

# No Friends but the Mountains

*An Interview with Diliman Abdulkader,  
Director of the Kurdistan Project of the  
Endowment for Middle East Truth*

by [Jerry Gordon](#) and Rod Reuven Dovid Bryant (June 2019)



*Kurdish Freedom Fighters, 2008, ©James Gordon*

**Recent developments in Congressional Hearings** on Syria policies impacting the position of the Kurds have [questioned](#) whether the US will honor its commitments to protect this ally in the wake of the hard-fought campaign against self-proclaimed ISIS caliphate in Syria and threats from Turkey to

establish so-called [safe zones](#) in the Kurdish control area. Evidence [presented](#) at Congressional Hearings on inconclusive US withdrawal plans suggests the Trump administration might maintain a presence of between 400 to 1,000 US forces in the al-Tanf area in southern Syria and the flashpoint of the Arab city of Manbij on the west bank of the Euphrates River. There have been a series of [bombings](#) in Manbij, that are unclear as to whether they were perpetrated by ISIS or jihadist allies of Turkey, like the so-called Free Syrian Army. Erdogan's threats to invade the Kurdish -controlled northeastern region of Syria are [opposed](#) by Kurdish, Arab and minority Christian communities.

A recent report of the Syrian Study Group (SSG) [presented](#) to the US Senate found the Trump withdrawal plan would undermine the US commitments in Syria. The SSG report also drew attention to the conundrum created by the fall of the self-declared Caliphate: detention of thousands of ISIS foreign fighters and their families. There are several [proposals](#) for international tribunals to prosecute ISIS fighters for possible repatriation and incarceration in home countries. Moreover, ISIS [threats](#) remain active in both Syria and Iraq where attacks have been made in the Kurdish regional area agricultural communities in both northeastern Syria and neighboring Iraqi Kurdistan.

Overarching this is the deepening Iranian encroachment in Syria that has engendered a continuing Israeli air campaign acquiesced in by Putin's Russia. A letter [signed](#) by 79 US Senators and 303 Congressional Representatives questioned the wisdom of the Trump withdrawal plan threatening allies like Israel and the Kurds, further requested pressure by the Administration on both Russia and Iran given the latter's activities and those of its proxies Hezbollah and the Hashd

Al-Shaabi in neighboring Iraq.

[Read More in New English Review:](#)

- [Much More than a Trade War in China](#)
- [Did Defector Intel Change Trump's Iran Strategy?](#)
- [The Strains of a Nation](#)

Then there was the [appearance](#) of US Envoy to Syria and Turkey James Jeffries before the US House Foreign Affairs committee during which Jeffries appeared to favor some form of compromise with Turkey over its interests in Kurdish controlled Syria.

The record of Turkey's oppression and record of human rights violations of the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northwest Syria is another cause for concern. Since Turkey's invasion in the Orwellian "Operation Olive Branch", it and its Islamist Free Syrian Army allies have pursued [Turkification](#) and Islamization of the heretofore quiescent secular Kurdish enclave that provided a haven for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees. Turkish flags are flown, and its forces and allies are [building](#) a concrete wall around Afrin, all but incorporating it as Turkish territory. Turkey has recently [sentenced](#) doctors in Afrin who have treated Kurdish resistance forces to 20 months in prison and [removed](#) several hundred Kurdish prisoners from the area.

Distrust of Turkey as a NATO partner may be one of the factors behind the [call](#) for formation of a European Army by France and Germany seeking to find a way to exclude Turkey, virtually impossible under the current NATO charter.

There is concern over what side the Iraqi Kurds might take in the current standoff between the US and Iran given the abandonment of the Kurdish Regional Government in the September 2017 Independence Referendum. Iran has made [significant inroads](#) in the KRG. Further, the leaders of Iran-backed Hashd Al-Shaabi Popular Mobilization militias include US designated terrorists and are prominent in the Baghdad parliament. In a recent *National Interest* [article](#), Diliman Abdulkader concluded that as a result of the betrayal of the September 2017 Independence referendum, the KRG might 'lie low' if a conflict erupted between the US and Iran. This follows an unfortunate pattern of abandonment of Kurdish aspirations by the West. Both Abdulkader and *Asia Times* columnist [Dr. Stephen Bryen](#) are concerned about the Russian offer to sell Iraq an S-400 system. That would threaten both US and Israel security interests in Syria and Iraq. That is compounded by alleged [transfers](#) of Iranian-supplied long-range rockets and missiles to the Hashd al Shaabi Shi'ite Popular Mobilization Units.

