

The Strategic Importance of Victory, Peace and Development in Syria

This is the address of Virginia State Senator Richard Black to the Schiller Institute conference, “Dona Nobis Pacem—Grant Us Peace, Through Economic Development,” convened in New York City on Saturday, June 9, 2018. He spoke on Panel 2 of the conference, titled “Choosing Creativity—Not Tragedy—In Economics and Statecraft.”



Richard Black, Virginia State Senator.

Dennis Speed: Many of you have heard our next speaker here before at some of our events, maybe one very hot and raucous occasion in September 2016. Richard Black, Virginia State Senator: “The Strategic Importance of Victory, Peace and Development in Syria.”

Sen. Richard Black: How are you today? This is Senator Dick Black, and as Dennis Speed mentioned, I’m going to discuss the Syrian situation and of course, the importance of victory, of peace, and development there.

Before I begin, please understand that I’m not a pacifist. I served 32 years in uniform, and in Vietnam, I flew 269 combat missions as a Marine helicopter pilot, and I made 70 ground patrols as a forward air controller for the First Marine Regiment, and dropped over 1,000 bombs in support of Marine companies that were engaged in battle. Both of my radiomen died beside me, and I was wounded attacking enemy forces across the Hoi An River.

So no one really has a greater love, understanding and respect for our troops, than I have for those who have been sent off to fight the wars in the Middle East. They are carrying out the orders they received and I respect them for their gallantry.

To hear the news, you’d think the United States is facing imminent military threats from Russia, from Iran, or from China. Just any day, there’s going to be

some sort of an attack from somebody. But to be honest, in the near term, the threat from those nations is roughly *zero*. Our most pressing national security threat is the one that we ourselves have created: It’s one that’s posed by our own support of terrorist forces in Syria, and by the unlawful occupation of the sovereign territory of Syria. In short, the United States is engaged in a suicidal mission in Syria that literally threatens to destroy Western civilization itself.

Who could possibly imagine that Syria, a modest nation of just 23 million people, could be winning a war of aggression that has been waged against it for seven years, by a coalition of nations representing two-thirds of the world’s military and industrial power? Think of that for a moment: One small nation, standing up, resisting the power of two-thirds of the world’s military-industrial power.

But, Syria has unity of command, and they’re supported by the Syrian people. On the other hand, the terrorists that we have supported are fractious. They’re plagued by infighting, by greed, by hatred, by jealousy. The Syrian rebels lack the moral high ground. Now, in seven years of war, the West has been unable to groom one, single terrorist who has widespread popularity among the Syrian people.

Also, who could possibly have imagined that a few dozen key activists across the globe, and organizations like the Schiller Institute and the *Executive Intelligence Review*, could blunt the untold billions that have been dumped into Syria by the CIA, by MI6, and a dozen other intelligence agencies, in order to topple the Syrian government. The propaganda of those intelligence agencies wasn’t focussed on misleading hostile nations; it was focussed on deceiving our own people about the realities of what was going on in Syria. However, we’ve had truth on our side, and truth, dissemi-



U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Jacob Connor

U.S. military forces in southern Syria, November 2017.

nated by social media, has gradually overwhelmed the lies, the deceit, and the covert actions sponsored by those intelligence agencies.

Let me take you back just a little bit: Before the Syrian war began, Syria was among the safest countries on Earth. It had endured forty years of peace with Israel. It wasn't perfect, but, look, neither are we! Syria had a well-balanced economy; it was debt free; it was not beholden to the IMF. It produced its own food, its own clothing, its own energy; it was rather self-sufficient, but engaged in active trade with other nations.

Syria had the greatest religious freedom and its women the greatest rights of any Arab country. Fifty-one percent of its college graduates were women, and those women could drive, they could dress in modern clothing, they could travel or do whatever they wanted without some man's permission. They were able to marry, they owned businesses, they had property. Their freedoms were light-years beyond those of our barbaric "coalition" allies Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Will This Barbarism Engulf the World?

