

Syria & Iraq: June 2017

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Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous 43 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 That webpage also includes links to many historical documents on the Syrian civil war, a table of death tolls in Syria since August 2013, and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.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

- 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.

Sometime around 6 May 2017, the English-language website of the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) — Assad's official propaganda agency — disappeared from the Internet.

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

Terse Summary of Syria Fighters

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

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

On 28 July 2016, Nusra voluntarily ended its affiliation with Al-Qaeda. [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". From July 2016 to January 2017, Nusra Front called 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."

On 28 January 2017, the former Nusra Front became the dominant member of

the new **Tahrir al-Sham** coalition, along with four other jihadist groups.
[Reuters](#); [Al-Jazeera](#).

- 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.

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".

[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](#).

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, in 2013-2014 the Coalition was the least objectionable alternative government for Syria.

In my essays for [August 2015](#) to [December 2015](#), I observed that the Syrian National Coalition was "fading".

In December 2016, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) was formed in Saudi Arabia to represent the opposition in the Geneva negotiations. But the HNC refused to negotiate during 2016. The HNC scuttled the Geneva negotiations in April 2016 when the HNC walked out and did not return until February 2017.

Since October 2013, several commentators have noted that Assad is preferable to having Al-Qaeda or ISIL control Syria. The topic of a future government for Syria is discussed in my separate [review](#).

Chemical Weapons

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

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

On 4 April 2017, there was a chemical weapons attack on Khan Sheikhun — also spelt Khan Sheikhoun and Khan Shaykhun — in Idlib province. For a detailed history of events in April, see my essay for [April 2017](#).

June 2017

On 4 May 2017, the [BBC](#) reported that "Syria's chemical weapons are manufactured at three sites — Masyaf, in Hama province, and at Dummar and Barzeh, both just outside Damascus." This is a major breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty that Syria signed in 2013.

On 16 May 2017, the U.N. publicly released an OPCW Fact-Finding Mission report that concludes sulphur mustard had been released in Aleppo province on 16 Sep 2016. OPCW could not visit the site of the chemical weapons attack, but Russia provided samples to OPCW. OPCW was only tasked to determine whether chemical weapons had been used, *not* to determine who released the chemical weapons. S/2017/400 and [Reuters](#). However, it is likely that ISIL released the sulphur mustard.

On 19 May 2017, OPCW released a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) "status update" on the use

of chemical weapons on 4 April 2017 at Khan Shaykhun, United Nations Security Council document S/2017/440. They found traces of "Sarin, or a Sarin-like substance", in blood from survivors and in autopsy samples. The Fact-Finding Mission did *not* visit the site of the attack, because of lack of security guarantees.

On 29 June 2017, journalists at [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#) reported that OPCW had concluded that Sarin — or a similar nerve agent — was used at Khan Sheikhun on 4 April 2017. The OPCW final fact-finding mission report is not yet public at the end of June 2017.

On 30 June 2017, the Director-General of OPCW declared: "The OPCW FFM has confirmed the use of sarin, a nerve agent, at the 4 April incident in Khan Shaykhun in Syria. I strongly condemn this atrocity, which wholly contradicts the norms enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention. The perpetrators of this horrific attack must be held accountable for their crimes." [OPCW](#). How are the perpetrators to be "held accountable"? The JIM has not yet identified the perpetrators, and because of lack of cooperation by Assad's government, the identities of the perpetrators may not be determinable. Even if the perpetrators are identified, the United Nations can *not* go to Syria and arrest the perpetrators. Moreover, the International Criminal Court in the Hague currently has *no* jurisdiction for trial of war crimes in Syria.

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 reasonable 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 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."

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.

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 July 2017, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) published a death toll for the month of June.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the death of

2282 persons during the month of June 2017, they were distributed as following:

- >Civilian casualties: 692 including 134 children under the age of eighteen, and 83 citizen women over the age of eighteen, and they were killed as follows:
 - 151 including 40 children and 28 citizen women were killed in raids by Syrian and Russian warplanes and by regime's helicopters on several areas of Syria.
 - 43 including 15 children and 3 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.
 - 12 citizens were killed under torture in Syrian security prisons.
 - 12 including 5 children and 2 citizen woman were killed in targeting and the fall of mortar shells launched by the rebel and Islamic factions.
 - 8 including a child were killed by the fire of the Turkish and Jordanian border guards.
 - 31 were executed by the "Islamic State" organization.
 - 27 including 2 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.
 - 1 man was killed by the Islamic factions.
 - 290 including 46 children and 43 citizen women were killed in airstrikes by the warplanes of the international coalition.
 - 16 including 3 children and a citizen woman were killed in the detonating of cars and booby trapped vehicles.
 - 9 including 1 child were killed by Syria Democratic Forces.
 - 79 including 19 children and 3 citizen women were killed in landmine explosions.
 - 11 including a child were killed in unknown circumstances.
 - 1 child was killed during clashes between the Islamic Factions.
 - 1 child was killed during a Turkish shelling.
 - Also the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights documented the death of 48 children and women of family members of the "Islamic State" organization were killed in bombing by the International Coalition on al-Mayadeen city in the eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor
- [Military deaths: 1542, distributed as follows:]
 - Syrian fighters of the rebel and Islamic Factions and the Syria Democratic Forces and other movements and organizations: 491
 - The regime forces: 205
 - Members of popular the committees, NDF and gunmen loyal to the regime of Syrian nationality: 224
 - Fighters of the Lebanese Hezbollah: 32
 - Fighters loyal to the regime of non-Syrian nationalities, most of them are of the Shiite sect: 89
 - Unidentified: 22
 - 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: 479

"740 civilian casualties including 265 children and women were killed in June 2017 about half of them were killed by warplanes of the International Coalition," [SOHR](#), 1 July 2017. [Formatting of military deaths as indented list by Standler. Some typographical errors corrected by Standler.]

SOHR forgot to include the 48 ISIL "family members" in al-Mayadeen city in their total of 692 civilian deaths, so the correct total is 740.

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 2282 deaths during June 2017 — during the ceasefire that began at the end of December 2016. The imperfect ceasefire has reduced fatalities by approximately 45% 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 330,000*.

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, which ended on 29 March 2017.

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.

U.S. troops in Syria

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

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

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

On 28 April 2016, Syria claimed that 150 U.S. soldiers entered Syria on 27 April. The Syrian Foreign Ministry called the U.S. troops a "blatant act of aggression that constitutes a

dangerous intervention and a gross violation of the Syrian sovereignty.” [SANA](#); [RIA-Novosti](#). On 29 April, Russian deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov agreed that the U.S. troops violate the sovereignty of Syria. [TASS](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that Obama's deployment of U.S. troops is not only a violation of Syria's sovereignty, but also a violation of U.S. law, because the U.S. Congress has *not* passed an authorization of force that specifically allows Obama to fight ISIL.

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

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.

Isolation of Qatar

It has been known at least since the year 2013 that Qatar was funding Islamic terrorists (e.g., Al-Qaeda, Nusra in Syria, ISIL, Hamas in Palestine, Muslim Brotherhood). On 5 June 2017, a group of four Arab nations (i.e., Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain) suddenly severed diplomatic recognition of Qatar. [Associated Press](#); [New York Times](#).

Saudi Arabian Airlines, EgyptAir, Etihad and Emirates in UAE, and other airlines in the four nations cancelled all flights to/from Doha, Qatar. Qatar Airlines then suspended all flights to the four nations. [Reuters](#). Many of the residents in Qatar are citizens of other Arab nations. With the suspension of airline service to those other Arab nations, they will need to fly an indirect route that includes a change of airlines in some third nation (e.g., Turkey, Europe).

Qatar imports most of its food from Saudi Arabia and UAE, which ended food shipments to Qatar. [Reuters](#). That forced Qatar to begin negotiations with Iran and Turkey for food exports to Qatar. [Reuters](#). The Gulf nations are concerned about Qatar's friendly relationship with Iran, but ironically the Gulf nations pushed Qatar closer to Iran when the Gulf nations

blocked food shipments to Qatar.

There are tantalizing hints that the incident that precipitated the diplomatic crisis was a computer hacker planted a bogus news story at the Qatar state news agency website. On Friday, 2 June, [Al-Jazeera](#) in Qatar reported that the FBI was assisting with an investigation of the hacker. On 6 June, [Reuters](#) reported that FBI personnel were in Qatar "since last week" to assist with an investigation of "hackers had posted fake remarks by the emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, that purportedly had him criticizing some leaders of fellow Gulf Arab states and calling for an easing of tensions with regional foe Iran." On 7 June, [The Guardian](#) reported that the FBI had found that Russian hackers — perhaps commissioned by some Gulf nation — had planted the fake news story.

What is the U.S. Government's role/position in the dispute with Qatar?

On 6 June 2017, Trump issued a series of tweets that appeared to take credit for the Arab nations ostracizing Qatar.

During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology. Leaders pointed to Qatar — look!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 08:06 EDT, 6 June 2017.

So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with the King and 50 countries already paying off. They said they would take a hard line on funding...

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 09:36 EDT, 6 June 2017.

...extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar. Perhaps this will be the beginning of the end to the horror of terrorism!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 09:44 EDT, 6 June 2017.

On 9 June 2017, the U.S. Secretary of State urged ending the blockade of Qatar:

Now, the situation in the Arabian Gulf over the last few days is troubling to the United States, the region, and to many people who are directly affected.

....

.... We ask that there be no further escalation by the parties in the region. We call on Qatar to be responsive to the concerns of its neighbors. Qatar has a history of supporting groups that have spanned the spectrum of political expression, from activism to violence. The emir of Qatar has made progress in halting financial support and expelling terrorist elements from his country, but he must do more and he must do it more quickly.

.... We call on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt to ease the blockade against Qatar.

....

We support the emir of Kuwait's efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to this

agreement and progress toward eliminating all forms of support for terrorism — military, financial, moral, or ideological. The U.S. will support these mediation efforts along with the emir of Kuwait.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Remarks on the Middle East," [State Dept](#), 9 June 2017.

Less than one hour after Tillerson's statement, Trump held a press conference at the White House, where Trump said:

I addressed a summit of more than 50 Arab and Muslim leaders — a unique meeting in the history of nations — where key players in the region agreed to stop supporting terrorism, whether it be financial, military or even moral support.

The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level, and in the wake of that conference, nations came together and spoke to me about confronting Qatar over its behavior. So we had a decision to make: Do we take the easy road, or do we finally take a hard but necessary action? We have to stop the funding of terrorism. I decided, along with Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, our great generals and military people, the time had come to call on Qatar to end its funding — they have to end that funding — and its extremist ideology in terms of funding.

I want to call on all other nations to stop immediately supporting terrorism. Stop teaching people to kill other people. Stop filling their minds with hate and intolerance. I won't name other countries, but we are not done solving the problem, but we will solve that problem. Have no choice.

This is my great priority because it is my first duty as President to keep our people safe. Defeating ISIS and other terror organizations is something I have emphasized all during my campaign and right up until the present. To do that, stop funding, stop teaching hate, and stop the killing.

For Qatar, we want you back among the unity of responsible nations. We ask Qatar, and other nations in the region to do more and do it faster.

I want to thank Saudi Arabia, and my friend, King Salman, and all of the countries who participated in that very historic summit. It was truly historic. There has never been anything like it before and perhaps there never will be again. Hopefully, it will be the beginning of the end of funding terrorism. It will, therefore, be the beginning of the end to terrorism. No more funding.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump and President Iohannis of Romania in a Joint Press Conference," [White House](#), begins 14:51 EDT, 9 June 2017.

The [Washington Post](#) observed that Trump appeared to undercut Tillerson. Trump appears to believe that Qatar deserves to be blockaded.

