essays have the history of the liberation of Mosul, which began in October 2016. 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. Journalists gave much more attention to the 4 April use of Sarin gas in Syria and the subsequent U.S. airstrike in Syria, than to the routine slog in the liberation of Mosul.

On 12 April 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported: "Two houses are all that remain standing on the street with no name in western Mosul, just blocks from the front lines of the battle to retake Iraq's second-largest city from the Islamic State group. The once-bustling neighborhood has been reduced to rubble, its sidewalks piled high with a jumble of concrete, bricks and metal."

On 17 April 2017, [Reuters](#) reported on continued "door-to-door fighting in the Old City of Mosul". Today is the beginning of the seventh month of fighting in Mosul, which began on 17 Oct 2016.

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## **Islamic Public Relations Problem**

### **Introduction**

Beginning in August 2014, I have included this section in my essays. In the USA and Western Europe, many Christians do *not* personally know any Muslim person, so the only



time these Christians encounter Muslims is in reading about atrocities of Islamic terrorists. That is a public relations problem for mainstream Muslims, as the reputation of the Islamic religion is besmirched by Islamic terrorists, who act in the name of their interpretation of Islamic theology.

Then some military leaders and politicians developed the notion that Muslim clerics needed to explain *why* so-called "Islamic terrorism" was unIslamic, to stop the flow of foreigners into Syria to fight for ISIL and Nusra Front, and to stop the financial support of terrorists. This exposure of the erroneous ideology of Islamic terrorism is a different kind of public relations problem from defending mainstream Islam.

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

Back in August 2014 there was a burst of condemnation of terrorism by Islamic clerics. (See my [tenth essay](#) on Syria.) But beginning in September 2014, Muslim clerics stopped publicly denouncing terrorism. There needs to be a consistent and continuing condemnation of terrorism by Muslim clerics, in part to discourage young Muslims from joining Al-Qaeda and ISIL.

This continuing condemnation by Muslim clerics is *not* something that is nice to have. It is an essential element in fighting against Islamic terrorism. On 3 Dec 2014, sixty nations agreed that "ideological delegitimization" was one of five "lines of effort" that would be used to defeat ISIL, see my essay for [Dec 2014](#). However, this program was quickly ignored by nearly everyone.

In the context of the Islamic terrorist attack in Paris on 7-9 Jan 2015, my [essay](#) explains two different reactions by Christian politicians to Islamic terrorism:

1. Some Christian politicians have condemned Islamic terrorism as unIslamic, but I think it is inappropriate — and *not* credible — for Christians to say what is, or is not, proper Islam. Instead, such distinctions should come from Islamic clerics.
2. Other Christian politicians carefully refuse to make a connection between Islam and terrorism. This may be "politically correct", but it is factually wrong. The facts are obvious, but I will tersely review them anyway. Leaders of Al-Qaeda and ISIL clearly and repeatedly invoke their concept of Islam in justifying or explaining their actions. Individual Islamic terrorists shout Islamic slogans as they commit their terrorist acts, and the individual terrorists are endorsed by Islamic terrorist organizations. Further, Al-Qaeda and other jihadists seek to establish Sharia law in Syria and/or Iraq — instead of a secular government. ISIL is even more extreme with its caliphate. These Islamic governments are part of the attraction of young Muslims to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and jihadist groups.

It is essential that mainstream Muslim clerics — and Islamic opinion leaders — consistently and continually publicly condemn the use of terrorism to impose any Islamic government.

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## My Proposal

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

- invade nations in an attempt to spread an interpretation of Islam on other Muslims
- invade nations in an attempt to spread Islam on non-Muslims
- kill civilians (i.e., noncombatants)
- kill unarmed military prisoners
- deny water, food, and/or medical supplies to besieged cities
- impose a tax (i.e., Jizya) on non-Muslims
- sell captured women as sex slaves

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

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

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

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

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

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

A manager would also recognize cost savings by purchasing equipment and Internet access in large quantities in *one* central office, to provide *all* of the small companies. Whoa! I want managers in each small company to be able to use a credit card to *quickly* purchase whatever they need, without going through a central bureaucracy. There are security advantages when

different companies use different computer operating systems, different webbrowsers, different antivirus and firewall software, and different Internet service providers. That way one computer virus, or one denial of service attack, will not affect all of the different companies.

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

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

1. **Collect and display truth about Islamic terrorism:**  
Create and operate websites that
  - A. explain why ISIL and Al-Qaeda are violating teachings of Islam,
  - B. collect and display Fatwas against ISIL and Al-Qaeda,
  - C. list atrocities committed by ISIL and Al-Qaeda,
  - D. hire Muslim clerics to write blogs or essays about how terrorism is evil.Each website to have versions for Arabic, French, and English languages.
2. **Social media:** Monitor social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) and refute propaganda. Cite URLs of websites that display truth about Islamic terrorism.
3. Produce press releases that can be published by newspapers or reported by radio/television stations.
4. Use ridicule and parody to humiliate ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

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

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

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

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## Need to Kill *Ideology* of Islamic Terrorism

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

- In June 2006, a U.S. airstrike killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (the predecessor of ISIL).
- In May 2011, the U.S. Military killed Osama bin Laden.
- In September 2011, a U.S. drone strike killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an Islamic cleric and Al-Qaeda terrorist in Yemen.
- On 9 June 2015, a U.S. drone strike killed Nasir al-Wuhayshi (aka al-Wahishi), head of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen). He was also the apparent successor to current Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.
- On 13 June 2015, U.S. fighter jets may have killed Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Libya. He is/was a leader in Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.
- On 16 June 2015, an airstrike in Syria smote "a senior ISIL leader", Tariq bin Tahar al-'Awni al-Harzi. [Reuters](#); [AP](#).
- On 11 July 2015, Abu Khalil al-Sudani, an Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan, was killed by a U.S. airstrike. The [Pentagon](#) boasted of the accomplishment. See also, [NY Times](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 18 August 2015, a U.S. drone strike near Mosul killed the Nr. 2 leader of ISIL, Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali, also known as "Hajji Mutazz", "Abu Muslim al-Turkmani", or "Abu Mutaz Qurashi". [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#). On 13 October, [Reuters](#) reports ISIL has confirmed his death.
- On 15 October 2015, a U.S. Coalition airstrike in Syria killed Abdul Mohsen Adballah Ibrahim al Charekh — also known as Sanafi al-Nasr — who was the leader of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Khorasan Group. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 12 November 2015, a U.S. drone airstrike in Syria apparently killed Mohamed Emwazi — a U.K. citizen also known as "Jihadi John" — who had executed at least 6 hostages (e.g., Steven Sotloff, James Foley, Abdul-Rahman Kassig, David Haines, Alan Henning, Kenji Goto) beginning in August 2014. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 13 November and 2 December 2015, U.S. airstrikes killed al-Qaida leaders in Libya and Somalia. [Pentagon](#).
- In "late November" 2015, a U.S. airstrike in Iraq killed Abu Salah, the financial minister of ISIL. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).

On 29 December 2015, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S.-led Coalition airstrikes had killed 10 senior ISIL leaders during 7-27 December. Some of the dead leaders were involved in the terrorist attack in Paris on 13 Nov. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 29 Dec; [Reuters](#) on 30 Dec.

- On 25 March 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S. Military had killed Haji Imam, "who was an ISIL senior leader, serving as a finance minister and who is also responsible for some external affairs and plots." Imam is also known as Abdul-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) spells the dead man's name as "Haji Iman — an alias for Abd ar-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli".
- On 4 May 2016, Australia announced that a Cambodian immigrant who had joined ISIL had been killed by a U.S. airstrike in Mosul on 29 April. His name was Neil Prakash, also known as Abu Khaled al-Cambodi. Neil had been featured in ISIL recruiting videos. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [ABC](#); [Sydney Morning Herald](#).
- On 9 May 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that an airstrike on 6 May had killed "Abu Wahib, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's military emir for Iraq's Anbar province". [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 21 May 2016, the leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, was killed by an airstrike from a U.S. drone in Pakistan. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#). [Reuters](#) reported: "The death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour ... could further fracture the Taliban — an outcome that experts cautioned might make the insurgents even less likely to participate in long-stalled peace efforts." And [Reuters](#) reported the Pakistani government is wailing about the U.S. violation of Pakistani sovereignty. [Obama](#) was pleased that Mansour — also spelled Mansur — was killed by the U.S. military. Four days after Mansour was killed, the Taliban elected a new leader. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
- On 4 August 2016, an Egyptian military airstrike killed the leader of ISIL in Egypt, Abu Doaa al-Ansari. [Ahram](#); [Associated Press](#); [Ahram](#)(18 Aug confirmation); [Al-Arabiya](#)(19 Aug).
- On 30 August 2016, a U.S. airstrike near Al Bab, Syria, splatted Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani. He is said to be the head of external operations of ISIL (i.e., in charge of attacks in Europe, etc.), a tactician, and their chief spokesman. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#)(31Aug); [Associated Press](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Pentagon](#)(12Sep).
- On 8 September 2016, Abu Hajer al Homs, 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](#).
- On 26 November 2016, a U.S. drone airstrike in Raqqa killed Boubaker el Hakim, an ISIL member who allegedly was involved in planning the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* newspaper offices in Paris on 7 Jan 2015. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
- On 4 December 2016, a U.S. drone splatted three ISIL members in Raqqa. The three were allegedly plotting attacks in foreign nations, and two of them had allegedly been involved in the Islamic attacks in Paris on 13 Nov 2015. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Aarabiya](#)(AFP).
- On 26 December 2016, a U.S. airstrike splatted "Abu Jandal al-Kuwaiti, an ISIL gang leader in Raqqah ... near Tabqa Dam, Syria. .... .. his death will degrade ISIL's ability to defend Raqqah and launch external operations against the West." [CENTCOM](#).
- On 12 January 2017, a U.S. airstrike splatted Abd al-Jalil al-Muslimi, a Tunisian citizen who was a member of Al-Qaeda in Syria. [Pentagon](#).
- On 17 January 2017, a U.S. airstrike splatted Mohammad Habib Boussadoun al-Tunisi, a Tunisian citizen who was a member of Al-Qaeda in Syria. [Pentagon](#).
- On 26 February 2017, something really important happened when a CIA drone launched a Hellfire missile that hit an automobile carrying the Nr. 2 international leader of Al-Qaeda. Abu al-Khayr al-Masri was blown to bits near the city of Idlib in Syria. *The New York Times* says "his real name was Abdullah Muhammad Rajab Abd al-Rahman" and "Since [March 2015], Mr. Masri had operated in Syria as Al Qaeda's deputy leader, providing orders and advice to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the Qaeda affiliate in Syria formerly known as the Nusra Front,...." [Associated Press](#)(27 Feb); [NY Times](#)(1 Mar); [Reuters](#)(2 Mar); [Associated Press](#)(2 Mar).