Against this background, Israel News Talk Radio–Beyond the Matrix interviewed Diliman Abdulkader, Director of the Kurdistan Project of the Washington, DC-based [Endowment for Middle East Truth \(EMET\)](#)

**Rod:** I'm Rod Bryant along with Jerry Gordon. Welcome to *Beyond the Matrix* here on Israel News Talk Radio. What a great day to do another show on the Kurds. We haven't talked about this in a while.

**Jerry:** Yes, it has been awhile. There have been a series of important developments which is the reason we are bringing back someone who knows what is happening, especially what is

going down in Washington D.C. Our returning guest is Diliman Abdulkader. He is Director of the Kurdistan Project at the Endowment for Middle East Truth in our nation's capital. The issues are stunning. There is the question about the U.S. support for protection of the Syrian Kurds, there is the question of whether the Europeans are trying to find a way to get rid of the association with the Turks perhaps to defend Kurds. There is also a problem in Iraqi Kurdistan with the Baghdad central government reaching out to Russia to buy the S-400 advanced air defense system that could seriously threaten not only the U.S. in that vicinity but Israel as well.

**Rod:** Also, we have the complicated nature of the Iraqi government that for all intense and purposes is an Iranian influenced government. That is causing some problems for the Kurds as well. We are also going to be talking about what is going on with NATO, with European countries wanting to start their own defense force and how that's going to affect the big picture?

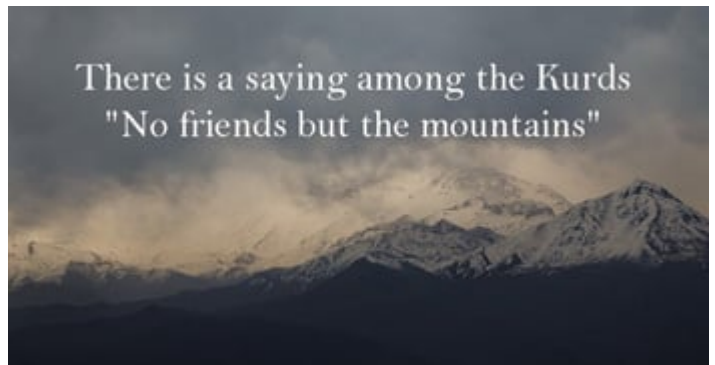
**Jerry:** It is about time that the U.S. really put its marker down in terms of defense of the Kurds. It is overdue and that is what this program is all about.

**Rod:** It really is. But also, to replace the old school mentality of status quo in the State Department with many bureaucrats running the show who keep making the same questionable policy calls they have made for over the past two decades regarding support for Kurdish aspirations in the Middle East.

**Jerry:** We must stop American diplomats kowtowing to the Turks under Erdogan.

**Rod:** I agree with that one hundred percent. Diliman, how threatened is Kurdish control in Syria at this point?

**Diliman:** Firstly, thank you for having me back. A lot of developments in Syria have occurred since the last time we spoke as far as the Kurds. Northeast Syria is still under constant threats coming from Turkey. We have



seen recently from the Assad regime increasing pressure and lack of urgency to take more of a diplomatic approach with the Kurds in Syria. Assad has increased military operations in Northwest Syria and that is likely a sign towards the Kurds as well. However, the major threat coming to the Kurds in Syria, especially the Syrian Democratic Forces is from NATO partner Turkey. There continues to be a threat in the Manbij area along the Euphrates River and the North. There is talk of safe zones, buffer zones in northeastern Syria. Afrin is still occupied by the Turks as well. So, these are all dangerous territories for the Kurds despite reassurances from the Americans for the SDF composed of majority Kurds but also Arabs, Armenians and other Christians that are indigenous to Syria. These are local forces so there is no need for any other external military incursions.

