

U.S. STATE SENATOR RICHARD BLACK

## On the True Interest of the United States

*Senator Richard Black is a member of the Virginia State Legislature. He made his presentation via pre-recorded video.*

I'm Senator Dick Black and I'm pleased to join you for this important conference. My remarks will focus on the Mideast conflict and America's undeclared war against the Syrian people.

Our current actions against Syria are unlawful and they run counter to our vital national interest. More importantly, they represent a direct pathway to a much larger and far more dangerous and unpredictable war against Iran and its neighbors.

Syria is the center of gravity in the war on terror. In other words, its survival as a viable, intact state may very well determine the outcome of the global war on terror. Should American succeed in our long-held objective of toppling the legitimately elected Syrian government, this would lead to an unprecedented expansion of jihadist terror. Within months, Lebanon and



*State Senator Richard Black*

Jordan would fall, and this would likely embolden President Erdogan, the Turkish dictator, to drive hordes of battled-hardened jihadists from the battlefield to overrun the nations of Europe.

### **Some Personal History**

For this reason, America's dogged opposition to the Syrian nation-state poses a clear and present danger to Europe and to all of civilization. Let me be clear: I'm not speaking as a pacifist. I served in uniform for 32 years. I was wounded fighting as a Forward Air Controller in the 1st Marine Regiment, and I made 70 combat patrols, generally at night, deep behind enemy lines. I was wounded during an attack, and both of my radiomen died fighting beside me. Before that, I flew 269 combat missions as a helicopter pilot. My aircraft was hit by enemy ground fire on four missions. Eventually, I served as a division chief in the office of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) at the Pentagon. There I prepared executive orders for the President's

signature, and testified before Congress on behalf of the U.S. Army.

I say this to let you know that I love my country, I've bled for it. And I respect the men and women who obey the orders that they are given, when we send them over to war, even though I often think those orders are extraordinarily ill-advised.

I'm deeply concerned by the direction of American foreign policy, particularly as it affects Syria, because that nation is a vital gateway to Turkey, and thus, on to Europe itself.

### Before the Syrian War

Before the Syrian War began in 2011, Syria was one of the five safest nations on Earth. It had the greatest women's rights and the greatest religious freedom of any of the Arab nations. It was debt free; it produced its own energy, food, many of its own manufactured products; its economy was very well balanced and it was self-sufficient. Syria had been at peace with Israel for 40 years. In 2013, just to demonstrate the secular nature of the government, Syria erected one of the world's greatest statues of Jesus Christ, and it towers over Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Syria is a diverse and secular country. It is home to about 2 million Christians and 2 million Alawites. Now, the Alawites are a very highly modernized population. Additionally, Syria is home to Druze and large Sunni and smaller Shi'a populations of Muslims. The great majority of each religious group has supported the central government. The Grand Mufti Ahmad Hassoun is the spiritual leader of Syria's Sunni Muslims. Ahmad is an unwavering supporter of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

During the seven brutal years of the war, the Syrian nation of about 23 million has united, and withstood the combined forces of *two-thirds* of the world's military and industrial might; but despite this massive international pressure, there has not been a single assassination attempt against President Assad, who enjoys overwhelming and passionate support of the army and the people. Syria has faced the combined might of Americans, British, French, Israelis, Turks, Qataris, and Saudi Arabians.



*Syrians celebrate the liberation of eastern Aleppo city in northern Syria, Dec. 22, 2016, with flags carrying the portrait of President Assad.*

Xinhua

### The United States Is at War with Syria

By any reasonable definition, the United States is at war with Syria. Since 2012, the United States has operated terrorist training camps in Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and now inside Syria, itself. We have supplied terrorists fighting Assad with tens of billions of dollars' worth of arms, ammunition, training, and payroll. This was done under the CIA's classified program, "Timber Sycamore." Once that program was disclosed, it was quickly terminated, but American-financed weapons, training, and manpower still flow freely to terrorists under other covert programs.

