

Beat: Politics

PART THREE - JOHN KERRY GIVING FULL REMARKS ON UNITED STATES STRATEGY IN SYRIA

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USPA NEWS - Secretary of State John Kerry : 'It's why we have been in regular contact from the outset with mainstream Syrian opposition groups, meeting with them repeatedly, helping them in ways both public and private, and encouraging them to unify and take steps to broaden their support.'

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'It is why we have worked hard to mitigate the incredible burden the war has placed on Syria's neighbors "" on Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq. Excuse me, not Iran, Iraq. And in each case, we have coordinated closely with the government in order to prevent the violence from spreading and to help them cope with the massive influx of refugees that has now spread even beyond their own region into the heart of Europe.'

'To date, as was mentioned, we have proudly given, contributed more than 4.5 billion in humanitarian relief and we are constantly exhorting other countries to open their wallets. Because, even as another winter closes in, the need for help far outweighs the supply.'

'In addition, we have announced a six-fold increase in the number of Syrian refugees that we will welcome to our shores in the United States.'

'In addition to all this, the United States led a successful international effort to eliminate Syria's inventory of chemical weapons. Now when Assad attacked his own people with these horrific weapons, banned by international law, President Obama's threat of military strikes forced the Syrian regime to back down and enabled us to strike a deal with Russia and other members of the UN Security Council.'

'As a result, for the first time in history, weapons of mass destruction were removed from a country while that country was engaged in a conflict. And let me tell you something, it is a plenty good thing that that happened, because you can only imagine the devastation the leaders of Daesh could have been able to wreak if they had gotten their hands on Syria's arsenal of sophisticated, lethal chemical arms.'

'Now I emphasize this because the list of crimes for which Daesh is responsible is already numbing. These thugs aren't just terrorists; they're also smugglers, kidnappers, raw criminals. They butcher teachers, burn books, wage war on knowledge itself. They execute journalists for doing their jobs and average citizens, not for anything that they have said or done but simply for who they are, for what they believe about religion and God.'

'In Iraq, Daesh fighters have been abducting, raping, and auctioning off women and girls, even teaching that the abuse of underage, non-Muslim girls is not only acceptable but a form of prayer, an expression of the will of God. That is how perverse this has become. And they have urged followers and affiliates from across the globe to murder their neighbors, to commit homicides and suicide at the same time.'

'This past summer, terrorists picked up sledgehammers and smashed half a dozen statues in the ancient city of Palmyra. They destroyed the 1,800-year-old Roman Arch and temples that were even more venerable. They seized the city's director of antiquities, made him kneel in a public square, cut off his head, and left his body tied to a pole. The man was 83 years old and he had been in charge of preserving Palmyra's cultural heritage for more than 50 years.'

'It couldn't be plainer. History doesn't matter to Daesh; human dignity doesn't matter to Daesh; and the sacredness of life itself is alien to Daesh. Their leaders represent everything that we fought against from World Wars I and II to today, and everything that we have tried to build up that is right and good in all of our societies. And in confronting them, we face a fight against medieval and modern fascism at the same time.'

'Let me be clear. This isn't just a fight that we must make on behalf of others, as important as that is at times. The United States does not go in search of enemies, but there are times when enemies come in search of us. And we know for a fact that Daesh means what it says when it threatens to attack America and attack Americans and attack America's interests.'

'So the stakes could not be higher. Under President Obama's leadership, the United States has mobilized a 65-member coalition to take on Daesh and defeat Daesh. And notwithstanding whatever you read recently about people diverted with other interests "" yeah, there are other conflicts too, but they remain committed, deeply committed, and at the table in Vienna helping to broker a solution. We have said from the beginning that this would be a multiyear effort, but as I will describe in a couple of minutes, we are on the right track and we are making gains, and we are clear about the road ahead.'

'My friends, the Syrian civil war has dragged on now for more than four and a half years. We recall with sadness that the civil war in neighboring Lebanon lasted for 16. Regrettably, this is not a part of the world where flames, once ignited, simply extinguish themselves.'

'The intractable nature of the conflict in Syria is attributable to a number of factors, beginning with the Assad government. The four decades of dictatorial rule choked off any attempt to develop an organized political opposition. Sectarian differences that might have worked themselves out peacefully in a more open society instead festered beneath the surface.'

'And the forces unleashed by the Arab Spring emerged so suddenly that the collision between rising alarm on one side and skyrocketing expectations on the other was much more traumatic than otherwise might have been the case.'

'The situation was further complicated by the involvement of regional actors, especially Hizballah, which intervened on behalf of Assad, and the foreign terrorist fighters who have joined Daesh and other terrorist groups, and members of the IRGC who crossed an international border to become involved in this fight.'

..... TO BE CONTINUED WITH PART FOUR

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