THE SYRIA REPORT

The West’s Destruction of Syria to Gain Control Over Iran

Kerry Patton and SOFREP

St. Martin’s Press
New York
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Whenever I talk to active duty special operations soldiers, both sergeants and officers, they all have one question in common, “What the hell are we doing?”

That may be the question of this generation of soldiers and intelligence professionals. Sorry, America, you won’t get much of an answer to that question from us, because we don’t know. Currently, the men and women of our armed services are cruising around Afghanistan, often rolling right through one ambush and straight into the next. The question is why and to what end? Indeed, today’s soldier must feel like a Roman centurion out defending the fringes of the empire while Rome burns. As I write this, America’s budget woes are back in the headlines and the government has shut down as a matter of political rhetoric. Pass our budget or else.

While our troops are aghast at our lack of any coherent strategy in Afghanistan, the entire country is mystified by the series of missteps, false starts, gaffes, and outright stupidity when it comes to our foreign policy in Syria. Long story short, we don’t have one.

Geez, that might have taken some of the wind out of Kerry’s sails. Let me back up.

Kerry Patton is one of the intelligence professionals I mentioned above. His specialty is HUMINT, or human intelligence. That means getting out and pounding the pavement, looking people in the eye and talking to them, feeling out the human terrain. He has done this sort of thing all over the world. Some of the places he has been and some of the operations he has participated in would make your head spin.
Since I’ve known him I’ve found that very few people know the intelligence business (yes, I said business) like Kerry. He knows the trade; he knows the bureaucracies and agencies involved. He knows how they interact with one another. He knows how they work and how they don’t. Kerry is one guy I can always turn to for accurate information. He has been doing this for so long that he has an ability to quickly process, vet, and analyze data.

If you want to know what is really going on inside the quagmire that is Syria, Kerry Patton is one hell of a tour guide.

So yeah, Syria is a mess, and America has no real foreign policy in place to deal with it. Now it is time to go a few steps deeper. Peel back the layers of the onion, so to speak. Kerry will give you the historical context that Syria takes place in, as well as explain why America’s foreign policy can appear . . . schizophrenic, to put it diplomatically.

In this e-book Kerry gives the inside scoop on Syria, the story that no one else is talking about. Syria is not really about Syria, it is about Iran. Syria is simply a shape operation, an operation that is to set the stage and open up new fronts for the Western world to use to attack Iran.

Just be careful, because as I’ve found out when talking to Kerry about these subjects, when you begin to peel the onion, you may come to find out that you are standing in an onion patch.
The Syria Report

It’s a nation that has been ruled by a fierce and brutal dictator with close allegiance to Iran for just shy of thirty years. A leader by the name of Hafez al-Assad ruled with an iron fist, ensuring the Syrian people lived in fear of crossing his path. It is a nation that attempted to groom its future leader, Bassel al-Assad, another brutal and violent man, to take the reins after his father left office. Bassel was killed in a vehicle accident, and through a sudden and unexpected turn of events a man some assume to be the weakest of the Assad family, Bashar al-Assad, assumed the office of president of Syria.

Bashar al-Assad was deemed an academic, geeky child who lacked any physical athletic skills. He graduated from college, became fluent in French, and later lived in the United Kingdom, where he attended medical school to become an ophthalmologist. Many Syrians considered him unfit for duty as the nation’s leader.¹

Bashar al-Assad valued the concept of education and sought educational reform ensuring all Syrians would receive an education that included the three Abrahamic religions. This was one way he sought to unify Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Even Christmas has been publicly celebrated in the Middle Eastern nation of Syria, not only in church services but through reenactments of the birth of Jesus. However, recent developments indicate that the commemoration of Christ’s Mass may become a thing of the past, or at least a celebration held in secrecy.²

Why has a nation whose appointed leader made valiant efforts to unify its people suddenly fallen into austere shambles? What caused the Syrian crisis? How have everyday Syrians, who recently lived without fear of persecution, turned against one another? What caused this atrocity to unfold?
It would make life much less complex if a person could simply divulge information about Syria and internal issues that caused its civil war, but revealing such information would give an incomplete picture of the Syrian crisis. To understand the Syrian civil war and the bloodshed that stems from it, one must look outside Syria for answers. Specifically, one must look at U.S.-Iranian relations—not just relations between both countries today but relations that go as far back as the close of World War II.

If one can understand U.S.-Iranian relations, and what caused a rift between those nations, one can then begin to put the pieces of the Syrian quagmire together. Before that puzzle is complete, however, one last step is needed—understanding “shaping operations.”

A shaping operation can be a clandestine, covert, or even overt activity meant to align a specific environment to another’s desires. These operations are often utilized to position a specific entity that can later be easily manipulated for defeat. As the U.S. Army defines it in FM3-0: “A shaping operation is an operation at any echelon that creates and preserves conditions for the success of the decisive operation. Shaping operations establish conditions for the decisive operation through effects on the enemy, population (including local leaders), and terrain. Shaping operations may occur throughout the operational area and involve any combination of forces and capabilities. Shaping operations may occur before, during, or after the decisive operation begins. Some shaping operations, especially those executed simultaneously with the decisive operation, may be economy of force actions. However, if the force available does not permit simultaneous decisive and shaping operations, the commander sequences shaping operations around the decisive operation. The concept of operations describes how shaping operations contribute to the decisive operation’s success, often in terms of the purpose.”
It is critical to look at U.S.-Iranian relations, past and present, and equally important to explore case studies that prove U.S. shaping operations on a global scale. This book will explore both aspects in the hope that readers will be capable of their own assessment of what is really taking place not only in Syria but throughout the entire Middle East.

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Listening to the testimony of administration officials on Wednesday during the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing only further solidified my position to vote against a resolution authorizing the president to use military force in Syria. I asked simple questions of the witnesses and expected straightforward answers. Secretary Hagel and Secretary Kerry could not offer an explanation that made U.S. military intervention an acceptable option, nor could they define a clear and present danger to the U.S. —Congressman Tom Marino, September 6, 2013

Syria is a nation ravaged with two years’ worth of atrocity after atrocity, destruction after destruction, and death after death. With well over 100,000 persons killed in its two-year civil war, no one within the current U.S. administration pushing for military intervention can adequately articulate an explanation that makes U.S. military involvement an acceptable option. As Congressman Tom Marino put it, “Nor could they define a clear and present danger to the United States.”

Matthew VanDyke, the American-born anti-Qaddafi freedom fighter turned documentary filmmaker, made a valiant effort to get Americans behind those attempting to squash Bashar al-Assad’s Syrian regime. Unfortunately, VanDyke arguably failed in his delivery. In his documentary titled Not Anymore: A Story of Revolution, one of VanDyke’s interviewees, an anti-Assad commander by name of Mowya, offered a serious statement at the conclusion of the film pertaining to the lack of U.S. interest in Syria. “Mowya suggests that the film be put on YouTube
so that people in America will see that there are cats in Syria who need help, because so far nobody is helping the Syrian people, but perhaps they will send help at least for the cats.”

Mowya fails to understand the American people and the country’s current state. America does not care about cats more than human life. America cherishes human life, yet the United States has been at war since 2001. The war in Afghanistan has lasted well over twelve years. The 2003 Iraq war lasted six years. Simply put, America is tired of fighting in the region. America is tired of war.

As of September 2013, iCasualties.org, a Web site dedicated to continuously inform the public about casualties related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, estimates 2,270 Americans have died in Afghanistan. In Iraq, the United States is estimated to have lost 4,486 lives. One question many Americans constantly ask themselves is “Why?”