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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.

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](#).)

## Recent Events

On 31 January 2017, the [Associated Press](#) exposed flaws in a U.S. Central Command program on the Internet to counter recruiting by Islamic terrorist organizations. An early version of the Associated Press article said the military program was "botched" because the operatives "have little experience in counter-propaganda, cannot speak Arabic fluently and have so little understanding of Islam they are no match for the Islamic State online recruiters." Moreover, the management is "beset with incompetence, cronyism and flawed data". My comment is that the CENTCOM program of hiring immigrants from Morocco is not as good as my 2015 proposal above to use refugees from Syria and Iraq who remain in the Middle East (e.g., Jordan, Saudi Arabia, etc.).

On 9 March 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported that the Oversight and Government Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives is investigating CENTCOM's failed counter-propaganda operations.

On 22 March 2016, the Australian Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, spoke at the Global Coalition Summit and said: "We are not doing enough to counter the perverse ideas and narrative of ISIS. Our challenge is to ensure these ideas are pushed to the fringes of our societies. There must be more Muslim moderate voices drowning out the extremists." [Australian ForMin](#). See also [The Australian](#).

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## ISIL is *not* defeated

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

1. On 10 June 2014, ISIL captured Mosul (the second largest city in Iraq), but, as of April 2017, the Iraqis have been unable to liberate Mosul.

2. My essay for [Jan 2015](#) chronicled the spread of ISIL to Egypt, Libya, and Afghanistan.
3. On 23-24 Feb 2015, ISIL abducted more than 220 Assyrian Christians in Syria. As of 30 Aug 2015, only approximately 46 have been released by ISIL.
4. On 17 May 2015, ISIL captured Ramadi in Iraq. After seven months of procrastination and delay, on 27-28 Dec 2015, the Iraqi army captured the government center in downtown Ramadi, as explained in detail in my essays.
5. On 20 May 2015, ISIL captured Palmyra in Syria. [Reuters](#); [BBC](#).
6. On 22 May 2015, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in a Shiite mosque in Saudi Arabia, killing 21 people. [Washington Post](#); [Arab News](#)(AFP).
7. My essay for [June 2015](#) cited that an ISIL suicide bomber killed 27 people at a Shiite mosque in Kuwait on 26 June.
8. On 26 June 2015, an ISIL terrorist killed 38 people on a beach in Tunisia. [Associated Press](#).
9. On 1 July 2015, ISIL attacked Egyptian army posts in the Sinai, killing at least 64 Egyptian soldiers. [Associated Press](#).
10. On 11 July 2015, an ISIL car bomb damaged the Italian consulate in Cairo, killing 1 pedestrian. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Casualties were few because the bomb exploded at 06:30 local time, when few people were on the street. The attack shows that ISIL can strike anywhere.
11. On 16 July 2015, ISIL in the Sinai Province of Egypt launched a missile that caused a fire on an Egyptian Navy ship. [Ahram](#) in Egypt; [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
12. On 17 July 2015, the last day of the Ramadan month, an ISIL suicide truck bomb at a market in the Diyala province of Iraq killed at least 115 people.
13. On 6 August 2015, ISIL captured the town of Qaryatain in Syria. [Associated Press](#); [SOHR](#). Also on 6 August, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated at a mosque used by Saudi Arabian police, killing at least 15 people. [Associated Press](#); [Arab News](#).
14. On 12 August 2015, ISIL in Egypt beheaded a hostage from Croatia, who was an oil and gas surveyor and who was kidnapped by ISIL on 22 July. It was the first time ISIL in Egypt had killed a foreigner. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
15. On 7 September 2015, ISIL captured the final Syrian oilfield. ISIL now controls *all* of the oilfields in Syria. [SOHR](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).
16. On 22 October 2015, IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center reported that the number of terrorist attacks by ISIL in the Middle East and Africa increased by 42%

from the second quarter of 2015 to the third quarter of 2015. [Associated Press](#); [Voice of America](#).

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

27. At night on 28 June 2016, three ISIL suicide bombers attacked an airport in Istanbul, Turkey. At least 42 people were killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
28. At 20:45 on 1 July 2016, seven ISIL terrorists attacked a bakery/restaurant in Dhaka, Bangladesh, taking hostages. The terrorists killed 20 hostages and 2 policemen. The terrorists had the hostages recite verses from the Koran, to identify who was a Muslim. The non-Muslim hostages were tortured and killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). While the Bangladeshi government attempted to deny that the terrorists were affiliated with ISIL, the terrorists belonged to a gang that had pledged allegiance to ISIL. [NY Times](#) ("... a local extremist group that has pledged loyalty to the Islamic State butchered diners in a restaurant."); [Reuters](#) ("... Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen claims it represents Islamic State."). Further, ISIL claimed credit for the attack in Dhaka. [The Telegraph](#); [Reuters](#). Moreover, the attackers uploaded photographs of their attack to the ISIL headquarters in Syria. The children of upper-class parents had joined the terrorist gang, which the [NY Times](#) says is evidence of the radicalization of the population. More about the elite attackers is at [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#).
29. On 3 July 2016, an ISIL truck bomb detonated at a shopping center in Baghdad, killing at least 292 people. See my essay for [July 2016](#).
30. On 4 July 2016, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in the parking lot outside the mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia, where the prophet Mohammed is buried. The blast killed four Saudi Arabian soldiers who were guarding the mosque. This attack is important because it occurred at one of the holiest sites of the Islamic religion. [Al-Arabiya](#); [Saudi Press Agency](#); [The Guardian](#).
31. On 14 July 2016, an ISIL terrorist drove a truck through a crowd of people in Nice, France, killing 85 people. See my essay for [July 2016](#).
32. On 18, 24, and 26 July 2016, there were ISIL terrorist attacks in Würzburg in Germany, Ansbach in Germany, and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray in France. See my essay for [July 2016](#).
33. On 2 August 2016, [NBC News](#) published an exclusive report of a classified National Counterterrorism Center briefing to the White House, that showed a "fully operational" ISIL had spread to 18 nations during Obama's presidency. ISIL is "aspiring" in six additional nations.
34. On 6 August 2016, an Islamic terrorist — and illegal immigrant from Algeria — used a machete to slash the faces of two policewomen in Charleroi, Belgium. See my essay for [August 2016](#).
35. On 20 August 2016, 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. On 10 December 2016, ISIL recaptured Palmyra, Syria. Assad's army had liberated

Palmyra from ISIL in March 2016.

37. On 11 December 2016, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated inside St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Cairo, the seat of the Egyptian Orthodox Church, killing at least 25 people. [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#).
38. On 1 January 2017 at 01:15, a man dressed as Santa Claus walked into a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey carrying a rifle. He shot 108 people, of whom 39 died. He shouted "Allahu Akbar" as he shot unarmed civilians. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters\(1Jan\)](#); [Anadolu Agency](#); [Reuters\(2Jan\)](#). ISIL claimed responsibility. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#). On 16 January 2017, police in Turkey arrested the gunman, who was a citizen of Uzbekistan who had trained in Afghanistan. [Anadolu](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
39. On 7 Feb 2017, an ISIL bomb at the Supreme Court building in Kabul, Afghanistan killed 22 people. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
40. On 8 March 2017, a group of four ISIL terrorists dressed as medical personnel and attacked a military hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan — killing more than 30 people. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
41. On Palm Sunday, 9 April 2017, ISIL terrorists attacked Coptic Christian churches in Tanta and Alexandria, Egypt, killing at least 45 people. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
- 42.
- 43.

This long list of continuing terrorist attacks by ISIL shows that ISIL is *not* defeated. ISIL — and Islamic terrorists inspired by ISIL — continue a global campaign of terrorism.

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 April 2017, the Pentagon reported the cost of the U.S. war against ISIL:

As of February 28, 2017, the total cost of operations related to ISIL since kinetic operations started on August 8, 2014, is \$11.9 billion and the average daily cost is \$12.8 million for 936 days of operations. A further breakdown of cost associated with the operations is [here](#).

"Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 25 April 2017.

Note that the Pentagon's accounting is two months old. Publicly available estimates are it will cost about \$90 million to replace the 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles used in the 7 April airstrike on Assad's airfield.

Note that the numbers in the Pentagon's 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).

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## Terrorism & Migration in Europe

### Islamic Terrorism in Europe

History in my previous essays:

- My [first essay](#) tersely — and incompletely — recounts a history of Islamic terrorism from 1972 to 2013.
- My essay for [June 2014](#) mentions the Islamic terrorist attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 May 2014, and an attack in France on March 2012.

- My essay for [Jan 2015](#) describes the Islamic terrorist attacks in France on 7-9 January.
- My essay for [Feb 2015](#) describes the Islamic terror attack in Copenhagen on 14 Feb.
- My essay for [September 2015](#) mentions a 15 y old girl in Denmark who stabbed her mother to death after repeatedly watching on the Internet (YouTube) videos of ISIL executions with her 29 y old boyfriend who was a so-called "refugee" from Iraq. That essay also mentions an Iraqi terrorist in Berlin who was killed by police in an attack on 17 Sep 2015.
- My essay for [November 2015](#) describes the Islamic terror attack in Paris that killed 130 people on 13 Nov 2015.
- My essay for [December 2015](#) describes an Islamic terror attack in San Bernardino, California on 2 Dec 2015.
- My essay for [January 2016](#) describes Muslim immigrants running amok in Cologne, Hamburg, and at least five other European cities on the night of 31 Dec 2015.
- My essay for [March 2016](#) describes ISIL terror attacks on the airport and subway in Brussels that killed 32 people on 22 March 2016.
- My essay for [June 2016](#) describes an Islamic terrorist who perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, by killing 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida.
- My essay for [July 2016](#) describes four ISIL attacks in Europe: 84 dead in Nice, France on 14 July; immigrant from Afghanistan or Pakistan uses axe in Würzburg, Germany on 18 July; refugee from Syria detonates bomb in Ansbach, Germany on 24 July; two ISIL attackers murder Catholic priest in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, France on 26 July.
- My essay for [August 2016](#) describes an ISIL attack on two policewomen in Charleroi, Belgium and how Canadian police prevented one ISIL bombing in London, Ontario.
- My essay for [September 2016](#) describes how (1) French police arrested a group of women before they could detonate a bomb, (2) series of bombings in New Jersey and New York City, and (3) an attack in St. Cloud, Minnesota.
- 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.
- My essay for [November 2016](#) describes an Islamic immigrant from Somalia who wounded 11 people at Ohio State University, before a policeman killed the immigrant.
- My essay for [December 2016](#) describes an Islamic terrorist who used a large truck to attack a Christmas market in Berlin on 19 December, killing 12 people. On 23 December, police in Melbourne, Australia arrested a group of Islamic terrorists who were planning attacks.



- My essay for [February 2016](#) describes an Islamic terrorist who brought two machetes and cans of aerosol spray paint to the Louvre art gallery in Paris.
- My essay for [March 2017](#) described an Islamic terrorist who died at the Orly airport in Paris, and another Islamic terrorist who killed five people at and near Parliament in London, England.

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

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## **Islamic Migration into Europe numbers**

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

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

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

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

On 9 August 2016, the [Associated Press](#) reported that approximately 263,600 immigrants arrived in Europe between 1 January and 7 August 2016.

## **disenchantment & failure of assimilation**

This increase in Muslim population in Europe will likely lead to an increase in Islamic terrorism in Europe for two reasons:

1. Muslim migrants do *not* speak the local language of their host nation, and the migrants have different religious values from the prevailing local Christian majority values, so the migrants will feel out of place in European society. (What Tej Parikh called a "failure in assimilation", [Reuters](#), 27 Nov 2015.) The migrants will become disenchanting with their new home, and some will become radicalized. The radicalization will most likely occur via the Internet, but could also occur from personal contact with Islamic radicals in Europe.

2. It is possible that some Islamic terrorists will enter Europe along with migrants. These could be terrorists sent to recruit more fighters for ISIL or Al-Qaeda. Or they could be Europeans returning from battle in Syria, but using a new name to avoid criminal prosecution for fighting in Syria.

This is a subject that humanitarians avoid considering, as the humanitarians welcome migrants to Europe.

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

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

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

On 13 September 2016, [Reuters](#) reported that only 63 refugees have been employed by the top 30 companies in Germany, because of refugees' weak knowledge of the German-language and because of refugees' lack of job skills.

### **some immigrants are criminals**

On 27 Sep 2015, there was a riot by Albanians and Pakistanis in a migrant camp in Calden, Germany. On 30 Sep 2015 there was a brawl between Syrian and Afghans in a migrant camp in Hamburg, Germany.

See:

- "German president warns of limits to number of refugees," [Reuters](#), 28 Sep 2015.
- "Germany quells migrant mass brawl at camp in Calden," [BBC](#), 28 Sep 2015.
- "A refugee riot puts a German town on edge," [Washington Post](#), 1 Oct 2015.

- "Syrians, Afghans clash in German refugee center riot," [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP), 1 Oct 2015.
- "Clash breaks out among refugees in Hamburg," [Deutsche Welle](#), 1 Oct 2015.

If these riots continue, I would expect many Germans to regret allowing these barbarians to enter Germany, because of strong law-and-order values amongst Germans.

On the nights of 8-9-10 November 2015, there were riots in a migrant camp in Calais, France in which more than two dozen policemen were injured. [France24](#); [Globe&Mail](#)(AP). There are approximately 6000 migrants waiting in Calais to illegally enter the United Kingdom via the tunnel under the English Channel.

On New Year's Eve, 31 Dec 2015, Muslim immigrants sexually assaulted more than 100 women in Cologne, Germany. At least six other cities in Europe experienced similar attacks, and journalists spoke of a "rape culture" amongst Islamic men.

On 15 January 2016, after multiple complaints of sexual harassment of women, the town of Bornheim, Germany banned adult Muslim men from the town swimming pool. [Reuters](#); [The Guardian](#).

On 20 January 2016, [Israel National News](#) reported that the German government had been concealing crimes committed by Muslim immigrants since June 2014.

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

On 7 June 2016, Muslims set fire to housing for refugees in Düsseldorf because the staff failed to awaken the refugees before sunrise for breakfast on the first morning of Ramadan. The building was home for 280 refugees, but now is totally destroyed. [Daily Mail](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

On 24 October 2016, the French government began demolishing the shanty-town migrant camp in Calais. The approximately 6500 immigrants will be moved to other locations in France. Reuters reported that some immigrants threw rocks at police. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). On 26 October, the last of the immigrants were bussed out of Calais. Some of the immigrants set fire to part of the shanty town. The Associated Press reports that four immigrants from Afghanistan were arrested for arson. [Reuters](#)(fire); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

### **fraudulent passports**

As an example of criminal fraud committed by some of the migrants, on 6 September 2015 the [Associated Press](#) reported that non-Syrian migrants were discarding in Serbia their identity cards, passports, drivers's licenses, and other documents, so they could fraudulently

claim to be refugees from Syria. On 23 September, *The Washington Post* has a similar report about fraud by migrants, and also tersely mentions "Islamic State sympathizers" are included in the migrants. On 25 September, the German interior ministry estimated that 30% of migrants in Germany are falsely claiming to be from Syria. [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#). Given that 527,000 migrants arrived in Germany during 2015 (as of 25 Sep), fraud by 30% of the migrants is a *huge* problem.

It is *not* possible to reliably vet the so-called refugees who enter Europe:

1. Some of these migrants have no passport and no identity documents, so their name and past history can *not* be verified, except laboriously through fingerprints.
2. After the attacks in Paris on 13 Nov 2015, it took European police three days to trace *one* Syrian passport issued to Ahmad al-Mohammad and determine that the passport was fraudulent. When there are thousands of migrants each day demanding entry, border guards can not spend three days checking each passport. Moreover, a second fraudulent Syrian passport with the same name was discovered in Serbia, which hints at widespread fraud. [The Guardian](#).
3. It is unlikely that Assad's government will cooperate with European requests for criminal background checks on emigrants from Syria, because European leaders have repeatedly called for the ouster of Assad.
4. Governments in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc. have primitive criminal databases and can *not* do complete criminal background checks on tens of thousands of migrants. Moreover, police in those nations arrest only a few of the terrorists, so most terrorists may be unknown to police.

Additionally, on 18 November 2015, five Syrians were arrested in Honduras for using stolen Greek passports. The five Syrians intended to travel to the USA. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). This incident shows that some so-called refugees from Syrian engage in fraudulent use of passports, and they successfully passed through several borders with the fraudulent passports.

On 10-11 December 2015, [ABC News](#); [CNN](#); and [Reuters](#) reported that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement had determined that ISIL was now able to issue fake Syrian passports, using genuine blank passports and genuine passport printing machines. This means that *all* Syrian passports are now worthless, because border guards can not distinguish a real Syrian passport from a fake Syrian passport. See [Reuters](#) for 20 December.

