



Episode 438: What Should Be Done About ISIS?

Guest: Scott Horton

WOODS: I'm looking at this headline right now. You and I are talking on July 1st, and people are listening to us on July 3rd, and I'm looking at a headline from June 30th, 2014. So almost exactly one year ago: "ISIS Jihadists Declare Islamic Caliphate." Well here we are about a year after that announcement, so let's assess where we are in terms of ISIS. What's going on today?

HORTON: Well, you know, I think relatively speaking, the power and the lines have not shifted too much since then. The Islamist State has lost the town of Tikrit, Saddam's hometown, but they've gained Ramadi, and they lost Kobani in Syrian Kurdistan, but they gained Palmyra, which was the city with the ancient ruins and all that that made the big headlines.

They rule an area about the size of Great Britain that makes up about two-thirds of – well, I guess about half of Syria, the eastern half of Syria, and virtually all of the Anbar province, which is the huge province in western Iraq – basically everything west of Baghdad, the capital. And up to the northwest, so that includes Baqubah, Ramadi, and Mosul. Fallujah and Mosul are both cities with well over a million people, I believe a couple million people up in Mosul. As Patrick Cockburn points out, they rule more people than most of the member states of the United Nations, most of the nations on the planet today.

And you know, as I told you a year ago, basically they are an extremely weak state – well, I don't know "extremely weak" – but they're a weak state, but they are the baddest terrorist group that has ever existed, by far. And basically what they are is, they're half George Bush's fault and half Obama's fault, as we talked about then. When Bush invaded Iraq, he turned all of from Baghdad down to Kuwait in the east and southeast, turned all that into Shiastan, and gave them the capital city – fought that whole war to give them the capital city and kick all the Sunnis out. And then he turned all of western Iraq and northwestern Iraq into lawless Jihadistan. And then – but basically once they were done with the battle for Baghdad, the Americans called a truce with the Sunni insurgency, and then got kicked out by the majority Shia, who they'd fought for.

And so that was more or less the end of that, until Obama and Hilary Clinton come and actually take the side — and I know I sound like a kook here, but it's just the factual history. Read Judge Napolitano's new article coming out on LewRockwell.com tomorrow; it'll blow your mind. We got a sneak peek. Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama took the side of the enemy, of the bin Ladenites, of the veterans of Al Qaeda in Iraq, when they came home from Iraq War II to Libya and decided in 2011 with the start of the Arab Spring, they wanted to take on Qaddafi, America took their side in Libya and then in Syria. And by backing especially the mujahedeen war against the Ba'athist Assad, Shiite-backed government in Damascus, the capital of Syria there, in backing those mujahedeen, what they did was they created a split inside what had been Al Qaeda in Iraq.

The Syrian dominant faction calls themselves al-Nusra. And at first, the Iraqi members of Al Qaeda in Iraq, they were al-Nusra too; they all went to Syria to fight. But then it was basically a personality split between the leadership of the two kind of sub-groups within the al-Nusra front, and in 2013, the Iraqi-led faction split off and declared themselves the Islamic State. Now, the bin Laden doctrine was always to keep fighting and keep fighting and to bankrupt and to bleed and bankrupt the American empire so that it's gone, and then someday we'll have a caliphate. Well this guy, Baghdadi and his faction, they decided they didn't want to wait for someday anymore, and so they broke with al Qaeda, and they declared — they basically saved up their arms and money. And a little more than a year ago, they went back to Iraq in force, and they seized the city of Mosul and declared their caliphate, as you said, almost exactly a year ago, declared the Islamic State.

And here in 2011, when bin Laden was killed, the Islamo-Fascist caliphate was his attic, where he was hiding from his wife up there. The Islamo-Fascist caliphate was nothing until Obama made it. And he didn't make it because he's a secret Muslim, jihadist, Black Panther, whatever, whatever like in the right-wing propaganda, born in Kenya or whatever kind of thing. He did it because he's a half-white, conservative, American, corporatist, imperialist, nationalist, Fascist, and he thinks he's smart. And this is how — you know, just like Ronald Reagan. Obama is Ronald Reagan here, using the mujahedeen to get America's dirty work done, which is almost, unbelievably, get rid of all the secular dictators that we've been backing all along, and back not just, you know, *some* rebels, but back the vowed, head-chopping bin Ladenites against them.