But for seven years, the United States, Great Britain, France, and their allies, have actively worked to topple the legitimate, duly elected govern-

ment of Syria, the one that was chosen through elections by the Syrians themselves. We have sought to replace it with an al-Qaeda-linked puppet government.

This isn't speculation. Gen. Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, reported that in 2001 he was present in the Pentagon when the Secretary of Defense had sent down orders to draft plans to overthrow seven nations in the Middle East. Among those seven were: Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Iran. Years later, WikiLeaks published secret plans developed by the chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus in 2006. Those plans provided a detailed outline of how the United States and its allies would destabilize and overthrow the legitimate Syrian government.

We executed that plan by creating religious divisions that led to an explosion of religious terror unprecedented in modern times. It's kind of like the story of Pandora's Box: You can unleash all of the hideous creatures in Pandora's Box in order to sic them on your enemy; but once they have been unleashed there is no controlling them. Since then, those creatures have turned on us, and they literally threaten our own destruction.

The United States has repeatedly attacked nations that did nothing hostile towards us. We had the First Gulf War against Iraq; we had the 2003 invasion of Iraq; we attacked Libya and subsequently murdered Muammar Qaddafi. Even though he offered to leave Libya and totally surrender the place, the decision was made among the United States, France, and Great Britain, that, honestly, Qaddafi knew too much and it would be better if he were simply murdered in Libya, and that's what was done. I understand that it was the French that actually orchestrated the incredibly vicious murder of Qaddafi.

We went on and launched a covert war on Syria, and today, we're not only fighting in Syria, but we are actively backing Saudi Arabia's very cruel war against the poverty-stricken people of Yemen.

We all remember when President Obama solemnly pledged that there



U.S. Navy/Jesse B. Awalt

Muammar Qaddafi at African Union Summit, 2009.



cc/Mil.ru

Aleppo, Syria, December 2016.

would be no “boots on the ground” in Syria. Today, American armed forces occupy almost a third of Syria. We have, conservatively, fourteen bases and airfields manned by American ground troops. There are, according to one American general who had a slip of the tongue, at least 4,000 uniformed GIs, and perhaps 2,000 contractors—sort of Blackwater-style mercenaries—who are stationed there. So much for the “no boots on the ground” promise that we were made.

President Trump told the American public, “I’m going to fight ISIS and I’m getting us out of there.” It wasn’t a week before his staff contradicted him, saying “No, we’re not leaving Syria. We’re going to stay there permanently; we have other things to achieve.”

But here’s the good news: Syria and its allies are winning the war! Now, why is that important to the United States, which has fought to defeat Syria for seven years? The reason is that Syria is the center of gravity in the war on terror. I attended the Army War College, the Command and General Staff College. They taught us that in military terms the center of gravity is that objective which determines the outcome of a struggle. In this case, it is Syria that will determine whether civilization survives, or whether barbarism surges forward and potentially engulfs the world.

Were Syria to fall, Lebanon and Jordan would almost certainly collapse in short order. That epic jihadist victory would create a massive, massive jihadist army, and the radicalization of the Syrian caliphate would probably incentivize Turkey, which has already moved in a

distinctly violent, jihadist direction, to embark on a final showdown with Europe.

U.S. Support for al-Qaeda and ISIS

From the outset of the seven-year Syrian war, the legitimate, UN-recognized government of President Bashar al-Assad has faced bands of savage terrorists. I want you think for a moment about those terrorists, and to realize—we have called them “rebels,” we’ve called them “opposition,” we’ve called them “moderate rebels.” The fact is, that virtually every single one of those opposition groups has fought shoulder to shoulder in alliance with al-Qaeda at various times.

Now for those of you listening, who are perhaps a bit younger, it’s very important to recall that al-Qaeda were the terrorists who hijacked four passenger planes on September 11, 2001 and used them to attack the Pentagon and the Twin Towers. They killed 3,000 Americans, and in the Twin Towers, Americans were forced to the top of the towers where they faced the choice of either dying in a ball of flames, or leaping to their deaths. Literally hundreds of American citizens leaped a quarter of a mile from the height of the Twin Towers to where they splattered on the sidewalks of New York.