After politicians assured the public that there were *no* terrorists in the refugees entering Europe, the attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 showed that at least two Islamic terrorists entered Europe with refugees. Then on 26 November, the Associated Press reported:

The Austria Press Agency cited German federal police chief Hans-Georg Maasen as saying that some who blend in with the migrants fought with IS and are planning a "combat mission" once they arrive in Europe. He said Thursday [26 Nov] that his office knows of 7,900 Islamic radicals in Germany who advocate violence to advance their goals, with some trying to win migrants to their cause.

He said German authorities receive one or two "fairly concrete tips" a week of planned terrorist activity. And he described IS extremists as "combat-hardened professionals" more dangerous than those from al-Qaida.

"The Latest: German official says some migrants IS radicals," [Associated Press](#), 15:21 GMT, 26 Nov 2015.

On 22 December 2015, the *Bild* newspaper in Germany reported anonymous German government officials said approximately 12 people entered Germany with fake Syrian passports and then they disappeared in Germany. The presumed terrorists entered sometime before 13 Nov, when the terror attacks in Paris occurred. Two of the attackers in Paris had similar fake Syrian passports. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).

### politics

At the middle of the immigration debacle in 2015, the German Chancellor, Dr. Angela Merkel, famously said that "asylum laws have no upper limit". [Associated Press](#) (5 Sep); [Politico](#) (1 Oct); [Deutsche Welle](#) (21 Nov); Commentators suggested that Dr. Merkel's absolute, "no limits" compassion for refugees had its origins in her moral upbringing as the daughter of a Lutheran pastor. My comment is that the asylum law has *no* limit because legislators forgot to put a limit in the law.

By 6 January 2016, Merkel was willing to reduce the flow of migrants to Europe. The Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) has demanded a limit of 200,000 migrants/year to Germany, which would mean that 80% of the migrants who entered Germany in 2015 would need to be expelled. [Reuters](#).

On 29 November 2015, the European Union and Turkey reached an agreement in which Turkey promised to reduce the number of migrants to Europe and Europe agreed to pay Turkey US\$ 3.2 billion. On 7 January 2016, [Reuters](#) reports that the European Union says it is "a long way from being satisfied" with Turkey's efforts to limit migrants.

The wave of hundreds of sexual assaults and robberies by Islamic immigrants in Cologne, Hamburg, and at least 5 other cities on the night of 31 Dec 2015 was the critical turning point in which many Germans went from welcoming refugees to wanting to expel immigrants. This incident showed that some immigrants were *not* going to conform to German concepts of law-and-order. Furthermore, the police waited 5 days to mention that Islamic immigrants were suspected of the assaults and robberies, a delay that does *not* inspire confidence in the German police.

Three German states (Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt) held elections for their state legislatures on 13 March 2016. The anti-immigrant party, Alternative für Deutschland, came in second place in Saxony-Anhalt, and made a strong showing in the other two states. These results indicate widespread dissatisfaction with Merkel's policy of welcoming Muslim immigrants. [Reuters](#); [tagesschau](#) at ARD; [Der Spiegel](#).

On 18 March 2016, the European Union and Turkey reached a new agreement about Muslim migrants to Europe. The EU will pay Turkey US\$ 6.6 billion for housing of refugees in

Turkey during 2016-2018. Turkey promises to end the flow of boat people across the Aegean Sea to Greece. Those boat people who do reach Greece will be returned to Turkey. Europe will accept some refugees from Syria, but *not* from other nations. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); Text of agreement at [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

On 24 March 2016, Poland refused to accept more Islamic migrants, because of the Islamic terrorist attacks in Brussels on 22 March. [Associated Press](#).

Immediately after the Islamic attacks on the office of the *Charlie Hebdo* satirical newspaper in Paris in Jan 2015, there was a slogan "Je Suis Charlie". And immediately after the Islamic attacks in Brussels on 22 March, there was a slogan "Je Suis Bruxelles". Now there is a new slogan: "Je suis sick of this shit". [France24](#); [NY Times](#). But one needs to be extremely careful. Instead of "sick of this shit", if one were to say "sick of Muslims", one might be arrested for having an unapproved thought. Indeed, a man in England was arrested on 23 Mar 2016 for inciting racial hatred. [BBC](#); [Evening Standard](#); [Associated Press](#). (On 25 March, charges were dismissed, although it is possible he will be charged later. [Associated Press](#).) 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 their 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. The new election was held on 4 Dec 2016, and the anti-immigrant candidate lost again, with 46.2% of the vote. [ÖRF](#).

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

On 4 September 2016, there was an state parliament election in Angela Merkel's home state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) captured 30.6% of the vote. In an upset, anti-immigrant party, Alternative für Deutschland, came in second place with 20.8% of the vote. Merkel's party, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), came in third place with 19.0% of the vote. [dpa](#); [Deutsche Welle](#).

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### 3 April 2017: Islamic subway bomb



## in St. Petersburg, Russia

At 14:40 local time on 3 April 2017, an Islamic suicide bomber detonated in a subway car that was traveling between two stations in St. Petersburg, Russia. Early reports were that approximately 10 people died in the subway car, but the death toll later climbed to 14, with 49 wounded. A 15th victim died in a hospital on 21 April.

A device with an energy equivalent to 1 kg of TNT and packed with shrapnel was found hidden in another St. Petersburg subway station, but that device was disarmed by police before it exploded. Police believe the suicide bomber put the explosive device in the station, then boarded the train in which he detonated.

On 4 April 2017, Reuters reported that Russian law enforcement identified the suicide bomber as Akbarzhon Jalilov, a Russian citizen born in Kyrgyzstan in 1995. Jalilov moved to St. Petersburg in 2012. The Associated Press spelled his name as "Akbarzhon Dzhililov". RIA-Novosti spelled his name both ways!

There are two ways in which this Islamic terrorist attack is different from many previous attacks:

1. Russian officials have been worried for the past several years that Islamists from Chechnya — or from the former Soviet Union — who traveled to Syria to fight with insurgents would return and conduct terrorism in Russia. But what is actually happening is that Islamic terrorists are attacking Russia without passing through Syria.
2. Jalilov has *no* known connection to either radical Islam or violent jihad. [Reuters](#) points out that, in this respect, Jalilov is similar to Masood, who attacked the U.K. Parliament on 22 March 2017.

On 5 April 2017, Reuters reported on Jalilov's amateurish bombs:

A Russian suicide bomber who killed 14 people in an attack on a St. Petersburg metro train conducted an amateurish, semi-bungled operation, probably with guidance but no direct support from outside backers, five security experts who reviewed publicly available evidence from the blast site told Reuters.

....

That unexploded bomb [that Jalilov put at a Metro station], according to the experts who reviewed a photograph of it in Russian media, was a low-tech homemade device, made locally with sugar and other readily available ingredients, and an improvised, non-commercial detonator.

This lack of sophistication points to a person, or persons, operating with limited resources but some guidance as to how to assemble an explosive similar to the kind used by militant groups such as Islamic State, the experts said.

That supports the theory that Russia is facing a new kind of threat, from violent Islamists who blend into society and are not part of established jihadi groups, and are



therefore much harder for security agencies to track down.

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A Western forensic explosives expert said the bomb was possibly made by mixing sugar or fuel with ammonium nitrate, which could be linked to an Islamic State grouping, but not any particular faction. "Often diesel is used for this, and that could produce a dark brown-coloured explosive. Many of the homemade main charges recovered in Iraq and Syria use (this method)," he said.

Whatever Jalilov's methods, all five sources said one thing was clear: the bomber's plan went awry.

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The weak blast and small amount of physical destruction means the charge Jalilov used was small or the bomb was badly designed, [Neil Gibson, a senior weapons analyst at Jane's,] said, citing possible problems with the shape, detonator and composition of the explosive.

Jalilov's decision to detonate in the middle of the day, when the metro was relatively empty, is a further sign the attack was poorly executed or compromised, Gibson added.

Russia's Kommersant newspaper on Tuesday [4 April] cited a source as saying security services had been tipped off about the planned attack and were closing in on the suspects.

"If the first (bomb) was a suicide device, as it seems to be, then it may have gone off early due to some error in construction," Gibson said. "Or the person thought they were being followed, so detonated the device as soon as they thought they could and still kill as many people as possible."

Jack Stubbs, Maria Tsvetkova, & Christian Lowe, "St. Petersburg bomber executed amateurish, flawed attack - experts," [Reuters](#), 15:23 GMT, 5 Apr 2017.

My comment is that it is correct that a professional explosives expert could have designed and constructed a more powerful bomb than Jalilov. But do not overlook that Jalilov the Amateur killed 14 people, destroyed one subway car, and wounded 49 people.

On 6 April 2017, Russian police were searching homes of suspected accomplices of Jalilov, when police found an explosive device similar to the unexploded bomb that Jalilov deposited in the Metro station. Reuters reported: "The discovery of the explosives raises the possibility that a string of bomb attacks was being planned in the city involving a group of plotters." The Associated Press incidentally remarks: "No one has claimed responsibility for Monday's [3 April] subway bombing,..." [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 25 April 2017, a "little-known" Al-Qaeda group claimed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of Al-Qaeda, had ordered the bombing in St. Petersburg. Reuters reportedL

A group called the Imam Shamil Battalion has claimed responsibility for a metro

bombing in the Russian city of St. Petersburg that killed 16 people and said the bomber was acting on orders from al Qaeda, according to the SITE monitoring group.

The claim by the little-known group was originally published by the Mauritanian news agency ANI, which is often used by West and North African jihadist groups to release statements.