On 21 June 2017, the U.S. Secretary of State attempted to move the Qatar crisis toward a resolution, by urging that a list of "reasonable and actionable" demands be "soon" given to Qatar. [State Dept](#).

On 23 June 2017, Saudi Arabia and 3 other Gulf nations sent Qatar a list of 13 demands,

including that Qatar terminate its *Al-Jazeera* broadcaster. [The Guardian](#); [CNN](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#). I suspect that the criticism of Qatar for funding Islamic terrorists is just pretext, and the real reason the Gulf nations are angry with Qatar is *Al-Jazeera's* reporting of news.

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, French president Hollande, U.S. president Obama, and U.S. Secretary of State 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.

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 in my essay for [April 2017](#), 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 Tillerson said there is "no role for [Assad] to govern the Syrian people." 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. And on 11 April, Tillerson took two different positions on Assad in one press briefing.

On 15 May 2017, the White House press spokesman spoke about the U.S. position on Assad. The State Department also had a few briefings today on the next step in addressing the Assad regime and the horrors it has committed on the Syrian people. The Trump administration believes that Syria's political future should be decided by Syrians in a free, credible and transparent process. However, we also believe that in a free process it's unimaginable that Syrians would choose to continue under the Assad leadership.

Syria will never be stable and secure as long as Assad is in power. The Assad regime has sunk to a new level of depravity, and it has done so with seemingly unconditional support from Russia and Iran. For these reasons, we continue to support the political transition process contained in U.N. security resolution 2254, and support the political process taking place under U.N. oversight in Geneva.

Sean Spicer, "Press Daily Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer — #48," [White House](#), 15 May 2017.

My comment is that Syrians will have a choice between Assad, someone from the opposition who has *no* experience in government and who has difficulty making decisions, or a leader from Nusra or ISIL. Assad is clearly the least worst leader for Syria. UN Security Council Resolution 2254 is seriously flawed and the "political process" in Geneva has accomplished nothing in 17 months.

On 22 June 2017, the new French president, Emmanuel Macron, declared that removing Assad was *not* a priority for the French government. Macron said: "Because no one has introduced me to [Assad's] legitimate successor!" — apparently a comment on the lack of suitable leaders for Syria. [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [The Guardian](#).

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.

My essay for [April 2017](#) mentions that *no* negotiations occurred in Geneva during April, as de Mistura futilely waits for the ceasefire to improve.

My essay for [May 2017](#) mentions that de Mistura held negotiations in Geneva for only four days during May.

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 occurred on 3-4 May 2017, at which the guarantors created four safe zones inside Syria.

Full-text of all publicly disclosed ceasefire agreements for Syria, including the Astana agreements, is available at rbs0.com

On Saturday, 3 June 2017, Syria's ambassador to Moscow announced that the next

negotiations in Astana were scheduled for 12-13 June. [Reuters](#). But on 8 June, [RIA-Novosti](#) reported that the meeting in Astana had been "postponed for weeks", without setting a new date.

The Astana agreement on 4 May specifically promises in ¶7 that "The Guarantors shall take steps to complete by 4 June 2017 the preparation of the maps of the de-escalation areas and security zones and to separate the armed opposition groups from the terrorist groups" But 4 June came and went without any agreement on detailed maps of the "de-escalation areas" (i.e., safe zones) and without separation of terrorists from other opposition groups. My search of RIA-Novosti on the night of 13 June found *no* announcement of the results that were promised on or before 4 June. Legally, this is a breach of the 4 May agreement by the so-called guarantors (i.e., Russia, Turkey, Iran).

My interpretation is that the 4 May Astana agreement was a propaganda stunt by Russia, to quickly (in two days) assemble some agreements on easy issues, with a promise to agree on the difficult issues by 4 June. But when the 4 June deadline arrived, the world had forgotten about the 4 May promise. Strangely, the monthly death toll in the Syrian civil war is approximately half of the average death rate during 2016 — so it appears that either the end of December 2016 ceasefire or the 4 May safe zones are having a beneficial effect.

On 13 June, Russia announced new negotiations in Astana are scheduled during 4-5 July. [RIA-Novosti](#); [Reuters](#). These meeting dates were confirmed on 19 June. [RIA-Novosti](#).

On 14 June 2017, journalists asked de Mistura about the missed Astana 4 June deadline.

QUESTION: The mapping out of the de-escalation zones was supposed to be finished by June the 4th, and they were supposed to agree on who would administer and observe the zones, so have these deadlines been met, as far as you know?

de Mistura: No, they have not been met, because this is a complicated process and while we are talking there are actually meetings, I am aware of them, taking place just on these issues and I do know that there is an aim of having an Astana meeting sometime early July, which is just before Hamburg, and perhaps just before we may be wanting also to relaunch Geneva talks.

"Transcript of stakeout by United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura in Oslo, 14 June 2017," [U.N. Geneva](#), 14 June 2017.

Copy at [U.N.](#)

Agence France Press tersely reported:

But a parallel peace process involving allies of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Russia and Iran, and rebel supporter Turkey, agreed in May to establish four safe zones across Syria where flights would be banned and aid deliveries ensured.

The zones — where aerial bombardments were supposed to stop — have ushered in a marked decrease in fighting.

But that plan, agreed in the Kazakh capital Astana between some of the war's major players, has stalled as sponsor nations disagreed over the precise outlines and which countries should send in forces to police the zones.

A new round of Astana talks had been scheduled for this week but were postponed indefinitely.

"Syria peace talks may resume in July: UN envoy," [Al-Arabiya](#), 16:43 GMT, 14 June 2017.

Negotiations in Geneva

In his 22 May 2017 briefing to the United Nations Security Council, at ¶23, de Mistura said: "I am also pleased that all parties were receptive to the UN convening a 7th round, which we intend to target sometime in June." [U.N. Geneva](#).

But then there were *no* Syrian negotiations in Geneva during June 2017.

On 14 June 2017, de Mistura spoke tersely about the date for the next negotiations in Geneva.

de Mistura: ... I do know that there is an aim of having an Astana meeting sometime early July, which is just before [the 7-8 July G20 summit in] Hamburg, and perhaps just before we may be wanting also to relaunch Geneva talks.

QUESTION: When could it be for Geneva?

de Mistura: We will not say exactly the date at the moment, because that could be quite a scoop. They need to be in July, and they will be in July, and it will be after Ramadan, but also once we would have helped and made sure that the de-escalation really works, that's why everything is a little bit (inaudible) in the same direction.

"Transcript of stakeout by United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura in Oslo, 14 June 2017," [U.N. Geneva](#), 14 June 2017.

Copy at [U.N.](#)

De Mistura hints that Ramadan (26 May to 25 June) may have caused the lack of negotiations in Geneva during June 2017. I remember in May 2016 that de Mistura said that it was acceptable for Muslims to fight in Syria during Ramadan, so Muslims could come to peace negotiations during Ramadan. De Mistura's actual words were:

Our respect for Ramadan is huge, so we are fully conscious that Ramadan has an influence on all we do in the region in particular. But you are right, if people are willing to fight during Ramadan, there are no reasons why we shouldn't have reliable people who could speak during Ramadan.

Staffan de Mistura, "Note to Correspondents: Joint press stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Adviser, Jan Egeland," [U.N.](#), 19 May 2016.

But there were *no* Syrian negotiations during Ramadan in 2016 or 2017.

I say that the lack of Syrian negotiations during Ramadan is *not* the fault of de Mistura, but should be blamed on Syrians who are pursuing a military victory, and who are intransigent. The Syrian civil war has killed *more* than 330,000 people, destroyed the Syrian economy and infrastructure, and caused millions of Syrians to flee from Syria. But the lackadaisical response to negotiations in Geneva by so-called leaders of the opposition shows a lack of concern about the suffering of the Syrian people. In the three months from 1 April 2017 to

30 June 2017 there were only 4 days of negotiations in Geneva (16-19 May) and *no* results during 17 months of negotiations since January 2016. That is an appalling track record by the Syrians. Among other things, it shows the opposition leaders are unfit to lead Syria.

At the previous negotiations in Geneva on 16 May, de Mistura announced the formation of a technical group to write a new constitution for Syria. The first meeting of this group was on 15-16 June 2017. Assad's government did *not* attend this first meeting. [U.N. Geneva](#).

On Saturday, 17 June, de Mistura told the delegates to arrive in Geneva on 9 July and be ready to negotiate on 10 July. [Reuters](#); [U.N.](#).

On Tuesday, 27 June 2017, de Mistura briefed the U.N. Security Council on the intractable problems in Syria and futile negotiations, except de Mistura was gushing optimism and unrealistic hope. Here is the entire transcript"

1. Let me start by giving a summary of what is our own analysis based on the latest developments and on some of the possible future steps ahead. As usual in Syria we have a mixed picture and I have to refer to it. There have been some interesting technical steps in advance of the 7th round of intra-Syrian talks that will take place as you know very well by now on the period of the 10-14 July. There are currently serious efforts on the other hand underway to deliver further agreements and implementation agreements regarding the de-escalation zones before an Astana meeting which is planned on the 4-5 July. But there have also been worrying developments which we cannot ignore and we will elaborate a little bit on that. We are at a time of testing whether the political will exists for real de-escalation and more meaningful political talks and move beyond preparatory talks.

2. Throughout this period, Mr. President, dear representatives of the Security Council, the UN has been quite active, convening joint technical meetings with opposition experts, seeking to support the efforts of the Astana guarantors on de-escalation, consulting widely including in Moscow and Paris and with many others, and laying the basis for a new round of the Geneva talks — and also having consultations with our colleagues in the European Union. Let me map this out for you and look to where we can go next.

Mr. President,

3. In the last round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, I did announce the establishment of a technical consultative process — you remember, that was an additional layer that we believe can be very helpful in actually abolishing layers by accelerating the real talks. This technical consultative process was meant to develop relevant options on constitutional and legal issues that would need to be considered anyway and resolved anyway in relation to any proposals and positions put forward in formal sessions. This was designed in fact to help the formal talks to progress more expeditiously, and be better prepared by ensuring that any negotiated transitional political process would enjoy solid technical constitutional and legal foundations. Let me give you one example, some times ago as you will remember, we had a moment of truth in Afghanistan, many years ago, I was around and some of you were. And there was a feeling that nothing was moving forward until at a certain point there was a rush for

conference in Bonn. Much of the work had been already prepared. Preparatory work which appears sometimes to be tedious, sometimes not conclusive, was immediately put in action and utilized as homework preparing for the Bonn conference. Well we are in a certain way doing something similar, waiting for the major Geneva conference, God willing.

4. We made it clear that the consultative process created was technical — as you know everything we do is political but the particular emphasis in this case were technical — expert and non-binding in nature. It was not designed, and it is not designed to act as a negotiating forum, to take on the political responsibilities of the formal sessions, or to take on itself the Syrian people's right to determine the constitutional future of the state of Syria. But it is a serious process because it does prepare for this.

5. You will recall that both the Government and the three opposition invitees to the intra-Syrian talks — those mentioned in [U.N. Security Council Resolution] 2254 — all agreed, last time, to participate in separate consultations under this consultative process, and indeed we were able to do so separately in the last round for at least two days.

6. Since then, there has been a potentially significant new development. On 15 and 16 June, two days [weeks?] ago, opposition experts from the High Negotiations Committee and the Cairo and Moscow platforms convened jointly, together, in the same room, in Geneva at the invitation of the UN within the framework of the consultative process. This was the first time a joint set of UN meetings with the opposition invitees in one room has taken place, and not only for protocol reasons, but substantively discussing during the whole day among them and with us — and we believe we must build on this.

7. The opposition experts worked to develop joint technical options regarding the schedule and process for drafting a new constitution and its popular approval. They also discussed the principles involved, covering the substance of the so-called living 12 points that we did put forward in round 4 [24 March 2016]. The experts also discussed these issues in the context of a negotiated political transition process within the framework of relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

8. While such expert meetings are by nature exploratory and non-binding, the joint meeting brought to light welcome similarities and common technical and perhaps even political understanding of various issues, and could potentially be the beginning of greater technical coordination among these three groups and we hope you will be helping us in supporting these three groups to do so in order to show unity.

