



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 26, 2014

Experts Doubt Authenticity of Foley Beheading Video

Following an explosive report in *The Times* of London citing forensic experts, the establishment press around the world is now reporting that the [video purporting to show the beheading of American journalist James Foley](#) by an Islamic State (ISIS) jihadist was probably “staged.” Other respected analysts had suggested that the execution footage could be bogus even before that. While it seems to be generally accepted that Foley was indeed killed, questions surrounding the barbaric alleged death and its implications continue to grow around the world. Countless theories and claims have surfaced purporting to explain it.



As doubts about the video spread like wildfire, Obama and other Western governments have already seized on it to advance various controversial objectives. The Obama administration, for example, citing the alleged threat of the Islamic State that supposedly beheaded Foley, announced unconstitutional military attacks in Syria and Iraq. Separately, U.K. authorities issued a warning to British subjects that even “viewing” the ISIS video purporting to show the journalist’s execution may be a crime under “terrorism” statutes in the United Kingdom. Analysts said the precedent was deeply troubling.

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Still, the video has been viewed by experts, and they concluded that it does not show what it purports to show. “I think it has been staged,” one of the unidentified “visual forensics experts” told *The Times* after reviewing the video footage for the newspaper. “My feeling is that the execution may have happened after the camera was stopped.” *The Times* report, based on the analysis of an international forensic science company with links to police forces across Britain, promptly sparked headlines throughout the United Kingdom and the rest of the world.

The forensic analysts cited in the original report highlighted the fact that, even after enhancements, no blood is visible up to the point where the picture fades to black. That is despite the video showing the knife going across the upper neck at least six times, the analysts told *The Times*. Separately, the sounds supposedly being made by the journalist during his alleged beheading also appear inconsistent with what would be expected, the paper reported. Prior to the purported execution, the footage also appears to include a “blip” that suggests Foley may have had to repeat a line.

Without explaining how it came to such a conclusion, the forensic analysis firm, which asked not to be named, claimed that there was no doubt that Foley had been killed — despite the apparent use of camera tricks and “slick” post-production manipulation. “No one is disputing that at some point an execution occurred,” the company said. Other analysts said such a conclusion seemed bizarre. ISIS, of course, has [posted numerous gruesome videos of its mass murder, beheadings, terror attacks, and other assorted horrors](#). Why would the outfit execute Foley but then stage a video of it, rather than just showing the real event?



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One purported explanation was offered by the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al Assad, which has been hard at work trying to crush ISIS and other jihadist forces — some backed by Obama — amid an ongoing civil war. According to Assad’s official spokesperson and political advisor, Bouthaina Shaaban, Foley was actually murdered a year ago after being captured by the Obama administration-backed Free Syrian Army (FSA) and then sold to ISIS.

“You can check with the UN,” Shaaban was quoted as saying in the *Daily Mail*, a leading U.K. newspaper, during an interview aired on the state-funded BBC. “James Foley was killed a year ago, not now, they only released the pictures now, but he was killed a year ago. We have definite information, the UN has the information.” While the brutal Syrian autocracy is hardly considered a reliable source, its claims about Foley have been widely reported in the international press. The UN has not confirmed whether it has information supporting the allegations.

Foley’s family and friends, meanwhile, blasted the claims made by the Syrian dictatorship, calling them “disgraceful.” Pointing to statements made by a Danish journalist who reportedly saw Foley in June while being held in captivity, Foley’s family suggested Assad’s claims could not possibly be true. GlobalPost chief Phil Balboni, Foley’s boss, also said the Syrian regime’s claims were “totally false” and “contradicted by a very significant body of incontrovertible evidence.” He said there were multiple accounts from hostages held with Foley as recently as last month. “It is a disgrace that this was ever broadcast,” Balboni added.

Even before *The Times* report and Assad’s claims sent shockwaves around the world, however, other experts were already questioning the video’s authenticity and urging caution as well. “Was Foley’s head really cut off? Hard to tell,” noted Eric Margolis, a prominent journalist who has often reported from dangerous war zones in the Middle East. “We have been fed so much fake government war propaganda in recent decades — from Kuwaiti babies thrown from incubators to Saddam’s hidden nukes — that we must be very cautious.”

For now, British authorities have identified U.K. rapper and Islamist Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary as the likely jihadist seen in the video purportedly executing Foley. However, the analysis commissioned by *The Times* concluded that the journalist was probably killed off camera, meaning the British ISIS terrorist may not have been the actual murderer. (This offers another explanation for why Foley might have been killed off-camera: The jihadists wanted an English-speaking member on film, and the one they found didn’t have the stomach to barbarically murder someone.) In the video, entitled “A message to America,” Foley offers a statement claiming that the U.S. government was actually responsible for his murder. Another American journalist being held hostage by ISIS is also shown, with a warning that he would be next.

Shortly after the alleged beheading video surfaced on August 19, the Obama administration announced more unconstitutional military intervention in the region without obtaining congressional approval. Senior Obama national security advisor Ben Rhodes said the U.S. government would “do what is necessary” and would not be constrained by borders. In other words, after repeatedly failing to secure authority to do so from Congress, Obama will finally be launching direct military strikes in Syria — something he has wanted to do for years despite overwhelming public opposition. [A previous claim pushed by Obama to justify launching a war in Syria alleging that Assad had used of chemical weapons eventually fell apart as a fraud.](#)

This time, the administration seems even more determined. “If you come against Americans, we are going to come after you,” Rhodes said at a news conference at Obama’s vacation spot. “We’re actively



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considering what's going to be necessary in dealing with that threat.... I think the American people understand that this president is very deliberate about military action. The American people also understand that there are some threats that have to be dealt with. We will take direct action against terrorists that threaten the United States.”

Left unmentioned, of course, is the fact that [the Obama administration played a crucial role in empowering the Islamic State](#) (also known as ISIS or ISIL) in the first place. By arming and training jihadists and terrorists in Syria to overthrow the Assad regime, U.S. taxpayers have literally armed and trained members of the Islamic State, which now styles itself a “caliphate” with authority over all Muslims. [Countless Christians and other minorities have since been slaughtered](#) by the terror group, [often using U.S.-supplied weapons](#).

Whether the Foley video was staged or not, what seems apparent at this point is that the footage served the administration's interests well — at least in terms of purporting to justify deepening U.S. involvement in the region. However, without a green light from Congress, Obama's machinations in Syria and Iraq remain illegitimate and unconstitutional. If the president wants to take military action, he has a constitutional obligation to secure approval from the American people's elected representatives.

Alex Newman, a foreign correspondent for The New American, is currently based in Europe. He can be reached at anewman@thenewamerican.com. Follow him on Twitter [@ALEXNEWMAN_JOU](#).

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