Despite this lengthy war of aggression, *not a single terrorist has ever become a popular figure* among the Syrian people, who remain doggedly loyal to President Assad and the Syrian armed forces. Recall that it was al-Qaeda that hijacked civilian airliners and flew them into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, killing 3,000 Americans. Nonetheless, throughout the Syrian War, the United States has aligned with al-Qaeda and its affiliate against Syria. Virtually every so-called "moderate rebel group" has at one time or another fought shoulder to shoulder with al-Qaeda or ISIS. The dominant jihadists are sworn to behead all Christian and Alawite men and to make sex slaves of their wives, their daughters, and their children. For this reason, the success of the American venture in Syria could very well trigger one of the greatest genocides in recent history.

Contrary to Western propaganda, the war was never a popular uprising. President Assad did *not* take harsh measures against early demonstrators. In fact, he issued orders requiring riot control troops to carry wooden batons instead of rifles. As a consequence, many died at

the hands of al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood before he finally relented and permitted them to protect themselves with loaded weapons.

### **Chemical Weapons Attacks are Fake News**

Let me address the often-cited claim that Assad has used poison gas, crossing some “red line.” That claim is patently false: The same propaganda ploy was used first by the CIA, as a pretext to launch the invasion of Iraq. That deceit proved so successful in laying the groundwork for the Iraq War, that it has been used several times during the conflict in Syria to blame President Assad for “gassing his own people.” This lie has duped Americans into being drawn ever deeper into the Syrian War. But ask yourself this question: “If Syria wanted to use poison gas, why would they use it on toddlers and their parents, instead of using it to defend against ISIS and al-Qaeda in the desperate battles raging across the country?”

Now, poison gas is not used in pinprick attacks against civilian targets. If it is used, it is employed massively, in conjunction with large-scale, offensive maneuvers on the battlefield. Each of the three false-flag attacks, staged by al-Qaeda and its allies, was convincingly disproved by the world’s most respected investigative journalist, Pulitzer Prize winning reporter Seymour Hersh—the man who wrote the story of the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, and the Abu Ghraib prison misconduct in Iraq. He has greater access to the inner workings of the CIA and Pentagon than any other journalist today. It would be totally irrational for President Assad to employ poison gas given the predictable backlash and the total absence of *any* military benefit to Syria.

### **The Spoils of Perpetual Wars**

The United States has long planned regime change in Syria. According to Gen. Wesley Clark, the former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, America first began drafting war plans to topple Syria in 2001. WikiLeaks published actual secret plans that were developed by the U.S. Embassy in Damascus in 2006. Those plans laid out detailed steps to destabilize and topple the legitimate government of Syria. In 2010, Hillary Clinton became Secretary of State. She executed plans to overthrow Libya to capture its arsenal of



Courtesy of Sen. Black  
*President Bashar al Assad (left) meets Virginia State Sen. Richard Black in Damascus, April 28, 2016.*

weapons and use them to arm terrorists in Syria. When Libya’s leader, Col. Muammar Qaddafi, was murdered in 2011, we invaded Libya under the guise of a “no-fly zone.” We quickly gave the Turks control of a Libyan air field and then began flying plundered Libyan weapons into Turkey using Qatari aircraft. The first aircraft that was sent from Libya also carried 700 Tunisian terrorists, who were then sent across the Turkish border, and into Syria.

From 2011 until today, the United States has fought to topple the popularly elected government of Bashar al-Assad and install a puppet regime. But why are we fighting in Syria at all? In fact, what are we fighting for *anywhere* in the Middle East? Our own actions have spawned huge armies of ISIS and al-Qaeda terrorists. Without us there, both Iraq and Syria would soon eliminate the last vestiges of these terror groups and restore order to their own nations. So, are we fighting to serve U.S.—or foreign—interests? And, are we simply deploying courageous American troops as a sort of Foreign Legion for hire?

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the brutal dictator of Saudi Arabia, was overheard saying, “I have Kushner in my pocket.” Some believe that Jared Kushner, who had access to Presidential intelligence, may have revealed the names of Saudis who were disloyal to the Crown Prince shortly before the Saudi dictator launched his brutal crackdown on those same dissidents. Is this all being done for personal gain?

Now certainly war profiteers have amassed enormous fortunes through these wars. And we know that our coalition partners, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, want to topple the Syrian government and run lucrative oil and gas pipelines across Syria’s sovereign territory.