9. The participants felt that more work could be even more productive, and my office has, therefore, accordingly invited them to participate next week in a further set of joint meetings in the framework of the consultative process on constitutional and legal issues, ahead of the seventh round of formal intra-Syrian talks, taking place as you know in July.

10. You will recall that the Government of Syria which was by the way the first to

commit to the technical process, communicated to me that it would participate in expert meetings in the framework of technical consultation process during formal sessions of the intra-Syrian talks — but not outside those formal occasions. I therefore look forward to experts from my team continuing during the 7th round the engagement that began with experts from the Government during the 6th round.

11. Naturally, the UN remains ready to engage with the Government experts at any mutually convenient time, including before and after formal talks.

Mr. President,

12. In my formal invitations to the forthcoming round of the intra-Syrian talks, I encouraged the invitees to prepare actively. I look forward therefore, to them engaging in an intensified set of discussions on issues across all four baskets — governance issues, constitutional issues, electoral issues, counter-terrorism, security governance and medium term confidence-building issues. I hope it will be possible to accelerate the peace talks. I am giving consideration to sharing some of my own thinking on certain issues in order to stimulate the parties.

13. If the environment is propitious, I am also ready to seek to facilitate direct talks between the Government and the opposition, hopefully unified opposition, in those talks, either at the formal or technical level. This is something that all sides have stated more than once they want, and I hope conditions are being created that could enable this.

14. I also believe it would be important to aim for a further round towards end August or early September, in advance of the September General Assembly meeting.

15. Both during and between the upcoming rounds of formal talks and expert meetings, my team will continue to closely engage with the members of the Women's Advisory Board of Syria and the Civil Society Support Room and listen to their suggestions and practical advice. In particular, my team and I continue to strive to engage with and hear the priorities of more women's organizations, including those working across Syria, inside Syria, during and between rounds of intra-Syria talks.

16. In this context, I should note that, following the last round of intra-Syrian talks, we did activate our Civil Society Support Room, which allowed us to consult with more than 50 civil society organizations and experts from all walks of life and different expertise, from both within and outside Syria.

17. The more we engage with these interlocutors, the more we are convinced that civil society will be critical to preserving and indeed regenerating the social cohesion of a country that for too long has been torn apart by war.

Mr. President,

18. As we advance the overall political effort unfolding under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva, efforts are continuing by the three guarantors to finalize

modalities for the implementation of the Astana de-escalation memorandum concluded on 4 May. A meeting of the guarantors is planned for Astana to be in Astana on 4 and 5 July. I plan to be present at that meeting.

19. With every week that passes, we know it, without a final arrangement for the de-escalation zones being indeed finalized, the fragility of the ceasefire regime and the risk posed by the fragility increases. I am aware of the genuine efforts currently being undertaken to try and overcome the remaining obstacles, as was witnessed by my own team of experts from my own office during the recently held technical-level meeting of the joint working group on de-escalation in Moscow.

20. The UN team continues to stand ready to provide technical advice, whenever and wherever needed. Because we need a success in Astana, as Astana desperately needs a success in the Geneva political process in order to consolidate what we are all trying to do. Let's give de-escalation efforts a fair chance to succeed because that is what people are asking in order to bringing the violence further down and enabling confidence-building.

21. I also express the hope that the discussions aimed at finding a suitable formula for addressing the difficult situation that has emerged in the south of Syria, will also yield positive results.

Mr. President,

22. As we plan for Geneva intra-Syrian talks and as the Astana guarantors work for de-escalation, let us recall what has been achieved and some of the challenges that are still to be met on the ground.

23. Since the three guarantor states signed the de-escalation memorandum on 4 May in Astana, violence is clearly down. Hundreds of Syrian lives continue to be spared every week, and many towns have returned to some degree of normalcy.

24. That is a good general trend, but it is not the same good trend everywhere. In some areas, the fight and violence has been continuing and in fact intensified.

25. The overall significant improvement of the security situation on the other hand has not, and we have to recognize that, regrettably, yielded equally significant progress on humanitarian access to areas where the needs are the greatest. The support of the ISSG co-chairs and other ISSG members has been helpful, and efforts are continuing. However, let me be honest, much more needs to be done — and urgently — to enable safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all Syrians, wherever they are, particularly in the areas which have been difficult to reach.

26. Let me also stress the importance of moving forward on the issue of detainees, abductees, missing people and on the important issue of humanitarian demining. Let me express here my appreciation to UNMAS for its continuing engagement in this regard.

Mr. President,

27. We note that the fight against terrorism appears to be proceeding with Daesh under pressure and in retreat in various locations in Syria. The same time incident between the international anti-ISIL coalition and forces of the Government of Syria and its allies, including the downing of a Syrian military plane, have taken place.

28. As I see it, the ideal trajectory over the coming two weeks would be: progress in Astana on 4-5 July; then a further set of joint technical expert meetings with the opposition groups in the same week; and then a continued discussion and dialogue hopefully among international stakeholders (including at the G20 Summit in Hamburg on 7-8 July), in which Syria can not be avoided as a subject. And all this in support of both the Astana de-escalation efforts and the intra-Syrian Geneva-based political process. I hope that a combination of these elements would help shape an environment conducive for the next round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva in the months to come, and bring us one step forward on the journey towards our shared goal of implementing the resolutions of this Council, in particular 2254. All the political efforts of the United Nations are directed towards this end, and we continue, with the guidance of the Secretary-General to count on the strong support of all of you and of the Security Council as a whole. Thank you.

Staffan de Mistura, "Note to Correspondents — Staffan de Mistura, UN Special Envoy for Syria, Briefing to the Security Council," *U.N.*, 27 June 2017. [A few typographical errors were corrected by Standler. Text inside brackets inserted by Standler.]

My comments:

- The most recent formal negotiations in Geneva were on 19 May 2017. The next negotiations will begin on 10 July — *no* negotiations for 52 days. There is *no* explanation for this lazy schedule.
- There have been *no* concrete results from 48 days of the Geneva negotiations that began 17 months ago, at the end of January 2016. Despite this failure, negotiations since March 2017 are scheduled less frequently and for fewer days. Instead of meeting every month for at least 10 days, the negotiations now meet once every two months for 4 or 5 days.
- De Mistura touts his "technical consultative process", but it has met for only two days since 19 May 2017, and without Assad's government. There is *no* explanation for this lazy schedule.
- At the 4 May 2017 meeting in Astana, the guarantors promised in writing to have, with a 4 June deadline, agreements on exact boundaries of the four safe zones. But 23 days after their deadline, there is still *no* agreement. Does anyone really believe that the guarantors — three rogue nations (Russia, Iran, Turkey) — are going to reach an agreement that both Assad's government and the insurgents will respect?
- Worse, the Geneva agreement by foreign meddlers on 30 June 2012 — 5 years ago (!) — and enshrined in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2118, called on Syrians to

prepare a new constitution. U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254 of December 2015 at §4 recalled and reiterated the need for a new constitution, and established a deadline of 18 months (i.e., June 2017) for elections under the new constitution. But the drafting of a new constitution has not yet begun, because of delays by the leaders of Syria, both the opposition and Assad's government.

- My previous essays chronicle the history of failed Geneva negotiations in 2014. There was a 7 May 2013 proposal by Lavrov and Kerry for negotiations in Geneva. Owing solely to delays by the Syrian National Coalition (the main opposition group at that time), the negotiations in Geneva actually began on 24 January 2014 — a delay of 8 months. Those negotiations ended in frustration on 15 February 2014.

With this long history of delays and failure to accomplish anything concrete, I suggest that it is unrealistic to expect the so-called leaders of the Syrian opposition (i.e., Syrian National Coalition and High Negotiations Committee) to accomplish anything in the future. Therefore, I suggested in February 2016 and April 2016 that a new opposition delegation be created by de Mistura for the Geneva negotiations. The new opposition could consist of delegates from de Mistura's "Women's Advisory Board of Syria and the Civil Society Support Room", the Moscow and Cairo opposition groups, and any political opposition groups inside Syria.

Because the third U.N. Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, frequently refers to the Nth round of negotiations, I posted a [table](#) of all the rounds of negotiations in Geneva. This table reminds us how rarely the parties meet in Geneva and their failure to accomplish anything.

__ June 2017: Day Nr. 49

I am including the above centered heading as a symbolic reminder of what could have been the 49th day of negotiations in Geneva during 2016-2017. Instead, de Mistura is waiting for a better ceasefire to come from Astana, and waiting for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan to end.

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

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.

My essay for [April 2017](#) mentions the evacuation of Al-Waer suburb of Homs and the evacuations of the Four Towns. 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, killing at least 126 people, mostly children.

My essay for [May 2017](#) reported the first month of safe zones inside Syria, and evacuations of insurgents from several towns.

Continuing War in Syria

On 5 June 2017, Syrian Kurdish forces supported by the USA began an assault on the ISIL-controlled city of Raqqa. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).

On 6 June the U.S.-led coalition had an airstrike on a pro-Assad militia sponsored by Iran. The U.S. previously had an airstrike on that militia on 18 May 2017. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).

Back in 2013-2014, I wrote an [essay](#) that chronicled attacks by Islamic terrorists on health care workers who were giving polio vaccine to children in Pakistan and several other Muslim-majority nations. I titled my essay "Polio in 2013-2014: Now an Islamic Disease?", because all other nations were free of polio. On 8 June 2017, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) reported an outbreak of polio in Deir al-Zor, a town in Syria that is controlled by ISIL. [Reuters](#). [Below](#), I quote a U.N. briefing: "And as of 6 June, 58 acute flaccid paralysis cases have been reported in Deir ez-Zor in 2017," The number of polio cases will surely increase.

On 17 June 2017, Assad's army unilaterally declared a ceasefire in the southern city of Deraa, for 48 hours beginning at noon Syrian time on 17 June. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP). On 20 June 2017, the ceasefire had expired, so Assad's warplanes resumed bombing Deraa. [Al-](#)

[Arabiya](#); [Reuters](#).

Since November 2015, there have been some U.S. Military personnel inside Syria, advising Kurds and Arabs in their battle against ISIL. On 18 June 2017, a Syrian warplane conducted an airstrike near fighters supported by the U.S. Military, so a U.S. F-18 shot down the Syrian warplane. This is the first time that the U.S. has shot down a Syrian warplane. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Russia responded by declaring it would track U.S. warplanes over Syria and west of the River Euphrates as potential targets, and Russia also suspended the airspace de-confliction program. (The de-confliction program was previously suspended by Russia after Trump's cruise missile attack on a Syrian airbase on 7 April 2017.) [Reuters](#). The U.S. Government piously invoked its right of self-defense in shooting down the Syrian warplane, while the U.S. ignored that its troops were unlawfully inside Syria, in gross violation of Syrian sovereignty. [Reuters](#).

On 20 June 2017, the World Health Organization reported 15 new cases of polio in Deir al-Zor, of which one victim had come from Raqqa in Syria. [Reuters](#).

June 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, there were only a few briefings during 2017: 19 Jan, 16 Feb, 6 and 20 April, 11 May, and 15 June at which a dismal and worsening situation for delivery of humanitarian aid was described.

