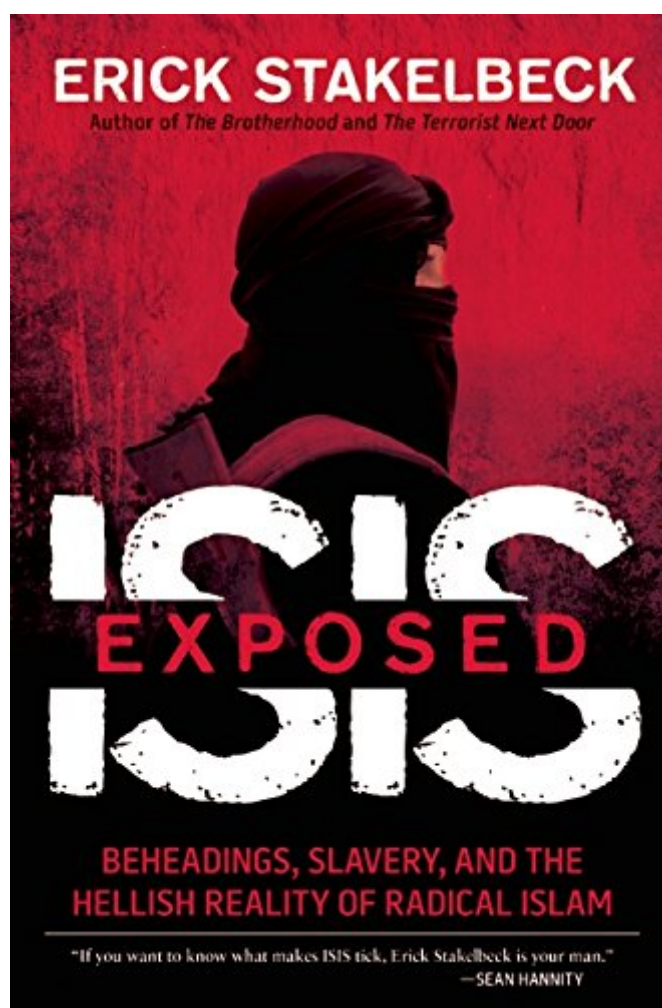


# ISIS Threat to America: an Interview with Erick Stakelbeck

by Jerry Gordon and Mike Bates (May 2015)



When we [reviewed](#) Erick Stakelbeck's latest book, [ISIS Exposed: Beheadings, Slavery and the Hellish Realities of Radical Islam](#), we wrote:

Tens of thousands of young Muslims across the ummah from Minneapolis in the US, the UK, France, Germany, Russia and even China have been drawn like bees to the holy beehive of the self-declared Caliphate which espouses Islamic purification through ethnic and religious cleansing.

Stakelbeck addressed an important question about why the large unassimilated Somali émigré community in Minneapolis has become the US hub for Al Qaeda and now ISIS recruitment. The

shift of Somali émigré young men from traveling to Somali to join Al Shabaab to join ISIS occurred in the last two years facilitated by the ease of travel to Turkey to enter Syria and the attraction of building a Caliphate based on pure Islam.

On April 20, 2015 six Somali émigré young men in their late teens and early 20's were arrested and indicted by the US Attorney in Minneapolis for material support to the Islamic State or ISIS. According to the [WSJ report](#):

All six charged Monday had been arrested Sunday. Four appeared in Federal Court in St. Paul, Minnesota—Adnan Farah, Zacharia Yusuf Abdurahman, Hanad Mustafe Musse and Guled Ali Omar—with their court appointed lawyers. Two others appeared in a San Diego court—Mr. Daud and Mohamed Abdihamid Farah—where they were arrested after driving from Minneapolis. They were ordered held pending a detention hearing.

A seventh Abdi Nur was separately charged as a recruiter as he successfully traveled to Syria to join and fight for ISIS. It is believed that email exchanges and calls with Abdi Nur, who successfully traveled in May 2014 to Syria may have provided the evidence for the charges in the indictment of material support for terrorism. The FBI was able to connect Nur who were indicted, Daud and Yusuf, because of a police report of an accident involving the vehicle driven by Yusuf.