And of course, mostly it's because this is what our allies want, first and foremost among them, of course, the Israelis, but also the Saudis and the Turks hate Assad and hate Iran and want to limit Iran's power by overthrowing their last Arab ally in the region, the Assad dictatorship in Damascus. And so you have an American policy, where — I think we probably joked about this a year ago, Tom, that wow, now how are they going to explain themselves as they

turn around, and they're going to have to start, at least lay off Assad, if not start backing him, because now their policy of backing the mujahedeen against him has blown up in their face so badly with the declaration of this caliphate; how are they ever going to turn the ship of empire around? And the answer is here we are a year later and they still haven't. We're fighting with the Iranians and the Shiites against the Islamic State in Iraq, and we're still backing the mujahedeen.

Now I don't know about direct support for the Islamic State, but America, Turkey, Saudi, and Israel are all backing al Qaeda in Syria right now. The al-Nusra front, you can read about it in *Foreign Affairs*, for crying out loud; has a whole thing, "Accepting Al Qaeda." There's an article at *Consortium News* right now: "Neocons Urge Embrace of Al Qaeda," where they go and they find all of the very different — you know, there's one in the *New York Review of Books*, "Why We Need Al Qaeda." These are supposedly the moderates now, the cousins of the 9/11 hijackers, because hey, at least they're not Assad, and at least they're not the Islamic State. Well pardon me, Assad shaves his chin in the morning and wears a three-piece suit, and has nothing to do with the bin Ladenites other than he kills them. And he's our enemy and the bin Ladenites, the avowed — not the guys who've broken with al Qaeda, the Islamic State, but the guys who are still loyal to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Butcher of New York City — they're the guys that *Foreign Affairs* is saying that we need to ally with? It's absolutely crazy, and yet that's where we are.

The good news is, because the policy is so confused, because America puts Israel first and Saudi and Turkey first, because the policy is so schizophrenic — it's completely horrible, but it would be a lot worse if it made any sense. Because if it made any sense, it would be a full scale invasion of Iraqi Sunnistan, and sending in the Marines to try to throw the Islamic State out of Mosul, out of Fallujah, out of Raqqa in Syria, and that would be an absolute nightmare. We've already seen that movie, and we saw how it ends. It created this mess in the first place.

So all that we could do, even if we just completely carpet bomb them and send in the Marines to try to drive them out of Mosul, all we'd do is turn them back into an insurgency. We can't get rid of them. So it's actually, ironically, slightly, relatively speaking, slightly to the benefit of peace that people who run the American empire are up to their eyeballs in high treason, because if they were actually fighting for America's interests, it would be a worse war, Tom.

WOODS: I want to link to on the show notes page, TomWoods.com/438 — I want to link to the articles you mentioned, and I also want to link to a recent episode of the Ron Paul Liberty Report that took on exactly this issue of allying with al Qaeda and getting the American public on board for that. So this is not something that Scott Horton cooked up, or it's not some crazy theory you'd

listen to on, let's just say, a competing podcast — we'll just put it that way. This is real stuff that Scott's talking about.

Now, you've indirectly touched on this, but I want to get your view on what we hear from a lot of the Obama opponents and Bush cheerleaders. They will say that you're wrong to say that Bush had anything to do or was in any way responsible, directly or indirectly, for the rise of ISIS, that what happened was we had things pretty well under control until Obama came along and started drawing down the U.S. presence in Iraq, and that that was what created a vacuum for ISIS. How do you answer that?

HORTON: Well, the eye of the hurricane is good weather then, I guess, if that's the only question. Just like the great Robert Higgs always says, the warmongers in any case always truncate the antecedents. Meaning, history begins when I say it begins, and never mind what happened before that.

So what did happen before that? Well, Saddam Hussein woke up in the morning every day and shaved his chin and read his atheist bible about how he was the only person that he worshipped, and put on his black beret like a Frenchman and his green fatigues that Ronald Reagan bought him, and was a secular, atheist, Fascist dictator that held Iraq together, eh, not so much — they always compared him to Hitler; he was more like Tony Soprano, trying to arrange for everybody to not go to war with each other all the time, and there was a lot of brutal suppression there, but a lot of bribery and deal making and arranged marriages and these kinds of things, as he was holding the place together.

When America came in and overthrew the Ba'athist regime in 2003, all the Shiite militias, who had been the Iraqi traitors when Jimmy Carter hired Saddam to invade Iran in 1980, these were the traitors who fled to Iran and fought on Iran's side — primarily the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and their private army, their Badr Brigade army.