What are these wars really all about? Why does the United States constantly find itself in the Middle East and nearby regions like Central Asia and North Africa? What are we really doing and why? Are the efforts undertaken within U.S. national security spectrums worth the amount of American lives lost, which includes one American ambassador—Chris Stevens?

More frequently, Americans, no matter their political affiliation, are answering that question with a “no.” It has become evident in recent polling that the American people vehemently oppose U.S. military intervention in Syria.

Matthew VanDyke may, however, get exactly what he is looking for, despite the stance of Congressman Tom Marino and the bulk of Americans. With or without congressional approval, with or without United Nations support, with or without a grand coalition, the United States may actually intervene militarily in Syria. In fact, the plan of U.S. military operations in Syria may have been created long before the civil war even began.
Unofficially, if this plan truly did exist, it could be called “Operation Quagmire.”

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The United States may have actually planned for the overthrow of Syria’s leader, Bashar al-Assad, long ago. In fact, evidence supports this theory for it to be easily dismissed. Americans deserve answers related to the United States’ stance on Syria. Killing over 1,400 persons with chemical weapons should not compare to killing 100,000 persons in Syria with more conventional armaments in the past two years—that is, if Assad truly was behind the chemical attacks that sparked the political-military debate.

With or without chemical weapons, Syria’s leader, Bashar al-Assad has been a target against the United States and our Western allies. But for how long has he been a target and why? When was this master plan formulated?

At a minimum, the United States has planned for several years to topple several regimes throughout the Middle East. General Wesley Clark stated in 2007, “We plan to topple seven countries in five years.” It just so happens that Syria was one of those countries.5

Evidence from the George Washington University National Security Archive suggests that since at least 1983, the United States wished to see Syria, along with several other nations in the region, witness regime change. In December of 1983, Donald Rumsfeld, who was serving as President Ronald Reagan’s special envoy in the Middle East, met with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. “The two discussed regional issues of mutual interest, shared enmity toward Iran and Syria, and the United States’ efforts to find alternative routes to transport Iraq’s oil; its facilities in the Persian Gulf had been shut down by Iran, and Iran’s ally, Syria, had cut off a pipeline that transported Iraqi oil through its territory. Rumsfeld made no reference to chemical weapons, according to detailed notes on the meeting.”6
What really caused the United States to despise Iran and its greatest ally, Syria? Was it really about oil and oil pipelines, or was it the fact that Iran, through proxy warfare and terror, targeted U.S. national assets, as it did the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979? Did it have anything to do with the Marine Corps barracks bombing in Lebanon in 1983?

The answer is that it was about none of these things. The United States has been at odds with Iran for a very long time. To be more precise, the United States has been at odds with Iran since the end of the Second World War, and due to the Iranian-Syrian geopolitical marriage, the United States has naturally been at odds with Syria during that time as well.

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To better understand the crisis in Syria, a person must first look beyond Syria and observe its history with its greatest ally, Iran. This is important because history will reveal significant information allowing conclusions to be made about today’s reality. It is a reality some may perceive as a major shaping operation targeted against Iran through regime change in multiple nations such as Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Somalia, and the Sudan, among others—and, of course, Syria.

World War II ended in 1945. This was the same year Iran became a target among the Western world and its rival, Russia. Iran had large stockpiles of a commodity deemed critical for industrial advancement—oil. Within a few short months, popular support to nationalize oil grew within Iran. Many people who saturate U.S. national security and foreign policy elements believe this came about through Russian influence. The move was observed as potentially crippling to the West and something that needed to be stopped.

However, neither the West nor Russia could stop the nationalization of Iran’s oil. Four years after World War II ended, in 1949, an assassination attempt against the country’s leader,
Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, unfolded. The shah was shot, yet the attempt to take his life failed. His assassin, Nasser Fakhrara’ei, was immediately killed by Iranian security forces.\(^7\)

With the shah still on the throne, Haj Ali Razmara, a highly popular friend to the West frequently praised by President Harry Truman, was elected as Iran’s prime minister in 1950. Razmara sought to minimize the power of Iran’s government by “bringing the government to the people” versus bringing the people to the government. This caused internal strife between numerous influential Iranians, eventually leading to Razmara’s death by assassination in 1951.\(^8\)

Immediately following the assassination of Razmara, nationalist leader Mohammed Mossadegh was elected as the new Iranian prime minister. Without any circumstantial evidence, some persons believe Mossadegh was a “communist collaborator and fanatic.” In any event, Mossadegh and the shah did not see eye to eye, especially when it came to Mossadegh’s desires to control Iran’s oil industry through nationalization of the commodity.\(^9\)

At the time, the majority of Iran’s oil production came from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company Ltd., better known as British Petroleum—a British-owned company. In fact, it was the United Kingdom’s single largest corporate entity. If nationalization of the Iranian oil industry were to unfold, it would be a devastating economic blow to the United Kingdom.\(^10\)

The U.K. immediately took steps to prevent Iran from seizing the initiative; however, those steps failed. Through British influence, the shah pressured Mossadegh enough that he stepped down from serving as the prime minister in July 1952. He still had his supporters, though, and they rioted in the streets, creating so much turmoil that the shah was forced to reappoint Mossadegh within a few days.\(^11\)

The U.K. had one last hope, and that was to speak to the world’s most prominent superpower for much-needed assistance—the United States of America. The United States had
an exceptional working relation with the shah of Iran. Prior to supporting the Brits, American delegates discussed matters with Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. Two key American figures involved in these negotiations were brothers who once worked for an organization partially responsible for financing Hitler’s war machine prior to World War II—Allen and John Foster Dulles.\(^{12}\)

The executive secretary of the National Security Council, drafted a Top Secret document in November 1952 titled “United States Policy Regarding the Present Situation in Iran.” It is filled with anti-Russian-Communist verbiage, for good reason considering that at this time Russia was often perceived as the West’s greatest threat. Upon close examination and analysis of the five-page document, however, one would argue that the greatest threat to the West was loss of control over Iran’s greatest resource—oil. The word “oil” is used as frequently as the word “Russia.”\(^{13}\)

Although Prime Minister Winston Churchill was more concerned about the threat to the British economy posed by nationalization of Iranian oil, he had explained as early as July 9, 1951, in a letter to his predecessor, Clement Atlee, “his determination to present the crisis to the United States as one plagued by the potential of a communist takeover.”\(^{14}\) This quote alone proves that even the U.K. knew it was best to articulate the economic Iranian oil crisis as an anti-communist threat.

A Top Secret document drafted in 1953 by the U.S. State Department, which was controlled by John Foster Dulles, mentions more Western government collaboration with private entities to control global economic markets. At best, or worst, depending on one’s viewpoint, it shows how nations that claim to support free markets are willing to manipulate other nations with bribes and front companies created ad hoc for the purpose. The memorandum, titled
“Proposed Course of Action with Respect to Iran,” is troubling. An excerpt from it reads, “They [the United States and the United Kingdom] made it possible for an international marketing company to be formed, consisting of British, Dutch, and American Companies, which would purchase and sell Iranian oil. The proposals also provided for an advance of $133,000,000 by the United States Government to Iran against future oil deliveries.”

This one paragraph alone serves as a reminder of how the United States and its Western allies willingly collaborate with private corporations in matters of national security. In many regards, free markets may not be free after all—especially when a nation feels a need not to play specific games controlled by the United States. Such practices cost millions of lives during World War II, and we will later realize how such practices always lead to significant bloodshed.