The statement, posted by SITE on Tuesday [25 April], said the bomber, Akbarzhon Jalilov, had acted on instructions from al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, in the April 3 attack on the metro in Russia's second biggest city.

....

It said the metro attack was revenge for Russian violence against Muslim countries, citing Syria and Libya as well as the Russian republic of Chechnya.

"Group claims Russia metro bombing, says bomber acted on al Qaeda orders - monitor," [Reuters](#), 16:54 GMT, 25 April 2017.

#### **Bibliography for St. Petersburg attack:**

- "Explosive device made safe in central St Petersburg - security services," [Reuters](#), 14:29 GMT, 3 Apr 2017.
- "Defused Bomb in St. Petersburg Metro Contained Charge of 1 kg of TNT," [RIA-Novosti](#), 20:38 GMT, 3 Apr 2017.
- "Suicide bomber carried out St Petersburg metro blast - Interfax cites source," [Reuters](#), 20:49 GMT, 3 Apr 2017.
- "Terrorist Suspect in St. Petersburg Metro Attack Had Links to Radical Islamists," [RIA-Novosti](#), 20:56 GMT, 3 Apr 2017. ("A terrorist suspected of carrying out a deadly bomb attack in St. Petersburg subway on Monday [3 Apr] had links to radical Islamist groups operating in Russia, a law enforcement source told Sputnik." But note that this one sentence is vague on details.)
- "Blast on Russian subway kills 11; 2nd bomb is defused," [Associated Press](#), 00:52 GMT, 4 Apr 2017.
- "Likely suspect in St Petersburg blast is Kyrgyz-born Russian citizen," [Reuters](#), 07:46 GMT, 4 Apr 2017.
- "Saint Petersburg Attack: What is Known So Far," [RIA-Novosti](#), 14:17 GMT, 4 Apr 2017.
- "Russian metro bomb suspect a Muslim born in central Asia - investigators," [Reuters](#), 17:16 GMT, 4 Apr 2017.
- "The Latest: Possible accomplices of suicide bomber sought," [Associated Press](#),

19:52 GMT, 4 Apr 2017.

- "The enemy within: Russia faces different Islamist threat with metro bombing," [Reuters](#), 06:03 GMT, 5 Apr 2017. ("Jalilov is typical of millions of young Muslim men living in Russia. There was nothing apparent from his background and lifestyle that made him stand out for the authorities.")
- "DNA Test Confirms Identity of St. Petersburg Suicide Bomber," [RIA-Novosti](#), 15:25 GMT, 5 Apr 2017. ("On Wednesday [5 April], the Russian Investigative Committee named Kyrgyzstan-born 22-year-old Akbarzhon Dzhililov who was the citizen of Russia as the suicide bomber behind the attack. The investigation also found out that the same man had left a bag with an explosive device on the Ploschad Vosstaniya subway station. It was neutralized by specialists.")
- "Suspect in Russia metro bombing was deported from Turkey - Turkish official," [Reuters](#), 16:28 GMT, 12 Apr 2017. ("Akbarzhon Jalilov, ..., entered Turkey in late 2015 and was deported to Russia about a year later because of migration violations, a senior Turkish official told Reuters on Wednesday [12 April].")
- "Suspected Organizer of St. Petersburg Metro Attack Detained Near Moscow - FSB," [RIA-Novosti](#), 14:53 GMT, 17 Apr 2017. (The Russian Federal Security Service on 17 April in Moscow arrested Azimov Abror Akhralovich, who allegedly trained Akbarzhon Jalilov.)
- "St. Pete Metro Blast Suspect Received Money From Terrorist Group in Turkey" [RIA-Novosti](#), 15:52 GMT, 20 Apr 2017. ("... Akram Azimov [the brother of the mastermind who trained Jalilov] called by phone suicide bomber Akbarzhon Jalilov and transferred [to] him money received in Turkey from a member of an international terrorist group." RIA-Novosti does *not* specify the name of the terrorist group.)
- "St. Pete Metro Bombing Victim Dies in Hospital, Bringing Death Toll Up to 15," [RIA-Novosti](#), 07:58 GMT, 21 Apr 2017.

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## 7 April 2017: Stockholm, Sweden

On Friday, 7 April 2017, at 14:53 local time, someone drove a stolen beer delivery truck 500 meters through a crowd of pedestrians in downtown Stockholm, and then crashed into the Åhlens department store. The driver of the truck fled from the crash scene. There were 4 dead and 15 wounded. On 28 April the death toll increased to 5, as one victim died in a hospital. The Swedish prime minister immediately called it a "terrorist attack", but he did *not* say by whom. Police closed the main railway station in Stockholm, shut down the entire mass transit system in Stockholm, closed several shopping centers in Stockholm — each with massive inconvenience to residents of Stockholm.

Journalists remind us that there have been three similar Islamic terror attacks that used a vehicle to kill pedestrians:

1. On 14 July 2016, an Islamic terrorist from Tunisia used rented cargo truck to kill 86 people in Nice, France.
2. On 19 Dec 2016, an Islamic terrorist from Tunisia used a stolen cargo truck to kill 12 people in Berlin, Germany.
3. On 22 March 2017, an Islamic terrorist used a rented SUV to kill 4 pedestrians on the Westminster Bridge in London, England. (The fourth victim died on 6 April.)

And, on the morning of 8 April, newspapers reported that the truck driver in the Stockholm attack was an immigrant from Uzbekistan who supported ISIL. Coincidentally, the suicide bomber on the St. Petersburg Metro was "was from a family of ethnic Uzbeks". [Reuters](#).

Sweden finds that — like France, Belgium, and Germany — they allowed Muslims to immigrate to their country, and now a very small percentage of those Muslim immigrants are conducting terror attacks in their country.

So how does an Islamic terrorist drive a truck through a crowd of pedestrians? *The Telegraph* in London England explained:

A suspected terrorist targeted young children as he drove a hijacked lorry into a crowded shopping street in Stockholm, witnesses claimed last night.

Infants' buggies were sent "flying through the air", one Swedish broadcaster reported, as the vehicle zigzagged along the pedestrianised Queen Street shopping district and embedded itself in the window of a department store.

"It swerved from side to side. It didn't look out of control, it was trying to hit people," a second witness, Glen Foran, an Australian tourist, told Reuters. "It hit people, it was terrible. It hit a pram with a kid in it, demolished it."

James Rothwell & Peter Foster, "Stockholm attack driver 'deliberately targeted young children' as he drove hijacked lorry into crowd," [The Telegraph](#), 07:15 GMT, 8 April 2017.

### **Bibliography for Stockholm attack:**

- "Three killed by truck driven into crowd in Swedish capital - police," [Reuters](#), 15:52 GMT, 7 Apr 2017. ("Police confirmed three deaths and eight people injured")
- "Hijacked truck crashes into Stockholm store in terror attack," [Associated Press](#), 16:25 GMT, 7 Apr 2017. (hijacked beer truck)
- "LIVE: Stockholm terror attack: Man arrested 'claiming responsibility' after hijacked truck ploughs into pedestrians killing at least four," [The Telegraph](#), 18:54 GMT, 7 Apr 2017. ("A man was arrested in north Stockholm after he confessed to carrying out the truck attack, daily newspaper Aftonbladet reported.")
- "LIVE: Police make arrest after Stockholm truck attack," [The Local — Sweden](#), 20:09 GMT, 7 Apr 2017. ("Stockholm Police have confirmed [at 20:40 local time] that four people are dead and 15 people have been injured in the attack." "Police

confirmed in a statement published at 2.53 pm that they have received reports that 'a person in a vehicle has injured other people'.")

- "Stockholm attack: Police suspect arrested man was truck driver," [The Local — Sweden](#), 06:23 GMT, 8 Apr 2017. ("According to the Aftonbladet newspaper, the same man [i.e., the suspect wearing a dark hoodie and military green jacket in a surveillance camera photo] is a 39-year-old of Uzbek origin and a supporter of the Islamic State (IS) group.")
- "Stockholm attack driver 'deliberately targeted young children' as he drove hijacked lorry into crowd," [The Telegraph](#), 07:15 GMT, 8 April 2017. ("The unnamed suspect reportedly confessed to the attack after being detained in Marsta, which is around 25 miles north of the Swedish capital. Some reports suggested he had previously posted jihadist propaganda on his Facebook page and had images of people injured in the explosion at the Boston marathon in April 2013.")
- "Swedish authorities say truck attack suspect held," [Associated Press](#), 09:47 GMT, 8 Apr 2017. ("Swedish police said Saturday [8 April] that they believe they have arrested the driver of a hijacked beer truck which killed four people and injured 15 others on a busy street in the Swedish capital. .... [Police spokesman Lars Bystrom] declined to comment on Swedish media reports that the suspect was a 39-year-old man from Uzbekistan.")
- "Police investigate 'bomb' found on Stockholm attack truck as they say terror suspect in custody was known to intelligence services," [The Telegraph](#), 12:11 GMT, 8 Apr 2017. ("Reports claimed the improvised explosive device (IED) was packed into a suitcase inside the hijacked beer truck." "[Dan Eliason, head of Sweden's National Police,] said police also found an object in the truck that "could be a bomb or an incendiary object, we are still investigating it.")
- "Police confirm suspect is an Uzbek national," [The Local — Sweden](#), 15:40 GMT, 8 Apr 2017. ("Police have now [at 13:50 local time] confirmed previous reports that the man arrested is an Uzbek national.")
- "Uzbek man main suspect in Swedish truck attack that killed four," [Reuters](#), 19:22 GMT, 8 Apr 2017. ("Police said they had found a suspicious device in the vehicle, which ended up rammed into the Ahlens department store, but said they did not yet know if it was a homemade bomb, as reported by public broadcaster SVT.")
- "Swedish police say truck attack suspect showed IS sympathies," [Reuters](#), 11:31 GMT, 9 Apr 2017. ("Police also said that the suspect had sought and been denied permanent residency in the Nordic country and was wanted for deportation. 'We know that he showed sympathies for extremist organisations, among them IS,' police official Jonas Hysing told a news conference.")
- "Stockholm truck attack suspect 'interested in ISIS': police," [The Local — Sweden](#), 11:39 GMT, 9 Apr 2017. (The nameless Islamic terrorist from Uzbekistan "applied for a permanent residency permit in 2014". His application was rejected in June 2016, and

in December 2016 he was told to leave Sweden within four weeks. He went "underground" and police were unable to locate him.)

