



## Obama Has a Plan Against ISIS, but Not “a Complete Strategy”

President Obama told reporters during a news conference at the Group of Seven (G-7) summit in Germany on June 8 that success against ISIS forces in Iraq is dependent on an “effective partnership” between Iraq and coalition partners, who must “coordinate more effectively in getting weapons in the hands of anti-ISIS forces.”



“The U.S. is going to continue to ramp up training and assistance,” Obama told reporters, but then admitted: “We don’t yet have a complete strategy.”

*The Hill* reported that while at the summit, Obama said the Pentagon has yet to submit a “finalized” plan “because it requires commitments on the part of the Iraqis as well about how recruitment takes place, how that training takes place.”

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“The details of that are not yet worked out,” he noted.

Obama met with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on the sidelines of the summit — the first meeting between the two since ISIS took control of the Iraqi city of Ramadi last month, which was a major blow to Iraq’s central government.

On June 10, during a press conference call, presidential assistant Ben Rhodes announced that after consulting with Abadi, Obama had made some new plans for the campaign against ISIS.

Elissa Slotkin, assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs, elaborated on those plans, noting that we will expand our advise-and-assist mission at Al-Taqaddum Air Base in central Iraq in support of the government of Iraq’s operations. The bottom line is:

We’ll add an additional 450 troops at this one site. This will bring our total up to 3,550 authorized across Iraq. These forces, again, will provide an advisory, training, and support role. They are not conducting offensive ground combat operations.

Slotkin’s revelation is very informative to those who think that U.S. military intervention in Iraq had ended or is dwindling down to nothing. Apparently, our involvement is escalating. A writer for the *Washington Post* observed of the increase:

President Obama’s announcement Wednesday that he is sending 450 more military advisers to Iraq highlights the central dilemma of his faltering strategy there: how to shore up the country’s fragile government without being pulled more deeply into a war he never wanted.

The *Post* writer’s statement may, however, give Obama too much credit for not wanting to get further involved in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. It is, rather, U.S. action that he approved that was responsible for the rise of ISIS in the first place. As Alex Newman noted in his article published by *The*



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*New American* last January ([“ISIS: The Best Terror Threat U.S. Tax Money Can Buy”](#)):

Without the U.S. government and Obama’s “coalition” of Sunni Islamist strongmen, the “Islamic State” would probably not exist — much less have the resources, weapons, manpower, and training needed to seize enough territory to create a “Caliphate” (Islamic Empire) of barbarism across large swaths of Iraq and Syria.

The basis for that statement was that the U.S.-led “anti-ISIS” coalition actually built up the terrorist group. U.S. involvement began as the civil war in Syria that began in 2011 — pitting various groups formed during the course of the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad’s government — continued. ISIS (also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL) entered the Syrian civil war on the side of the rebels and by July 2014 was in control of a third of Syria’s territory and most of its oil and gas production.

As the civil war in Syria raged, the United States decided that Assad was an undesirable strongman in the mold of Saddam Hussein who must be removed. (The vacuum created after the removal of Saddam from Iraq, which allowed ISIS to flourish there, had apparently not taught our government anything.) And so, our government decided to assist the “moderate” jihadist rebels fighting against Assad. However, many of these U.S.-supported “moderate” rebels defected to al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch, known as Jabhat al-Nusra, which was also reportedly working with ISIS. When these rebels left to join up with ISIS, they reportedly took their heavy U.S.-supplied weapons with them.

Two of the Obama administration’s top officials — Vice President Joe Biden and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Martin Dempsey — have publicly discussed the role of Obama’s “anti-ISIS” coalition in building up the terrorist group. Speaking at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government last fall, Biden admitted that despite all of Obama’s rhetoric, there is no such thing as a “moderate” force in Syria that our government claims to have been supporting in the war against al-Assad.

“The fact is, the ability to identify a moderate middle in Syria, um, was, uh — there was no moderate middle,” Biden stated. Therefore, the administration’s assertion that our government was arming “well-vetted moderate” jihadists in Syria to battle less-moderate jihadists is a complete fabrication that Biden’s public statement discredited.

Another curious factor regarding U.S. foreign policy toward ISIS is how our government views the relative positions of ISIS, the other rebel groups, and Assad. Since ISIS was part of the anti-Assad coalition, one might assume that the strongman would be solidly opposed to the terrorist group. This logical premise was readily supported in media reports until recently. A CNN report last September, “Obama’s Syria dilemma: Does hurting ISIS help al-Assad?” noted that U.S. airstrikes against ISIS might be helping Assad. CNN reported that a year earlier, “it was al-Assad’s forces, not Islamic militants, against which President Barack Obama was weighing military action.” The report continued:

Now, warplanes from the U.S. and Arab nations are pummeling the stronghold of ISIS, a group that has gained global notoriety for its brutal tactics and ruthless treatment of people who don’t follow its extremist version of Islam.

But ISIS, which controls broad areas of northern Syria and Iraq, has also been racking up military victories against al-Assad’s troops.

The Syrian regime may end up as “the real winner” from the expanded campaign against ISIS, said CNN Political Commentator Peter Beinart.



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CNN was merely following the conventional knowledge that Assad and ISIS were mortal enemies. Remember: It was while ISIS was an ally of the anti-Assad rebels that they benefited from U.S. aid to the rebel side.

However, note some reports in the major media, things have now changed. The *New York Times* ran an article last week headlined: "Assad's Forces May Be Aiding New ISIS Surge." The report noted: "Islamic State [ISIS] militants are marching across northern Syria toward Aleppo, Syria's largest city, helped along, their opponents say, by the forces of President Bashar al-Assad."

The *Times* reported that while neither American officials nor Syrian insurgents had provided any proof of such direct coordination between Assad and ISIS,

What is clear is that Mr. Assad and the Islamic State reap benefits by eliminating or weakening other insurgent groups. Mr. Assad can claim he is the only alternative to the Islamic State, and the Islamic State can claim it carries the banner of oppressed Syrians and Iraqis.

If there is any truth in such reports, what should be obvious is that the United States has no interest in taking sides in this mad, three-way power struggle for control of Syria. It should also be obvious that one of our last major forays into the region, to remove Saddam Hussein from power, upset the balance of power in Iraq and set the stage for ISIS and other militant Islamic groups to gain control of Iraq. Among the victims of this conflict to suffer the most have been Iraq's Christians, who prospered under Saddam and were allowed to practice their religion in peace.

Instead of sending 450 additional troops to Iraq, we would do better to bring all 3,550 of them home.

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