On Thursday, 15 June 2017, Jan Egeland gave a press briefing in Geneva:

Thank you very much, we just finished a meeting of the Humanitarian Task Force of International Syria Support Group. We laid out a number of very worrying trends in Syria and especially bad things that keep affecting the civilian population in this war that has lasted longer than the second world war and is continuing in too many places in Syria. First, the Task Force was created, among other things, to provide access to besieged and hard to reach areas. We have not had a 40-day period before without access by land to any besieged area and it happened today. The last time we reached a besieged area by land interagency convoy was the 2nd of May to Douma, we haven't been able to reach any of the remaining, nearly a dozen of besieged areas where there are still more than 600,000 people. This could change this weekend because yet again we are trying. A convoy is scheduled to go today to Homs and Hama, which are hard-to-reach areas, and this weekend to besieged areas in Eastern Ghouta. It is unacceptable that we do have trucks ready, courageous humanitarian workers eager to go even in great danger often, warehouses full and civilians in need and then bureaucratic impediments, lack of permits, infighting among armed groups, no clearance from the government, leaves us unable to reach women and children and others in great need.

We are continuously working outside of besieged areas to reach areas in great need. Courageous humanitarian workers have been now traveling for days this week to open

a new corridor from Aleppo in the west to Qamishli in the east, going through northern Syria and we are hopeful that we will be able to reach that place very soon now, within hours hopefully and that would mean that a very expensive air bridge to Qamishli in the north-east of Syria can be substituted by the only sensible thing which is road convoys.

Let me mention also three very concerning developments in three regions of Syria connected actually to war. Number one, tens of thousands of civilians are now trapped inside of Raqqa city. A tremendous battle is being waged, the attacking forces are closing in on Raqqa city, there is intense bombardment from the air and it's very hard for the civilians to get of Raqqa. There are reports that air attacks cause civilian casualties and that it has made it hard for civilians to flee, as certainly the ruthless ISIL fighters are making it very hard for civilians to leave the area, it could not be worse inside Raqqa city than it is today. Equally bad in the southern city of Daraa, we had an appeal from the Daraa provincial council with a talk about intensive bombardment of Daraa city, including the use of barrel bombs and they say that it destroys hospitals and degrades infrastructure and the statement calls for international assistance to Daraa city. We are reaching Daraa governorate by cross border assistance, it is very hard to reach a city like Daraa in that kind of urban warfare.

In Deir ez-Zor governorate, which is held by the Islamic State fighters except for Deir ez-Zor city which is besieged by them and where we reach the population by air drops, in the governorate and the countryside there is a very dangerous polio outbreak. This is a particular virus called VDP. It is extremely rare and I am informed by our good WHO doctors that it can only occur when population immunity is very low and thereby left susceptible to the polio virus. We are trying to reach all parts of Deir ez-Zor, which means also using local medical authorities that still exist there with vaccines but certainly a polio outbreak is a sign to the world, to the Syrians, to everybody that this war has lasted too long, the population is really too weak and it's been too difficult to do the immunization campaigns needed to avoid epidemic disease.

....

QUESTION: The Commission of Inquiry presented their oral update to the Human Rights Council and there was mention that there had only been one UN aid convoy this year and it wasn't clear what they meant. To besieged areas or hard-to-reach areas? Maybe you could just tell me how many there have been?

Egeland: It has been, let us also distribute this (UNOCHA interagency operations humanitarian update) if we haven't yet. It basically says how many convoys, where and when. No, there are dozens and dozens of convoys to hard-to-reach areas and even numerous convoys to besieged areas this year, although it's often half of what it should have been.

Our standard is that we should go to all of the besieged areas and all of the hard-to-reach areas every single month. There is the capacity to do that, we have enough trucks, we have enough supplies, we have enough humanitarian workers. It's very uneven when and where we can go but there are certainly lots of convoys. In March for

example we had a relatively high number of convoys, for example. I should also say that it's a very fluid arena now, more things happen per month now than per year earlier in terms of shifting front lines. There were some ten local agreements, some of them good, some of them bad, some good elements, often bad elements where, you know, besieged areas virtually become not-besieged because armed fighters leave with families. We have criticized many of those agreements because that doesn't seem adequate protection standards for civilians, but it has led to access Al-Waer which I frequently talked about during the previous press conferences, we could go to it with an assessment mission and what we could see was that humanitarian aid and commercial traffic is now flowing freely into Al-Waer and there are 17,500 people there, and there was a local agreement that led to this.

....

Egeland: And as of 6 June, 58 acute flaccid paralysis cases have been reported in Deir ez-Zor in 2017, so 58 cases and then they have isolated the strain and that's why you can confirm that this is a rare bad virus.

"Transcript of press briefing by Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the Special Envoy for Syria," [U.N. Geneva](#), 15 June 2017.

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.

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 — three 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.

In his 23 May 2017 monthly report, S/2017/445, the United Nations Secretary General again said: "I continue to reiterate my call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court," Amongst the possible war crimes during April 2017, the Secretary General noted:

1. "There were 30 credible reports of attacks on hospitals and medical facilities" in Syria during April 2017 alone.
2. The 4 April use of Sarin gas in Khan Shaykhun, Syria.
3. "The United Nations estimates that, as of the end of April, some 624,500 people were living under siege in the Syrian Arab Republic," 82% of whom are besieged by Assad's government. Both Assad's government and insurgents are impeding delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians in besieged towns.

In his 23 June 2017 monthly report, S/2017/541, the United Nations Secretary General again said: "I continue to reiterate my call for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court." See ¶44 of his report.

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 June 2017.

Then on 3 July 2017, Guterres appointed Catherine Marchi-Uhel to head the Mechanism. She is a former judge in France, and was later a judge in war crimes trials in Kosovo and Cambodia. [U.N.](#); [Associated Press](#). The United Nations offered *no* explanation for the four-month delay in appointing a head of the Mechanism.

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

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 415 Iraqi civilians killed in "terrorism, violence, and armed conflict" during June 2017, most of whom were in or near Mosul. [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.

Atrocities in Iraq

Introduction

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

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

June 2017: Islamic Terrorism in Iraq

On 9 June 2017, an ISIL suicide bomber exploded in a crowded market in a town 80 km south of Baghdad, killing at least 31 people. An ISIL bomb killed a few more people at a bus station in Kerbala. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

Conclusion to Atrocities in Iraq

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

Iraq is a Failed Nation

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).

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).
13. On 22 June 2017, [Reuters](#) reported that the Iraqi prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, said: "It's a matter of a few days and we will announce the total liberation of Mosul." Notice he did *not* say that Mosul would actually be totally liberated, but only that he would announce the liberation.

All of these promises quoted above were unfulfilled by the Iraqi army.

June 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. News about Mosul seems to be sparse, perhaps because journalists are concentrating on the larger problems in Syria.

On 3 June 2017, [Voice of America](#) reported that "Iraqi forces continue to get bogged down in ancient parts of [Mosul] where Islamic State remains entrenched." VOA quotes Iraqi Major General Najim Abdullah al-Jubouri: "It will take at least another month before we liberate the Old City because IS is using civilians as human shields." He estimated that ISIL has fewer than 1200 fighters holding less than 10 km² of West Mosul.

On 18 June 2017, the Iraqi army began the "final assault" on ISIL in the Old City in West Mosul. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).

On 21 June 2017, ISIL detonated explosives in the historic al-Nuri mosque in the Old City in western Mosul, destroying the mosque where ISIL leader al-Baghdadi on 4 July 2014 declared the so-called "Islamic State" caliphate. This mosque had existed for more than 800 years, but now it is rubble. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#). This is just another destruction of an antiquity by barbarians in ISIL.

On 24 June 2017, [Reuters](#) reported "Iraqi forces opened exit routes for hundreds of civilians to flee the Old City of Mosul", but that is a tiny fraction of the more than 100,000 civilians trapped and starving in Western Mosul. ISIL now controls less than 2 km² of Western Mosul.

On 27 June 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported "Counterattacks by Islamic State militants on the western edge of Mosul have stalled Iraqi forces' push in the Old City, the last IS stronghold in the battle" for Mosul.

On 28 June 2017, [Reuters](#) reported "Iraq's military pushed deeper into Mosul's Old City".

On 29 June 2017, the Iraqi military seized the ruins of the Grand al-Nuri Mosque (which ISIL had destroyed on 21 June) in the Old City. The Iraqi prime minister triumphantly declared the end of the ISIL caliphate. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#).

Islamic Public Relations Problem

Introduction

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

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

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

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

This continuing condemnation by Muslim clerics is *not* something that is nice to have. It is an essential element in fighting against Islamic terrorism. On 3 Dec 2014, sixty nations agreed that "ideological delegitimization" was one of five "lines of effort" that would be used to

defeat ISIL, see my essay for [Dec 2014](#). However, this program was quickly ignored by nearly everyone.

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

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

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

My Proposal

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

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

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

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

I suggest that the U.S. government fund a hundred small companies in Jordan, Saudi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Use ridicule and parody to humiliate ISIL and Al-Qaeda.

I have seen calls for Internet Service Providers to shut down websites that espouse Islamic terrorism. (See, e.g., plan for Europol to shut down ISIL's social media accounts.

[Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); 22 June 2015.) I am opposed to shutting down websites for three reasons:

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

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

Need to Kill *Ideology* of Islamic Terrorism

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

- In June 2006, a U.S. airstrike killed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (the predecessor of ISIL).
- In May 2011, the U.S. Military killed Osama bin Laden.
- In September 2011, a U.S. drone strike killed Anwar al-Awlaki, an Islamic cleric and Al-Qaeda terrorist in Yemen.
- On 9 June 2015, a U.S. drone strike killed Nasir al-Wuhayshi (aka al-Wahishi), head of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen). He was also the apparent successor to current Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.
- On 13 June 2015, U.S. fighter jets may have killed Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Libya. He is/was a leader in Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.
- On 16 June 2015, an airstrike in Syria smote "a senior ISIL leader", Tariq bin Tahar al-'Awni al-Harzi. [Reuters](#); [AP](#).
- On 11 July 2015, Abu Khalil al-Sudani, an Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan, was killed by a U.S. airstrike. The [Pentagon](#) boasted of the accomplishment. See also, [NY Times](#);

[Reuters](#).

- On 18 August 2015, a U.S. drone strike near Mosul killed the Nr. 2 leader of ISIL, Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali, also known as "Hajji Mutazz", "Abu Muslim al-Turkmani", or "Abu Mutaz Qurashi". [White House](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Rudaw](#). On 13 October, [Reuters](#) reports ISIL has confirmed his death.
- On 15 October 2015, a U.S. Coalition airstrike in Syria killed Abdul Mohsen Adballah Ibrahim al Charekh — also known as Sanafi al-Nasr — who was the leader of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Khorasan Group. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 12 November 2015, a U.S. drone airstrike in Syria apparently killed Mohamed Emwazi — a U.K. citizen also known as "Jihadi John" — who had executed at least 6 hostages (e.g., Steven Sotloff, James Foley, Abdul-Rahman Kassig, David Haines, Alan Henning, Kenji Goto) beginning in August 2014. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 13 November and 2 December 2015, U.S. airstrikes killed al-Qaida leaders in Libya and Somalia. [Pentagon](#).
- In "late November" 2015, a U.S. airstrike in Iraq killed Abu Salah, the financial minister of ISIL. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 29 December 2015, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S.-led Coalition airstrikes had killed 10 senior ISIL leaders during 7-27 December. Some of the dead leaders were involved in the terrorist attack in Paris on 13 Nov. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#) on 29 Dec; [Reuters](#) on 30 Dec.
- On 25 March 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that the U.S. Military had killed Haji Imam, "who was an ISIL senior leader, serving as a finance minister and who is also responsible for some external affairs and plots." Imam is also known as Abdul-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli. [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) spells the dead man's name as "Haji Iman — an alias for Abd ar-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli".
- On 4 May 2016, Australia announced that a Cambodian immigrant who had joined ISIL had been killed by a U.S. airstrike in Mosul on 29 April. His name was Neil Prakash, also known as Abu Khaled al-Cambodi. Neil had been featured in ISIL recruiting videos. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [ABC](#); [Sydney Morning Herald](#).
- On 9 May 2016, the [Pentagon](#) announced that an airstrike on 6 May had killed "Abu Wahib, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's military emir for Iraq's Anbar province". [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 21 May 2016, the leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, was killed by an airstrike from a U.S. drone in Pakistan. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [NY Times](#). [Reuters](#) reported: "The death of Mullah Akhtar Mansour ... could further fracture the Taliban — an outcome that experts cautioned might make the insurgents even less likely to participate in long-stalled peace efforts."