- "Stockholm truck attack suspect reported to have confessed: media," [The Local — Sweden](#), 20:28 GMT, 9 Apr 2017. ("The suspected driver of the stolen truck that mowed down pedestrians in central Stockholm last week, killing four people, has allegedly confessed to the attack, daily *Expressen* reported on Sunday [9 April]. He reportedly told investigators he was 'pleased with what he had done' and had 'accomplished what he set out to do,' the paper said. The suspect has only been officially identified as a 39-year-old man from Uzbekistan, but both *Expressen* and its rival *Aftonbladet* have named the name as Rakhmat Akilov, a construction worker and father-of-four.")
- "Swedish prosecutor asks to extend custody for Stockholm truck attack suspect," [Reuters](#), 15:28 GMT, 10 Apr 2017. (Prosecutors name suspected driver of truck of death as "Rakhmat Akilov", a 39-year-old Uzbek.)
- "Suspect in Stockholm truck attack admits terrorist crime," [Reuters](#), 17:32 GMT, 11 Apr 2017. ("[Akilov's] lawyer, Johan Eriksson, told the court that his client had admitted the crime." "Legal documents show Akilov had asked for Eriksson to be replaced by a Sunni Muslim lawyer, but the court denied his request." "Two Swedes, a British man and a Belgian woman were killed in the attack. Fifteen were injured. Eight people remain in hospital, including two in intensive care.")
- "Who is the real Rakhmat Akilov?," [The Local — Sweden](#), 05:23 GMT, 12 Apr 2017. ("Stockholm terror suspect Rakhmat Akilov had used at least two different identities in Sweden, and public broadcaster SVT reports that several people may have used the name Rakhmat Akilov.")
- "Sweden truck attack suspect tried to join Islamic State — source," [Reuters](#), 14:36 GMT, 12 Apr 2017. (Akilov "had tried to travel to Syria in 2015 to join the Islamic State group, an [anonymous] Uzbekistan security source said on Wednesday [12 April]. .... Akilov was detained at the Turkish-Syrian border in 2015 and deported back to Sweden, the source said.")
- "Fifth person dies after Stockholm truck attack — police," [Reuters](#), 19:36 GMT, 28 April 2017. ("The death toll from the truck attack in Stockholm earlier this month rose to five on Friday [28 Apr] after a woman died from her injuries in hospital, police said.")

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## 20 April 2017: Paris, France

At 20:50 local time on 20 April 2017, a terrorist stopped his automobile at 102 Champs-Élysées in Paris (near the Franklin Roosevelt Métro station), then the terrorist used an AK-47 assault rifle to spray a police van with bullets. Police immediately shot and killed the terrorist. One policeman died and two other policemen were injured. One tourist was also

injured.

Approximately three hours after the attack, ISIL's Amaq news agency claimed credit for the attack. Usually, ISIL waits until the following day to claim credit.

*The New York Times* reported:

... the Islamic State issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack.

....

The Islamic State statement, on the group's Amaq news agency, was published first in Arabic and later in French. Citing a "source," it said that the attack was the work of someone named Abu Yousuf al-Beljiki, "who is one of the soldiers of the Caliphate."

The terror group, also known as ISIS and ISIL, has generally been careful to only claim attacks carried out by radicalized Muslims, but it does not distinguish between plots directly carried out by its fighters and those inspired by its ideology.

"The speed with which IS claimed responsibility is surprising," said Peter Neumann, a counterterrorism expert and professor of Security Studies at the Department of War Studies at King's College London. "The attacker being from Belgium highlights the closeness of the Belgian-French network that carried out the Paris-Brussels attacks," he added, referring to assaults in those cities in 2015 and 2016.

Aurelien Breeden, "Paris Shootout Leaves Police Officer and Gunman Dead," [New York Times](#), about 22:00 GMT, 20 Apr 2017.

The Associated Press reported:

The Islamic State group's claim of responsibility just a few hours after the attack came unusually swiftly for extremist group, which has been losing territory in Iraq and Syria.

In a statement from its Amaq news agency, the group gave a pseudonym for the shooter, Abu Yusuf al-Beljiki, indicating he was Belgian or had lived in Belgium. The group described it as an attack "in the heart of Paris."

....

The attacker had been flagged as an extremist, according to two police officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly discuss the investigation.

Lori Hinnant & Sylvie Corbet, "IS group claims Champs-Elysees attack on police officers," [Associated Press](#), about 23:30 GMT, 20 Apr 2017.

On the morning of 21 April 2017, the Associated Press reported the Amaq news agency gave a false name for the Islamic terrorist:

Islamic State's claim of responsibility came just a few hours after the attack — far more quickly than other similar claims — and the statement gave the attacker a pseudonym that would mean he was Belgian or had ties to Belgium.



Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon said Friday, "The guy who yesterday did the act was not a Belgian. He was French."

Asked about the Abu Yusuf Al-Beljiki pseudonym given by IS, Jambon said he "is certainly not the guy who committed the crime yesterday."  
"The Latest: Belgium: IS naming of Belgian attacker was fake," [Associated Press](#), 10:43 GMT, 21 April 2017.

The lone gunman was Karim Cheurfi, a 39 year old French citizen who lived with his mother in Chelles, an eastern suburb of Paris. Karim was arrested for stealing a car in 2001. Just before he was arrested, he shot a policeman. Two days later, Karim grabbed a pistol from a jailor and shot the jailor. Karim was sentenced to 15 years in prison for his crimes, including the attempted murder of the policeman and jailor. Karim was released from prison in 2013. Three months after he was released from prison in 2013, Karim committed an armed robbery, for which he spent another two years in prison. Karim was released from prison in October 2015. In February 2017, Karim was detained for allegedly attempting to purchase weapons for an attack on police, but he was released for "lack of evidence". Despite his felony convictions, Karim was able to purchase a full automatic assault rifle.

Some French government officials said there was *no* evidence that Karim has been "radicalized". But police found a handwritten note near Karim's corpse that praised ISIL, which is strong evidence of radicalization. The note apparently fell from Karim's pocket.

#### **Bibliography for Paris attack:** (Paris time is GMT +2 hours)

- "The Latest [on the shootings of two police officers in Paris]," [Associated Press](#), blog begins 19:00 GMT, 20 Apr 2017.
- "Live — Paris attack: police officer and suspect shot dead on Champs Elysees," [The Telegraph](#), blog begins 19:27 GMT, 20 Apr 2017. (At 21:39 GMT: "The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terror group have claimed responsibility for the Paris attack.")
- "French police officer killed, Champs-Elysees in Paris closed, CNN affiliate says," [CNN](#), 20:21 GMT, 20 Apr 2017.
- "The French terror attacks carried out by Islamist extremists who were known to police," [The Telegraph](#), 23:00 GMT, 20 Apr 2017.
- "One dead, two wounded as Paris police come under fire on Champs-Elysees," [Washington Post](#), 23:10 GMT, 20 Apr 2017. ("A spokeswoman for the Paris police, Johanna Primevert, said the gunman attacked police guarding an area near the Franklin Roosevelt metro station at 8:50 p.m. Thursday Paris time at the center of the heavily traveled Champs-Elysees.")
- "Islamic State claims Paris shooting, one policeman killed," [Reuters](#), 00:18 GMT, 21 Apr 2017.

- "Paris attack: who is Karim Cheurfi, the gunman who was 'let go' by French authorities?," [The Telegraph](#), 08:48 GMT, 21 Apr 2017.
- "Champs-Elysées gunman: An unstable criminal who 'hated French police'," [The Local — France](#)(AFP), 11:52 GMT, 21 Apr 2017.
- "Anger and questions over how Champs-Elysées gunman was left free after 'threats to kill police officers'," [The Telegraph](#), 13:22 GMT, 21 Apr 2017.
- "Police seek possible accomplices of Paris gunman," [Reuters](#), 17:27 GMT, 21 Apr 2017. ("[Paris Prosecutor Francois] Molins confirmed police had found a note with handwritten messages defending Islamic State near [Karim's] body, addresses of police establishments in his car and a Koran. Police believe he had 'opened fire on the officers in the knowledge he would be killed by them', a source close to the investigation said.")
- "Paris Police Shooting: Attacker Karim Cheurfi Had Long Criminal Record," [NBC News](#), 19:30 GMT, 21 Apr 2017.
- "Paris gunman named as small-time criminal apparently inspired by Islamic State," [Washington Post](#), 20:05 GMT, 21 Apr 2017. ("Cheurfi, a 39-year-old of Algerian descent who was born in the Paris suburbs, had a criminal record and was well-known to authorities, Molins said.")
- "Champs-Elysees gunman had long criminal record, praised IS," [Associated Press](#), 22 Apr 2017.