But, you know, I am amazed at Americans' acquiescence in perpetual Mideast war. No one even mentions an end to hostilities and a return to peace. By contrast, it's instructive to recall that we only fought in World War I for 17 months, before politicians were forced to promise that that would be the "war to end all wars."

Now think of this: After 17 years, we remain committed to several simultaneous wars with no end in sight. It's breaking our military forces down and it is bankrupting the nation. How many Americans realize that *fully one-third of the entire U.S. national debt* has been incurred through our Middle Eastern wars? Despite American lives lost, soldiers maimed, and treasure wasted; despite one and one-half million Libyans, Afghans, Yemenis, Iraqis, and Syrians killed; despite trillions in property destruction—I cannot point to a *single thing* that these wars have done for the American people, or for the vital national interests of the United States. Instead, we've generated massive strings of refugees, who are hostile to Western values and determined to undermine European cultures.

We started these wars facing a small contingent of terrorists. Well, here we are a generation later: We've multiplied their ranks a thousand-fold, by arming, training, and financing these same terrorists. We've given them real-world battlefield experience, making them the most combat-ready forces on Earth today.

This, in my view, is suicidal madness. The enormous fear and resentment we have generated have obliterated generations of good will. This makes it a near certainty that China will soon displace, through peaceful means, the trade and influence the United States has tried to exact through fear and terror. Unless we develop a strategy for peace, China will displace us as the world's dominant power. Our present strategy amounts to regime change by raining down bombs, collapsing homes, and blowing bodies into the streets. By contrast, China quietly builds highways, factories, dams, infrastructure, without instigating violent coups. Now which approach will appeal to foreign nations? Given the choice, they will inevitably opt for China's roads, bridges, dams, and factories over the American bombs, destruction, and bloodshed.

Just take a look at Iraq: From 1990, when the Gulf War first began, until today, the United States bombed that country almost incessantly. During the 28-year bombing campaign, we've dropped over a third of a million bombs on Iraq and the number is still rising. Just this past week, we, or our ally Israel, bombed Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), killing 22 and

wounding 12. At that time, those Iraqis were fighting ISIS, our supposed enemy. So this week's attack rounds out the 28th year of hostile actions on Iraqi territory, against a nation that, just like Syria, has *never* once taken hostile action against the United States.

Now, returning to Syria: The United States, which once promised "no boots on the ground," is likely to have as many as 8,000 soldiers, marines, and contractors, stationed in Syria today. We built at least 11 bases in northeast Syria, a fact that Turkey disclosed in 2017 to our enormous consternation. U.S. troops are presently embarked on a mission to carve out a tenuous landlocked state, by granting the Kurdish minority dominance over predominantly Arab lands in northeast Syria. This region, lying between the Euphrates River and the Turkish border, comprises about 30% of Syria's land mass.

While Syria is sparsely populated, it holds much of the oil, gas, and agricultural wealth that sustains the entire Syrian people. Should this American "Plan B" succeed in splitting Syria apart, the nation's people will be permanently impoverished—all so the United States can block ancient trade routes linking Syria, Iraq, and Iran. This appears to be part of a strategy to pave the groundwork for a far greater war yet to come.

### **But There is Great Hope in and for Syria**

But there is great hope in Syria. The Syrian armed forces and its allies have liberated 90% of Syria's population. Since Russia intervened in 2015, Syria has scored an unbroken string of battlefield victories. Almost all of its major cities have been liberated by the Syrian Army. It's only the resistance of the United States, Israel, and Turkey, that prevents a rapid conclusion to the war. It's high time for the United States to depart from Syria, and to leave the Middle East. If we leave, there will be a time of peace and reconciliation. Refugees will return, and rebuilding will accelerate.

Since its liberation by Syrian forces in 2016, almost one-half million Syrians have returned to the Syria's second largest city, Aleppo. The United States could make an impressive humanitarian gesture, simply by lifting its naval blockade of Syria, and by releasing the monetary restrictions, in order to end the starvation, the poverty, the deprivation of medical supplies that we've inflicted on their people.

Americans are a good and decent people. Our nation is better than our foreign policy would suggest. We need to stop inflicting violence by supporting terrorist groups and restore peace to the world.

Thank you very much.