And [Reuters](#) reported the Pakistani government is wailing about the U.S. violation of Pakistani sovereignty. [Obama](#) was pleased that Mansour — also spelled Mansur — was killed by the U.S. military. Four days after Mansour was killed, the Taliban elected a new leader. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).

- On 4 August 2016, an Egyptian military airstrike killed the leader of ISIL in Egypt, Abu Doaa al-Ansari. [Ahram](#); [Associated Press](#); [Ahram](#)(18 Aug confirmation); [Al-Arabiya](#)(19 Aug).
- On 30 August 2016, a U.S. airstrike near Al Bab, Syria, splatted Abu Muhammad Al-Adnani. He is said to be the head of external operations of ISIL (i.e., in charge of attacks in Europe, etc.), a tactician, and their chief spokesman. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#)(31Aug); [Associated Press](#); [Al-Arabiya](#)(AFP); [Pentagon](#)(12Sep).
- On 8 September 2016, Abu Hajer al Homsî, 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).
- On 7 May 2017, journalists reported that the leader of ISIL in Afghanistan, Abdul Hasib, had been killed by U.S. and Afghani ground troops on 27 April. [Reuters](#); [NY Times](#).
- On 26 May 2017, the U.S. Military announced that three ISIL senior leaders had been killed by coalition airstrikes: Mustafa Gunes was killed on 27 April in Syria, Abu Asim al-Jazaeri was killed on 11 May in Syria, Abu-Khattab al-Rawi was killed on 18 May in Iraq. [Pentagon](#); [Reuters](#).
- On 31 May 2017, a U.S.-led Coalition airstrike killed Rayan Meshaal, the founder of ISIL's Amaq news agency. [Reuters](#).

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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](#).

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 at Shiite mosque in Kuwait on 26 June.
 8. On 26 June 2015, an ISIL terrorist killed 38 people on a beach in Tunisia. [Associated Press](#).
 9. On 1 July 2015, ISIL attacked Egyptian army posts in the Sinai, killing at least 64 Egyptian soldiers. [Associated Press](#).
 10. On 11 July 2015, an ISIL car bomb damaged the Italian consulate in Cairo, killing 1 pedestrian. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). Casualties were few because the bomb exploded at 06:30 local time, when few people were on the street. The attack shows that ISIL can strike anywhere.
 11. On 16 July 2015, ISIL in the Sinai Province of Egypt launched a missile that caused a fire on an Egyptian Navy ship. [Ahram](#) in Egypt; [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
 12. On 17 July 2015, the last day of the Ramadan month, an ISIL suicide truck bomb at a market in the Diyala province of Iraq killed at least 115 people.
 13. On 6 August 2015, ISIL captured the town of Qaryatain in Syria. [Associated Press](#); [SOHR](#). Also on 6 August, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated at a mosque used by Saudi Arabian police, killing at least 15 people. [Associated Press](#); [Arab News](#).
 14. On 12 August 2015, ISIL in Egypt beheaded a hostage from Croatia, who was an oil and gas surveyor and who was kidnapped by ISIL on 22 July. It was the first time ISIL in Egypt had killed a foreigner. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
 15. On 7 September 2015, ISIL captured the final Syrian oilfield. ISIL now controls *all* of the oilfields in Syria. [SOHR](#); [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#).
 16. On 22 October 2015, IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center reported that the number of terrorist attacks by ISIL in the Middle East and Africa increased by 42% from the second quarter of 2015 to the third quarter of 2015. [Associated Press](#); [Voice of America](#).
 17. On 31 October 2015, ISIL put a bomb aboard a Russian airplane carrying tourists from Sharm el-Sheikh airport in Egypt to St. Petersburg, killing 224 people. [The Guardian](#) (crash); [NY Times](#) (crash); [NY Times](#) (blame ISIL); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#) (bomb in soda can); [Reuters](#) ("Schweppes bomb").
 18. On 12 November 2015, ISIL claimed responsibility for a bombing in Beirut that killed at least 43 people. [Telegraph](#); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#).
 19. On the night of 13 November 2015, ISIL masterminded multiple attacks in Paris that killed 130 people. See my essay for [November 2015](#).

20. On 19 December 2015, the [Associated Press](#) has a headline: "Islamic State expands Afghan footprint with terror campaign". The previous day [Reuters](#) reported: "U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter warned of the threat from Islamic State in Afghanistan during a surprise visit days after the Pentagon painted a grim picture of worsening security there."
21. On 12 January 2016, a Syrian ISIL suicide bomber exploded in Istanbul, killing 10 tourists. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [Anadolu](#); [Hurriyet](#). This was apparently an attack on Turkey's tourist industry. [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).
22. On 29 January 2016, the United Nations Secretary General said there are now 34 terrorist groups who have pledged allegiance to ISIL. Ban Ki-moon said: "it is expected that ISIL affiliates will increase in number and that its membership will grow in 2016." [U.N. Report](#); [Associated Press](#).
23. On 21 February 2016, ISIL detonated two car bombs in Homs, Syria that killed at least 57 people. [Reuters](#). Two ISIL car bombs and two suicide bombers in the Sayeda Zeinab district of Damascus killed at least 87 people. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). At night on 22 Feb, [SOHR](#) claims a total of 190 dead in Homs and Zeinab.
24. On 22 March 2016, three ISIL suicide bombers killed 32 people at the airport and one subway station in Brussels. See my essay for [March 2016](#).
25. On 12 June 2016, an Islamic terrorist perpetrated the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, killing 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando Florida. The terrorist pledged allegiance to ISIL, although there is *no* evidence that ISIL communicated with him. See my essay for [June 2016](#).
26. On 16 June 2016, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John Brennan, testified before a committee of the U.S. Senate that "Unfortunately, despite all our progress against ISIL on the battlefield and in the financial realm, our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach." [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [CNN](#).
27. At night on 28 June 2016, three ISIL suicide bombers attacked an airport in Istanbul, Turkey. At least 42 people were killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#).
28. At 20:45 on 1 July 2016, seven ISIL terrorists attacked a bakery/restaurant in Dhaka, Bangladesh, taking hostages. The terrorists killed 20 hostages and 2 policemen. The terrorists had the hostages recite verses from the Koran, to identify who was a Muslim. The non-Muslim hostages were tortured and killed. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). While the Bangladeshi government attempted to deny that the terrorists were affiliated with ISIL, the terrorists belonged to a gang that had pledged allegiance to ISIL. [NY Times](#) ("... a local extremist group that has pledged loyalty to the Islamic State butchered diners in a restaurant."); [Reuters](#) ("... Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen claims it represents Islamic State."). Further, ISIL claimed credit for the attack in Dhaka. [The Telegraph](#); [Reuters](#). Moreover, the attackers uploaded photographs of their attack to the ISIL

headquarters in Syria. The children of upper-class parents had joined the terrorist gang, which the [NY Times](#) says is evidence of the radicalization of the population. More about the elite attackers is at [Associated Press](#) and [Reuters](#).

29. On 3 July 2016, an ISIL truck bomb detonated at a shopping center in Baghdad, killing at least 292 people. See my essay for [July 2016](#).
30. On 4 July 2016, an ISIL suicide bomber detonated in the parking lot outside the mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia, where the prophet Mohammed is buried. The blast killed four Saudi Arabian soldiers who were guarding the mosque. This attack is important because it occurred at one of the holiest sites of the Islamic religion. [Al-Arabiya](#); [Saudi Press Agency](#); [The Guardian](#).
31. On 14 July 2016, an ISIL terrorist drove a truck through a crowd of people in Nice, France, killing 86 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. On 12 May 2017, an ISIL bomb exploded targeted a convoy of automobiles for the deputy chairman of the Pakistan Senate, killing at least 25 people in the town of Mastung. [Reuters](#).
43. On 26 May 2017, ISIL attacked buses carrying Coptic Christians in Egypt, killing 29 people. The Egyptian government retaliated with airstrikes on ISIL training camps in Libya. [Reuters](#); [Al-Arabiya](#); [Los Angeles Times](#).
44. On 7 June 2017, ISIL gunmen and ISIL suicide bombers attacked Iran's Parliament and the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran, killing at least 12 people. [The Telegraph](#); [Reuters](#).
45. In June 2017, ISIL began an active insurgency in the city of Marawi, in the southern Philippines. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Navy Times](#).
- 46.

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 April 30, 2017, the total cost of operations related to ISIL since kinetic operations started on August 8, 2014, is \$13.1 billion and the average daily cost is \$13.2 million for 997 days of operations. A further breakdown of cost associated with the operations is [here](#).

"Operation Inherent Resolve," [Pentagon](#), 21 June 2017.

Note that the Pentagon's accounting includes 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.](#)

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, including the attack on the office of *Charlie Hebdo* satirical newspaper.
- My essay for [Feb 2015](#) describes the Islamic terror attack in Copenhagen on 14 Feb.
- My essay for [July 2015](#) describes an Islamic terror attack in Chattanooga, Tennessee (USA) that killed 5 people.

- 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. Two minor Islamic terrorist attacks in France are mentioned.
- 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: 86 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) a minor 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 4 people on Westminster Bridge and then killed a policeman at Parliament in London, England.
- My essay for [April 2017](#) described an Islamic terrorist who killed 15 people in the subway in St. Petersburg Russia, an Islamic terrorist who killed 5 people in downtown Stockholm Sweden, and an Islamic terror attack in Paris France.
- My essay for [May 2017](#) described an Islamic suicide bomber who killed 22 people at a music concert in Manchester 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.

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 disenchanted with their new home, and some will become radicalized. The radicalization will most likely occur via the Internet, but could also occur from personal contact with Islamic radicals in Europe.

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

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

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

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

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

On 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](#).

3 June 2017: Islamic attack in London, England

At 22:08 British Summer Time (BST) on Saturday, 3 June 2017, a van hit at least 5 pedestrians on the London Bridge. Three men got out of the van and used knives to attack more pedestrians. At 00:04 on 4 June, police said at least two victims had died. *The Telegraph* reported that a witness heard the three attackers on the bridge shout “this is for Allah” as they stabbed innocent victims.

The three attackers then drove their van to Borough Market, where they stabbed additional victims in restaurants and pubs and on the sidewalk. At 22:16 on 3 June, police shot to death the three attackers at Borough Market in a fusillade of 50 bullets.

Although all three terrorists were neutralized (i.e., shot dead) within 8 minutes of beginning their attack, the panic and confusion in London continued for at least three hours.

Just before midnight, one man was stabbed in the Vauxhall area. However, at 00:51 on 4 June police said the Vauxhall incident is *not* related to the two previous incidents. I mention the Vauxhall incident only because it is included in early news reports about the terrorist attacks.

At 03:53 on 4 June, police said 6 victims had died. The ambulance service transported at least 48 victims to hospitals. At 09:32 on 4 June, police increased the death toll to 7. On the morning of 7 June, the death toll increased to 8, as one corpse was pulled from the Thames River.

One remembers previous Islamic terror attacks, in which a Muslim terrorist drove a vehicle into a crowd of people:

1. 14 July 2016, rented refrigerator truck driven into crowd at Nice France, killing 86 people.
2. 19 Dec 2016, stolen truck driven into Christmas market in Berlin Germany, killing 12 people.
3. 7 April 2017, stolen truck driven into crowd in downtown Stockholm Sweden, killing 5 people. (The final victim died in a hospital on 28 April.)
4. 22 March 2017, Khalid Masood drove a rented SUV into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge in London, killing 4 people on the Bridge. (The fourth victim died in a hospital on 6 April.) Then Khalid ran to Parliament and fatally stabbed one policeman, for a total of 5 dead.