Somali émigré Abdirahman Sheik Mohamud from the second largest Somali community in the US, Columbus, Ohio was [indicted](#) on federal terrorist charges following his return from Al Qaeda training in Syria. The indictments announced by the US Attorney in Minneapolis capped a 10 month investigation. The *Wall Street Journal* [report](#) on this latest development, illustrated the resourcefulness of those indicted. Some used student loans to purchase airline tickets to travel to Turkey to enter Syria and join ISIS. The two detained in San Diego were caught trying to enter Mexico from which they intended to travel to Turkey and hence to Syria. Two had traveled by bus from Minneapolis only to be arrested at New York's JFK Airport.

This is the latest story of how the [US humanitarian refugee program](#), controlled by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, flooded this major Midwestern community with 100,000 East Africa Muslims. Many of them failed to assimilate into American culture with radical Mosques [recruiting](#) dozens of native born jihadists to fight and die for first al Shabaab in Somalia and now for ISIS in Syria. We have [written](#) about this repeatedly since 2008. Somali refugees came to the Twin cities with the assistance of voluntary agencies paid by the State Department and Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement to process them, provide cash assistance, Medicaid and receive a green card leading to eventual

citizenship. All while many of these Muslim émigrés rejected American values, instead seeking to impose their Sharia law on the host non-Muslim community.

Erick Stakelbeck aired his version of this story, March 17, 2015 on *CBN's The Watchman*, ["Minneapolis- the US Capital of ISIS."](#) Stakelbeck knows the Somali émigré terror recruit story and how our humanitarian refugee program played a major role in creating the radical Muslim environment in these communities that indoctrinated and recruited these youths. He visited the areas that have the look and feel of Mogadishu in Minnesota. He spoke with frustrated Somali community and former law enforcement officials about the futility of trying to divert these youths from a likely dead end that have befallen dozens who preceded them. He delved into what attracts these young American Somali and other Muslim émigrés and converts to follow this delusional self destructive jihadist cause.

There have been Mexican and US intelligence reports of possible ISIS presence in Mexico adjacent to the West Texas and New Mexico borders. Late in April 2015 there was a general intelligence alert by the Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Safety Administration. Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, issued a statement [saying](#) the Obama administration "is far behind the curve in scaling up programs to counter domestic radicalization, and it has struggled to explain to Congress whether it has a strategy to combat terrorist travel." He went on to say:

The potential for ISIS infiltration into the U.S. is great, especially from Europe, which U.S. extremists are using as a transit hub to join ISIS and al-Qaida.

Against this background we invited Erick Stakelbeck for an interview about the ISIS threat to America:



**Mike Bates:** Erick Stakelbeck, welcome to Your Turn.



**Stakelbeck:** Thanks Mike. Great to be with you.

**Bates:** And joining me is Jerry Gordon, senior editor of *The New English Review* and his blog *The Iconoclast*. Welcome, Jerry.



**Jerry Gordon:** Glad to be back, Mike.

**Bates:** Erick, what is the difference between ISIS, ISIL, and the Islamic state?

**Stakelbeck:** You know, Mike that is a great question. When I was writing this book, *ISIS Exposed*, my wife actually said, "Hey, include a distinction in there, because I'm confused about it." Here's how to break it down. ISIS stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Most people use ISIS. President Obama, interestingly enough, uses the term ISIL, which means the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Now, Mike, here's the significance. When you call it ISIS, you're just giving it Iraq and Syria. That's bad enough. But when you include ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the Levant is a huge area. It's not just Iraq and Syria. It's Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, and, yes, Israel. So when you call ISIS, ISIL, you're actually empowering them and giving them more territory than they actually hold. So it's a head-scratcher why President Obama would use the term ISIL.

**Bates:** Well, I don't have to scratch my head. I think I know. It's because he's not a friend of Israel and he wants Israel to be ultimately controlled by ISIL. Speaking of President Obama, most of the world first learned of the Islamic State in 2014. When did the President first learn of it?

**Stakelbeck:** Mike, at least he knew in late 2012, early 2013, the stirrings were there. ISIS was gaining territory by a lot of victories in Syria, number one, and building their ranks, number two. Foreign fighters from around the world were flocking to Syria to join up with this group. At, the end of the day, in December 2011, President Obama, against the advice of all of his top generals, withdrew every last US soldiers from Iraq. Mike, once he did that, you had Al-Qaeda in Iraq expanding, despite being crushed by the troop.