Due to failed negotiations, the United States and its key ally, the United Kingdom, undertook what many believe to be an incredibly unethical coup d’état, all in the name of economic supremacy.

Cloaking them as an anti-Russian-Communist initiative, the West used large-scale propaganda measures throughout Iran in an attempt to rally the Iranians, who vehemently detested the Russians. These Iranians would serve as the variable to achieve the facilitator’s (the West’s) wishes.

A relatively complex plan comprised of propaganda, orchestrated demonstrations, significant amounts of bribery, and paid protesters was developed and executed, eventually leading to the overthrow of Iran’s Prime Minister Mossadegh. The overthrow could arguably be construed as the tipping point in American history that helped spark many of the international threats observed today in dealing with Iran.
With a joint plan in place, the United States and its British ally were prepared to enact measures accordingly.

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In March of 1953, one key Iranian military leader requested the assistance of the U.S. government to support an overthrow of Prime Minister Mossadegh—General Fazlollah Zahedi. This communication verified to the West that limited blowback would be received from the Iranian populace were the coup to unfold.16

Every intelligence officer is trained in proper vetting of sources and assets—especially those considered “walk-ins.” General Zahedi was considered a “walk-in,” meaning he made contact with the United States first, not the other way around. Was General Zahedi properly vetted? What was his motivation? Motivation is a critical determining factor in understanding who is truly a friend and who can potentially pose a threat.

General Zahedi was a prominent supporter of Prime Minister Mossadegh. He valued the prime minister’s nationalization initiative. He also valued the idea of controlling Iran’s most precious natural resource—oil. Even knowing this and realizing where the general stood, the United States and its allies put significant amounts of trust in General Zahedi. This proves Zahedi was not properly vetted, considering his motivation remains unclear.

With a plan in place, approval from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the shah, and an insider (General Zahedi) willing to play along with a very dark, clandestine Western initiative to overthrow Mossadegh, a decision was made to initiate. Operation TPAJAX was in effect.

Though it was presented as such, Operation TPAJAX was not aimed at an oppressive Soviet puppet, let alone any true threat coming from Russia. The operation was aimed
specifically at a democratically elected government that threatened Western economic interests. This alone should make an individual question the seriousness behind the West’s forever-spewed claims of everything being related to “democracy.”

TPAJAX, fully orchestrated by the CIA and Britain’s MI6, preserved and fully empowered the only true friend to the West in Persia—the shah of Iran. The operation was intended to preserve and protect a lucrative oil industry predominantly owned by the United Kingdom deep inside Iran. The Iranian constitutional monarchy was quickly transformed into an absolute kingship.

The successful Operation TPAJAX led to Prime Minister Mossadegh’s removal from office and immediate arrest. The operation has been argued to have helped fuel the 1979 Iranian coup that deposed the shah as well. A case could also be made that this operation eventually led to the death of thousands of Americans over time, including more than 200 U.S. Marines in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983.17

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As the West sought to control Iran and its vast amounts of oil, Great Britain’s largest economic venture, British Petroleum, was secure. With time, however, the world market began to turn. More and more Middle Eastern states discovered and began to produce their own lucrative amounts of “black gold.” This caused markets to compete with one another, and through that competition, price wars unfolded. Some would say deals were signed with the “devil” during this period. All the while, others would claim the West turned its back on the only true ally found throughout the Middle East region—the shah of Iran.

By 1976, in large part due to the 1973 Yom Kippur War in which Egypt and Syria invaded Israel, the world oil market had crumbled. Even Iran felt the economic pain, due to its
overestimation of oil revenues, which helped fuel civil unrest throughout the country. Something needed to be done, and knowing that Iran held the keys to one of the world’s largest oil kingdoms, the United States and its supposed allies made critical decisions. One of those decisions was to betray an ally (the Shi’ite Muslim nation of Iran) and sign a deal with what could later be argued to be the devil (the Sunni nation of Saudi Arabia).¹⁸

Thanks to numerous Western oil companies’ global exploration initiatives, oil was discovered in many places far beyond Iran. It could be argued with good reason that the West sought to bleed certain nations of their natural resources for later dependency initiatives. The Council on Foreign Relations explains this strategy in great detail in the book Beyond the North-South Stalemate: The 1980s Project.¹⁹

Saudi Arabia was the devil with whom the West signed agreements. It is a Sunni kingdom that had always maintained its differences with Iran and Syria. Saudi Arabia had limitless amounts of oil and was willing to allow the West to process the commodity much more cheaply than Iran. In 1976, a deal was made by the West and the House of Saud that later triggered not only an economic meltdown in Iran but also a world filled with radical Islamic terror the West would later be forced to contend with. The shah was betrayed.

“The Shah’s personal reaction to the Saudi action was telling. Muhammad Reza Pahlavi had been counting on higher oil prices to buttress Iran’s anemic economy—and strengthen his hand—while he embarked on a highly risky course of political liberalization at home.”²⁰

Not only was the West willing to betray its long-standing ally in the region, it was willing to turn a blind eye were the shah to be overthrown. President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had deep admiration for Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi; however, not
everyone in the Nixon administration felt similarly. At least one man, Treasury Secretary William Simon, believed the shah was nothing more than a global oil ringleader.\textsuperscript{21}

It is critical to understand who Treasury Secretary William “Bill” Simon was. By understanding his background, one will be better able to understand his mentality. Many similarities will be found between William Simon and the Dulles brothers—he was born in a prestigious household, served his country, worked on Wall Street making millions, and was positioned within the federal government to manipulate policy makers.

Secretary Simon was born in New Jersey to a wealthy family. He joined the U.S. Army and later attended Lafayette College, then quickly found work at Union Securities, where he worked on large-scale investments. In time, through his successes, he became a managing partner at Wall Street’s famed Salomon Brothers. He was very well connected with some of America’s wealthiest corporate leaders and even served as board member for over thirty companies.\textsuperscript{22}

Friendships come and go. For Secretary Simon, it had become apparent that he couldn’t care less about any U.S.-Iranian friendship. In fact, Simon, without any true conviction, fought Nixon and Kissinger on foreign policy matters in the Middle East until Nixon’s term in office ended.

Once President Gerald Ford took office, Secretary Simon swayed him to move forward with a Saudi “oil for arms” agreement—completely betraying the team he formerly served, which included not only Nixon and Kissinger but also the cash-strapped shah of Iran.\textsuperscript{23}

The move positioned Saudi Arabia, along with other Arab nations including Qatar and Kuwait, to serve as America’s puppet masters for years to come. The United States’ alignment with Saudi Arabia fueled its power in the region and throughout the Islamic world—threatening
Israel and the West—and left the United States on hostile terms with Iran and its key regional ally, Syria. In fact, the arsenals of the aforementioned Arab nations are now largely comprised of U.S.-manufactured armaments, which can often be found in the hands of Islamic terrorists whom we fight today.\textsuperscript{24}

While the West signed a deal with the devil in Saudi Arabia, it betrayed a onetime true friend in Iran. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and Empress Farah lost their thrones in February of 1979. In April, Ayatollah Khomeini, the shah’s replacement, turned the former constitutional monarchy into an Islamic republic. Protests filled the streets, and riots ensued. On November 4, the U.S. Embassy in Iran was seized, and American diplomats were held hostage for 444 days.\textsuperscript{25}