**Jerry:** Diliman what is the status of the Trump withdrawal plan from Syria? How does it impact on the ability of the Syrian Democratic Force to defend the Kurdish controlled territory?

**Diliman:** For the SDF and the Syrian Kurds regarding President Trump's announcement back in December it is still a little scary. They are a little hesitant. They still don't know where the United States stands but the scare has decreased largely because the president has taken back his position of fully or immediately withdrawing U.S. troops from Northeast Syria. The original announcement was basically taking out 2,200 US troops. We do have two hundred U.S. troops based in Al-Tanf inside Syria near the Iraqi border and most of the remaining troops in Northeast Syria. That number has fluctuated anywhere from two hundred to a thousand. Now the number is estimated to be anywhere from four to seven hundred troops in the long-term as far as decreasing US troop presence in Syria. Currently, the situation is that there are still officially twenty-two hundred U.S. troops based in Syria and they have not been withdrawn since December.

**Rod:** Recently, the U.S. Senate-sponsored Syria Study Group delivered an interim report. What were the findings relative to the Trump withdrawal plan from Syria?

**Diliman:** The Syria Study Group (SSG) was implemented by US Oklahoma Republican Senator Lankford's office and its activities are conducted by the United States Institute for Peace. The Syria Study Group proposes policy recommendations for the consideration of the U.S. Congress and eventually for the administration. One of the SSG report principal recommendations was that the United States needs to keep a continuing presence in Syria to keep pressure on the Islamic State. We do know that the caliphate is defeated. However, there are still over 20,000 ISIS fighters across Syria and Iraq currently in sleeper cells. They can attack the rural

areas, the desert areas, the smaller villages. The other recommendation supported Israel's right to defend itself through its air campaign. The SSG stated that Iran is the destabilizing force, in Syria for the long-term. The United States needs to be there in order to continue the Maximize the Pressure Campaign that the administration espouses. What was interesting was this SSG Report included the situation in Afrin which has not been talked about since Turkey occupied the Kurdish enclave in northwest Syria in January 2018. The SSG report said that the Turks aren't willing to negotiate on Afrin. Turkey has built concrete walls around Afrin City. The most interesting part of the SSG study from a Kurdish perspective was that it stated that the best approach to resolve the situation between the SDF and Turkey was a diplomatic long-term approach for Turkey to conduct peace talks with the PKK inside Turkey. Coming from the U.S. perspective, it signals the Turks that the United States is taking the PKK seriously. That the United States realizes that Turkey must have peace with the PKK for them to have peace with the Kurds in Syria.

**Jerry:** This past week four hundred members of the House and Senate signed a letter to the Trump White House regarding Syrian policy. What were their recommendations?

**Diliman:** When you have a letter that includes four hundred signatures from the Congress, it is likely watered down to make everybody happy. First, the letter from the four hundred members of the US House and Senate reiterated from the United States perspective that we continue pressure on the Islamic state to ensure its defeat. Secondly, the letter supported the right of Israel to conduct its air campaign against Iran in Syria. Thirdly, that we need to defeat and continue the pressure on Hezbollah militias on the ground in Syria.



Hezbollah militias have been weakened because of losses during the eight-year Syrian Civil War.

**Rod:** Obviously there is quite a bit of bipartisan support in Congress for this but how does it balance out? Is it more of the Conservatives are for this or is it a pretty balanced bipartisan support?

**Diliman:** Regarding keeping troops in Syria, I would say it is bipartisan. Regarding different aspects of the issues some are more Democrat, some are more Republican. However, everyone understands that we need to keep troops inside Syria. The best thing that the President has done is that he brought both sides together which was surprising. It worked and that is very rare to achieve this on the Hill. Second, I would say that regarding Turkey there is a little hesitancy from the Democratic side because they are a NATO ally. The Republicans do understand that Turkey is a NATO ally, that we want to preserve that relationship. However, they also understand that we must look out for the United States security interests and that we cannot abandon our allies the Kurds.

**Jerry:** Trump's' Special Envoy on Syria and Turkey Ambassador James Jeffrey testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. What did he offer in the way of administration policies protecting Syrian Kurdish interests?