And when Bush invaded, they came in and even though the Americans kind of spun it as — this is the best spin they could put on it, is, we were using the Shiite militias to hunt down leaders of the Sunni insurgency. What was really happening was the Shiite militias were using us. The U.S. Army was their auxiliary, and their chore was the sectarian cleansing of Baghdad and fighting a massive civil war on the side of the Shia. And in doing so, they drove all the Sunnis into the army — and because these Badr Brigade guys are really bad guys. They torture people to death with power drills and stuff — our allies there, not like in the movie, where it's America's enemy that does that. It's America's allies in the Badr Brigade that do that.

So this drove more and more Sunnis, not just into the insurgency, but into the very worst aspect of the insurgency, which was called Al Qaeda in Iraq. And guess when it started being called Al Qaeda in Iraq: at the end of 2004,

December 2004. A year and three-quarters into the invasion, began the existence and occupation, began Al Qaeda in Iraq. Because even though Colin Powell lied and said that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the link between Saddam and Osama, he had told Osama, no, I don't want to join al Qaeda. I want to fight the king of Jordan, not the Americans. And Saddam Hussein's only connection to him was that he had a death warrant out for him. And the Mukhabarat were instructed to find this guy at all costs.

And yet the neocons made up all these — and, well, Ahmed Chalabi — made up these ridiculous lies that Saddam had given him a peg leg, that he'd been wounded in battle and Saddam was his friend and had given him medical treatment and all of this stuff. And that supposedly justified the war. In fact, he'd been up in American-protected, autonomous Kurdistan, not — I mean, so you could say technically Iraq, but not under Saddam Hussein's control whatsoever, was where his base was.

And Jim Miklaszewski from NBC News broke this, but then it was backed up and further explained by numerous, detailed journalistic enterprises — man, you Google this up; there's a lot about this, how the military begged George Bush to go and kill Zarqawi in American-protected, autonomous, no-fly zone, no-drive zone Kurdistan before the war. Because Mr. President, this guy is going to be a real problem if you don't let us get him now. But if they got him now, well then that takes away the excuse for the invasion in the first place. And so Bush overruled them and refused to allow the military to kill him before the war against Baghdad had begun.

WOODS: Wait, hold on a minute; hold on a minute. That seems very plausible. Of course, we can't know his motivations — or can we?

HORTON: Well, look; they were lying about his connection between Saddam and Osama. So why leave him alive, other than you need a talking point? I mean, you're right: that's speculation, I guess, on my part. But unless somebody else — I don't know of any reporting, in Jim Miklaszewski's reporting or any other reporting on that story; I've never heard a plausible excuse for why they wouldn't let them do it. And the military asked them over and over and over again in 2002 and 2003, to go and kill Zarqawi before the war started.

Now once the war started, he's missing; man, nobody knows where he is until the suicide bombs start going off. And then again, he didn't even declare his allegiance to bin Laden and Zawahiri for a year and three-quarters into the war. And then finally he said, okay, I am Al Qaeda in Iraq and I am loyal to Osama and his goals. So, not Bush's fault? Wrong. 100% Bush's fault. There never was a single suicide bombing in Iraq ever before the American invasion there. There never was any al Qaeda in the country. Saddam's orders to his men were find Zarqawi and kill him.

And you know what they did? They tortured al Qaeda guys in implicating Saddam, like Sheikh al-Libi, who they tortured into pretending that an anti-terrorist training camp in Iraq was a terrorist training camp. They had a fuselage of an airplane to practice killing hijackers. But, “Oh no, that’s where they train us hijackers how to hijack things — is that what you want me to say?” cried the tortured man. And then also said that Saddam had taught them how to make chemical weapons and all of this. They were lying to get us into that war. They knew Saddam was not connected to Osama. And it wasn’t until right around the time that Saddam was finally dug out of his hole in the ground and killed that Zarqawi’s men declared themselves loyal to al Qaeda.

Now it’s true that when the troops pulled out before Bush’s timetable, the timetable that Bush signed at his sock puppet’s insistence — the guys that he put in power’s insistence — that said that we had to go, the U.S. had to be out by the end of 2011, it’s true then that that was still somewhat marginalized. But they had not been defeated.

And the entire so-called success of the surge was totally bogus. The only thing successful about the surge was that it was a slogan that was repeated a lot of times — “The surge worked” — and everybody memorized it. But what were the details? What it was supposed to accomplish was reconciliation through the magic of parliamentary democracy. All the different factions in Iraq were supposed to get it together, that we’re all one people, and let’s all share the oil wealth, and etc., etc.

Well that never happened. The people that America put in power there, not only did they kick us out, they told the Sunnis, you guys can basically just go to hell. All the oil is in Kurdistan up in the north and in Shiastan down in the south near Basra and Kuwait. And so basically the Shiite and Kurdish factions that we put in power had no reason to compromise with the Sunnis as far as they could find, as far as they could think of. So they never did integrate them into the government, never integrated them into the police, into the armed forces, into the oil economy whatsoever. They just left them to rot out in the sun.