Although I searched the Associated Press, Reuters, and Google News websites on 24 April and again on 2 May, the news about Karim seems to have ended at night on 21 April.

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### French Politics

On 23 April, the first round of a national presidential election is scheduled in France. One can speculate that the Islamic terror attack by Karim on 20 April was intended to influence the French election, perhaps by discouraging people from voting. There are 11 candidates in the first round on 23 April, of whom only four are taken seriously. The top two candidates in the first round of voting will stand in a runoff election on 7 May.

On 21 April, Marine Le Pen — head of the Front National party, with anti-immigrant and anti-European Union views — proposed that France "expel foreigners who are on the watch lists of intelligence services". (See, e.g., [The Telegraph](#).) My comment is that a rational person would want to do something to prevent future Islamic terror attacks. But Le Pen's proposal has at least three problems:

1. Her proposal would *not* have prevented the 20 April shooting on the Champs-Elysées, because the perpetrator (Karim Cheurfi) was a French citizen, born in France to parents from Algeria, a former French colony. So Karim was *not* a "foreigner". Likewise,

Bouhlel — the driver of the truck who killed 86 people in Nice, France in July 2016 — was also a citizen of France, although he was born in Tunisia.

2. A program to deport foreigners will stall when their original nation refuses to accept them. This actually happened when Germany attempted to deport Anis Amri to Tunisia, and he later drove a truck into a crowd of pedestrians in Berlin in December 2016. One can easily understand a nation not wanting its criminals to return.
3. A French program to deport foreigners could easily radicalize mainstream Muslims who are living in France, as the program would be seen as a purge of Muslims.

Emmanuel Macron — a former investment banker who has never before been a political candidate — came in first place with 24.0% of the vote in the first round of voting in the French presidential election on 23 April. Marine Le Pen received 21.3% of the vote, and came in second place, so she and Macron will be the two candidates in the 7 May election. [France24](#)(AFP).

This election is important not only for France, but also for all of Europe, because Le Pen wanted to remove France from the European Union.

In the second election on 7 May, Macron won with 66% of the vote. [France24](#). Le Pen joins the defeated anti-immigrant presidential candidates in Austria (Dec 2016) and the Netherlands (Mar 2017).

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## Conclusions

During September 2013, I began chronicling the history of chemical weapons in Syria and the futile peace negotiations. I now see four 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.
4. [On 23 Feb 2017](#) — after a ten month suspension owing to the refusal of the opposition to negotiate — negotiations resumed in Geneva. But there was *no* realistic hope of progress.

## 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 attempted 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.

Finally, on 13 Dec 2016, the insurgents in Aleppo agreed to depart. After many violations of the agreement in Aleppo, the evacuation was completed on the night of 22 December 2016.

### **Blame for Failure in Geneva in 2016**

In my essay for December 2015, I wrote:

I predict that in February 2016 people will realize the operative principle is the German saying "von nichts, kommt nichts" (out of nothing, nothing comes).

Ronald B. Standler, "Syria & Iraq: December 2015," [www.rbs0.com/syria28.pdf](http://www.rbs0.com/syria28.pdf), 4 Jan 2016.

I wrote "von nichts, kommt nichts" in response to unrealistic expectations by delusional diplomats. By choosing the HNC as the main opposition delegation, the negotiations in Geneva were doomed from the beginning.



My essays for February through April 2016 document the refusal of the HNC to negotiate in Geneva. Instead of negotiating, the HNC issued demands (i.e., pre-conditions) that must be satisfied before the HNC would negotiate. The charade of so-called negotiations ended when the HNC walked out of negotiations on 18 April 2016, and the HNC failed to return until ten months later.

My essay for [February 2016](#) said: "As a result [of Hijab's demands], I suggest that Hijab's [HNC] be banned from attending the Geneva negotiations, and that de Mistura appoint an opposition delegation that is representative of the Syrian people and insurgents fighting on the ground." My essay for [April 2016](#) contains a section with suggestions for ending the futility of talks in Geneva, principally replacing the HNC with a different opposition delegation.

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, Kofi Annan resigned as the first U.N. Envoy for Syria. In the ninth paragraph of his resignation [speech](#) he said: “You have to understand: as an Envoy, I can’t want peace more than the protagonists, more than the Security Council or the international community for that matter.” It is still true that the participants in negotiations must want the negotiations to succeed. Unfortunately for the people of Syria, the so-called Syrian opposition — a bunch of self-appointed expatriates in the Syrian National Coalition in Turkey and the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) — is focused only on grabbing power from Assad. On the other side, Assad's number one priority is to cling to power.

Why don't the foreign meddlers — who are members of the ISSG — force their proxy armies in Syria to negotiate? Well, the foreign meddlers — like the protagonists in the Geneva negotiations — are obsessed with the issue of whether Assad remains or resigns. Russia needs Assad to remain in power, so Russia can continue to use the naval base at Tartus. Iran needs Assad (a Shiite) to remain in power, so the Shiite government in Iran can have influence in Syria, where the majority of the Syrians are Sunnis. Obama is under the delusion that if Assad resigns, then the terrorists (i.e., ISIL and Nusra) and the jihadists will all magically disappear. My essay for [March 2016](#) (see section titled "Why wait for Assad to leave before fighting terrorist groups?") explains why ISIL and Nusra will persist after Assad is removed.

In summary, Syria is a complicated mess with too many rebel and jihadist groups, acting in a fragmented and disorganized way, supported by foreign meddlers. Politicians and diplomats seem to *assume* that the leaders in Syria (i.e., Assad, the HNC, other Syrian groups) *sincerely desire* peace. But struggles for political power have apparently overwhelmed peace negotiations.

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#### 4. February 2017: *No Reasonable Hope* for Geneva Negotiations

The Syrian opposition to Assad is in deep trouble:

- The rebels — and to a lesser extent the jihadists — are being clobbered by Assad's army, Russian airstrikes, and attacks by Iran and Hezbollah. After the insurgents were defeated in Aleppo in December 2016, foreign meddlers appear to have reduced their support of insurgents.
- Beginning in 2014, besieged towns in Syria are negotiating agreements directly with Assad's government that banish insurgents to Idlib province.
- Beginning in August 2015, the Syrian National Coalition — once recognized by some

nations as the legitimate Syrian government — was being ignored.

- The HNC (which includes a number of members of the Syrian National Coalition) has been ineffective in negotiations in Geneva since January 2016.
- After 30 March 2017, the U.S. Government no longer supports the insurgents' demand that Assad resign — but the removal of Assad has been, and continues to be, the principal goal of the opposition.
- The opposition to Assad continues to be fragmented and disorganized, a problem that has persisted at least since mid-2013, perhaps earlier.

On 23 February 2017, negotiations in Geneva resumed after a ten month suspension caused by the refusal of the HNC to negotiate. My essay for [February 2017](#) gave five reasons why the negotiations in Geneva were futile:

1. Critically important issues (e.g., ceasefire and delivery of humanitarian aid) have been pushed to the parallel negotiations in Astana, but those negotiations in Astana were a complete failure. Russia and Turkey — the so-called guarantors of the ceasefire — have completely failed to punish violators of the ceasefire that began on 30 Dec 2016.
2. After weeks of negotiations in the year 2016, plus 9 days of negotiations that ended on 3 March 2017, the parties finally agreed on an agenda that was specified in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 that was issued on 18 Dec 2015:
  - A. credible, inclusive, and non-sectarian governance.
  - B. new constitution for Syria.
  - C. elections in Syria.

The agenda for a new government, new constitution, and new elections is dogma that began with Kofi Annan's Geneva Communiqué of June 2012. In the year 2012, the consensus was that Assad's government would soon collapse and a transitional government was needed in Syria. For other reasons why the 2012 Geneva Communiqué is flawed, see my [review](#).

As I explained in my essay for February 2017, this is the *wrong* agenda. What Syria really needs is:

- A. *all* insurgents stop fighting,
  - B. punishment of violators of the ceasefire,
  - C. unimpeded deliveries of humanitarian aid to all who need food or medicine, and
  - D. reconstruction of Syrian cities and towns, roads, electricity infrastructure, and water infrastructure.
3. The delegates are too uncivilized to meet in the same room, face-to-face. Further, the opposition intransigently demands that Assad resign — a result that the opposition has failed to achieve in six years of civil war.
  4. From what they have said and from how they act, I have the impression that neither Assad nor the opposition want a negotiated end to the Syrian civil war. Instead, they

want a military victory.

5. Will *all* of the insurgents in Syria obey any agreement reached in Geneva? I suggest the answer is "no", for two reasons. First, Nusra, ISIL, and major jihadist groups are not represented in Geneva. Second, for those groups who are represented in Geneva, the loyalty of fighters tends to be to local commanders, not to some distant leadership.

As I said in my essay in February 2017, for the negotiations in Geneva to be successful, we need an opposition delegation who will surrender to Assad's government and who will compromise with Assad. But such a surrender is supported by neither the rebels nor the jihadists, who continue their futile fight against Assad.

