

James Mattis Allowed the ISIS Terrorists to Escape from Raqqa, Smuggled Out of Syria

By [Eric Zuesse](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Media Disinformation](#), [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

The U.S. Secretary of Defense, General James Mattis, made a secret decision to place the safety and welfare of some foreigners higher than the welfare and safety of the American people.

His number-one concern turned out to be the safety and welfare of the few remaining civilians who remained in Raqqa, and the safety and welfare of the U.S.-sponsored anti-Assad, Arab and Kurdish, mercenaries who have been America's proxy-soldiers, or "boots on the ground," fighting against ISIS at Raqqa in Syria (where America has no lawful presence but is instead only an uninvited invader, a violator of sovereign Syrian territory and even having the audacity to be trying to overthrow Syria's sovereign Government).

*As a consequence of Mattis's placing their welfare above that of the American people (and above that of all nations which suffer from jihadist terrorists such as ISIS), **thousands of ISIS terrorists were allowed by Mattis to escape from Raqqa and are now being smuggled out of Syria to perpetrate their terrorism here in the U.S., and elsewhere.** All of this happened because Mattis remains determined ultimately to overthrow the rule in Syria by its Ba'athist Party and that Party's leader, Bashar al-Assad.*

Mattis had promised not to do this — he had promised never to agree to any such outcome as releasing ISIS jihadists, but instead that the goal of the mission in Raqqa was ([he said](#)) to "annihilate ISIS. The intent is to prevent the return home of escaped foreign fighters" to their lands-of-origin and to their homes. That's the promise which any U.S. Secretary of Defense is duty-bound to honor, as his/her basic professional commitment in this entire matter — especially because that's *the commitment which his boss, Commander-in-Chief Donald Trump had given him about the matter.*

Concern for the welfare of the foreign fighting forces, and concern for the welfare of the very few civilians who had still remained in Raqqa at the time of the culmination of this secret deal, are fine, but they aren't the primary obligation of a U.S. Secretary of Defense, in any case. The United States and the other fighting forces during World War II, didn't hesitate to kill all in a particular city, in situations where the total defeat, conquest, of the enemy, was possible in no other way than to kill everybody there (it happened on many occasions, we bombed cities: wars routinely do that) — and this rationale was used on the Allied side (and not only on the fascist side), in that war, as being the 'justification' for horrific bombings. It was used even regarding the firebombing of Dresden, and the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan, at the war's end.

Each of those instances can be debated, but that they occurred is a non-debatable historical fact. It's nothing new to say that a President's first obligation is to his/her own nation. And, regardless of whether or not those instances were really justified, it isn't even the point here, because the United States, and even Defense Secretary James Mattis himself, have, *in precisely the Syrian matter, made quite clear* that they place the extermination of all ISIS jihadists as being the supreme purpose for the United States Government in Syria. They made this commitment, to serve the national-security interests of the American people, as being the most basic of their official duties. Candidate Trump had even made this very promise during his campaign — to kill all ISIS in Iraq and Syria. And, on 19 May 2017, Commander-in-Chief Trump's Secretary of Defense announced publicly that this was the command that he had just received from his boss.

During [a press conference on May 19th](#), Mattis announced that President Trump “directed a tactical shift from shoving ISIS out of safe locations in an attrition fight to surrounding the enemy in their strongholds so we can annihilate ISIS. The intent is to prevent the return home of escaped foreign fighters.”



That's quite clear instruction from the President. “Annihilate,” not imprison. “Annihilate,” not allow them to commit future acts of terrorism, not only in Syria but anywhere — including the United States. “Annihilate” means slaughter. The President, according to Mattis, wasn't placing qualifiers on that (such as to protect the few remaining civilians left in Raqqa at the end — which became the U.S. Defense Department's excuse for letting thousands of ISIS jihadists escape).

Trump knows, just like Mattis does, that protecting the lives of human shields — people amongst whom the enemy hide and who will be killed if the enemy itself is to be killed — is a concern, up to a point, but that, especially when dealing with jihadists, the only solution is to annihilate them regardless, so that they won't survive to recruit more, and to perpetrate more acts of terrorism anywhere.

Mattis said:

By taking the time up front to surround these locations, instead of simply shoving them from one to another and actually reinforcing them as they fall back, based on the recommendation that we made and the direction that President Trump took we now take the time to surround them. And why do we do it?