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Since 1979, Iran has, in many ways, been engaged in a war against the United States. In an attempt to protect himself and his Islamic republic, Ayatollah Khomeini established an incredibly lethal force known as the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution, commonly referred to as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The IRGC was also established for another key reason—to prevent any future coups d’état inside Iran. As former CIA operative Bruce Riedel put it, “The Revolutionary Guard was created as a counterweight to the regular military, and to protect the revolution against a possible coup.”\textsuperscript{26}

Over the years, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps transitioned into an incredibly large and, in many ways, very influential socioeconomic entity within Iran. Today’s IRGC controls Iran’s nuclear endeavors, a large portion of its economy, its foreign policy, and much more. It also serves as a facilitator for a significant amount of Iranian terror, which includes Lebanon’s terror organization, known as Hezbollah, along with the task of working alongside Syria’s special operations forces.\textsuperscript{27}
Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has been involved in hundreds of terrorist operations globally. Their activities were carried out either directly or through one of their proxies, which include the Quds Force as well as Hezbollah. The list below consists of thirteen significant terrorist operations against the West. This list was compiled through multiple sources, including but not limited to the 9/11 Commission Report, the University of Maryland’s National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), the RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, and the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

1979: U.S. diplomats were taken hostage in Tehran and held for 444 days.

1983: Iranian-supported Hezbollah detonated a VBIED (vehicle-borne improvised explosive device), killing over 241 U.S. service members in Lebanon.

1984: William Buckley (CIA station chief) was taken hostage by Iranian terrorists and later killed by the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

1985: U.S. Navy Underwater Diver Robert Stethem was brutally murdered on TWA Flight 847.

1992: The Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was attacked by Iranian operatives, leaving more than 250 injured and 20 dead.

1995: The AMIA Jewish Center, also in Buenos Aires, was the target of a VBIED, killing 85 and leaving over 230 injured. Quds Force commander Ahmad Vahidi was behind the execution of the attack.

1996: Iranian-supported Hezbollah in Hijaz detonated a VBIED at Khobar Towers in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. service members.
1998: Two U.S. embassies in Africa were bombed in attacks coordinated by Iranian agents.

2000: An attack on the USS *Cole* killed 17 U.S. service members and left 39 injured.

2001: The 9/11 attacks, coordinated by Iran along with al Qaeda, produced casualties in New York City, the Pentagon, and Pennsylvania.

2003: Al Qaeda was reported to be using Iran, under the protection of the Quds Force, as a base to engage in operations throughout Iraq and Afghanistan against U.S. service members.

2010: Substantial signs of Iranian infiltration into the United States were identified on the southern U.S. border. Representative Sue Myrick cried out for investigations, with no result.

2011: Iran articulated its desire to send its naval vessels on patrol around North America, threatening U.S. coastal waters.

Why so much bloodshed? Why have the Iranians turned against the United States and its Western allies? Why do they hate us so much? The answers to these questions are quite obvious.

The United States and its Western allies interfered one too many times in Iranian domestic affairs. Iran once had a constitutional monarchy, which the United States helped topple due to one large corporation known today as British Petroleum. When the world faced an economic crisis in the 1970s, the United States again helped facilitate an uproar by not only turning its back on the one nation some American politicians considered its greatest ally in the Middle East but also signing deals with that nation’s rival, Saudi Arabia.

Simply put, today’s issues with Iran come from a long history of stabbing that nation in the back. This inference is based on historical facts and should be considered more than just opinion. With these blunders, thousands of American lives have been lost.
One thing not mentioned in all of this, however—and it is critically significant—is the fact that in attempting to nationalize the country’s oil Iran was breaching contracts with British Petroleum. For those wishing to ensure this point is clear, we must then ask, so what? We must also ask whether everything that unfolded in America’s past and continues to unfold today and likely tomorrow is worth so much bloodshed.

Unfortunately, something very similar to what has been unfolding in the Middle East over the years has already occurred throughout South and Central America. This, too, is important to understand.

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From the 1960s through the 1980s, military regimes throughout South and Central America implemented a reign of terror from Argentina all the way north to Mexico and even into the United States. Very few responsible for the 1970s nightmare were held accountable, and not one U.S. official was ever identified as serving as a conduit for the death and destruction that occurred in multiple Latin American nations.

Operation Condor, like many other assassination operations, was articulated as an anti-Communist operation. Some people believe the operation, whose key participants were Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil, was a self-induced operation sparked by host-nation dictators. Very few acknowledge those Latin America dictators were heavily assisted through an entity known as the School of the Americas—an institution owned and operated by the U.S. Department of Defense and originally established to help “defeat communism.”

“The United States, in this period, in the 1970s, was a major sponsor of the military dictatorships that had overthrown some democracies, some faltering civilian governments. . . .
The United States knew about the mass killings. . . . The United States supported the coming dictatorships.”

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was fully aware of the activities that unfolded in Latin America. Documents in the National Security Archive prove his knowledge of the assassinations, torture, and disappearance of thousands of individuals. Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America Harry W. Shlaudeman produced a July Monthly Report in August of 1976 that was classified Secret and addressed to Secretary Kissinger. The report was titled “The ‘Third World War’ and South America.”

In fact, not only did the United States know about the situation at hand, the U.S. intelligence community also knew about future operations planned by the military juntas involved in Operation Condor. One declassified Defense Intelligence Agency document reveals how much the United States was in the loop. “A third and reportedly very secret phase of Operation Condor involves the formation of special teams from member countries who are to carry out operations to include assassinations against terrorist or supporters of terrorist organizations. . . . Source stated that team members would not be commissioned or non-commissioned officers from the armed forces, but rather ‘special agents.’ Two European countries specifically mentioned for possible operations under the third phase were France and Portugal.”

It should be noted that those “terrorists or supporters of terrorist organizations” were not terrorists as thought of today since the spark of 9/11. These were mere opponents of the dictatorships who ruled the countries in which Operation Condor atrocities occurred. It is important to note that those who ran Operation Condor were themselves dictators who implemented military coups against democratically elected leaders to assume power. Those
dictators were supported by the United States. It is also critical to point out that the assassination teams, also at times construed as “death squads,” were trained by the U.S. Department of Defense, either through military advisers working deep inside South and Central America or through the School of the Americas.

Assassinations and capture of key persons unfolded not only across Latin America but also throughout Europe and even inside the United States—specifically inside Washington, D.C. One key person assassinated there was Orlando Letelier, a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. The former Chilean military officer, economist, and diplomat was killed on September 21, 1976, in Embassy Row.

Letelier was traveling with two colleagues, American citizens Ronni and Michael Moffitt, when an explosive device strategically placed inside his vehicle detonated. Letelier and Ronni Moffitt would later die from injuries sustained in the explosion, while Michael Moffitt would escape the blast with minimal injuries. The perpetrator behind the attack was Michael Townley.\(^{31}\)

Michael Townley was an American citizen who either served in the Central Intelligence Agency or worked as one of the CIA’s assets. In either case, it is clear that Townley worked incredibly closely with the CIA and Chile’s secret intelligence unit known as the DINA. A unique link intensifies the credibility of Townley’s U.S. government connection. The following information comes directly from undisclosed sources who work or have worked within the U.S. intelligence community.

Michael Townley was mentored at one point (specific dates remain unclear) by a former U.S. Marine who later became a CIA asset (or even possibly employee) by the name of Frank Fiorini. Fiorini got his claim to fame as the “Watergate Burglar” who was on the CIA payroll for
approximately ten years. The two worked incredibly closely with José Joaquin Sanjenis Perdomo (a.k.a. Sam Jenis), who was a member of Brigade 2506 during the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961—a failed CIA coup to overthrow Fidel Castro.