Relationship to ISIL

On 4 June, [Reuters](#) reported: “Islamic State, losing territory in Syria and Iraq to an advance backed by a U.S-led coalition, had sent out a call on instant messaging service Telegram early on Saturday [3 June] urging its followers to launch attacks with trucks, knives and guns

against ‘Crusaders’ during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.” See also [The Telegraph](#), on 26 May, updated 4 June.

At 22:26 BST on 4 June, ISIL's Amaq news agency claimed responsibility: "A detachment of Islamic State fighters executed yesterday's London attack." [Reuters](#).

On 4 June, police have *not* publicly named any of the three attackers, and Amaq also did not name any of the attackers. This shows that ISIL does *not* know the names of the attackers, and therefore ISIL did not sponsor the London attack. However, ISIL propaganda may have inspired or motivated the attack in London.

The Amaq claim of responsibility does show that ISIL approves of the terror attack in London.

About the three terrorists

On 4 June, police released *no* facts about the three terrorists. However, their choice of methods (i.e., running over pedestrians with a rented van, stabbings) is low-technology, suggesting either they were either uneducated or without resources to build a bomb. They had canisters strapped to their bodies, but the canisters were empty — a hoax suicide bomb vest.

On 4 June, the [Daily Mail](#) reports that one of the attackers was banned from a mosque, after he "repeatedly interrupted" the imam during a sermon. [The Independent](#) reported this attacker insisted that voting in the U.K. general election was unIslamic. The manager of the mosque is quoted as saying about this attacker: “He seemed an uneducated person. He seemed to have no knowledge of religion.”

On 5 June at 00:55 BST, [The Telegraph](#) reported that the attackers learned how to execute their terrorist attack by watching YouTube videos.

On 5 June at 18:00 BST, police announced the identities of two of the three Islamic terrorists. On 6 June at 11:00 BST the third attacker was named:

1. Khuram Shazad Butt — also known as "Abu Zeitoun" — 27 year old from Pakistan, was the mastermind. Butt was banned from a mosque in London, and watched YouTube videos (see previous two paragraphs).
2. Rachid Redouane — also known as "Rachid Elkhdar" — 30 year old, who claimed to be Moroccan-Libyan. He traveled from North Africa to Dublin Ireland, married a U.K. citizen, and was issued an Irish identity card that he was carrying during the 3 June attack.
3. Youssef Zaghba, 22 year old son of a father in Morocco. His mother is an Italian citizen who now lives in Bologna.

Note that all of the three Islamic terrorists were immigrants to the U.K., but only Butt was a U.K. citizen. One of the reasons for this terror attack was poor vetting of immigrants by the

U.K. government.

While neighbors of Butt had reported him to the police for his radical views, the police decided Butt was "low-risk" of being a terrorist. It is possible that the low-technology methods of his terrorist attack are consistent with his being a low risk for mass murder, large-scale bombing, etc. Note that the police in the U.K. are currently investigating approximately 3000 suspected terrorists, so police resources are spread thin. By focusing limited police resources on preventing major terrorist attacks, we may prevent one bombing that kills 25 people, but allow five little terrorist attacks that each kill an average of 5 people. This kind of problem is another reason why we should be devoting significant resources to fighting the *ideology* of Islamic terrorism, instead of concentrating all of our resources on arresting terrorists before or after they strike.

In contrast to the dismissive view of Butt by the U.K. police, Channel 4 television in the U.K. showed Butt with an ISIL flag in their January 2016 documentary titled *The Jihadis Next Door*, about the dangers of Islamic extremists inside the U.K. [Chan4](#); [The Telegraph](#); [The Independent](#). It is an embarrassment to the U.K. government that a television station is better able to identify future terrorists than the police.

On 15 March 2016, Zaghba attempted to fly on a one-way ticket from Bologna Italy to Istanbul, and then travel to Syria. But he was stopped at the Bologna airport, where he told police: "I want to be a terrorist." The Italians put Zaghba on an European anti-terror watchlist. Despite being on the anti-terror watchlist, the U.K. allowed Zaghba to immigrate to the U.K. [The Telegraph](#)(6June); [The Guardian](#)(6June); [Reuters](#); [The Telegraph](#)(7June); [The Guardian](#)(7June).

British Politics

On 18 April 2017, the U.K. Prime Minister dissolved Parliament and called for a national election on 8 June. Early opinion polls suggested her Conservative party was approximately 18% ahead of Labor, its largest competitor. (See, e.g., [Reuters](#)) But after the Islamic terrorist bombing in Manchester, the Conservative party support in opinion polls plummeted — but perhaps not because of terrorism. After three Islamic terrorist attacks in less than three months (i.e., Westminster Bridge on 22 March, bomb in Manchester on 22 May, London Bridge on 3 June) it is obvious that the U.K. needs a new anti-terrorism plan.

On the morning of 4 June, about 12 hours after the Islamic terrorist attack in London, the U.K. Prime Minister declared:

We cannot and must not pretend that things can continue as they are. Things need to change, and they need to change in 4 important ways.

First, while the recent attacks are not connected by common networks, they are connected in one important sense. They are bound together by the single, evil ideology of Islamist extremism that preaches hatred, sows division, and promotes sectarianism. It is an ideology that claims our Western values of freedom, democracy and human rights are incompatible with the religion of Islam. It is an ideology that is a perversion of Islam and a perversion of the truth.

Defeating this ideology is one of the great challenges of our time. But it cannot be defeated through military intervention alone. It will not be defeated through the maintenance of a permanent, defensive counter-terrorism operation, however skilful its leaders and practitioners. It will only be defeated when we turn people's minds away from this violence — and make them understand that our values — pluralistic, British values — are superior to anything offered by the preachers and supporters of hate.

Second, we cannot allow this ideology the safe space it needs to breed. Yet that is precisely what the internet — and the big companies that provide internet-based services — provide. We need to work with allied, democratic governments to reach international agreements that regulate cyberspace to prevent the spread of extremism and terrorist planning. And we need to do everything we can at home to reduce the risks of extremism online.

Third, while we need to deprive the extremists of their safe spaces online, we must not forget about the safe spaces that continue to exist in the real world. Yes, that means taking military action to destroy ISIS in Iraq and Syria. But it also means taking action here at home. While we have made significant progress in recent years, there is — to be frank — far too much tolerance of extremism in our country.

So we need to become far more robust in identifying it and stamping it out — across the public sector and across society. That will require some difficult and often embarrassing conversations, but the whole of our country needs to come together to take on this extremism — and we need to live our lives not in a series of separated, segregated communities but as one truly United Kingdom.

Fourth, we have a robust counter-terrorism strategy that has proved successful over many years. But as the nature of the threat we face becomes more complex, more fragmented, more hidden, especially online, the strategy needs to keep up. So in light of what we are learning about the changing threat, we need to review Britain's counter-terrorism strategy to make sure the police and security services have all the powers they need.

And if we need to increase the length of custodial sentences for terrorism-related offences, even apparently less serious offences, that is what we will do.

Since the emergence of the threat from Islamist-inspired terrorism, our country has made significant progress in disrupting plots and protecting the public. But it is time to say enough is enough. Everybody needs to go about their lives as they normally would. Our society should continue to function in accordance with our values. But when it comes to taking on extremism and terrorism, things need to change.

Theresa May, "PM statement following London terror attack: 4 June 2017," [PM Office](#), 10:30 BST, 4 June 2017.

Copy at [Reuters](#).

My comments on May's speech:

1. It is *not* for a Christian (e.g., Theresa May) to declare what is a "perversion of Islam". Islamic religious leaders must frequently explain that Islamic terrorist groups have perverted Islam.

I have been [saying](#) in my essays — beginning in June 2015 — that we need to defeat the *ideology* of Islamic terrorism.

2. Censorship of the Internet is a wrong policy. See [above](#). May is engaging in propaganda when she attempts to blame the Internet.
3. I agree with her criticism of liberal political correctness: "far too much tolerance of extremism in our country." We need to tell Muslims to clean up the mess that their extremists have made. Because Christians and Jews have *no* credibility in explaining the perversion of Islam by Islamic terrorist groups, the task falls on mainstream Muslims to refute the propaganda by Islamic terrorists and Islamic extremists.

But requiring all Muslims to assimilate to English cultural values ("we need to live our lives not in a series of separated, segregated communities") is an infringement on personal freedom. Is the Prime Minister seriously contemplating expelling Muslim citizens of the U.K. who refuse to assimilate?

4. Increasing length of prison sentences is *not* a good response to Islamic terrorism. These terrorists are willing to die for radical Islamic ideology, as shown by Islamic suicide bombers. Furthermore, there is evidence that many terrorists were radicalized during a previous prison sentence.

I do *not* know whether the Prime Minister was making a campaign speech or a serious policy statement, but her speech has some big problems.

The U.K. Foreign Minister, Boris Johnson, declared on his FaceBook webpage:
Today we collectively resolve to beat the terrorists and their nihilistic creed.

To those who sympathise or encourage or harbour or aid or abet these killers — in any way — we say enough is enough.

Your time is up. The wells of tolerance are running empty.

We will not let you disrupt our lives or our democracy.
Boris Johnson, [FaceBook](#), 12:50 BST, 4 June 2017.

On 5 June 2017, Sajid Javid — U.K. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and a Muslim — wrote:

Once again, our country has experienced terror. We react to such barbarity by expressing unity and defiant hope, believing that if we stand together terror can be defeated. But with three terrorist attacks in as many months it is time to face some hard truths. As Theresa May said in Downing Street yesterday, enough *is* enough.

We have seen all too often that there are some people in our country who reject our

shared values. Who are born here, raised here, have the same opportunities and advantages enjoyed by the rest of us, yet choose to turn on their fellow citizens in the most brutal way imaginable. We talk about the actions of a poisonous few, but the reality is that the problem is significant in size.

....

After any terrorist attack a lot of well-meaning people line up to say it has nothing to do with Islam. That the perpetrators are not true Muslims. They are, of course, right. But speaking as a Muslim myself, we need to ask ourselves searching questions.

As British Muslims, we rightly condemn terror attacks. But we must go further. It is not enough to condemn. Muslims must challenge too. This will take courage. All communities must feel confident in calling out extremism where they see it. It may be uncomfortable, people may feel embarrassed about making judgments, but we can no longer shy away from those difficult conversations.

There's no avoiding the fact that these people think they are Muslims. They identify as Muslims. And they carry out their attacks — ignorantly, offensively — in the name of Islam.

That's why, although we all share the responsibility for tackling terrorism, there's a special, unique burden on the Muslim community.

....

So why talk of a special burden? Because this terror will not be ended on the battlefield or through negotiation. A lasting peace will only come when young Muslims growing up in Britain decide that this is not their fight and they want no part of it. When they turn their backs on the preachers of hate.

We need them to set off on the path to peace rather than the road to war. We need to offer not just a counternarrative, which rebuts the extremists, but a positive and self-confident narrative that promotes pluralistic, British values — and their compatibility with an Islamic life. And that message can best come from within the Muslim community.

In the war against extremism we're not fighting against an army. We're fighting against an idea. And the battle for the hearts and minds of the next generation will be won in the schools. In the mosques. On the streets. In our communities. And in cyberspace.

Sajid Javid, "As British Muslims, we must do more than just condemn," [The Times](#), 00:01 BST, 5 June 2017. (Requires subscription to read.)

Part quoted by [The Telegraph](#) and in their [blog](#) at 07:30 BST.