Because the foreign fighters are the strategic threat should they return home to Tunis, to Kuala Lumpur, to Paris, to Detroit, wherever. Those foreign fighters are a threat. So by taking the time to deconflict, to surround and then attack,

we carry out the annihilation campaign so we don't simply transplant this problem from one location to another.

He took full personal responsibility for having his subordinates carry out the President's command:

The generals who know how to do those kind of things — we don't direct that from here. They know our intent is the foreign fighters do not get out. I leave it to their skill, their cunning, to carry that out.

One reporter asked an incoherent question “on the annihilation change to encompassing cities” and promptly asked about timelines, so that the real issue here, which is how do you protect civilians when bombing and shooting at an enemy force that's occupying a city, could easily be ignored, but Mattis included in his answer:

it is a change in tactics, (inaudible), that we now surround these location — these concentrations of enemy. ... But the bottom line is the foreign fighters don't get out is our intent, or at least is greatly reduced in (inaudible) get back home again to bring their hate and discontent back.

Later in the press conference, he said:

The campaign designed end state remains the same; to destroy ISIS.

It's not to protect anyone except the American people (and in the process, to not be sending ISIS terrorists anywhere else — to not be increasing the terrorist threats to Europe or anywhere).

However, there was also this remarkable and totally uncalled-for spewing-of-hate against Iran, and against the leader of Syria, Bashar al-Assad:

SEC. MATTIS: The Iranian regime has been unhelpful. As you all know, some years ago when the Syrian people rose up against Assad, they would have been successful except for the Iranian reinforcements, full — full support for Assad. That's the reason he was able to withstand that difficult time and be still in position now. So Iran's activities have not been helpful.

They've been hurtful, they've extended a war that should have ended long ago. I've been in a lot of refugee camps over my years on active duty from — from the Dalmatian Coast to Africa and other places, seen boat people pulled out of the water off Vietnam. I have never seen refugees as traumatized as I've seen come out of Syria. Never. And Iran bears no little responsibility for that situation.

Either he's stupid there, or he's lying, because [all of the actual scientific polling of Syrians, even the polling that's done by Western polling firms and on behalf of governments that are dead-set against Assad's continuing to lead Syria, has shown, consistently, that a clear majority of Syrians want him to continue leading the country.](#)

Furthermore, all of the reliable reports from Syrian battlefields have indicated that there are far more people who have been fleeing from rebel-held territory to Government-held territory, than in the reverse direction, from Government-held territory to rebel-held territory. However, with [Mattis's clear](#) prejudice against Iran and against Shia, in favor of Sunnis, and especially "[James Mattis' 33-Year Grudge Against Iran](#)", it would be understandable why Mattis would have allowed thousands of ISIS terrorists (ISIS being 100% a fundamentalist *Sunni* operation) to escape. But Mattis's doing this, is clearly in violation of what he says was the command from his Commander-in-Chief. He'd have no argument if Trump fired him for this. And then, should come the court-martial.

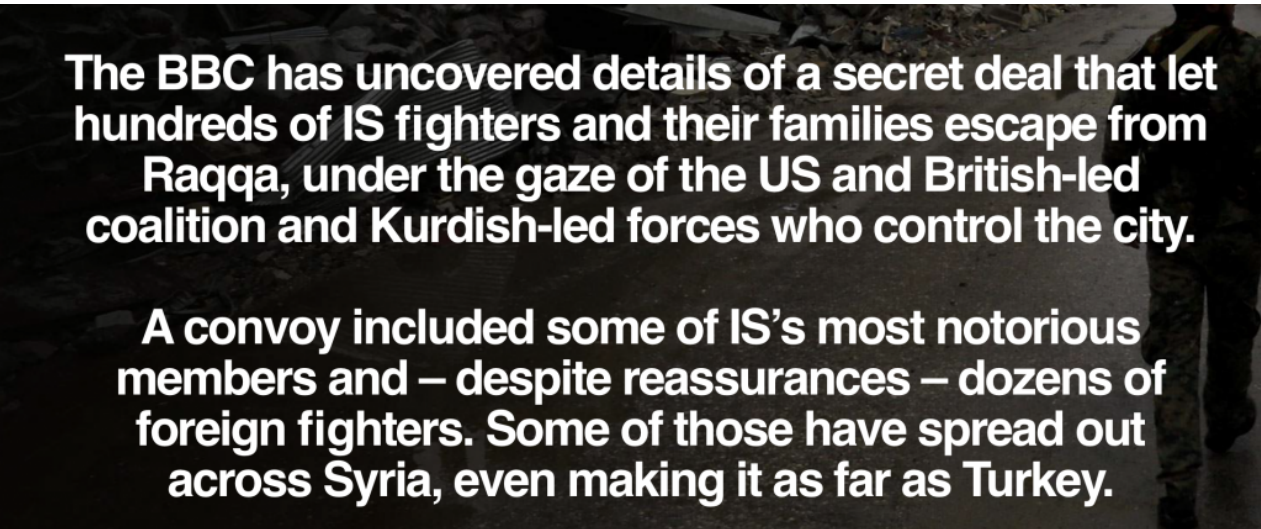
The November 13th news-report from the BBC regarding this matter, was absolutely devastating against Mattis — and, indirectly, devastating also against U.S. President Trump, for not subsequently firing him, for having violated the President's explicit command. Here are some highlights from that BBC report

