

## The Folly of US Military Interventions in Iraq, Syria, and Libya Since 2011

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*This is a transcript of a video presentation by Virginia State Senator Richard Black to the 7 April 2016 Schiller Institute conference.*

**Senator Richard Black:** I'm Senator Dick Black, State Senator of Virginia. I have a long military history. I fought with the First Marine Regiment in Vietnam and also flew helicopters on quite a number of missions, so I'm very pro-military, but at the same time I have very deep reservations about what we're doing in Syria.

So, I'd like to talk with you, and I'd like to just give you a rundown on where we stand today and kind of how we got there. Syria is the essential nation in the Middle East, because everything revolves around Syria. What I will present is a brief countdown to the Syrian war. There are things that preceded it, obviously.

But I want to just start with 2001.

In 2001, the Pentagon started war-planning to topple the Syrian government. [Gen.] Wesley Clark said that after the 9/11 attacks he was in the Pentagon, visiting with the Secretary of Defence, and then he went and he spoke with a friend of his who was a general, and the general said, "Boss, you got to look at this." Clark said, "What is it?"

He said, "We're going to attack Iraq!" And General Clark said, "Why? Have we found something on weapons of mass destruction?" The general said, "No, it looks like we just figured we got a great military, and we got a problem, and we're going to do something with it."

About a month later, General Clark goes back in, and he looks up this same general. He says, "Is it still on? Are we still going to attack Iraq?" And the general said, "Hey, it's worse than that", and he pulled up a sheet of paper. He said, "we've got plans now to topple seven governments in the Middle East." Now, one of them was Syria. One of them was also Libya, which ties in with Syria, so I want to discuss both. But in any event, the war-planning had clearly begun in 2001.

Now, what's important about 2001? Well, the Syrian war did not begin until 10 years later. There were no uprisings in Syria. The Syrians were prosperous. It was one of the most prosperous nations in the Middle East, one of the most advanced. Syria had the greatest women's rights and the greatest religious freedom of any of the Arab nations. Think about that. Here, we've demonised Syria, and yet, they were the nation that had genuine freedom relative to all of the other Arab nations.

So we begin war-planning in 2001. WikiLeaks did a tremendous service, I think, to all of us, when it released some of the diplomatic communiqués out of the Syrian Embassy. A communiqué from the US Embassy in 2006 described a detailed plan for destabilising and undermining the Syrian government.



Virginia Senator Richard Black, in a video message he sent to the 7 April Schiller Institute conference in New York City.

The year 2011 becomes a very terrible year in Mideast history. This is when the so-called "Arab Spring" starts in Tunisia and then, all of a sudden, unrest spontaneously occurs in so many countries, as it often does when covert operatives go to work. The United States, Britain, and France took the lead, working together with Turkey, and with Qatar, and we promoted the Libyan uprising.

Now, why did we do this? Colonel Qaddafi had become the principal ally of the United States in the war on terror in North Africa. We had had our problems with him, to be sure, but they had been settled. We had normalised relations.

We went in there, and with the great help of Senator John McCain, we declared that there would be a "no fly zone". Now, a "no fly zone" is a strange name for a "free fire zone", but that's what it is. It's a free fire zone, where you go in and you literally bomb everything to smithereens. That's what we did.

By the time that we were finished in Libya, there essentially was no government, there was no culture, there was *nothing*. Everything was destroyed except for the Libyan arms supplies. Colonel Qaddafi had a vast supply of modern arms.

The purpose in overthrowing Libya was to be able to take these advanced weapons from Libya, send them through Turkey into Syria, to overthrow Syria. And this was their way of getting around having to go to Congress for appropriations, and having to say, "Hey, look, Congress. Let's go

## The folly of US Military interventions since 2011

in and let's attack an allied nation, a neutral, non-belligerent country, and murder its leader. What d'ya think?" I don't think they'd have gotten very far. It's much easier to simply stage a covert operation, and so that's what happened there.

This is the outline of where we were and how we got there.