Soon as the US troops left, Al-Qaeda in Iraq rose from the ashes, and began a wave of suicide bombings and assassinations of Iraqi leaders. All of a sudden, they were strong again in Iraq. They spread their tentacles next door into Syria. Now you have the monster that we have today, ISIS. President Obama gets intelligence reports across his desk every day. He knew. But in my book, I document how people on both sides of the political aisle were warning him. Former diplomats, military leaders were warning him, "Look, this group, ISIS, it's gaining in strength. We need to do something."

Then in January 2014, ISIS roars into Fallujah, where our troops expended so much blood and treasure in the battles there. Shortly thereafter, President Obama went on national TV and called ISIS the "JV team of terrorism." So a lot of responsibility for this lies squarely with him.

**Gordon:** Erick, tens of thousands of foreign Muslim young men and women have been attracted and left their countries, including the US, UK, and other around the globe, to join ISIS. What is so compelling about the Islamic State?

**Stakelbeck:** This is a great point. I think, number one, it is the ideology. ISIS has a well-defined jihadist ideology behind the success they've had. They now control 35,000 square miles of territory in the heart of the Middle East. That is an area the size of Great Britain. Not only that, they've declared a caliphate, a global Islamic State. That is what every Islamist has wanted for the past century. Now ISIS is doing it in a bold and audacious way.

So success breeds attraction, number one. Number two the ideological message, jihad, caliphate also breeds attractions. Number three, ISIS is a different beast because of their use of social media and propaganda: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. ISIS and its supporters around the world send out 90 tweets per minute. That's astounding. Their propaganda and their social media arms are controlled by Westerners who were born and raised there who know our culture and know exactly how to connect to an English-speaking audience. Not only that, ISIS spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on these slickly produced propaganda videos that look like a Hollywood action flick.

The days of Osama bin Laden in a cave in front of a green screen droning on in Arabic for an hour are long gone. ISIS is on the cutting edge. They're very savvy. And on Twitter they use Hollywood movie references, hip-hop music references, anything to connect with young people here in the West. And they're doing it to great effect. At least 180 US citizens have traveled overseas to join the caliphate, and up to 5,000 Western Europeans, Brits, French, Germans, have left to go join ISIS. And the fear is, obviously that one day, they will return home.

**Bates:** Where does ISIS get its funding? This is not a cheap operation.

**Stakelbeck:** No. This is the richest terrorist movement in history, Mike, and they get their funding in a few ways. Number one, just old-fashioned conquest. Look, when they conquered Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq back in June 2014, they seized the Mosul Central Bank, with over \$400 million in assets. And, again, when they seize a town, a city, a village, they demand tribute from the conquered people. That's an Islamic tradition. They demand tribute. That's another way.

Then you have the illicit oil trade where ISIS is very active in the oil black markets in Turkey, Iran, and Lebanon. They're making up to \$2 million, maybe even \$3 million a day with this black market oil. Remember, ISIS has seized oil fields in Syria and Iraq. Another way they're doing it is by seizing antiquities in places like Nineveh. Now they destroy these ancient biblical sites, but they also take some of the antiquities, and they sell them on the black market as well.

Last way they're doing it, there is something called the golden chain in the Persian Gulf region. That is where these wealthy folks in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and the Emirates fund jihad around the world. And these individual donors are pouring money into ISIS as well.

**Gordon:** Erick, in your book, you draw attention to US folks who depart for the Islamic State. You call Minneapolis "the hub" attracting those individuals. Recently, we had like seven Somali émigré young men who were indicted in places like Columbus, Ohio, San Diego, and Minneapolis. Why is that the case?

**Stakelbeck:** I think, number one, Jerry, the main reason that's the case is because Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Twin Cities in Minnesota are a nice place to live. They have the largest Somali Muslim population in all of North America. Some 100,000 Somali Muslims live in Minneapolis and St. Paul. That will probably shock a lot of people. The problem is they're not assimilating. They are not integrating. I spoke to Somali community leaders there who said, "Look, we have a big problem because they're not becoming part of the American fabric." This has been the fear when you're letting, mass numbers of immigrants into the country and they're not assimilating, you have a big problem. We see this in Western Europe where we have many more Muslim immigrants coming to Germany, France, Britain, they're not assimilating. They're setting up almost self-segregating enclaves – I've been in these neighborhoods – where they don't feel British.

They don't feel French or German, and I fear we have a similar situation going on right now in the Somali communities in the United States. You have a pipeline going from these communities

in Minnesota to Iraq and Syria. You've had dozens of young people – US citizens – traveling overseas to join the jihad out of Minnesota. If they return home, you have battle hardened and battle-tested, radicalized, fanatics in your midst.