To access the full BBC report click title:

[Raqqa's Dirty Secret](#)

by the BBC

[date not indicated but 13 November 2017]



The BBC has uncovered details of a secret deal that let hundreds of IS fighters and their families escape from Raqqa, under the gaze of the US and British-led coalition and Kurdish-led forces who control the city.

A convoy included some of IS's most notorious members and – despite reassurances – dozens of foreign fighters. Some of those have spread out across Syria, even making it as far as Turkey.

...

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...

Abu Fawzi and dozens of other drivers were promised thousands of dollars for the task but it had to remain secret.

The deal to let IS fighters escape from Raqqa — de facto capital of their self-declared caliphate — had been arranged by local officials. It came after four months of fighting that left the city obliterated and almost devoid of people. It would spare lives and bring fighting to an end. The lives of the Arab, Kurdish and other fighters opposing IS would be spared.

But it also enabled many hundreds of IS fighters to escape from the city. At the time, neither the US and British-led coalition, nor the SDF, which it backs, wanted to admit their part.

Has the pact, which stood as Raqqa's dirty secret, unleashed a threat to the outside world — one that has enabled militants to spread far and wide across Syria and beyond?

Great pains were taken to hide it from the world.

...

One of the drivers maps out the route of the convoy

"We were scared from the moment we entered Raqqa," he says. "We were supposed to go in with the SDF, but we went alone. As soon as we entered, we saw IS fighters with their weapons and suicide belts on. They booby-trapped our trucks. If something were to go wrong in the deal, they would bomb the entire convoy. Even their children and women had suicide belts on."

The Kurdish-led SDF cleared Raqqa of media. Islamic State's escape from its base would not be televised.

Publicly, the SDF said that only a few dozen fighters had been able to leave, all of them locals.

But one lorry driver tells us that isn't true.

"We took out around 4,000 people including women and children — our vehicle and their vehicles combined. When we entered Raqqa, we thought there were 200 people to collect. In my vehicle alone, I took 112 people."

...

This wasn't so much an evacuation — it was the exodus of so-called Islamic State.

...

It was also understood that no foreigners would be allowed to leave Raqqa alive.

Back in May, US Defence Secretary James Mattis described the fight against IS as a war of "annihilation". "Our intention is that the foreign fighters do not survive the fight to return home to north Africa, to Europe, to America, to Asia, to Africa. We are not going to allow them to do so," he said on US television.

But foreign fighters — those not from Syria and Iraq — were also able to join the convoy, according to the drivers. One explains:

There was a huge number of foreigners. France, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi, China, Tunisia, Egypt..."

Other drivers chipped in with the names of different nationalities.

...

In light of the BBC investigation, the coalition now admits the part it played in the deal. **Some 250 IS fighters were allowed to leave Raqqa, with 3,500 of their family members.**

"We didn't want anyone to leave," says Col Ryan Dillon, spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve, the Western coalition against IS.

"But this goes to the heart of our strategy, 'by, with and through' local leaders on the ground. It comes down to Syrians — they are the ones fighting and dying, they get to make the decisions regarding operations," he says.

While a Western officer was present for the negotiations, they didn't take an "active part" in the discussions. Col Dillon maintains, though, that only four foreign fighters left and they are now in SDF custody.

IS family members prepare to leave

...

Raqqa's freedom was bought with blood, sacrifice and compromise. The deal freed its trapped civilians and ended the fight for the city. No SDF forces would have to die storming the last IS hideout.

...

The men who cut fences, climb walls and run through the tunnels out of Syria are reporting a big increase in people fleeing. The collapse of the caliphate is good for business.