While many readers may question the authenticity of this information and the undisclosed sources, something can be revealed today that makes the information more credible.

Four Cuban exile groups were brought together on behalf of Chile’s DINA in an attempt to assassinate Orlando Letelier. One of those groups was CIA-backed “Force Fourteen.” While nowhere could the name Jose Joaquin Sanjenis Perdomo (a.k.a. Sam Jenis) be found in any record of involvement with the Letelier assassination case, an inference of association can be made that in one way or another that he may have helped Michael Townley bring Cuban exiles together. It just so happened that Guillermo Novo Sampol, Ignacio Novo Sampol, and Alvin Ross Díaz, three of five Cuban nationals Townley had confessed to hiring, were found guilty of murder in the Letelier case. The other two Cuban nationals were never extradited to the United States—Virgilio Paz Romero and Dionisio Suárez. General Augusto Pinochet believed their operational status within Chile’s DINA was too valuable. Of note, in 1991, fifteen years after the terrorist attack, Virgilio Paz Romero, while living in Florida, was captured and sentenced to twelve years for conspiracy to assassinate Letelier. One year earlier, in 1990, Suarez who was also living in Florida by this time, was captured and pleaded guilty to conspiracy, sentenced, and released in August of 2001.32

With this information, it is safe to assume that not only did the United States government know about ongoing atrocities in Latin America, the United States government actually helped facilitate some of those atrocities through training, mentoring, and advising foreign clandestine agents, and also helped coordinate CIA-trained foreign exiles who were later held accountable
for their activities in terrorism operations inside the nation’s capital. It is important to note that Michael Townley served only sixty-two months in a U.S. federal penitentiary. He is now living under the U.S. Federal Witness Protection Program.

Such operations continue today, but they go far beyond just South America. The United States has supported and continues to support regime change throughout Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Rarely do we ever hear about such operations due to their secretive nature, but rest assured U.S. involvement in such regions is massive. From the end of World War II through 1986, 127 “significant wars” occurred—and virtually every single one of these wars has traces of U.S. involvement. All but 2 of these wars took place in third-world, underdeveloped, or developing nations.33

Articulation is critical, and throughout the Cold War, U.S. leaders claimed “Communism was a threat to the United States.” However, in Guatemala and many other nations throughout the world that witnessed U.S.-assisted overthrows, clearly Communism was not the main reason for participating in these covert activities. When Communism wasn’t used as the excuse, the United States termed the reason “pro-democracy” as the reason. Both of these terms can be viewed as simply articulated excuses to keep the United States involved abroad—globally.

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How long will these covert operations last? Who knows? What is known, however, is the fact that some active players/organizations, including U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations, have expressed concern about ongoing U.S.-led global regime change activities. The National Endowment for Democracy, one of those organizations, wrote in a 2006 report: “The color revolutions are increasingly invoked and exploited by repressive regimes to portray democracy assistance as a form of ‘regime change by stealth’ and to justify clamping down on allegedly
subversive activities. Democracy promotion is increasingly confronting new actors and agencies, largely associated with authoritarian ‘petro-states,’ committed to undermining, countering and reversing liberal democracy’s progress. This almost amounts to a rival ‘democracy retardation’ or ‘democracy perversion’ movement, incorporating ersatz democracy promotion groups (as in Russia); increased funding for radical Islamist groups from Saudi/Wahhabi, Iranian, Syrian and related sources; and reported Venezuelan financing of radical populist, nationalist, or ‘Bolivarian’ parties across Latin America.”

Is global democracy truly what the United States wishes or seeks to implement? Is democracy truly the best form of governance for every society or every culture? Then again, what exactly is “democracy,” considering many so-called forms of democracy actually exist?

Many argue that the United States is not a “democratic” nation but rather a “constitutional republic.” If the United States cannot even figure out exactly what “democracy” means, then how can such a term be used while articulating U.S.-backed “regime change” in Syria—or anywhere else, for that matter? Yet that is exactly what has been pitched time and time again pertaining to U.S. intervention. In 2011, President Barack Obama used that term, “democracy,” when speaking about Syria and its leader, Bashar al-Assad.

“The Syrian people have shown their courage in demanding a transition to democracy,” the president said. “President Assad now has a choice: He can lead that transition, or get out of the way. The Syrian government must stop shooting demonstrators and allow peaceful protests.”

Unfortunately, the United States and its people have constantly been conditioned to listen to leaders articulate in a manner that makes Americans feel a need to embrace their decisions, for example, “pro-democracy” or “anti-Communism.” Today, we hear the new catchphrases
regarding “radicalization,” “extremists,” or “Islamic extremism.” What, though, is the truth regarding the vast amount of United States’ involvement throughout the Middle East?

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The U.S.–House of Saud relationship cannot be stressed enough. Virtually everything the United States has done over the years throughout the Middle East has a direct link back to Saudi Arabia. More importantly, a specific node of Saudi origin can also be identified. That node is a man by the name of Prince Bandar bin Sultan.

Bandar bin Sultan, the illegitimate son of a Saudi prince and a servant girl, has been a U.S. manipulator since the days of the Cold War. (He once served as a Saudi ambassador to the United States and quickly thereafter, in 2012, earned the position of director general of Saudi Arabia’s Ri’āsat Al-Istikhbārāt Al-’Āmah (General Intelligence Presidency, or GIP)—Saudi Arabia’s equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency.36

Many Americans understand that a significant amount of U.S. support to the Afghan Mujahideen during the Russian-Afghan War was facilitated by Saudi Arabia. Few realize that one man from the House of Saud truly served as the facilitator between the United States and the Afghan Mujahedeen in an attempt to assist in bringing about the overall defeat of Russia during the Cold War. That one specific person who helped the United States was Prince Bandar bin Sultan.37

The prince also assisted in facilitating a unique covert operation during the same period. Halfway across the globe, far away from Afghanistan, the United States was involved in a series of covert activities throughout South America, and by the side of Uncle Sam came Bandar bin Sultan.
During the Iran-Contra Affair, the United States needed additional funding to ensure specific activities, covert in nature, could be paid for. Bandar bin Sultan was seen standing close enough to be brought into the process. His specific mission was to facilitate getting dollars to the Contras, who were fully backed by President Reagan. In total, Bandar bin Sultan provided, per request of the United States, an estimated $32 million to assist the Nicaraguan Contras.38

Who cares about Bandar bin Sultan? Who cares about his past? Who cares about anything about the man? How does he have anything to do with today’s issues throughout the Middle East, let alone Syria? It’s time to take a pause and answer some of these questions.

