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# 1

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## THE BEGINNING: ISIS AND OIL

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*ISIS's urgent goal is not to affect the commodity markets, but to fill its own coffers. Then again, its bigger goal is to scare the whole world. Now, ISIS's failure to instill in the oil markets the kind of fears it has instilled elsewhere, can be counted as its first strategic defeat.<sup>3</sup>*

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BEFORE THE IRAQ WAR BEGAN, I wrote *Beyond Iraq: The Next Move*. In the pages of that book, I predicted what would happen in Iraq in a battle between the Shia and Sunni Muslims. As a result of that book, in 2007 I was invited by President Mahmoud Barzani of Kurdistan for a state visit. While there, I met with the president, his Minister of the Interior, speaker of the Kurdish government, the head of the

Kurdistan equivalent of the FBI, the Minister of State, the vice president, and members of the Kurdish government.

During those meetings, I was made aware that something existential was transpiring in Iraq. I wrote a sequel to my first book and titled it, *The Final Move Beyond Iraq, The Final Solution While the World Sleeps*. On the back cover, I stated, “An Islamic revolution is spreading and is on the brink of becoming America’s greatest threat since the [American] Civil War.”

The book, a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, predicted the birth of an Islamic Sunni caliphate. Derived from the word “caliph”, a caliphate is the area controlled by what is historically considered to be a successor to Mohammad. The caliph is the political leader of the area and head of the Islamic nation. The establishment of such a caliphate is drawing ever closer with the rise of the Islamic State—or as it has become known in its many mutations: ISIS, IS, or ISIL. The battle is one between authoritarianism and any move toward democracy. Some Middle East countries are now losing the battle either because of low oil revenues or a complete loss of that income. CIA Director John Brennan said in January 2016 that an ISIS attack on the United States was “inevitable.” According to Brennan:

We have a number of instances where ISIL has used chemical munitions on the battlefield. There are reports that ISIS has access to chemical precursors and munitions that they can use.<sup>4</sup>

Reports of mustard gas in the hands of ISIS began in the summer of 2015. Kurdish troops in Syria related exposure to the chemical during a confrontation with Islamic State terrorists.

ISIS has commandeered millions of dollars in revenue, i.e., banks, oil, gas reserves, taxation, extortion, kidnapping, and donations from some Gulf Oil States under the guise of humanitarianism. It is using every conceivable social network from Twitter, Friendica, Diasporamessenger.com, and Quitter to spread its message in more than twenty-three languages. Recruits are joining from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Jordan, Morocco, France, Turkey, Lebanon, Germany, Libya, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, virtually the known world, and sadly, the United States.

It may seem more like fiction than reality, but the truth is: ISIS controls portions of Iraq and Syria, an area with

a population of eight million. The lives of the inhabitants under its control are a living hell. According to Bernard Haykel, a professor of Near-Eastern Studies at Princeton:

Slavery, crucifixion, and beheadings are not something that freakish [jihadists] are cherry-picking from the medieval tradition. [They are] bringing it wholesale into the present day.<sup>5</sup>

There are few news reports about the spread of ISIS into Algeria, Yemen, West Africa, the northern provinces of Southeast Asia, and the enormous impact on Libya, Egypt, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and even the threat to Israel. ISIS claims religious and military authority over the entire Muslim world. It is also well-versed on how to integrate into the Middle East and the West quietly and carefully, preparing for an eventual overthrow.

ISIS leaders refer to their strongholds as *Dar al-Islam*—the house of Islam. Not only are a large number of al-Qaeda defectors involved, but also military leaders and members of the late Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party. Disenfranchised, unemployed masses raised on the precepts of Islam are inspired by dreams of an Islamic caliphate, and the belief that it can conquer the world.

This is partially because it is an authoritarian regime, an entity similar to the government in Saudi Arabia that dumbs-down the masses for its own benefit.

What ISIS believes about prophecy has a sense of plausibility: that when the end of time arrives, not only will it take over the world, but that Jesus, who is considered a prophet in Islam, will return to earth and join them. He will help lead the Muslims to victory against Jews, Christians and the Antichrist—the deceiver who claims to be the Christian Messiah. This teaching is a huge selling-point in recruiting foreign jihadists to join what IS heralds as the final battle of the Apocalypse.