"In the past couple of weeks, we've had lots of families leaving Raqqa and wanting to leave for Turkey. This week alone, I personally oversaw the smuggling of 20 families," says Imad, a smuggler on the Turkish-Syrian border.

"Most were foreign but there were Syrians as well."

He now charges \$600 (£460) per person and a minimum of \$1,500 for a family.

...

Walid, another smuggler on a different stretch of the Turkish border, tells the same story.

"We had an influx of families over the past few weeks," he says. "There were some large families crossing. Our job is to smuggle them through. We've had a lot of foreign families using our services."

...

IS fighters were bombed to the negotiating table on 10 October.

"Air strikes put pressure on us for almost 10 hours. They killed about 500 or 600 people, fighters and families," says Abu Musab Huthaifa.

...

"After 10 hours, negotiations kicked off again. Those who initially rejected the truce changed their minds. And thus we left Raqqa," says Abu Musab.

...

"We didn't have heavy weapons anyway," Abu Musab says.

Now in jail on the Turkish-Syrian border, he has revealed details of what happened to the convoy when it made it safely to IS territory.

He says the convoy went to the countryside of eastern Syria, not far from the border with Iraq.

Thousands escaped, he says.

Abu Musab's own attempted escape serves as a warning to the West of the threat from those freed from Raqqa.

How could one of the most notorious of IS chiefs escape?

...

Abu Basir al-Faransy, a young Frenchman, left before the going got really tough in Raqqa. He's now in Idlib, where he says he wants to stay.

The fighting in Raqqa was intense, even back then, he says.

"We were front-line fighters, waging war almost constantly [against the Kurds], living a hard life. We didn't know Raqqa was about to be besieged."

Disillusioned, weary of the constant fighting and fearing for his life, Abu Basir decided to leave for the safety of Idlib. He now lives in the city.

He was part of an almost exclusively French group within IS, and before he left some of his fellow fighters were given a new mission.

There are some French brothers from our group who left for France to carry out attacks in what would be called a 'day of reckoning.'"

Much is hidden beneath the rubble of Raqqa and the lies around this deal might easily have stayed buried there too.

The numbers leaving were much higher than local tribal elders admitted. **At first the coalition refused to admit the extent of the deal.**

...

Raqqa was effectively IS's capital but it was also a cage — fighters were trapped there.

The deal to save Raqqa may have been worth it.

But it has also meant **battle-hardened militants have spread across Syria and further afield — and many of them aren't done fighting yet.**

All names of the people featured in the report have been changed.

Whereas the British BBC thinks that "The deal to save Raqqa may have been worth it," this was an American deal, and it violated what U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis publicly stated to be the instruction he had received from his Commander-in-Chief. If Trump intends to retain him, Trump should explain why it was okay for his Defense Secretary to violate his command. Allowing that disobedience to happen is a dangerous precedent — and it's occurring on top of the danger, now, of the thousands of ISIS terrorists whom the U.S. Government allowed to escape.

Furthermore, when one looks at the record of what candidate Trump had said during his campaign, firing Mattis is clearly in accord with what Trump was

saying at that time, such as (in the 15 December 2015 Republican primaries debate) “We have to get rid of ISIS first. After we get rid of ISIS, we’ll start thinking about it [invading Iran]. But we can’t be fighting Assad. And when you’re fighting Assad, you are fighting Russia.” So, President Trump knows that Mattis’s action here, placing the war against Russia’s allies **above** the war against ISIS, is profoundly wrong, and that it threatens WW III.

The site of the brilliant anonymous geostrategic analyst who writes the “Moon of Alabama” blog, posted, on November 23rd, his interpretation of the evidence, that Trump is just the stupid stooge of a “junta” consisting of the generals (including Mattis) that Trump brought in to run U.S. foreign affairs. He opens:

November 23, 2017

[Syria – This U.S. Occupation — Or “Presence” — Is Unsustainable](#)

by Moon of Alabama

November 22, 2017

The U.S. is now occupying north-east Syria. It wants to blackmail the Syrian government into “regime change”. The occupation is unsustainable, its aim is unattainable. The generals who devised these plans lack strategic insight. They listen to the wrong people.

The Islamic State no longer holds any significant ground in Syria and Iraq. What is left of it in a few towns of the Euphrates valley [will soon be gone](#). Its remnants will be some of several terror gangs in the region. Local forces can and will hold those under adequate control. The Islamic State is finished. This is why the Lebanese Hizbullah announced to pull back all its advisors and units from Iraq. It is the reason why Russia began to repatriate some of its units from Syria. Foreign forces are no longer needed to eliminate the remains of ISIS.