**Diliman:** Ambassador James Jeffrey reiterated many of the points made by Secretary of State Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton even the President. He said that The US is there to protect the Kurds. That eventually we were going to

withdraw our troops. However, for the time being we haven't decreased the number of supporting US troops. One of the Members of Congress mentioned that four hundred to one thousand troops is the eventual goal. Jeffrey also stated that the two hundred troops in the Al-Tanf border area weren't going to be effective in Southern Syria. The estimated four hundred to one thousand troops will be mainly focused on Northeast Syria. Regarding the Syrian Kurds Ambassador Jeffrey said that we need to protect our allies. However, the administration was also taking Turkey's security concerns into consideration. That obviously could be good or bad for the Kurds. He discussed where Turkey wants to put military presence inside Northeast Syria in a twenty-five to thirty-kilometer safe zone. The Kurds are against this. The American stance is currently that they cannot accept thirty kilometers and that, once if they do decide on a number in Syria that would include local forces. What is confusing about that is the SDF are local forces composed of the YPG and YPJ. It appeared to me as if Ambassador James Jeffrey wanted other local forces besides the Kurds sharing this safe zone. The Kurds feel most of their population is based in the North so they should have troops there as well along with the Turks and the Americans.

**Rod:** Diliman what is the general level of safety or security for the Kurdish people in Syria?

**Diliman:** The security of the Kurdish people continues to be at risk. Largely there are still ISIS sleeper cells in rural villages which pose a threat. We have seen this not only in Syria but also in Iraqi Kurdistan. Near the Iraqi KRG border in Kirkuk ISIS have attempted to burn Kurdish crops, if Kurdish farmers and their villages don't pay taxes. If they don't give up their production of food, they would have their

lives threatened. Unfortunately, what is happening in Iraqi Kurdistan is happening in Syria as well. The bigger threats would be the mercenaries. The Assad regime continues to threaten SDF stability and the homeland in Northeast Syria which is about thirty percent of the country's territory.

**Rod:** What seems to be fairly encouraging to me is that Members of Congress signing the letter shows bipartisan support for the Kurds. We may be slowly approaching a period where we can achieve some stability if the United States continues to provide logistical and intelligence support to kill or capture these ISIS leaders. It may be just a matter of time if we are consistent in our support that the situation might quiet down. What do you think?

**Diliman:** I agree. However, the constant threat of U.S. withdrawal hovers over the feelings of insecurity within the Syrian Democratic Council at a government level and its military the SDF. It has been stable since the defeat of the ISIS caliphate. However, this can all unravel as soon as the U.S. withdraws or even if the U.S. shows any signs of weakening by pulling out troops and military intelligence sharing. That includes not just the U.S, but the seventy-nine-member global coalition including European members.

**Jerry:** Diliman, what is the current position of the U.K., France and Germany on protection of Syrian Kurdistan? We also understand that France and Germany are proposing formation of an EU Army. How does that impact on the situation for Syrian Kurds?

**Diliman:** To answer your first question, France has been the most vocal in supporting the Kurds and keeping their troops on the ground and in coordination with the United States. This is especially after the loss of the four American service members in a bombing attack in Manbij in December 2018. After the President announced the US withdrawal, French President Macron stated that he wanted to keep troops for a year longer. As far as the U.K. and Germany, I think they will likely stay in Syria long-term if the United States can reassure them of air protection. None of these countries have the tools or the capabilities the United States has. This needs to happen in an alliance because if the U.S. withdraws France doesn't have much leverage alone. As far as the EU Army proposals, this may be good and bad. It may look bad for the United States. I'm not sure of the U.S.'s position on this. I think the United States is for preserving the status quo of NATO. The original NATO objective was deterring the Soviet bloc. Today it is Russia. I think the EU's intention is to create a more independent military security bloc away from NATO obligations such as the 2% GDP defense requirements for which they have been facing a lot of pressure from the administration. I would say it also includes uncontrollable state actors such as Turkey because most of these European members are a part of NATO. There is no mechanism within NATO to eject or suspend a NATO partner. I think this would be an opportunity for the EU to have an exclusive military security bloc like their economic union that would exclude Turkey headed by Erdogan. I don't think this is a surprise.