That small amount of history about Bandar bin Sultan was provided simply to show his past record in working with the United States. History often shows a pattern, and when it comes to Bandar bin Sultan and his close working relationship with the United States, a pattern is indeed apparent, especially in light of some of the activities he has been involved with lately. For instance, “Prince Bandar has been jetting from covert command centers near the Syrian front lines to the Élysée Palace in Paris and the Kremlin in Moscow, seeking to undermine the Assad regime, according to Arab, American, and European officials.”39

Some Americans have sought to see Bashar al-Assad removed, and surely they appreciate the efforts coming from Bandar bin Sultan. Undisclosed sources who work closely within the intelligence community claim the prince has actually funded the training of Syrian rebels—rebels who may or may not be closely aligned with radical Islamists. That training has been speculated to come from the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center in Jordan—a training center that incorporates former U.S. special operators as its instructors, who work under U.S. government contracts.
It is apparent that the United States has a close working relationship with Saudi Arabia, and more importantly Prince Bandar bin Sultan. How “good” a guy is he? Is he a man willing to do anything in his power to completely manipulate a serious crisis that the entire world has their eyes set on? Is he willing to go so far as to actually assist Syrian rebels with chemical agents to help create a “smoke and mirrors” atrocity? Several reports claim this is exactly what Bandar bin Sultan has actually done, yet Peter Nealen, a contributor for SOFREP.com, provides appropriate analysis for these claims.

“A report has arisen out of the Ghouta area of Damascus, claiming that the chemical weapons that killed over three hundred people were in fact in the possession of the rebels, supplied by Bandar bin Sultan, and had in fact been mishandled due to a lack of training, resulting in the exposure and deaths. The report has only come from an AP-affiliated reporter named Dale Gavlak, and was not picked up by AP, but was rather printed by MintPressNews. So far it is a single-source report (read-rumor), and as such should be taken with a large grain of salt until some corroborating reporting comes up.”

No matter one’s opinion, good or bad, of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, he is a significant player who works in close proximity with the United States. As earlier noted, the Saudi prince has been working with the United States for a very long time, including American covert efforts during the Russian-Afghan War and throughout the Iran-Contra Affair.

Revealing who Bandar bin Sultan is, his involvement and close relations with the United States, and his current alleged activities in the Syrian conflict should lead a person to question not only him and his morality but also U.S. relations and activities with others. A brief history of a few more covert activities the U.S. has been involved in around the globe may actually assist in establishing answers to such questions.
Another exceptional case study exists that can lead to a better understanding of U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Not only does this case study show how the United States orchestrated specific operations, it also shows how quick the United States can be to turn its back against those who once assisted it. This case study comes through the Iran-Contra Affair.

Throughout Latin America, the United States engaged in an array of controversial activities; however, none compares to what resulted during the Iran-Contra affair. Some would argue the Iran-Contra Affair was executed in an attempt to free seven U.S. hostages in Lebanon. The reality behind the affair actually had very little to do with the seven hostages in Lebanon but rather a lot to do with dictators, drugs, and maintaining a strong foothold in South and Central America, and with a unique game played in the Middle East but more specifically Iran.

In an attempt to keep readers from feeling scattered in reading what is to come, let’s just say a few nodes will specifically be highlighted in this section—Manuel Noriega, Iran, weapons, drugs, and very briefly yet the incredibly important nation of Afghanistan. Yes, during Iran-Contra, even Afghanistan played a key role.

In 1985, TWA Flight 847 was hijacked as it was en route from Athens to Rome. Those responsible for the hijacking were Iranian-supported terrorists from Lebanon known as Hezbollah. Of note, while Hezbollah initiated the hijacking, another Lebanese terrorist group supported by Iran and Syria quickly became involved—Amal. One U.S. citizen was brutally murdered during the initial seizure of the aircraft, U.S. Navy Underwater Diver Robert Stethem. Many use this atrocity as an excuse for the spark of the Iran-Contra Affair.41

During this period in world history the Cold War was at its peak, and proxies were often utilized between the United States and Russia. Terrorism became a global issue needing to be
addressed. During his 1980 campaign, Ronald Reagan vowed never to negotiate with terrorists. However, his vow was broken throughout the Iran-Contra Affair. Not only did the United States broker deals with terrorists during the Reagan era, it helped fuel terrorists with weapons and training—the very tools U.S. service members would later be forced to counter. 42

For some, it is safe to say that the Iran-Contra Affair had very little to do with the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847. One argument that counters this justification for the affair is very simple. The last U.S. hostage, Terry Anderson, was not released from captivity until 1991—approximately six years after the initial hijacking in question. 43

While it is virtually impossible to declare exactly when the Iran-Contra Affair ended, it is safe to say that due to the 1987 congressional public hearings, which led to more than a dozen indictments, it ended several years before 1991, when Terry Anderson was freed. So what was the Iran-Contra Affair about if it wasn’t about seven American hostages? A million theories exist, and while the answer remains unclear, some things are evident. 44

Was the Iran-Contra Affair an actual shaping operation? During this period, Russia was in for the fight of its life in Afghanistan, the Middle East was ravaged with Islamic extremism fueled by the Iran-Iraq War, and the United States was playing economic roulette in South America via fueling dozens of coups d’état with military juntas.

For American power players, the Iran-Contra Affair could be an opportunity to continue shaping the geopolitical environment in such regions with one massive punch—sell weapons to Iran through facilitators like Israel and Saudi Arabia, divert the proceeds to help strengthen the Nicaraguan Contras, create commando training platforms for revolutionaries/insurgents out of Afghanistan, and all the while play nice with some major narco-terrorists, who included Pablo Escobar and Manuel Noriega, knowing that drugs, like war, make money. 45
The key figure in Latin America for the United States was Manuel Noriega, a longtime asset who was twice paid handsomely under the CIA’s payroll. He attended the School of the Americas, was provided multiple courses in intelligence tradecraft, and had a close relationship with the Columbian drug lord Pablo Escobar. He was America’s man down south.46

The United States used Manuel Noriega for everything he had—drugs, the Panama Canal, international influence, and the ability to operate clandestinely. He would serve as one of the greatest brokers for the United States throughout the entire Iran-Contra Affair. How critical was Noriega? He actually provided safe haven for the man President Nixon described as “Our greatest ally in the region”— Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the shah of Iran.47

Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North had a good relationship with Manuel Noriega. North has been construed by many as the mastermind behind the Iran-Contra Affair. During this period, however, Noriega had a bad reputation and self-admittedly needed to clean it up to gain greater support not just in Panama but on the world stage. Under one key condition, Noriega was willing to deal with the Nicaraguan Sandinistas leadership—the United States needed to lift the ban on arms sales to the Panamanian Defense Forces.48

The United States lifted the ban per Noriega’s request and then began to incorporate the military dictator into the grand-scale schematic of operations, even though the U.S. government knew about his connections with South American narco-terrorists like Escobar. Funding to Noriega would come by multiple means, which included his ongoing drug business but also the National Endowment for Democracy through a secretive international funding scheme known as Project Democracy. “Project Democracy grew into a parallel foreign policy apparatus—complete with its own communications systems, secret envoys, leased ships and airplanes, offshore bank accounts, and wholly owned corporations.”49
Everything written about Project Democracy makes it appear to have operated no differently from a large organized crime syndicate—offshore bank accounts, unique communication systems, secret envoys, etc. Could the “good guys” have mirrored such an economic enterprise for any specific reason? The answer is obvious.

It would be a tragic mistake to forget about the weapon deals, monetary exchanges, and loss of life that unfolded throughout the Iran-Contra Affair. However, as significant is the unprecedented amount of drug deals that took place between U.S. government officials and known narco-terrorists. An argument, weak or strong depending on one’s perception, could be made that through the Iran-Contra Affair and the dealings through Project Democracy, the United States was just as responsible as any criminal or narco-terror group for yesterday’s and today’s drug crisis in America. As the saying goes, drugs make money.