Map by [Southfront](#) - [bigger](#)

In its UN Security Council resolutions [2249](#) (2015) for the fight against ISIS the UNSC was:

“Reaffirming its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity of all States in accordance with purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, ...



The above Moon of Alabama article emphasizes that the U.S. is a foreign invader into Syria and has no legitimate right to have troops and military bases there. He closes by placing all of the blame for Trump's continuation of [Obama's invasion of Syria](#), upon the people who run Israel, and none of the blame upon the Saud family, who run Saudi Arabia:

The [military junta](#) that controls Trump and the White House, (former) generals McMaster, Kelly and Mattis, are not acting in the interest of the United States, its citizens and troops. They are following the [call of the Zionist Jewish Institute for National Security of America \(JINSA\)](#) which is pushing for a war on all Iran related entities and interests in the Middle East. JINSA [advertises](#) its huge influence on the higher U.S. officer corps. ...

[My own analysis of the situation](#) (which is not addressed in the M of A article) explains the arrangement that the royal Saud family and Israel's and America's billionaires have had for a long time, by which they jointly [control the U.S. Government](#), at least as regards America's policies in the Middle East. And, actually, [the Saudi royal family control the U.S. Government even more than Israel's regime does](#).

Because Russia will not allow the U.S. (fronting for the Saudis and Israel) to conquer Syria, Lebanon, and Iran (because Putin knows that next the U.S. would invade Russia), a significant possibility exists that the U.S. aristocracy's effort (on behalf of the Saudis and Israel, as well as of American firms including oil companies and Halliburton) to conquer these countries, will produce World War III — Putin is fearing a sudden blitz nuclear first-strike attack against Russia so fast Russia won't have time even to launch their retaliation. ([The U.S. Government no longer believes in nuclear weapons for "Mutually Assured Destruction" deterring both sides against either side's striking first to blitz-eliminate the other side's retaliatory ability, but now believes instead in nuclear weapons for actual conquest — to actually win a nuclear war against Russia](#) — and that's what the U.S. regime is trying to put into place, starting with the conquest of Syria and of Russia's other allied nations.)

Thus far, the U.S. alliance (including the Saudis and Israel) have not stopped their invasion of Syria, even after it has become clear that, when Syria will decide to impose its sovereignty and finally order all U.S.-and-allied invading forces to leave Syria, World War III (between Russia, including its allies Iran and China, versus the U.S. and its allies NATO and the fundamentalist-Jewish Israel and the fundamentalist-Sunni Arab oil kingdoms), will be the result, if the U.S. fails to comply with that demand from the sovereign Government of the land.

If the U.S. fails even to start its withdrawal by Syria's pre-set deadline, Russia would then (in fulfillment of the reason for which Russia was invited into the war to defend Syria's sovereignty) promptly bomb all U.S.-and-allied controlled parts of Syria, and (since WW III would thus already have started in that case) might simultaneously launch all of its strategic arsenal against the U.S. mainland and against all U.S. allies that are also occupying Syria — launch these strategic weapons at that same time in the hope of reducing the destruction directly of Russia itself by whatever U.S.-and-allied forces remain in the wake of Russia's blitz-nuclear-first-strike against the U.S. invaders/occupiers. The U.S. had already invaded, and has for several years occupied, Syria; but, this will be the moment when Syria, backed by Russia, demand the end of that invasion/occupation.

The U.S.-Saudi-Israeli aristocracies' grabs for Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, could thus end the world. It probably will happen unless the U.S. alliance quits grabbing for the entire world.

The American Century (which in recent decades became instead, because of the U.S. aristocracy, the fundamentalist-Sunni and the fundamentalist Jewish and the fundamentalist Christian 'century') has ended, but now the real question is whether the U.S. aristocracy [will go so far as global nuclear homicide/suicide](#), in order to *resist* that established fact, by trying to defeat Syria in at least a *part* of that nation.

James Mattis clearly is a key person in that attempt to conquer at least a portion of Syria. America's shame would not be in its being destroyed but in its having forced WW III and thus the destruction of everything. It would be the U.S. aristocracy's shame; but perhaps that aristocracy is [too psychopathic](#) even to understand shame. Anyway, there'd then soon be no future in which to contemplate whatever they were, for for their having destroyed the world: they would not be viewed by future history, because there'd be none.

As regards the historical *origin* of this situation, my ["Understanding the Power-Contest Between Aristocracies"](#) presents that background information.

Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).

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