And so yes, it’s true. What Obama did to help these guys was as bad as what Bush did. But it wasn’t that he got a couple of 10,000 American soldiers out of there. It’s that he took their side in Libya and Syria. So I’m not making some partisan case to defend Obama, but you know, for George Bush to somehow be cleared of blame here is just crazy, when there never was Al Qaeda in Iraq — not one member, ever — until Bush invaded that country and turned it into Jihadistan.

WOODS: Scott, tell us what exactly does ISIS want, according to their own statements? What are they aiming at?

HORTON: Man, they're not nationalists. The government I think is mostly run by former Ba'athist military types, but at the head of the thing, they're run by bin Ladenites, by hardcore religious extremists who would believe they are due the loyalty of every Sunni Muslim in the world. And as far as their greatest object, I think it's to kill as many Shiites as they can. And they're basically a bunch of complete, fanatical crazy people.

And I don't know whether this is true, but there was a report last night that there had been an attempted coup in Mosul, and that the guy who tried it or was accused of being at the head of it was executed. And then a whole bunch of Syrian, I guess, ISIS guys at the top, that they all quit and went back to Raqqa in Syria, western Islamic State, in protest. So this — I don't know if it's true or not — but very good news, if it is true, and it's I think what will certainly be these guys' undoing is that, you know, they're like the Sith; they can't stand to even tolerate each other's presence, even their allies. They're so power-mad and so fanatical, that hopefully they'll just tear each other apart.

People equate their fanaticism to the Nazis, which I think is kind of fair, as far as fanaticism is. But they don't have a Third Reich to take over, right? They don't have a Germany to take over. They've got the worst part, as I was saying; they've got the least valuable part of Iraq, the least oil resources. And the same thing for Syria. They don't rule the real population centers in Syria, just the countryside in the east there and the desert. And so they're landlocked. They're surrounded at least by official enemies — although the Turks don't seem to have too much of a problem with them. And I think time is on our side and not on theirs.

And in fact, I'm going to interview Stephen Walt today on my show about his article, where he says, you know what? If Iran won't get rid of them, if the current policy won't get rid of them and the American people don't want to do ground troops, eh. Maybe we should just accept the Islamic State. You know, they tried to overthrow the Soviet Union right after it was created. That didn't work. They refused to recognize Mao Tse-tung and his rule over China and all that, but that didn't work, and that ended up — I mean, that's a permanent government that still exists to this day, Mao's government. It was kind of ridiculous to refuse to recognize them for so many years and that kind of thing. And you know what? We've seen some pretty bad states in Iraq. I mean, you look at Saddam Hussein's regime; he was certainly no threat to the West, but was he a threat to the Kurds? Hell yeah, he killed hundreds of thousands of Kurds before.

So in the scheme of things, it's all America's fault and the American government and the civilians who supported them and cheered for them should take responsibility, but is it so bad that now we've got to go in there and do something about the mess that our government has made? Absolutely not. I

don't buy that for a minute. And I think that these guys are basically bad enough that I can't imagine that they'll really last, Tom.

WOODS: Scott, what you do every day on your show — and we'll link to all your information on our show notes page, TomWoods.com/438 — it just is so important to me. But first of all, ScottHorton.org is your website. You can find out about your show; you're on different stations; you've got a daily show. Give me the times of your daily show — is it noon to 2 PM Eastern?

HORTON: Yeah, LibertyRadioNetwork.com or LRN.fm, every noon to 2 after Ernie Hancock there, everyday. I do Sunday mornings on KPFK in L.A., which is obviously a left-wing station. But they're very cool, and they've got the most powerful FM antenna west of the Mississippi river, so virtually all of Southern California can hear me there on Sunday mornings. And I'm the Opinion Editor over there at AntiWar.com, so when you're reading those viewpoints, it's because I told you to.

WOODS: All right, that's good. That's very important. Well, I support AntiWar.com every month, but I support Scott Horton even more every month. I make a \$100 donation to the Scott Horton Show every single month, because it means that much to me. What Scott is doing, he's a ridiculously unsung hero of the movement, and I want you to tell people about your tremendous fundraiser that's going on. You're holding a raffle that I would like to win. But if I did win, everybody would suspect there's something fishy going on, so I'll let other people in on it. Tell them what's going on.