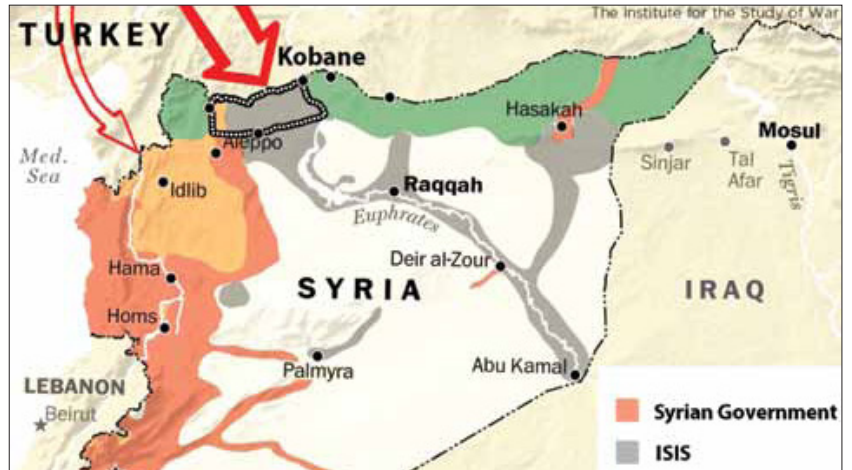
The Syrian war is often presented as a domestic uprising, an uprising of people who wanted freedom and democracy. A Defence Intelligence Agency study that was commissioned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff determined that this is essentially a myth, this idea of "moderate rebels". It has always been a myth. The Syrian rebels were heavily infiltrated and controlled by the terrorists from the very beginning.

### Saudi-Turkish sponsorship of terrorism

Now, what I'd like to do is go beyond that. If you go back to early in 2015, what had happened is the Turks and the Saudis had teamed up and they had formed something called the Army of Conquest. The Army of Conquest was based and centred around al-Nusra. Al-Nusra is al-Qaeda in Syria, and al-Qaeda, you'll recall, is the group that killed 3,000 Americans when they attacked the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on 9/11. So Turkey and Saudi Arabia put together this Army of Conquest, based on the *very people* who carried out the greatest attack ever on the American homeland.

Turkey runs along the northern border of both Syria and Iraq. Now what this map shows you here, the green portions are now controlled by the Kurds. You recall the heroic battle at Kobane? I have spoken to Kurds who were present on the Turkish side of the border. The Turkish army had protected the border with tanks, they put in 50 tanks. During the battle of Kobane, the Turks brought convoys of Red Crescent ambulances, which are like the Red Cross in the Middle East, and they loaded them with ISIS jihadist and they used the ambulances, which the Kurds obviously would not fire on, and they used them to carry ammunition and fresh troops into battle for ISIS. So this was going on.

Well, what happened was the Kurds finally managed to get the best of ISIS. They conquered ISIS and, rather than simple securing Kobane, they began to attack, and they began to move all the way across the border, and they began to seal it and to cut off access to Turkey.



This threatened to totally block access from ISIS. Now, the number-one ally of ISIS is Turkey. Turkey provides them with all of the arms, with all the ammunition, with hospitals to treat their wounded. They have regular routes where jihadists from all over the world are recruited and come in. They pay various rebels both in al-Qaeda and ISIS. Now, Turkey supplies the Army of Conquest, which is al-Qaeda based, through this gap over here, which they have opened up. But this Kobane gap is where ISIS is supplied.

Now, if you look at the grey area, the grey area is held by ISIS. ISIS has, or they did have, 1,200 oil tankers that were running oil through the Kobane gap—44,000 barrels of oil a day were transiting through there, and unlike the typical border controls that Turkey has over things flowing through, they wave the oil through. They knew what that was, and they knew where it was going. And it was going on the market, and they paid good money to ISIS. This was probably the major single source of financing for ISIS. But it wasn't the only one. The ISIS terrorists captured the wonderful, beautiful city of Palmyra, which was one of the architectural treasures of the world. They began to loot, and the looted material was sent up through the Kobane gap and marketed in Turkey. Additionally, in Mosul in Iraq, a city of a million or so captured by ISIS troops, they had seized major hospitals and they forced the doctors to do live removal of human body parts which would be packed in ice and shipped again through the Kobane gap and sold on the market through Turkey and also through Saudi Arabia. There is a tremendous amount of money in live body parts, because they could literally select the size. If you have a child, you could get a child's organs. There were various reports of

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Iraqi doctors who were beheaded for refusing—they simply refused to open up live children and extract their organs.

But this is the type of trade that our good ally, our NATO ally, Turkey, conducts. Turkey is essentially an organised criminal enterprise. This is how they function, this is how they fund themselves. The President of Turkey, President Erdogan, has now won total control of the Parliament, and they're going to rewrite the Constitution. He has declared that he wants powers similar to those of Adolf Hitler. We are now fighting alongside, in a coalition with, a man who says that he wants the powers of Adolf Hitler.

And so, as we negotiate for peace in Syria today, we have a spider on one side and a scorpion on the other, and those are Turkey and Saudi Arabia, two of the most vile dictatorships in the world. The Turks have a long history of murdering Christians in the Armenian genocide. They're now killing off Kurds within Turkey. The Kurds are about 20 percent of the Turkish population. We have Saudi Arabia, which has *absolutely* no freedom whatsoever. Women are viewed as total property, and there still is slavery that goes on. They officially abolished slavery in 1962, but it still goes on to some extent even to this day.