It will be the battle between the modern-day Crusader armies and Islam. This is one reason ISIS needs—and wants—such a battle between the Muslims and the United States of America. Its leaders believe it will legitimize their cause and help recruit additional members. This feeds the group's desire to do everything possible to provoke the U.S. into a fight. They believe ISIS is a legitimate caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph.

The caliphate called “ISIS” is not only a threat in the Middle East, but is an extremely serious problem worldwide. Author David Ignatius wrote of its threat:

ISIS is mysterious in part because it is so many things at once. It combines Islamic piety and reverence for the prophet and his companions with the most modern social-media platforms and encryption schemes; its videos blend the raw pornographic violence of a snuff film with the pious chanting of religious warriors; the group has the discipline of a prison gang (many of its recruits were indeed drawn from U.S.-organized prisons in Iraq), but also the tactical subtlety and capacity for deception of the most skilled members of Saddam Hussein's intelligence services, who were also pulled into the ISIS net. It appears less brittle than al-Qaeda because its members care less about religious doctrine and organizational hierarchy.<sup>6</sup>

Not only are Crusaders targeted, ISIS terrorists readily behead Muslims as was the case with 15-year

old Ayham Hussein. He was caught in Mosul, Iraq by a faithful ISIS follower and held captive by other members of the death cult. According to an article in the *Jerusalem Post*, Ayham was hauled before a sharia court, beaten and judged guilty. He was then dragged into the town square and beheaded. His crime: listening to Western music. No one—Muslim or Christian, Jew or gentile—is safe from the barbarism of ISIS.

The Middle East is on the brink of an Islamic explosion. The hopes ignited by an Islamic/Sunni caliphate are mesmerizing to the youth of the Muslim world. A global coalition attempting to defeat ISIS is failing. The terrorist group is spreading through the world's blood stream like a terminal cancer. Jihadist groups in thirty countries have pledged allegiance to or support for ISIS, i.e., Boko Haram in Nigeria and Velayat Sinai in Egypt. Reports from Turkey indicate that even intelligence officials with the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have found a way to turn a blind eye to ISIS infiltrators wishing to cross the border to support the terrorist group. This collaboration is similar to that which took place between Osama bin Laden and the Pakistani intelligence service which also turned a blind eye to the al Qaeda leader living in their midst.

In later chapters of this book, you will see how the birth process for ISIS has created and unleashed a Frankenstein-type monster. Its architects have totally lost control of the beast. Gulf State corporations, loosely called “countries”, have employed oil-produced revenues to pay off Islamic fundamentalists, while extorting more moderate Muslims in an attempt to keep the ogre at bay. ISIS claims that all emirate groups, states, and organizations are illegitimate, while it desires to conquer the world and usher in the final battle of the Apocalypse.

ISIS has ties to Wahhabism which was birthed in Saudi Arabia and continues to flourish there. This branch of Islam began in the eighteenth century when cleric and academic Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab fostered a revival of ultra-conservative, pure Islam. His doctrine is echoed in the ISIS appeal for the purification of Islam. It considers all other branches of Islam to be apostate. No other Islamic movement has emphasized apocalypticism—the idea that civilization will soon come to a tumultuous end due to some sort of catastrophic global event.<sup>7</sup> This sect also believes that the arrival of the one known as the Mahdi is near.

The name given to the sect, Twelvers, is derived from twelve supposedly divinely ordained leaders—

imams—descendants of Mohammad. At the age of five, the Mahdi, the last of the twelve, was supposedly hidden from view in a state often referred to as “occultation.” In the midst of turmoil and warfare, it is believed the last imam will be revealed and will establish a worldwide caliphate with Shia Islam at its center.

Of great significance to the ISIS hordes is the large Syrian village of Dabiq. The Islamic State is so focused on the prophecy regarding Dabiq that it has given that name to its stylish, glossy, and artistically designed magazine. To maximize its reach, the publication is translated into a number of languages including English.