My comment is there is a cliché about history repeating itself. One reason history repeats is that people do *not* listen to history and then avoid previous mistakes. And so it is *no* surprise

that we have been here before. See my comments about Islamic terrorism in my discussion of the Islamic terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo* satirical newspaper in Paris France on [Jan 2015](#). My essay for January 2015 also quotes from a letter by U.K. minister Eric Pickles and MP Tariq Ahmad that urged mainstream Muslim opinion leaders in the U.K. to help young Muslims reject extremism, but Muslim leaders rejected that letter. My essay for [June 2015](#) mentions a speech by U.K. Prime Minister Cameron that again called on mainstream Muslims to do more to oppose Islamic terrorism, a call that was again rejected by Muslims. Will the series of Islamic terrorist attacks in London and Manchester during March, May, and June 2017 will help motivate mainstream Muslims to do more to oppose Islamic terrorism? The answer is "no". On the nights of 6 June and 21 June, my search of Google News in the U.K. showed that Javid's article had been ignored.

On 5-6 June 2017, more than 200 imams and other Muslim religious leaders in the U.K. refused to perform funeral prayers for the three dead terrorists. [MCB](#) and three news articles cited [below](#). This rejection of Islamic terrorists as unIslamic is important symbolism, but it needs to be extended worldwide and highly publicized amongst Muslims.

On 6 June, an obviously desperate Theresa May declared she would change human-rights laws if those laws interfere with her fight against Islamic terrorism. [BBC](#); [The Guardian](#); [The Telegraph](#).

The U.K. general election on 8 June pushed the terrorist attacks out of the news on 7-9 June.

When U.K. prime minister and leader of the Conservative party dissolved Parliament in April 2017, she intended to increase the Conservative majority in Parliament to aid in the U.K. exit from the European Union (Brexit). But after the third U.K. terrorist attack in three months, on 3 June, security became the central issue. Stunningly, the Conservatives lost their majority in the Parliament. Before the election, the Conservatives had only 330 seats of 650 seats in Parliament. After the election, the Conservatives have only 318 seats, 8 short of the 326 seats needed for a majority. (See, e.g., [The Telegraph](#).) On the morning of 9 June, the Conservatives began negotiations with the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, to form a coalition government. The DUP has only 10 seats, so it will be a very weak coalition. One interpretation of the vanishing Conservative majority is the failure of the Conservative government to prevent Islamic terrorism in the U.K. caused the defeat of the Conservatives in Parliament. The Conservative government had decreased the number of policemen by 20,000 and allowed known Islamic extremists to immigrate to England.

Bibliography for attack in London, England

Live Blogs

- "Live — London terror attack: London Bridge, Borough Market and Vauxhall latest — at least two dead amid van attack, stabbings and gunfire," [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins at 23:02 BST, 3 June 2017.
- "Live — London Bridge attack latest:" [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins at 00:19 BST, 4 June 2017.

"Latest updates: London attack," [BBC](#), live blog begins at 01:43 BST, 4 June 2017.

- "Live — London Bridge attack latest:" [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins at 06:46 BST, 5 June 2017.
- "Live — London Bridge attack latest:" [The Telegraph](#), live blog begins at 07:19 BST on 6 June; ends 16:44 BST, 6 June 2017.
- "London Bridge Attack," [The Guardian](#), live blog begins at 08:00 BST, 7 June 2017; ends at 16:58 BST on 7 June.

News Articles

- Mark Rowley, "Statement on London Bridge and Borough Market terror attacks," [Metropolitan Police](#), 03:58 BST, 4 June 2017.
- "Arrests following attacks in London Bridge and Borough Market," [Metropolitan Police](#), 13:09 BST, 4 June 2017. ("The MPS would like to express gratitude to the public and the media for their ongoing support and strongly requests that no-one publishes or broadcasts any images purporting to show suspects as this risks jeopardising our investigation. The MPS also asks that no-one publishes or broadcasts the names of any alleged suspects.")
- "Police make 12 arrests in connection with London attack — statement," [Reuters](#), 13:19 BST, 4 June 2017. (The BBC reported that the arrests were during a raid of the apartment of one of the terrorists in Barking, in east London.)
- "Islamic State claims responsibility for London attack," [Reuters](#), 22:47 BST, 4 June 2017. (ISIL's Amaq news agency statement.)
- "London attack: Seven killed in vehicle and stabbing incidents," (main news article) [BBC](#), 4 June 2017.
- "Khuram Butt and Rachid Redouane named as London Bridge terrorists — everything we know about them," [The Telegraph](#), 14:07 BST, 5 June 2017.
- "'Enough is enough' May says after London attackers kill seven," (main news article on 4 June) [Reuters](#), 14:39 BST, 5 June 2017.
- "Updates: Two men shot dead by police following terrorist attack named," [Metropolitan Police](#), 18:00 BST, 5 June 2017.
- "Two London attackers named by police," [BBC](#), 18:23 BST, 5 June 2017. (Khuram Butt, 27 year old from Pakistan. Rachid Redouane, 30 year old claimed to be Moroccan-Libyan. On the afternoon of 5 June, "NHS England said 36 people remained in hospital, with 18 in a critical condition.")

- "Imams refuse funeral prayers to 'indefensible' London Bridge attackers," [The Guardian](#), 20:05 BST, 5 June 2017. ("More than 130 imams and Muslim religious leaders have said they will refuse to say funeral prayers for the perpetrators of Saturday's attack in London.")
- "UPDATE: London Bridge Terror attack investigation," [Metropolitan Police](#), 21:56 BST, 5 June 2017. ("All of the [12] people arrested on Sunday, 4 June, as part of this investigation have now been released without charge.")
- "London Bridge attack — everything we know," (summary of news 3-6 June) [The Telegraph](#), 09:57 BST, 6 June 2017.
- "More Muslim leaders refuse funeral prayers for London attackers," [The Guardian](#), 12:35 BST, 6 June 2017. (Imams: Islamic terrorists "not welcome in our community either in life or in death". Refusal to conduct funerals "intended to deter extremists who believe that acts of jihad will be rewarded" after death.)
- "British police name third London Bridge attacker as Youssef Zaghba," [Reuters](#), 12:36 BST, 6 June 2017.
- "UPDATE: London Bridge Terror attack investigation," [Metropolitan Police](#), 13:00 BST, 6 June 2017. (Youssef Zaghba "is believed to be an Italian national of Moroccan descent.")
- "Muslim leaders refuse to perform funeral prayers for London Bridge attackers," [The Telegraph](#), 15:05 BST, 6 June 2017. ("More than 200 Muslim leaders from across the UK have signed a statement condemning the terror attack that took place in London on Saturday — and saying they will refuse to perform the traditional Islamic prayers for the perpetrators at their funerals.")
- "London Bridge terror ringleader funded by benefits after mentor ordered him to claim 'Jihad Seeker's Allowance'," [The Telegraph](#), 21:30 BST, 8 June 2017. (Islamic cleric Anjem Choudary urged Islamic terrorists to claim welfare benefits, meaning taxpayers were funding Islamic terrorists. Butt claimed a Jobseeker's Allowance of about £300/month plus living in subsidized housing.)
- "London Bridge terrorists were thwarted in attempt to hire a 7.5 tonne truck on day of atrocity," [The Telegraph](#), 00:01 BST, 10 June 2017. (Butt attempted to rent a large truck, but failed to make the initial payment. So Butt rented a Renault van, "packing it with bags of gravel to make it heavier and have more impact as a 'battering ram'." The three Islamic terrorists put in the van "13 Molotov cocktails, which police believe they intended to ignite after going on their stabbing spree." The cocktails were "wine bottles full of lighter fluid and primed with rags as fuses." Police killed the terrorists before they could return to their van and throw the Molotov cocktails.)
- "London attack: seven in custody as 19-year-old arrested in Barking," [The Guardian](#), 16:23 BST, 12 June 2017. (A total of 21 suspects were arrested following the London

Bridge attack, of whom 7 suspects remain in custody.)

- "UPDATE: London Bridge Terror attack investigation," [Metropolitan Police](#), 19:20 BST, 16 June 2017. (Twenty people arrested have been released without charge. One suspect was arrested and charged with selling illicit drugs and released on bail.)

6 June 2017: Islamic student runs amok in Paris

At 16:20 Paris time on 6 June 2017, a 40 year old Algerian graduate student went to the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and attacked a policeman with a hammer. The student shouted "this is for Syria" during his attack. Colleagues of the policeman shot and wounded the student. [Reuters](#); [The Local](#); [The Guardian](#).

Although the Islamic terrorist attack was quickly ended by police, police overreacted by putting the Cathedral on lockdown, trapping 900 people — mostly tourists — inside the Cathedral for hours.

As Islamic terrorist attacks go, this was insignificant. But France last had an Islamic terrorist attack on 20 April 2017, so it is worth mentioning. One must wonder if the graduate student from Algeria was deranged, for choosing to attack a group of policemen with a hammer — an attack likely to get the student shot. Islamic terrorists in past years used sophisticated bombs and assault rifles, now they use ordinary tools like hammers or kitchen knives.

On 7 June, journalists reported that the Islamic terrorist was named Farid Ikken. He was a former journalist and public relations consultant. Since 2014, he had been working at the University of Lorraine on his doctoral dissertation about North African media. His nephew in Algeria, his thesis adviser in France, and a former colleague all agreed that Farid was *not* a radical Muslim. The former colleague told the Associated Press: "I'm more inclined to think that he has suffered a nervous breakdown." But a police search of Farid's apartment in France found Farid's video declaration of allegiance to ISIL. And Farid shouted "This is for Syria" during his attack. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [BBC](#).

On 10 June, Farid appeared in court in Paris and was charged with attempted murder in connection with a terrorist enterprise. [RFI](#) reported: "Prosecutor Francois Molins said Saturday [10 June] that the 40-year-old Algerian appeared to have become radicalised through the internet and Islamic State (IS) armed group propaganda."

Farid Ikken is an example of how an apparently intelligent, mainstream Muslim can suddenly become an Islamic terrorist.

My search of Google News on the night of 23 June found *no* articles on this topic after 11 June.

19 June 2017: Islamic car bomb in Paris

At 15:40 Paris time on Monday, 19 June 2017, Adam Djaziri — an Islamic terrorist — drove a car full of explosives into the lead car of a convoy of Gendarmes on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The terrorist detonated, committing suicide. No policemen were injured in the attack.

In addition to explosives and two gas cylinders in his car, the Islamic terrorist was carrying an AK-47 assault rifle, two pistols, and ammunition.

The [Associated Press](#) reported that the 31 year old terrorist was known to law enforcement for "links to extremism".

On 20 April 2017, an Islamic terrorist used an assault rifle to kill one policeman on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. CNN reminds us that there have been "five attacks in four months on security forces in Paris". The high state of alert in Paris, and the best efforts of the French government, are *not* completely protecting French citizens from Islamic terrorism. That means the French government will probably respond to Islamic terrorism with more intrusive security measures that will inconvenience everyone.

Bibliography for Paris suicide car bomb: (Paris time is GMT +2 hours)

- "Explosive-laden car rams police van on Paris' Champs-Élysées in 'botched suicide attack'," [The Telegraph](#), 14:16 GMT, 19 June 2017. ("Experts said that the curiously strange yellow smoke coming from the car suggested that it contained explosive material that failed to properly blow up on contact. Jacques Poinas, ex-head of the French anti-terror coordination unit, told BFMTV: 'It appears the explosive part didn't work. The device was apparently ignited but didn't go off. It could also be that that the assailant was too badly injured in the collision to go through with his plan.' ")
- "Car rams police vehicle on famed Paris avenue; attacker dies," [Associated Press](#) 17:00 GMT, 19 June 2017.
- "Car rams police van on Champs-Elysees, armed suspect dead," [CNN](#), 17:32 GMT, 19 June 2017.
- "Car rams police van on Paris' Champs Elysees, driver dead," [Reuters](#), 20:51 GMT, 19 June 2017.
- "Paris: 4 Family Members Detained After Champs-Elysees Attack," [Associated Press](#), 09:48 GMT, 20 June 2017. ("Two police officials identified the attacker as 31-year-old Adam Djaziri from the Paris suburb of Argenteuil.... The prime minister said Tuesday [20 June] that the man's gun permit was initially issued before he was flagged to authorities. Asked on BFM television why this attacker's permit wasn't rescinded, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said that 'if you take away a permit from someone who is the subject of surveillance or being monitored, he will quickly understand why it has been taken away. ... It's a difficult decision.' ")
- "Champs Elysees attacker was Islamic State loyalist, on French watchlist," [Reuters](#), 17:36 GMT, 20 June 2017. ("A source close to the investigation said the 31-year-old

assailant had sworn allegiance to Islamic State in a letter to his brother-in-law.")