The Mall of America, the largest shopping mall in the United States is right outside of Minneapolis. So you have the potential for some real damage. When you mentioned the seven Somali young men arrested recently, an Obama administration official said, "We have a terror recruitment problem –" I'm paraphrasing – "in the Twin Cities."

**Bates:** Erick, is the US government doing anything to prevent the return of these jihadis to the United States after fighting with Islamic state? Are we doing anything to stop this threat from entering the US at either the Southern or Northern borders?

**Stakelbeck:** Mike, nothing on the southern border. As to what the government is doing anything to prevent it is unclear. Jeh Johnson, the Department of Homeland Security chief, said recently that we already had about 40 US citizens return who were fighting with ISIS overseas. They're back.

He said, "Look, we're trying to monitor them, but you can't know what everyone's doing." This is the Department of Homeland Security chief. So, can people slip through the cracks? Absolutely. Think back to Paris in January 2015 where two brothers had trained with Al-Qaeda in Yemen. They returned to France and they carried out a horrific terror attack there. That can also happen here.

Our system is not foolproof, and people can come back and slip through the cracks. What I would do if I knew someone left to join ISIS – and our government knows who's going in many cases – is revoke their citizenship and do not allow them back into the United States. It's as simple as that. "You are no longer a US citizen. You're not welcome in this country. And if you do try to enter this country, you'll be thrown in jail." That is the logical solution.

**Bates:** Isn't that a constitutional matter? I realize that ISIS, isn't a nation, but if they take up arms for another nation, we can revoke their citizenship legally.

**Stakelbeck:** ISIS is declared a state, so in their eyes they're a nation. As to your point about the border, Mike, one of the most chilling passages in my book was a conversation I had with a former CIA clandestine service officer. He told me, "Erick, the thing that keeps me up at night is the possibility of an ISIS jihadist carrying a, a biological or a chemical weapon over our southern border, or our northern border for that matter, and setting it off in a US city."

You know, it's been 13-1/2 years since 9/11, and that southern border in particular is more wide open than ever before. And you can't sustain yourself long term as a nation state if you refuse to secure your borders.

**Gordon:** Erick, we've had recent intelligence reports indicating that ISIS camps may have been established in Mexico near the US border in Texas and New Mexico. How much of a threat is that?

**Stakelbeck:** I'm trying to verify those reports. I talked to one source who was kind of skeptical. He said, "Look, if the Mexican government knows that there are ISIS camps in their country, what are they doing about it, or why hasn't anything been done about it yet? This is obviously an imminent threat if these camps exist." That is an interesting take on it.

It has been a little tough to verify. You know we had one report from Judicial Watch, with a lot of unnamed sources. A lot of times you use unnamed government sources. But unnamed, Mexican officials? That is the kind of report where absolutely like you; it raised my eyebrow big time because the southern border is a massive concern over possible ISIS infiltration. But that kind of report is one I would double and triple check, verify and footnote extensively because that is a serious allegation. Would I doubt it? No. The southern border is so porous and you have these drug cartels that control the Mexican side who have no allegiance to anyone other than the almighty dollar.

Would they work with Islamic terror groups? Absolutely. Have they worked with Islamic terror groups? Probably. It's a disaster waiting to happen. And eventually, God forbid, if terrorists enter through the southern border, our government will have some tough questions to answer from the American people to say the least.

**Gordon:** The other folks who have had experience on the southern border are the Iranians. A few years ago, we had the story about a drug cartel hooking up with an Iranian American in Texas involved with an attempted assassination of the Saudi ambassador in Washington.

**Stakelbeck:** The Iranians, Jerry, this is another facet. If I look at the two-headed monster that we're confronting right now in the Middle East, ISIS and Iran, to me, Iran is the bigger threat long term and possibly short term, depending on when they acquire the bomb, a nuclear weapon.

The Iranians, through Hezbollah in particular, have an extensive network throughout Latin America in our hemisphere. Now in terms of Iran's nuclear weapons program, why should every American care? Right now Iran is not only developing nuclear weapons, they're developing



intercontinental ballistic missiles, ICBMs, that could reach the United States.

You only develop ICBMs for one reason, to mount them with a nuclear warhead. Now why would Iran do that? Why would Iran be developing missiles that can reach the United States? It's simple, because they still consider us, although the Obama administration's tripping over itself to embrace them and work with them – the Iranian regime considers America the great Satan. Just two weeks ago, the Supreme Ruler of Iran led chants of "Death to America," in a rally in Tehran.