Journalist Anna Glanville wrote an article for British newspaper, *The Guardian*, which clarifies the prophecy:

The 1,300-year-old hadith, which is a report of the deeds, teachings and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, refers to the ‘horde’ flying 80 banners as they take on a Muslim army in the Syrian town of Dabiq . . . . Supporters appear to be convinced of the prophecy’s validity, with one writing on Twitter: “Dabiq will happen for

certain. The U.S. and its allies will descend on Syria once they see that the air campaign has failed. That is a promise by God and his Messenger.”

Another, from Tunisia, wrote. “The lions of Islam have raised the banner of the Caliphate in Dabiq. Now they await the arrival of the Crusader army.”<sup>8</sup>

In a threatening ISIS rant released in September 2014, its spokesman exposted:

And so we promise you by Allah’s permission that this campaign will be your final campaign. It will be broken and defeated, just as all your previous campaigns were broken and defeated, except that this time we will raid you thereafter, and you will never raid us. We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah, the Exalted.<sup>9</sup>

No matter how the lines are drawn, ISIS depends on oil revenue to fund its extremism. Recent events in Syria

and Northern Iraq have revealed the correlation between oil and power and how vulnerable the Islamic State is when its funds dry up. The Islamic State has established its own financial composition based on its control of oil-fields in that area. The fields in question are the al-Tamak and al-Omar in Syria and the Qayyara field near Mosul. ISIS built revenues based on illegally selling oil to fund its organization in the amount of approximately \$40 million per month. Coalition members have made inroads with bombing runs that target production and refining facilities controlled by ISIS.

In late 2015 journalist Nick Butler summarized information from the *Iraq Oil Report* giving a glimpse of how the Islamic State has been hampered by the attacks:

Production is down as field infrastructure has been hit by bombing. Some oil continues to flow automatically and has to be stored temporarily in holes dug hurriedly in the ground.

Key refining links have been broken forcing the use of primitive techniques using open pits to make usable products.

The fall in the price has cut margins—already low because of discounting and is discouraging the black market trade because the risks involved now far outstrip the rewards especially for the tanker drivers.<sup>10</sup>

A recent Fox News article contends that:

The extremists who once bragged about minting their own currency are having a hard time meeting expenses, thanks to coalition airstrikes and other measures that have eroded millions from their finances since last fall. Having built up loyalty among militants with good salaries and honeymoon and baby bonuses, the group has stopped providing even the smaller perks: free energy drinks and Snickers bars . . . . An exile from al-Bab said low-level fighters there have begun to grumble, and townspeople have overheard Islamic State officials discussing crippling airstrikes on oil infrastructure in

Syria and Iraq and the cutoff of supply lines and revenue sources.<sup>11</sup>

Even the debilitating strikes against ISIS in Syria and Iraq are by no means indicative of its lack of oil revenue opportunities. There are major fields awaiting an assault by the terrorist group in Libya, Algeria and in Egypt. And it has not given up on capturing other Iraq oil facilities near Kirkuk and Mosul.

Unlike the Iraqi oilfields, the Saudi Arabia fields may not be in the crosshairs of ISIS as yet; they are thought to be too highly-patrolled and too tightly-controlled. However, with its ties to Wahhabism and the late Osama bin Laden, who knows what the future will bring between the Saudi kingdom and the ISIS caliphate.

Current political conditions in the post-Arab Spring climate, and especially in hypocritical, oil-rich, family-owned corporations called countries only feeds and fuels the narrative in the minds of unemployed, impoverished youth. In the past, countries such as Saudi Arabia could export terror and use social welfare and bribery to trivialize the rhetoric being taught in mosques and madrassas by the mullahs. Now, thanks to the oil crisis, those dollars have disappeared.

The solution is for the Western world to castigate ISIS

as Islamic Infidels. They must be branded with that name that identifies outcasts of the Islamic faith. The cancer of ISIS will metastasize, feeding on global oil to nurture and ultimately change the balance of the contest in the Middle East.