- "Paris attacker on French watchlist was allowed to have gun permit," [The Times](#) of London, 23:01 GMT, 20 June 2017. ("[Adam] Djaziri, who was 31 and of Tunisian origin, died after he rammed his car into a gendarmerie van on the central Paris boulevard on Monday [19 June] afternoon. He tried to detonate a gas cylinder and died in the fire inside the vehicle.")
- "Prosecutor: Paris attacker asked family to see him as martyr," [Associated Press](#), 16:41 GMT, 22 June 2017. ("Paris prosecutor Francois Molins, citing a letter resembling a will that was dated Monday, the day of the attack on the French capital's famed Champs-Elysees Avenue, said the [Islamic terrorist] had pledged his allegiance to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and practiced shooting 'to prepare for jihad.' " Evidence from the investigation shows the suspect wanted to join IS forces in Syria and Iraq, the prosecutor said.")
- "Paris attack was work of jihadist with gun licence — prosecutor," [Reuters](#), 17:43 GMT, 22 June 2017.

The Islamic terrorist attack on a train station in Brussels on 20 June pushed out of the news the 19 June attack on the Champs-Élysées.

Recent Attacks by Islamic Morons

During February-June 2017, has been a series of ineffective attacks by Islamic terrorists in Europe:

1. On 3 Feb 2017, an Islamic terrorist from Egypt attacked two French soldiers who were checking bags outside the Louvre art gallery in Paris. The only damage during this Islamic attack was one soldier was slightly injured. The other soldier shot the Islamic terrorist four times, almost killing him.
2. On 18 March 2017, an Islamic habitual criminal attempted to grab a rifle from a French soldier at the Orly airport in Paris, and the attacker was shot dead. There was no injury to anyone else.
3. On 20 April 2017, an Islamic terrorist on the Champs-Elysées in Paris used an 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.
4. On the night of 3 June 2017, three Islamic terrorists killed a total of 8 people by using a van to run over some pedestrians on London Bridge and then used knives on a stabbing spree. The three terrorists died in hail of gunfire from police, just 8 minutes after the terrorist attacks began. (See [above](#).) Those Islamic terrorists could have killed more if they they had thrown their 13 Molotov cocktails into pubs and restaurants, instead of leaving the Molotov cocktails unused in their van. Instead of wearing hoax suicide

bomb vests, they could have worn packs filled with Molotov cocktails.

5. On 6 June 2017, an Algerian graduate student used a hammer to attack a policeman outside the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. The policeman's colleagues quickly shot this Islamic terrorist. (See [above](#).)
6. On 19 June 2017, an Islamic terrorist drove his car bomb into a convoy of Gendarmes on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The Islamic terrorist died at the scene of the attack, but *no* one else was injured. (See [above](#).)
7. On 20 June 2017 at 20:44 local time, an Islamic suicide bomber created a tiny explosion and fire, when he attempted to detonate his bomb on a luggage trolley in Brussels Central railroad station. His burning luggage then exploded a second time. Finally, the Islamic terrorist shouted “Allahu Akhbar” as he charged at a Belgian soldier, who shot the terrorist dead. *No* one else was injured. [Associated Press](#); [The Guardian](#); [The Telegraph](#). The day after the attack, journalists reported the Islamic terrorist was Oussama Zariouh, a 36 year old citizen of Morocco, who was living in the Muslim ghetto of Molenbeek in Brussels. The Associated Press reports that the Belgian federal prosecutor's office said the Islamic terrorist "sympathized with the Islamic State group". [Reuters](#)(10:25GMT); [Associated Press](#)(16:00GMT); [Reuters](#)(16:54GMT); [CNN](#). Police arrested four suspects during searches of houses on the night of 21 June, but released all four on the morning of 22 June. [Reuters](#).
8. On 21 June 2017 at 09:45 local time, an Islamic terrorist yelled “Allahu Akbar” then stabbed a policeman in the neck at the airport in Flint, Michigan. The terrorist — Amor Ftouhi, a 49 or 50 year old man from Tunisia who had immigrated to Canada 10 years ago — was arrested at the airport. Journalists report that court documents say: “Ftouhi also yelled something like, ‘You have killed people in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and we are all going to die.’ ” The criminal complaint also says Ftouhi asked the police officer who subdued Ftouhi why the policeman did not kill Ftouhi, which indicates that Ftouhi expected to die in his attack. [Michigan Live](#); [Associated Press](#)(blog); [CNN](#); [Reuters](#); [CBC](#). There is *no* explanation for why an Islamic terrorist living in Montreal would travel to Flint Michigan to stab a policeman.

On 22 June, the FBI said the knife used to stab the policeman was purchased in the USA by Ftouhi. Also Ftouhi attempted to purchase a firearm in Michigan, but the gun dealer turned him away because Ftouhi was not a resident of the USA. Further, Ftouhi drove his car from his home in Montreal to New York State on 16 June, then drove to Flint Michigan. [CNN](#); [Detroit Free-Press](#).

On 28 June, Ftouhi appeared in federal court, where he twice said "Allahu Akbar". [MichLive](#). Repeatedly saying "Allahu Akbar" in court strengthens the impression that he is an Islamic terrorist. Then on 5 July, Ftouhi entered a federal courtroom "chanting 'Allahu Akbar' five times while shuffling into the courtroom". [Detroit News](#).

Seven of these recent Islamic terrorist attacks were ineffective, because the terrorists used weak weapons to attack more heavily armed soldiers or police. Typically, the Islamic terrorist suffers the worst injuries in his attack, and the terrorist is often the only person killed/injured

in his attack. The Islamic terrorists would have been more effective if they had chosen better weapons or softer targets.

The 3 June attack would have been worse if the Islamic terrorists had chosen either (1) better weapons or (2) a remote location where police could not promptly respond.

There appears to be an ample supply of Islamic extremists who will commit terrorist attacks in Western Europe. However, history during February-June 2017 suggests that nearly all recent Islamic terrorists are too stupid to plan a scheme that will result in mass murder.

Increased surveillance by governments *may* be forcing Islamic terrorists to work alone, without communication with other terrorists or groups of terrorists. This isolation may be depriving Islamic terrorists of the benefits of specialist bomb makers with experience.

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, 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.

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, water infrastructure, and hospitals.
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 the 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.

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 330,000 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.

Conclusion for Iraq

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

There are several huge problems in Iraq:

1. The Iraqi government is corrupt. (See my essays for [June 2015](#) and [January 2016](#))
2. The Iraqi government is dysfunctional. During July-October 2014, the Iraqi Parliament *slowly* formed a new government — during an existential crisis. My essays for July 2014 through February 2015 summarized the infrequent meetings, and low attendance in the Iraqi Parliament. (See the summary for July through October 2014 in my [webpage](#).)
3. The Iraqi army was unable to stop the ISIL invasion during the first six months of 2014. In June 2014, the Iraqi army was exposed as at least partly cowardly, corrupt, and incompetent by its rout in Mosul and Tikrit, which abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles to be captured by ISIL. Astoundingly, in May 2015 the Iraqi army *again* fled and abandoned U.S.-supplied weapons and vehicles during a rout in Ramadi. This shows that the Iraqi government learned nothing from the rout in Mosul, 11 months before the similar rout in Ramadi.
4. The criminal justice system in Iraq is apparently incompetent and dysfunctional. The Iraqi government is unable or unwilling to prosecute:
 - A. corrupt politicians or corrupt government officials,
 - B. army officers who hired ghost soldiers,
 - C. desertion at Mosul on 10 June 2014,
 - D. fleeing from Ramadi on 17 May 2015, and
 - E. terrorists who kill innocent civilians in frequent bombings in or near Baghdad.(See my essay for [September 2016](#).)
5. Beginning in August 2014, my essays each month have chronicled suicide bombings, car bombs, kidnappings, and other horrible crimes in Iraq. Such attacks have become an almost routine part of life in Iraq since Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003. These continuing attacks are an indication that civilization has collapsed in Iraq.

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

It will take years to fix the defects in the Iraqi army, while effective troops on the ground are

needed *now* — truly were needed back in January 2014 — to prevent ISIL from capturing more cities and infrastructure. This lack of competent ground forces in Iraq is a glaring defect in Obama's strategy.

Need for Muslim Clerics to Continually Condemn Islamic Terrorism

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

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

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

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

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

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

U.S. War on Terror

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

war against Islamic terrorists.

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

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

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

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

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

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the corrupt and weak governments are unable to defend their nations from Islamic terrorists. Substantial numbers of U.S. Military personnel and many tens of billions of US dollars in both Afghanistan and Iraq also have not defeated the Islamic terrorists. No one is asking the question *why* Islamic terrorists are so successful in their battle, while national armies and police are unable to defeat Islamic terrorists. I suggest the holy concept of jihad resonates with terrorists, while it is difficult for soldiers and policemen to be enthusiastic about working for a corrupt, dysfunctional government.

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

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

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

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

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

- "As ISIS Loses Land, It Gains Ground in Overseas Terror," [NY Times](#), 3 July 2016.
- "Islamic State's ambitions and allure grow as territory shrinks," [Washington Post](#), 3 July 2016. ("U.S. intelligence officials say battlefield setbacks in Iraq and Syria appear to have driven the Islamic State's leaders to speed up their timeline for attacks abroad.")
- "More than 140 killed in Islamic State's worst ever bomb attack in the Iraqi capital," [Washington Post](#), 4 July 2016. ("U.S. officials have warned that the [Islamic State] group is likely to intensify its attacks overseas as it loses ground in Iraq and Syria, but civilians in the Middle East continue to bear the brunt of the campaign of bombings.")
- "Inside ISIS: Quietly preparing for the loss of the 'caliphate'," [Associated Press](#), 13 July 2016. ("U.S. counterterrorism experts believe the mass-casualty attacks in Istanbul and Baghdad in the past month were largely a response to [ISIL's] military reversals in Iraq and Syria." "... [ISIL]'s highly decentralized nature ensures that it will remain dangerous for some time to come, according to current and former U.S. officials and terrorism experts.")
- "As 'caliphate' shrinks, Islamic State looks to global attacks," [Reuters](#), 13:08 GMT, 31 July 2016.
- President Obama at 4 Aug 2016 press conference at Pentagon: "In fact, the decline of ISIL in Syria and Iraq appears to be causing it to shift to tactics that we've seen before — an even greater emphasis on encouraging high-profile terrorist attacks, including in the United States." [Pentagon](#). See also [Associated Press](#).

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

Soon ISIL will be defeated in its two capital cities — Mosul Iraq and Raqqa Syria. Some people in the U.S. Government apparently expect ISIL to disappear after ISIL is defeated on the battlefield. But ISIL will remain alive as a brand of Islamic terrorism, which will inspire attacks worldwide. My essays chronicle years of suicide bombings and car bombings in Baghdad, as well as ISIL taking credit for inspiring terrorist attacks in Russia and Europe.

This document is at <http://www.rbs0.com/syria46.pdf>
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The annotated [list](#) of my essays on Syria and my links to historical documents.

[my homepage](#)