Oliver North, Elliott Abrams, and Alan Fiers oversaw the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office—a U.S. government front organization to help aid the Nicaraguan Contras in their fight against the Sandinistas. One National Security Archive document shows that Oliver North knew of one of the largest marijuana smugglers taking part in providing “aid” to the Contras though a plane belonging to a Miami-based company known as Vortex. The trafficker is named as Michael Palmer—who under the U.S. payroll once received up to $300,000 for shipping arms and had direct links with Pablo Escobar. At least six companies that had been owned and operated by convicted or suspected drug traffickers were linked to the United States and the Contras—and all six were at one point or another on the U.S. payroll.30

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If you play with the devil, you’d better play by his rules or you will get burned. That is exactly what happened to Manuel Noriega—he failed to play by American rules. The United States paid
Noriega handsomely; some estimates claim his annual payments as a U.S. asset exceeded $200,000. In some regards, Noriega could be seen as the United States’ observation/listening-post operative ensuring all drugs entering the United States were fully monitored.

The moment Noriega decided to once again work close with his Medellín cartel friends and knowledge of his dealings with Pablo Escobar and the Iran-Contra Affair became public, the United States was pressured to take him out of office. Some politicians were hesitant, but enough pressure was applied to result in a U.S.-military-led operation known as Operation Just Cause.

More than three hundred persons were killed in Operation Just Cause, including at least twenty-three Americans. Thousands were injured. There is no question that this military engagement was a direct result of poor foreign policy on the part of the United States. That foreign policy resulted in deaths far beyond those that occurred during the Panama invasion.

Today, the United States faces a serious drug crisis. Some would say that only conspiracy theorists would claim the U.S. government helped fuel this situation. However, too much evidence proves the truth of the assertion—the U.S. government did have a hand in fueling today’s drug crisis in America.

In fact, it is safe to say that during the wars in Vietnam, Panama, and Afghanistan, the United States was clandestinely playing along with several international narco-terrorists—and this is evident when the realities that unfolded throughout the Iran-Contra Affair are acknowledged.

According to *Drugs, Law, and the State*, written by Harold Traver and Mark Gaylord, three key figures who played in the Iran-Contra Affair also played in the drug game in Laos during the Vietnam War. Theodore Shackley, second in command of the CIA’s clandestine operations during the war, assisted in organizing opium trafficking out of Laos. Thomas Clines,
another CIA operative, helped facilitate the Nugan Hand Bank as the money depository for the CIA’s opium activities in Laos. General Richard Secord, CIA chief of tactical air support in Laos, helped ensure safe transport of goods. All three men were indicted not for their activities in Laos but rather for the Iran-Contra Affair. All three men were at one time considered national heroes within the clandestine services.51

The Iran-Contra Affair is important for many reasons. It shows how far the United States will go to secure key assets. It reveals that good or bad, the United States is willing to put anyone on its team so long as they play by U.S. rules. This is clear considering how many drug dealers actually played during the Iran-Contra Affair and how many of those drug dealers were given deals so long as they testified against Manuel Noriega: Noriega’s pilot Floyd Carlton, drug kingpin Ricardo Bilonick, and Colombian narco-pilot Roberto Striedinger all come to mind.52

Most importantly, the Iran-Contra Affair proves that the United States will quickly turn its back on allies no matter how long they served the nation or how much money was put into making them become the people they have become; case in point, Manuel Noriega. Finally, the case proves that the U.S. government is willing to take risks—and, when those risks cause blowback, quick to cover up as much as possible by sending in U.S. forces. After all, a soldier is not nearly as valuable as some corrupt politician, right?

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How many other world leaders can we now claim the United States turned its back on?

From evidence in this writing alone, it is clear that the United States worked very closely with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein—even supplying him with chemical weapons, which he later used not only during the Iran-Iraq War but also against his own people, the Kurds. He was
supposedly an ally, yet in 2003 the United States invaded Iraq, and eventually the Iraqi dictator was captured and later executed.

It should be noted that the West provided unprecedented amounts of chemical and biological weapons to Saddam Hussein in the 1980s. In fact, Special Envoy Donald Rumsfeld helped facilitate Iraq’s chemical and biological warfare program during the Reagan era. One report specifically explains how Rumsfeld, who would serve two later presidents as secretary of defense, actually assisted in providing Iraq with anthrax and bubonic plague. According to former U.S. ambassador to Baghdad David Newton, “Fundamentally, the policy was justified. We were concerned that Iraq should not lose the war with Iran, because that would have threatened Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Our long-term hope was that Hussein’s government would become less repressive and more responsible.”

“That would have threatened Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.” Was Ambassador Newton referring to the same Saudi Arabia that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers on 9/11 came from? Could nations in “the Gulf” have included Qatar, which has been secretly financing the anti-Assad forces in Syria over the past several years, many of which have aligned with al Qaeda? Rhetorical questions, obviously. Still, Ambassador Newton’s quote is important, because it divulges the reality of the relationship between the United States and the House of Saud and other Gulf states.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have been strategic allies since the late 1950s or early 1960s. Remember how easy it was for the United States to turn its back on its onetime closest ally in the Middle East—Iran? If you jump off a broken boat in the middle of the ocean without seeing any form of rescue nearby, the odds are you will die. The United States jumped
off Iran as a strategic partner, and Saudi Arabia served as the rescue boat. Ever since, some would argue, the United States has been nothing but a puppet to the House of Saud.

Is this why the United States entered the First Gulf War in 1990 with incredible expedition and unprecedented amounts of brute force? Did it really have anything to do with Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, or did it have to do with the proximity of Saddam’s forces to Saudi Arabia, which jeopardized the world oil market? Why wasn’t Saddam actually taken out during the First Gulf War? Remember, Saddam was a former strategic ally. He also served as a buffer between the other Gulf nations and Iran.

The U.S. military supremacy displayed during the First Gulf War was overwhelming. However, with the victory came concern. Was the victory too quick? Did the victory show enough evidence to potential threats that the United States and its allies truly are militarily supreme? Who would those potential threats be? Iran, Syria, Libya? Could such victory have come with some blowback?

The First Gulf War did come with some blowback. Some would argue that the unprecedented military might displayed by the West actually strengthened bonds among our supposed enemies like Iran, Syria, the Sudan, North Korea, and Libya. All of these nations, while not necessarily each stated by name, were implied during President George W. Bush’s famous speech addressing the United States and the rest of the world shortly after 9/11. He referred to these nations as the “axis of evil.”

In May 2002, U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton claimed that Syria was officially listed as one of the several nations in the original “axis of evil” construct. Bolton also included Cuba and Libya in the mix.
These nations identified as part of the “axis of evil” have worked long and hard with one another. One of their biggest missions is to unilaterally create and/or develop chemical, biological, and/or nuclear weapons—the very weapons the United States has previously provided to at least one of those nations named in Bush’s “axis of evil” speech.

In 2003, Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi renounced his nation’s efforts to procure weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It was apparent he realized the seriousness behind Bush’s speech. Libya took the steps needed to comply with international desires and welcomed inspectors to observe the dismantling of the WMD program.

“Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control Stephen Rademaker stated May 2, 2005 during the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference that Libya’s choice ‘demonstrates that, in a world of strong nonproliferation norms, it is never too late to make the decision to become a fully compliant NPT state,’ noting that Tripoli’s decision has been ‘amply rewarded.’”

Anyone looking at former U.S.-Libyan relations would see that Muammar Qaddafi, while not the nicest guy on the planet, did flip and eventually work with the United States immediately after 9/11, which sparked the War on Terror. Not only did Libya comply with U.S. demands in dismantling its WMD program, it was one of at least fifty-four nations that worked alongside the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in establishing a “black site” where terrorists would be sent and interrogated.