I think that Americans would be *stunned* were they to realize that we had sided with that same al-Qaeda and with its allies throughout this war. We have armed, we have recruited, we have trained, and we have paid jihadists, through the CIA’s top secret Project Sycamore, which was discovered and subsequently abandoned by the U.S. government, and through other secret projects. But there’s no doubt that there are other



VOA/Almigdada Mojalli

Sana’a, Yemen in October, 2015, months after an airstrike.

programs that are underway to make sure that the terrorists have an abundant supply of weapons, ammunition, financing, whatever they need. We have never stopped siding with the terrorists from literally Day 1 of the war.

If America were to switch sides or, more practically, if we simply abandoned the effort to impose a puppet regime on Damascus, that war would end quickly. This entire effort against Syria began when we invaded Libya for the purpose of plundering its stores of arms and munitions. We sent those arms and munitions through Turkey and on to Syria, where, according to a secret study conducted by the Defense Intelligence Agency in 2013, the Central Intelligence Agency distributed those arms—advanced arms, I'm not just talking about bullets, I'm talking about tanks, artillery, TOW anti-aircraft missiles, or antitank missiles, and things of that sort. We distributed all of those things, indiscriminately to all rebel groups. And the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that the rebels that received them, specifically included al-Qaeda and ISIS.

America established a huge coalition, ostensibly to fight ISIS. However, it's rather curious that the coalition declined to interdict the main source of ISIS income, which was plundered Syrian oil. ISIS has garnered income from many places. They did it through kidnapping; they did it by killing Yazidi and Christian children and harvesting their organs and selling them on the open market. They plundered the ancient antiquities of Palmyra and they sold them off. But the biggest source of ISIS income was a fleet of 2,000 oil tanker trucks. Full of stolen Syrian oil, they ran them in long lines that were waved across the Turkish border, across super-highways without interference.

And by the year 2014, the terrorists were driving back Syria's Army; there was every indication that unless something changed, the terrorists would seize Damascus, and vastly increase the ISIS-controlled territory. And the United States was supplying the tanks, the artillery, and so forth.

In 2015, however, the Russians sent a modest expeditionary force of several squadrons to help Syria. In two days, the Russians somehow managed to discover the ISIS oil tankers that we had deliberately overlooked for years. In two days, they destroyed 500 of those oil tankers, forcing ISIS to cut their soldiers' pay in half!

There have been a tremendous number of great victories by the Syrian government, the greatest being the liberation of Aleppo, followed by the elimination of



youtube/Russian Ministry of Defense
Russian air force destroying truck convoy transporting oil for terrorists in Syria.

major jihadist pockets within Damascus itself, so that today the Syrian government controls the territory holding about 90% of Syria's population, the terrorists being confined to two large pockets and several smaller ones.

Trump Blackmailed

However, the biggest impediment to peace is not the terrorists. The terrorists are defeated, they are on the run. The biggest impediment to peace is America's occupation of 30% of Syria, and Turkey's occupation of a smaller part.

I want you to listen to something for just a minute, and I want you to absorb this: Isn't it ironic that the U.S. military unlawfully occupies in Syria, roughly twice the extent of territory compared to Russia's legitimate occupation of Crimea? How many times have you heard Europe just going ballistic over Russia moving into Crimea, which traditionally was Russian territory? And how many times have you heard the mainstream media protest the unlawful U.S. occupation of an area of Syria which is twice the size of Crimea? And we have done it with vastly more violence. In fact, when Russia moved into Crimea, the Crimeans welcomed them with open arms. There were no bullets fired, there were no people killed. The Russians simply moved back into what was traditionally Russia. We, on the other hand, have bombed and slaughtered and killed a great number of people in northeastern Syria.