**Rod:** There have been a series of bombings at the flashpoint of Manbij. Who is behind this?

**Diliman:** Manbij. We must remember it is along the border of the Euphrates River and across the river is controlled by the

Turks and their proxies. The other side of the river Manbij is controlled by the Manbij Military Counsel which is majority Arab forces. They may have Kurdish-led Generals, but Manbij is an Arab city. You have American presence there so the threat continues. The bombings have occurred after speeches by Erdogan himself saying that the Turks are preparing for war going into Northeast Syria. We saw this rhetoric increase especially during recent local elections in Turkey. I think this has hyped up the intention to militarily occupy Manbij and cross the river into Northeast Syria. Erdogan has continued to threaten to go in with Russia's blessings.

**Rod:** So, you are saying that Turkey is directing this threat?

**Diliman:** I think to a certain degree Turkey is giving orders. If it is not Turkey then even more dangerous it could involve uncontrolled jihadist militias, as non-state actors. Which can risk a broader conflict in that area because it involves major actors such as the United States, the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Force, Turkey and the Syrians.

**Jerry:** Diliman what has been the record of human rights violations under Turkish occupation in Afrin that we talked about earlier?

**Diliman:** Afrin continues to be occupied by the Turks. They took it over in their ironically named Operation Olive Branch. Afrin has been under their control since January 2018. There has been a long list of human rights violations. We witnessed Afrin that had been a ninety-five percent majority Kurdish city become less than forty percent Kurdish. This is

demographic change in 2019. This is a NATO ally that is Turkifying and Islamifying a very secular and very stable part of Syria. It was never touched by ISIS. It was never attacked by the Assad regime largely because it was considered a haven even for Syrian IDP's and refugees. Now you have civilians continuing to flee the area. Those that remain are being pressured by the Turkish factions, the Al Qaeda affiliate the FSA, to basically Turkify them, change their culture, change their language, change their education system, and their books. Now you have Turkish flags flying everywhere. This was supposed to be a Syrian revolution not a Turkish one.

**Jerry:** Why are the Kurds, Arabs and Christians in the Northeast of Syria opposing Erdogan's demand to build a safe zone?

**Diliman:** This relates to the Afrin issue that we just discussed because we know Erdogan's intent. We witnessed Erdogan's slaughter against the Kurds and against the civilians, against the IDP's. We know what Erdogan is capable given what he did in Afrin. The Turks and jihadist allies occupied that area in Northwest Syria and then built a concrete wall around it with the intention of eventually annexing it as Turkish territory. We know this is his intent with Northeast Syria.

**Rod:** Yes, that would be like handing it over to him.

**Diliman:** Exactly. This is unacceptable because that area was stable so there was no reason for the Turkish military incursion in that part of the country. Afrin provided safe

havens for IDP's and refugees with international assistance. Turkey would just attempt to duplicate what they did in Afrin in Northeast Syria.

**Rod:** We mentioned several weeks ago about this huge group of detained ISIS fighters and family members who are being held in a refugee camp. What is their status?

**Diliman:** I think Ambassador James Jeffrey mentioned this in his House Foreign Affairs testimony. He stated that the Syrian Democratic Forces have done a great job of holding on to these ISIS fighter detainees and their families. However, the problem is complex. The families are still being held in a UN refugee camp need international support. The Kurdish local forces can't do it alone. They don't have the capacity to hold all these ISIS families together. As far as the ISIS fighters there is still an estimated three to ten thousand being held in Northeast Syria. The scary aspect of this is there are no foreign countries where these ISIS fighters came from that are willing to take them back. So, they are stuck in Syria. I would say give an incentive for the SDF and the Kurds to keep them there such as continued US and coalition military support. That would mean keeping US forces there. I think that would be the best solution because right now they're held in makeshift prisons.

**Rod:** You have published an article in *The National Interest* , "[What War with Iran Would Mean for the Kurds](#)," regarding the Iraqi Kurdistan position caught in the U.S. confrontation with Iran. What are your principal findings and conclusions?