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## Conclusion for Syria

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 326,000 people in Syria,
- the destruction of the Syrian economy and infrastructure — costing Syria

approximately US\$ 200 billion [Reuters](#).

- the destruction of a secular Syria government,
- the rise of Islamic terrorists (e.g., ISIL, Nusra Front) in Syria, and
- more than five million refugees from Syria in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, (see [Reuters](#)); plus 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 six years of civil war in Syria.

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## Conclusion for Iraq

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

There are several huge problems in Iraq:

1. The Iraqi government is corrupt. (See my essays for [June 2015](#) and [January 2016](#))
2. The Iraqi government is dysfunctional. During July-October 2014, the Iraqi Parliament *slowly* formed a new government — during an existential crisis. My essays for July 2014 through February 2015 summarized the infrequent meetings, and low attendance in the Iraqi Parliament. (See the summary for July through October 2014 in my [webpage](#).)
3. The Iraqi army was unable to stop the ISIL invasion during the first six months of 2014. In June 2014, the Iraqi army was exposed as at least partly cowardly, corrupt, and incompetent by its rout in Mosul and Tikrit, which abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles to be captured by ISIL. Astoundingly, in May 2015 the Iraqi army *again* fled and abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles during a rout in Ramadi. This shows that the Iraqi government learned nothing from the rout in Mosul, 11 months before the similar rout in Ramadi.
4. The criminal justice system in Iraq is apparently incompetent and dysfunctional. The Iraqi government is unable or unwilling to prosecute:
  - A. corrupt politicians or corrupt government officials,
  - B. army officers who hired ghost soldiers,
  - C. desertion at Mosul on 10 June 2014,
  - D. fleeing from Ramadi on 17 May 2015, and
  - E. terrorists who kill innocent civilians in frequent bombings in or near Baghdad.(See my essay for [September 2016](#).)
5. Beginning in August 2014, my essays each month have chronicled suicide bombings,

car bombs, kidnappings, and other horrible crimes in Iraq. Such attacks have become an almost routine part of life in Iraq since Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003. These continuing attacks are an indication that civilization has collapsed in Iraq.

I conclude that the government of Iraq is dysfunctional and unworthy of assistance. But the Iraqi people do *not* deserve to suffer at the hands of the barbaric ISIL terrorists. Furthermore, ISIL in Iraq and Syria must be annihilated to protect neighboring nations from future invasion by ISIL terrorists, as ISIL expands their caliphate.

It will take years to fix the defects in the Iraqi army, while effective troops on the ground are needed *now* — truly were needed back in January 2014 — to prevent ISIL from capturing more cities and infrastructure. This lack of competent ground forces in Iraq is a glaring defect in Obama's strategy.

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### **Need for Muslim Clerics to Continually Condemn Islamic Terrorism**

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

Leaders of Al-Qaeda and ISIL clearly and repeatedly invoke their concept of Islam in justifying or explaining their actions. Individual Islamic terrorists shout Islamic slogans as they commit their terrorist acts, and the individual terrorists are endorsed by Islamic terrorist organizations. Further, Al-Qaeda and other jihadists seek to establish Sharia law in Syria and/or Iraq — instead of a secular government. ISIL is even more extreme with its caliphate. These Islamic governments are part of the attraction of young Muslims to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and jihadist groups.

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

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

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

Just to be clear, Western Civilization is *not* at war with *all* Muslims. I suggest that Western



Civilization — *and* also mainstream Muslims everywhere — *should* be at war with Islamic terrorists. Indeed, mainstream Muslims are most affected by Islamic terrorism, as death tolls in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq show.

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## U.S. War on Terror

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

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

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

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

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

The U.S. war against terrorism began in Afghanistan in 2001. Fifteen years later, the U.S. Military is still fighting against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, with *no* end in sight. On 15 October 2015, Obama postponed the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan until sometime after the year 2016. The next U.S. president will inherit 5500 U.S. Military personnel in Afghanistan in January 2017. [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#) (commentary). On 6 July 2016, in response to an apparently worsening situation in Afghanistan, Obama decided to leave 8400 U.S. Military personnel in Afghanistan in January 2017. [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the corrupt and weak governments are unable to defend their nations from Islamic terrorists. Substantial numbers of U.S. Military personnel and many tens of billions of US dollars in both Afghanistan and Iraq also have not defeated the Islamic terrorists. No one is asking the question *why* Islamic terrorists are so successful in their battle, while national armies and police are unable to defeat Islamic terrorists. I suggest the holy



concept of jihad resonates with terrorists, while it is difficult for soldiers and policemen to be enthusiastic about working for a corrupt, dysfunctional government.

By May 2016, the U.S. airstrikes on ISIL had significantly limited ISIL's finances. In response, ISIL began inviting Islamic terrorists to attack targets in their local nation in Western Europe, USA, etc. (See, e.g., [Associated Press](#)(22May); [Reuters](#).) Encouraging local, lone-wolf attacks on the Internet will be cheaper for ISIL than training terrorists in Syria.

Examples of such lone-wolf Islamic terrorist attacks in the USA include:

- the Boston Marathon on 15 April 2013,
- Chattanooga (see my essay for [July 2015](#)),
- San Bernardino ([December 2015](#)), and
- Orlando ([June 2016](#)).

The recent conventional wisdom is that, as ISIL is defeated in Iraq and Syria, ISIL will sponsor — or encourage — more Islamic terrorist attacks in Europe and the USA. See, e.g.,

- "Are airstrikes successfully weakening ISIS?," [PBS](#), 1 May 2016. (Doug Ollivant interviewed by Soledad O'Brien. "We are hearing some reports, that actually now is what ISIL is telling people that they're talking to on social media: Don't come here [to Iraq or Syria]. Stay home. .... But that's obviously something we're just as concerned about, if not more so, are these radical jihadists in their home countries doing these lone wolf or very small group attacks. .... This is bad news particularly for Europe, where a much larger percentage of these foreign fighters come from....")
- Colin P. Clarke & Chad C. Serena, "Commentary: Islamic State may be down, but it's far from out," [Reuters](#), 25 May 2016. ("... Islamic State leaders could instruct would-be jihadists to remain home and launch attacks there.")
- "CIA chief: IS working to send operatives to the West," [Associated Press](#) 15 June 2016. ("CIA Director John Brennan will tell Congress on Thursday [16 June] that Islamic State militants are training and attempting to deploy operatives for further attacks on the West and will rely more on guerrilla-style tactics to compensate for their territorial losses." "Brennan also noted the group's call for followers to conduct so-called lone-wolf attacks in their home countries.")
- "White House says Baghdad attacks strengthen U.S. resolve in Iraq," [Reuters](#), 3 July 2016. (Brennan told Congress in June: "To compensate for territorial losses [in Iraq and Syria], ISIL (Islamic State) will probably rely more on guerrilla tactics, including high-profile attacks outside territory it holds.")
- "US official says anti-Islamic State forces gaining momentum," [Associated Press](#), 28 June 2016. (Brett McGurk told the U.S. the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "more 'lone wolf' style attacks such as the one in Orlando are possible as the Islamic State loses territory, ....")

- "Islamic State's 'lone wolf' attacks to persist in West despite territorial losses in Middle East," [Washington Times](#), 28 June 2016. (Brett McGurk: "Islamic State officials are telling recruits in the West to stay put and conduct attacks at home rather than travel to the Salafist group's base in Syria, where its control is increasingly under threat.")
- "Germany girds for potential spike in Islamic State attacks in Europe," [Reuters](#), 28 June 2016. (German Interior Minister Thomas De Maiziere: "... we fear that Islamic State will externalise, transfer its activities to Europe, especially because of military losses in the region [Syria and Iraq].")
- "As ISIS Loses Land, It Gains Ground in Overseas Terror," [NY Times](#), 3 July 2016.
- "Islamic State's ambitions and allure grow as territory shrinks," [Washington Post](#), 3 July 2016. ("U.S. intelligence officials say battlefield setbacks in Iraq and Syria appear to have driven the Islamic State's leaders to speed up their timeline for attacks abroad.")
- "More than 140 killed in Islamic State's worst ever bomb attack in the Iraqi capital," [Washington Post](#), 4 July 2016. ("U.S. officials have warned that the [Islamic State] group is likely to intensify its attacks overseas as it loses ground in Iraq and Syria, but civilians in the Middle East continue to bear the brunt of the campaign of bombings.")
- "Inside ISIS: Quietly preparing for the loss of the 'caliphate'," [Associated Press](#), 13 July 2016. ("U.S. counterterrorism experts believe the mass-casualty attacks in Istanbul and Baghdad in the past month were largely a response to [ISIL's] military reversals in Iraq and Syria." "... [ISIL]'s highly decentralized nature ensures that it will remain dangerous for some time to come, according to current and former U.S. officials and terrorism experts.")
- "As 'caliphate' shrinks, Islamic State looks to global attacks," [Reuters](#), 13:08 GMT, 31 July 2016.
- President Obama at 4 Aug 2016 press conference at Pentagon: "In fact, the decline of ISIL in Syria and Iraq appears to be causing it to shift to tactics that we've seen before — an even greater emphasis on encouraging high-profile terrorist attacks, including in the United States." [Pentagon](#). See also [Associated Press](#).

It appears that the U.S. may have spent huge amounts of money to fight Islamic terrorists, but with the counter-intuitive result that the USA is now *less* secure than previously. The glaring error in U.S. policy was to neglect fighting the *ideology* of Islamic terrorism.

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