### The Russian intervention

So those are our grand allies, the ones that we think we should rely on to improve Syria. The Russians, in what can

only be described as an absolutely heroic act on the part of President Putin, moved in with a relatively modest military force. They attacked the oil supply, they began driving back the Army of Conquest and shrinking it in this area. They began bombing around Aleppo, the major industrial centre of Syria. Everywhere, the rebels, ISIS, and al-Qaeda are falling back on every single front throughout the country.

So, in summary, I would simply ask, what would end this war? If we want this war to end, and it is essential to American vital interests in the Middle East that Syria survive and that the terrorists be defeated, the way to do it is to cut off the TOW anti-tank missiles that we are continuing to send in and that we are allowing the Saudi Arabians and the Turks to send in. We must restore peace to the Middle East. Syria is the key to doing it. When this war ends, this tremendous wave of jihadist activity across the globe will begin to subside.

It's going to be essential that, as it does, we start putting the thumb on Saudi Arabia, which is exporting this Wahhabist *poisonous* breed of Islamic radicalism which causes, literally, thousands of attacks across the globe *monthly*, on a monthly basis! It's a remarkable number! And so, we've got to stop the terrorism, and the place to start is in Syria.

So, thank you very much for listening, and we hope that you enjoy the Schiller conference.

## Senator Black in Syria, to change US Syria policy

I ran's Press TV prominently featured Virginia State Sen. Dick Black's meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his advisors in Damascus on 28 April.

During the television clips of his meeting with President Assad, Sen. Black emphasised that what is happening in Syria is far from the disinformation being spread by some parties in the US administration.

President Assad, for his part, said that terrorism knows no borders and that the fight against terror requires a joint international effort—an effort not limited to the military level, but which includes battling the Wahhabism that is widely promoted by Saudi clerics.

Sen. Black also held meetings with other Syrian government officials, where he stressed his resolve to advocate better Damascus-Washington ties. "I will be Syria's voice", the official SANA Syrian news agency quoted Black as saying. Prior to his trip, Black said in a letter that he was travelling to Syria "in an attempt to restore peace and prevent the slaughter of Christians and other minorities" in the conflict-ridden Arab country.

On his Twitter account, Black wrote that he supported Assad because he was fighting the growth of the Takfiri<sup>1</sup> Da'esh terrorist group. "If Assad falls, ISIS (Da'esh) will secure Syria and march on Europe", Black's tweet said.

"Syria has greater women's rights and religious freedom than any nation in the Arab world", Black pointed



Virginia State Senator Richard Black (right) with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.  
Photo: AFP/Ho/SANA

out. Yet, "[the USA] is allied with two of the most vile nations on earth, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which are intent on imposing a [Wahhabi] fundamentalist government on the Syrian people."

Associated Press and *The Washington Post* responded with lengthy articles marked by incredulous ridicule of Senator Black's Syria trip, apparently amazed that an American legislator could act like a citizen of the world—especially toward a country not approved by popular opinion.

1. "Takfir" is the proclamation that someone is an unbeliever and no longer Muslim. Rightly rejected by mainstream Islam (since, as in Christianity, judgement belongs to God alone), it is used by Wahhabi extremists to justify their murder of those who reject their doctrine.

## Syrian reconstruction plans take shape

The government of Syria is already moving into a reconstruction phase, and is especially seeking cooperation with Russia and the other BRICS countries. Extensive discussions are being held with various Russian authorities for aid in reconstruction of the war-torn country, and there are even plans in the making for a reconstruction conference in which representatives of BRICS and other friendly countries would participate.

In an interview with RIA Novosti on 25 April, Syrian Prime Minister Wael Nader al-Halqi expressed his country's desire to expand wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in both reconstruction and long-term economic development. "The Russian side was receptive to the idea of restoring infrastructure; accordingly a number of deals were signed", al-Halqi said. RIA Novosti reported that the deals are worth some €850 million.

Al-Halqi also said Syria wants to become a hub for the promotion of Russian economic activity in the entire region. "We would like Syria to be considered not only within its geographical boundaries of its relatively limited economic market, but as a centre for the expansion and promotion of companies and industrial products in the entire Middle East region. Syria, with its geographical advantages, is capable of becoming a developed commercial and industrial centre for Russian companies in the markets of the Middle East", the prime minister said.

Al-Halqi reminded his interviewer that since July, Moscow and Damascus have discussed the possibility of Syria forming a free trade zone with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and its customs-free zone.