President Trump's involvement in all of this is very interesting, because he twice expressed his intention to withdraw from Syria, and twice his pronouncements were *immediately* followed by false-flag gas attacks,

that were actually staged by terrorist forces.

The deep state has effectively blackmailed Trump, holding him hostage through these covert actions that played off the totally fictitious Russian collusion narrative. We know today that there was no Russian collusion [in the 2016 U.S. elections]; I don't think anybody seriously even claims that there was Russian collusion, and yet, through all of the propaganda, every time there is a false flag gas attack, if President Trump delays for a moment to reflect on the veracity of terrorist reports that there had just been gas attack, he's accused of growing "soft on Russia." And in this way, the sinister forces of the deep state have managed to retain their dominance over American policy, and to continue to support terror in Syria.

Now the good news is that President Assad and the Syrian people are winning in Syria and that Syria will soon control all of Syria that's not under occupation by the United States and Turkey.

Now, I'll tell you that the coalition composed of the United States, Great Britain, France, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, has done *enormous* damage to the infrastructure of Syria. Our occupation of northeast Syria seeks to rob that nation of much of its oil, natural gas, and agricultural production. That occupation ensures the impoverishment of Syria. We do it in order to establish this highly unstable, race-based, Kurdish state, in which the Kurds would dominate a majority of Arabs who occupy northeast Syria. It is one of these goofy, Western-style imposition of maps on the Middle East that have caused no end of problems, and we are certainly creating the worst possible map now. It's forcing us to permanently station American troops in order to suppress the Arab majority and keep them under the domination of the Kurdish minority in northeast Syria.

American withdrawal from Syria is vital. If we were to do that, we would achieve peace and security. The nation of Syria is able to care for its own population, its own borders; it's able to negotiate peace. They understand the culture in a way that Americans, in hundreds of years, *never* will.

Bombs and Bullets, or Schools and Industry?

The good news is that rebuilding has already begun, although the rebuilding is inhibited to some extent by an American blockade of Syria, and by the fact that we have imposed banking sanctions that prevent the people from receiving food and medical supplies from Western countries. The United States has estimated that rebuilding Syria will cost a quarter-trillion dollars. Western

countries have no interest in rebuilding what they have spent seven years to destroy.

Russia will help and Iran will help, but they simply don't have the funds for such a massive rebuilding of the country. However, China has already pledged considerable aid. They have teams of individuals who are scouring the country, looking for opportunities to rebuild infrastructure, and to re-create Syria in the great image that it once had.

I will tell you that from the many reports that I'm receiving, peace is returning to great regions of Syria today. We can expect that as areas become secured, reconstruction efforts will be led by China.

You know, it's a sad thing. I'm very proud of my country; I love my country, I've bled for my country, but the American paradigm, since the days, perhaps of Herbert Walker Bush and George Bush, the American paradigm has become bombs, bloodshed, reducing nations to rubble, and forcing them into submission. That's the American paradigm, and that is what we offer.

Today, we are in competition with the Chinese Silk Road paradigm. Their paradigm is funding infrastructure, reconstruction of what has been destroyed by the West; noninterference in nations' internal affairs, and peace. They don't come with bombs, they don't come with bloodshed, they come with roads, and dams, and schools, and industry.

I'm deeply concerned that over time, China's course will prevail and ours will inevitably crumble in the marketplace of ideas.

Peace in Syria will eventually return millions of refugees and diminish tensions throughout the Middle East. The return of peace will spill over to a diminution of global terror as Western powers recognize the bankruptcy of their failed strategy, and as we stop training, arming and recruiting violent jihadists from throughout the world and training them, literally on the battlefields of Syria, to go back to their home countries and destabilize those countries, and spread terror throughout the globe.

It is my very sincere hope, and my prayer, that the day will come when there will be forces that emerge in the Democratic and the Republican Parties in the United States, that world leaders will stop speaking in bellicose terms about how we're going to attack and how we're going to bully and how we're going to threaten other nations in the world. Perhaps, we're going to be able to hear world leaders speak of peace, once again.

Thank you very much.