While Qaddafi was willing to work with the United States after a years-long rift between the two nations, eventually, in 2011, he was removed from power by a rebel force, which was fully supported by U.S. military might. Before the year was out, Qaddafi was captured and killed by anti-Qaddafi forces that included members of al Qaeda.
U.S. intervention in Libya emboldened rebel groups throughout the region, many of which were radical Islamists. What happened in Libya, similarly to what happened in Iraq, makes little sense unless a person understands and accepts the fact that these nations are considered micronations. They are micronations that are sought for regime change so the United States can keep at least one macronation at bay—Iran. Which micronation is likely next for U.S.-backed regime change? Iran’s greatest ally—Syria.

If regime change can be orchestrated in Syria, Iran is left with virtually no allies in the region. Iran would be required to solely utilize nations such as China, Russia, and North Korea for its continued efforts to survive, and none of those nations is close enough to make constant support easily accessible. These efforts are more or less simple yet complex survival against its greatest threat, the Middle East’s dominant Sunni Islamic kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, in order to tie the noose around Iran, the final phase of American-led shaping operations throughout the Middle East and North Africa must occur. That final operation must happen in Syria, under Bashar al-Assad’s regime.

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Shaping operations are nothing new for the United States. History reveals U.S.-led clandestine operations that were truly shaping operations throughout South and Central America—Operation Condor comes to mind—and in other regions as well. In fact, it is safe to assume the idea of shaping operations evolved in Europe immediately following World War II through an “anti-Communist” initiative known as Operation Gladio.59

It is clear that shaping operations have occurred for a long time. Evidence suggests the United States has been heavily involved in these operations. While declassification of such operations is often long drawn out, details of an operation in North Africa were recently released
that fuel speculation that the United States has been attempting to shape the region—Operation Oasis Enabler.

Very few have ever heard of Operation Oasis Enabler, which “never officially launched.” The program was intended to provide the government of Mali with U.S. special operators who would serve as mentors and trainers in an attempt to help defeat opposition forces growing in the area who were closely aligned with al Qaeda elements. This sounds too similar to what occurred during Operation Condor.60

If Operation Oasis Enabler never launched, then what were three U.S. special operatives doing in Mali during the summer of 2009? Why were their dead bodies found in a vehicle alongside three dead Moroccan-national females? Why has this administration gone public through a U.S. Embassy spokesperson, Megan Larson-Kone, claiming the U.S. special operatives were on “personal business” rather than speaking the truth that they were on “professional U.S. government business?”

Why would anyone in the U.S. military wish to take leave for a fun-filled vacation in Mali? Really, Mali is not some fun-filled paradise. These troops weren’t on any type of personal leave, as some U.S. government representatives would like us to believe.

Al Qaeda operatives have known for a very long time that the United States has been operating in Mali since at least 2009. They also know that the U.S. special operations community, along with nearby nations, has been orchestrating unique clandestine activities throughout all of North Africa and the Middle East.

So why did the United States place its best and brightest in grave danger in Mali back in 2009? What were its greatest national assets trying to do there? Were they engaged in shaping operations? Were they conducting operations that would later add pressure against Iran? Have
we not seen similar atrocities over the years in the region? Do we not have a plethora of questions needing answers—questions related to the 2012 Benghazi atrocity?

Three U.S. service members were killed in Mali back in 2009. If that was not enough, four Americans were killed in Benghazi on September 11, 2012—Ambassador Chris Stevens, Sean Smith, Glen Doherty, and Tyrone Woods. Americans have continued to present questions about the Benghazi atrocity, yet few answers have been heard. Some persons have speculated that the Benghazi attack had a lot to do with illegal arms shipments headed for Syria.

In an exchange between Senator Jeff Duncan and Secretary of State John Kerry during hearings on Syria held by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Duncan asked a volley of questions linking what happened in Benghazi to arms shipments in Syria. “He didn’t want to answer, and I tried to make the connection between Benghazi and Syria by asking whether weapons were being funneled from the rebels that we supplied them to in Libya to the rebels in Syria,” Duncan said. “He didn’t answer that question.”

If it is later found that clandestine operations were unfolding in Benghazi, and they were related to arms shipments headed for anti-Assad forces in Syria, another shaping operation would then be identified to the public. So far, that has not happened, and the thought of such remains speculation.

Speculating about what unfolded in Benghazi is not necessarily wrong, considering that during the Iran-Contra Affair the United States engaged in secret arms deals with actors who were not necessarily friendly. Those arms deals were meant to assist unlawful enemy combatants, i.e., terrorists, with their initiatives to overthrow regimes. That is something we know the United States would love to see happen in Syria—the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad.

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The United States is intent on seeing the Assad regime crumble. Too much evidence supports this claim for it to be denied, ranging from Ambassador Bolton adding Syria to the “axis of evil” category to General Wesley Clark speaking about the nation being one of several where regime change is sought. However, Syria is not what many may believe it to be.

Syria is in the midst of a civil war. How that war began or who was behind the spark of that war matters little. What matters is the fact that more than 100,000 people have died in this war. How these persons died also doesn’t matter. Whether they were killed by conventional bombs or bullets versus chemical warfare shouldn’t matter; they are dead. What should matter is the intent behind the United States and its allies like Saudi Arabia desperately seeking regime change.

Why does the United States really want regime change in Syria? To what lengths is the West willing to go to ensure Syria’s regime is changed? Is the United States willing to finance and arm specific terror groups, as it did throughout South and Central America during Operation Condor and during the Iran-Contra Affair?

Is the United States willing to kill a man who attempted to implement a more secular nation, which included educational reform ensuring different religions could live without fear of persecution, solely because his father was a bloodthirsty murderer? A man Secretary of State John Kerry claimed in 2011 was “very generous,” then called a “thug” and a “murderer” after alleged chemical attacks in 2013?62

With these questions asked, none of the answers that come with them matter. What really matters is knowing that the United States, just as in South America, is intent on shaping the Middle East. More precisely, the United States is intent on shaping the Levant. These shaping
operations, while tactically will affect each individual nation, are meant for a much larger picture—Iran.

Syria can fall one way or another, with or without U.S. military intervention. Eventually, Syria may see its leader, Bashar al-Assad, removed from power. If this happens, it may have an effect in a nearby nation, and that nation is Lebanon. Without Syria, Lebanon is crushed. Yes, the West would also love to see Lebanon witness its own regime change; hence our efforts to support the 2005 Cedar Revolution, which served as an anti-Syrian movement as much as a political shift desired in Lebanon.63

Without Lebanon, but more importantly without Syria, Iran is doomed. Since the late 1950s, the United States and its Western allies have wished nothing more than to see Iran crumble. The United States has gone so far as to implement covert activities that involved the overthrow of Iranian leaders like Mossadegh. To date, not one U.S.-led operation against Iran has achieved its overall intent. Today, with an array of lessons learned throughout South and Central America, lessons learned in dealing with nation-state leaders including Muammar Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein, and lessons learned in more than one decade of fighting asymmetric threats, the United States feels enough knowledge has been obtained to finalize one of the last chapters in “Operation Quagmire”—the destruction of Syria to gain control over Iran.
Notes
3 Not Anymore may be viewed at http://www.matthewvandyke.com.


Frederic Wehrey et al., The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009).


59 http://www.thejohnfleming.com/gladio.html


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