While Syria will begin the process of trying to get the Western financial sanctions against it lifted, al-Halqi said, Syria is very interested in opening a joint Russian-Syrian bank, with an equity participation of 50 per cent by each side that would be controlled by each country's central bank. He also said Syria will prepare detailed proposals for establishing mechanisms for conducting bilateral trade in national currencies.

As for energy cooperation, al-Halqi said that "the Petroleum Ministry has prepared strategic projects in the field of energy, gas and oil in land and sea, and it has presented proposals to companies from friendly countries, mainly Russia." His government has already given approval to Russian companies to take part in setting up and developing the oil refineries in Syria, in addition to building joint refineries in cooperation with Iran and Venezuela.

Another area of cooperation is the field of communications and high technology. "We welcome this cooperation with Russian companies", al-Halqi said. "Russian companies have the experience, knowledge and technical ability to provide these services, have channels of contact between the Ministry of Communications of Syria, its various divisions, and Russian firms. We, in turn, provide all possible sup-

port and encourage this cooperation."

The official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) reported on 25 April that Deputy Director General of the Syrian Investment Agency (SIA) Dr Inas al-Omawi had held discussions that day with the Russian Commercial Attaché in Damascus, Igor Matveyev. Dr al-Omawi revealed SIA's intention to hold a conference for reconstruction to seek new partners from the BRICS and other friendly countries. The conference would discuss prospects of investment and trade exchange, and avenues of cooperation to implement short- and medium-term joint investment in Syria.

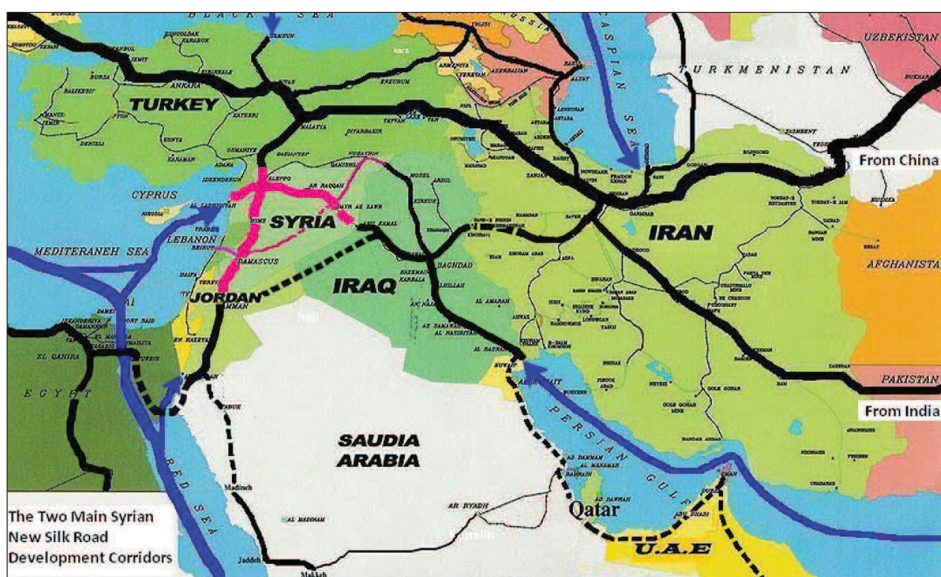
### China sends special envoy

Russia and China are discussing cooperation in the reconstruction of Syria. After holding talks with the Russian Foreign Ministry's Special Envoy for Middle East Settlement Sergei Vershinin on 28 April, China's Special Envoy to Syria Xie Xiaoyan told Sputnik, "China is positive about taking part in post-war reconstruction in Syria, and we are ready to cooperate with Russia and other relevant parties."

Commenting on the ceasefire and political process in Syria, Xie said, "Although now the political process might be slow, it has not been put on hold and the negotiations are continuing." As for the ongoing problems the peace talks have encountered, Xie said that the crisis "did not crop up overnight, so we should not expect to solve it overnight ... The negotiation is going to be an incremental process, and it is all very natural to experience some twists and turns and setbacks."

Xie made clear that "Russia, as you know, is China's comprehensive strategic partner of coordination, therefore China is ready to compare notes on a regular basis on the Syrian issue with Russia, and work closely together to make positive efforts to promote the political solution."

"We appreciate Russia in its unswerving efforts in fighting terrorism and promoting the talks" among the Syrian interlocutors, Xie said.



Map depicts routes for extending the New Silk Road Land-Bridge development corridors throughout the Middle East. Such a huge development perspective, "from Afghanistan to the Middle East, to the Mediterranean, and from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf"; is the only way to eliminate regional conflict and the resultant refugee crisis.