If we think Iran has changed its spots, we're kidding ourselves. We have a bull's eye on our back coming out of Tehran.

**Bates:** Why didn't the Obama administration stop ISIS when they left Syria and went into Iraq when they were on the open roads and could have easily been taken out? And combined with that, do you advocate the United States military putting troops on the ground to stop ISIS from advancing?

**Stakelbeck:** Why did the Obama administration do nothing? Because he's a do-nothing guy, in general. He's watched as the Middle East has burned. If you dig deeper with President Obama, he's more focused on domestic things. He wants to fundamentally transform America in his words. Sadly, he seems to be succeeding in at least some ways. It's almost like an operation of chaos around the world over the past six and a half years. However, I don't think he's naïve.

The Middle East is on fire, and he sees America and Israel as forces not for good, but for bad in Middle East. We have been imperialist occupying powers that have oppressed Muslims around the world, and now we're getting our just deserts. We are trying to level the playing field, and he seems content to hand over the Middle East and North Africa to radical Islamists. I think that's pretty clear. Whether it is the Muslim Brotherhood or the Iranian regime.

And all that will happen is for him to manage the ISIS problem until he leaves office. To answer your second question, we don't need a heavy footprint on the ground, but we do need some ground presence. Think back to 2001 in Afghanistan where we had US Special Forces, the CIA, on the ground working with the Northern Alliance. They routed the Taliban.

We can do the same thing today in Iraq and Syria. We don't need tens of thousands of American troops. What we need are our elite forces on the ground leading the way. We have the Kurds who are fierce fighters, who are pro-American, who want to get in the fight. We have Syrian Christians. We have some Iraqi tribes that don't like ISIS. All of them are begging for

leadership from the leader of the free world, and we're MIA.

Again, it doesn't take a heavy footprint. We could lead the fight. They're not – they can't do it themselves. But we need some kind of US ground presence. You can't do it through limited air strikes alone. If your intention is truly to crush this group – and make no mistake, we need to crush ISIS like the German and Japanese war machines were crushed during World War II before this movement metastasizes any further. It is already spreading throughout the region and it is here in the west.

If we really wanted to crush ISIS, if we're serious, we need to do it now. I don't think we're serious. I don't think the West is serious. I think we're going to be in for some serious trouble down the road and, God forbid, maybe in the short term because of our lack of will. This is a Winston Churchill moment. The only man, in my view, who is answering the call, is the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Yet the West, instead of embracing him, siding with him, is shunning him.

**Bates:** Yes, that is a shame. Many more questions, not enough time to ask them. The name of the book is *ISIS Exposed: Beheadings, Slavery, and the Hellish Reality of Radical Islam*. It's written by Erick Stakelbeck. You can learn more at [www.ErickStakelbeck.com](http://www.ErickStakelbeck.com). Erick Stakelbeck, thank you for joining us. Jerry Gordon and I will continue the conversation.

**Stakelbeck:** Thank you for having me.

**Bates:** Erick Stakelbeck touched on a large growing émigré Muslim population in the United States. Why is the Obama administration admitting such a large number of Muslim refugees?

**Gordon:** When the congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, they gave the keys to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who establishes allotments for providing asylum. The State Department and the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Health and Human Services administers it with the consent and approval of Congress. These humanitarian refugees may receive an eventual US citizenship. So we're put in the quandary when émigré Somali Muslim young men are caught and arrested for joining ISIS. They are US citizens and received all kinds of benefits under the Refugee Act. The total program cost for the US refugee program at both the federal and the state levels is staggering. It is estimated at more than \$12 to \$20 billion a year. And remember there are more refugees on the way from Syria.

**Bates:** Man, talk about a Trojan horse.

**Gordon:** Absolutely.

**Bates:** The enemy is being allowed in the gates. Thanks so much for joining us. If you want to find Jerry Gordon online, he's the senior editor of *The New English Review* and his blog *The Iconoclast*. You can find him online at [www.newenglishreview.org](http://www.newenglishreview.org).

The name of that book that we were discussing earlier, *ISIS Exposed: Beheadings, Slavery, and the Hellish Reality of Radical Islam* by Erick Stakelbeck.

Listen to the 1130amWEBY interview with Erick Stakelbeck of CBN's "The Watchman," [here](#) and [here](#).

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