**Diliman:** My conclusion is that the United States must learn from its previous lessons regarding the Kurds. Essentially, that we cannot abandon them because when conflicts like this arise the Kurds come in handy. No matter whether in Syria, whether it be Iran or even in Iraqi Kurdistan, the US will eventually need them. The Iraqi Kurds control the Kurdistan regional government. it is the most stable part of Iraq. Now with that said the Iraqi Kurds still have a resentment towards the U.S. especially since 2017 when they held the Independence Referendum and the United States did not back them. They felt abandoned. This feeling persists with the US. They would be a little more hesitant I would say in outright support of the United States because they will have to think about their stability. The reality is that Iran is their neighbor so if the U.S. is demanding full support from the Iraqi Kurds, I think it will be a little difficult. Since 2017 a lot has developed within the KRG, the Kurdistan Regional Government. Iran has built deep roots within the major political parties both in Sulaymaniyah, in Erbil, in Duhok with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Barzani-led government and the Talabani Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan or the PUK. It is not as easy as we may think these Iraqi Kurds, are going to support America. Of course, they would like that, but will they have the guarantee of continued American support ten years from now?

**Jerry:** Diliman there is concern about the Iraqi Shia militias, the Hashd al-Shaabi Popular Mobilization Units, because they could be assets of Iran in Iraq that might attempt actions against, for example, the U.S. Air Base at al-Sad. In Western Anbar Province. What threats do they pose to the KRG?

**Diliman:** This goes back to the fight against ISIS and the Independence Referendum as well. The Hashd al-Shaabi was



legalized under the Iraqi Constitution by Former Prime Minister Abadi. That was a dangerous move. I think many Kurds in the Kurdistan Regional Government reiterated that they cannot be legalized because this is a Shi'ite force that is deeply funded by the Iranian regime. We know where they got their support, we know where they get their weapons from and they are even using U.S. Humvees, and U.S. weaponry. Those are the same forces that took over Kirkuk in October 2017 using US equipment while they were stepping on U.S. flags. I would say this is biting the U.S. in the back now. This is the reality that we created when we decided not to back the Kurdistan Regional Government and the referendum. Instead the US backed Baghdad and the Abadi government. We thought he was going to win. He ended up losing. He has the new government that is more inclusive. Still the Hashd al-Shaabi are very much independent from the main Iraqi Security Forces which is Shia led. It also isolates the Sunni population as well.

**Jerry:** Aren't there members of the Hashd al-Shaabi in the Baghdad Parliament who were in fact identified as terrorists by the US during the Second Gulf War?

**Diliman:** There are many members of Hashd al-Shaabi that are U.S. designated terrorist entities and individuals. Some of their leadership is Iranian and some have been to Iran. I mean what can I say about this it happened before the United States conquest of the Hussein regime in Iraq. Unfortunately, that is why the United States must have realistic policies towards Iraq and not the status quo. This is the result of a status quo policy of keeping Iraq together when the reality is that Iran is heavily influencing the outcome if there is a conflict between the United States and Iran. I think the Hashd al-Shaabi would be on the Iranian side.

**Rod:** I'm shaking my head in absolute disgust because it is something that this country created. The previous administration seemingly went out of its way to make a mess. I realize that they were operating on ideology and on whatever visions they thought were the correct. However, they created such a mess when we pulled out our troops and influence in the region. Now, we can hardly keep it from exploding again.

**Diliman:** Exactly. I would say it all began with the 2011 withdrawal under the previous administration and this is the result of it. We gave too much power to Maliki the former Shia Prime Minister which basically went on a revenge campaign against the 20 percent Sunni population in Iraq and the Kurds. The Maliki government gave all the weapons and funding to the Shi'ites. Then we had the creation of ISIS and the rising of the Shi'ite militias. A lot of people don't see much difference between the Islamic State and the Shi'ite Militias.

**Jerry:** Diliman, was the architect of this debacle that occurred in 2017 none other than the former US Special Envoy to defeat ISIS, Brett McGurk?

**Diliman:** Brett McGurk is an interesting individual. Now he is not very much liked in Iraqi Kurdistan, but he is very much liked in Syrian Kurdistan. Because he was an advocate for keeping the U.S. troops there, continuing to protect the Syrian Kurds. He was on the ground with them constantly. He understood why Turkey is acting more like an adversary than an ally and he continues to do that now. However, in Iraqi Kurdistan, it is a different story. If they feel that Brett McGurk betrayed the Kurds, he went against his promises, he

was not there for them during the referendum and he backed Baghdad. He played an interesting role. He had much more success in Syria I would say than in Iraq. This is the creation again of the old State Department types. Unfortunately, they don't always apply a realistic necessary policy towards Iraq.