HORTON: All right, well, first of all, thank you very much. And again, thank you for having me on here. Every time I do your show, I win new loyal fans — I mean, *great* fans — new supporters, sometimes new advertisers. And, you know, you're the best thing that's ever happened to my show, no doubt about that, Tom.

WOODS: That's very kind of you to say. I'm glad to be able to help.

HORTON: Yeah, cool. Well, I sure appreciate it. And yeah, the \$100 is not too shabby either.

WOODS: (laughing)

HORTON: So yeah, I am doing a fund drive. I've got a listener down in Costa Rica; I believe he's a libertarian — certainly ain't playing into this empire thing anymore, and he decided he's out of here. He went down to Costa Rica and bought some property, and it's a permaculture farm down there. Mostly what he does is he teaches people how to do permaculture farming; he's learning a lot himself, and all this.

But he's offered up — they have a private house there, separate, away from everything else — and he's offered it up for a week's stay for a listener — your listeners or mine, whatever listener — and a guest to stay for a week. Now, airfare is on you to get down there, but they'll pick you up from the airport and feed you three meals a day. And it's off in the jungle; there's a river and a hammock, I was told. You got me at hammock. So there's a hammock there by the river, you should know, and it's not too far from the sea if you want to go check out the ocean. And I'm like you; I want to go really bad, but yeah, conflict of interest thing kind of prohibits it.

But the drawing is on July 15th, and people can out all about it at ScottHorton.org/raffle. Oh by the way, I should have mentioned I got 3,500, 3,800 interviews there at ScottHorton.org, if you want to hear 10 years' worth of interviews about foreign policy. But at ScottHorton.org/raffle, you can find out all about this, and you can find the link to their site. It's VerdEnergia.com, and they've got a bunch of pictures there. Find their picture album thing on their website there, and take a look at the place. It looks really great, and I think it's going to be great. And we've sold quite a few tickets already, but chances are still pretty good, I think. So it's \$50 for a raffle ticket.

And there's a fundraiser going on besides that. I'm also, if anybody donates \$100 or more, you get a raffle ticket; you get a QR code, silver commodity disc — it has no face value, but you scan it with your phone, and it tells you the instant spot price, which I think is the greatest invention of a currency in the history of the universe. CommodityDiscs.com, you get one of those for free. And you get either Sheldon Richman's book, *Your Money or Your Life*, against the income tax, or the brand new audiobook of Lew Rockwell's *Fascism versus Capitalism*, narrated by me. And that one is only for the first 25 to sign up — actually less than that now, because if you have taken that option. But I've got, well, high-teens left of those, if anyone wants a free copy of the audiobook of *Fascism versus Capitalism*, by Lew Rockwell.

WOODS: Well, I'll tell you, I would love to hear an audiobook narrated by Scott Horton, wouldn't you, listeners? I mean, sometimes — I've griped about this on the show — sometimes when they assign audiobook readers for my books, they assign people whose job it sounds like is to put you to sleep. But I refuse to read books that way. I just won't do it. And I know you won't do it, so that's another great bonus.

HORTON: I try to be kind of calm, because Lew, of course, is very understated.

WOODS: That's right, yeah, you do have to give a bit of the Lew Rockwell gravitas —

HORTON: Yeah, I mean, it's really hard to mix me and his style, because he's the kind of guy, he says the harshest thing you ever heard in the gentlest way possible.

WOODS: Yeah, I know, like you're sitting there, innocently nodding your head, and then you say, "Wait a minute; what did he just say?"

HORTON: "Of course, Harry Truman was among the most horrible monsters in the history of the world."

WOODS: "Yeah." (laughing) Wait, what?

HORTON: Now I didn't read it in his voice — I mean, it's me — but I was trying to not overdo it too much.

WOODS: No, I do get that; I do get and appreciate that. Well, listen, I hope people will check you out at ScottHorton.org and the raffle to help you out, doing what you're doing. Every single day, you are spending an enormous amount of time researching. It's not like you came out of the womb just knowing everything there was to know about U.S. foreign policy. I mean, like this takes effort, takes work, every single day, so that we have this great resource, Scott Horton, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of pretty much everything. Well, that doesn't happen automatically. We need to help it out, and we need to show that as libertarians, we mean what we say when we say that we can run society along voluntary lines. If there's a worthy cause, we'll voluntarily support it. Well, I'm telling you, I'm talking to a worthy cause right now, on the show, and check out that worthy cause at ScottHorton.org and especially ScottHorton.org/raffle. Scott, thanks for your time again today, as always.

HORTON: Tom Woods, you're the best, my friend. Thank you.