**Rod:** When you talk about the old school mentality of the State Department, I don't know how we can ever avoid that. If you go back in history to Korea and Vietnam for example and look at how we made decisions that created tremendous amount of turmoil. It just seems like we have never as a country learned from our mistakes. It seems that we repeat the same kind of stupidity. I'm not sure why that happens. Is it because we are hiring people that are just bureaucrats or should appoint real visionaries and thinkers? I think that those two don't even exist in the same world. That is what it seems to be.

**Diliman:** You know this is the most difficult part of my job dealing with these issues as far as where the State Department stands with a status quo policy. I cannot emphasize why the United States must have a more modern and realistic approach towards the Middle East. Just to add to this last point, Iraq is a country we have invested billions of dollars since 2003 in training and equipment and even the American lives. Now it is in talks with Moscow about purchasing a Russian S-400 advanced missile air defense system. This is dangerous. What does this mean if Turkey is purchasing Russian S-400 missiles, Syria has S-300 missiles, Iran has S-400 missiles and now Iraq has the S-400 air defense system provided by Russia across the Middle East? We are talking about a Shia Crescent, but we also must ask what is Russia's strategy? The United States is nowhere to be found. We see Russia, Iran and Turkey carving up the Middle East, carving up Syria in meetings in Astana.

Again, the United States is nowhere to be seen.

**Jerry:** Diliman, speaking about the S-400 threat we recently interviewed Dr. Stephen Bryen on Israel News Talk Radio-Beyond the Matrix, who amplified what you just talked about. Listen to "[Iran Threat, NATO Unraveling](#)." The problems extend well beyond the question of Iraq and Syria if the Iraqi regime acquired the S-400. That would mean that Israel's ability to interdict Iranian and Iranian backed proxies in Syria would be seriously curtailed.

**Diliman:** Israel would have a lesser chance of defending its sovereign territory. My response to that is if the Iraqis are currently caught between the Iranian U.S. tensions is that they will want to play neutral. Now I don't think Iraq has the capability of being a neutral partner or even a mediator. They may be a messenger of Iran, not a mediator. Most of the Iraqi government is under Iranian influence now. My opinion on this is that the United States should consider providing Patriot missiles to the Kurdistan Regional Government in opposition to Baghdad's S-400 missile purchase.

**[Read More in New English Review:](#)**

- [Excellence Rejected](#)
- [Virtue Gone Mad](#)
- [Rock Around the Clock: Dance Mania of the Left](#)

**Rod:** Diliman we are going to have to end it here. What is the name of the website where people can read more information about your research and what you are doing?

**Diliman:** Yes, you find my latest articles, interviews and research on twitter at [@D\\_abdulkader](#). A website is currently under construction.

**Rod:** It has been great visiting with you. Listen at this same time next week here on [Beyond the Matrix on Israel News Talk Radio](#).

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

---

**Jerome B Gordon** is a Senior Vice President of the *New English Review* and author of *The West Speaks*, NER Press 2012. Mr. Gordon is a former US Army intelligence officer who served during the Viet Nam era. He was the co-host and co-producer of weekly The Lisa Benson Show for National Security that aired out of KKNT960 in Phoenix Arizona from 2013 to 2016. He is co-host and co-producer of the Middle East Round Table periodic series on 1330amWEBY, Northwest Florida Talk Radio, Pensacola, Florida. He is producer and co-host for the weekly Israel News Talk Radio-Beyond the Matrix program that airs on-line out of Jerusalem.

**Rod Reuven Dovid Bryant** is the creator and host of the weekly Israel News Talk Radio-Beyond the Matrix that airs on-line out of Jerusalem. He is the Director of Education and Counseling for Netiv Center for Torah Study in Houston, Texas. He was a successful former Evangelical Christian minister, who advocates Torah-based principles for the non-Jew.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)