

Headlines:

- **France Calls for 'Enlightened Islam' against Jihadist Ideology**
- **Russia, Turkey Trade Accusations over who Bought Oil from ISIS**
- **America is still paying for its Wars: The enduring catastrophes of Iraq and Afghanistan**

Details:

France Calls for 'Enlightened Islam' against Jihadist Ideology

Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve urged French Muslim leaders to develop an "enlightened Islam" to confront what he called the obscurantist views of Islamic State that lead young Muslims into violence. At their first meeting since the Nov. 13 killings of 130 people, he told about 400 Muslim leaders, imams and activists that France would do everything it could to track criminals, but only they could win the battle of ideas within Islam. The unusual meeting of 10 Muslim federations and five grand mosques was arranged to "cry loud and clear our condemnation of these acts," Anouar Kbibech, head of France's Muslim Council (CFCM), said of the massacre in Paris by mostly French and Belgian recruits to the Syrian-based Islamic State movement. It swore allegiance to France and ended with the French national anthem, La Marseillaise. France's five-million-strong Muslim minority, Europe's largest, makes up about 8 percent of the population. Two-thirds of them are French citizens. Cazeneuve, whose portfolio includes religious affairs, recalled Islam's "Golden Age" of prominent philosophers and cooperation among religions, which was a far cry from what he called the perverted Islam of today's jihadists. "It is your responsibility to revive this enlightened Islam to denounce the spiritual duplicity of the terrorists and those who follow them," he told the meeting. "You are the most legitimate and qualified to fight these deadly ideas ... we must protect our youth from the spread of this stupidity," he said. "Just think what effect this progressive Islam would have on the rest of Islam in the world." France is home to many Muslim intellectuals who write long treatises about reforming Islam to make it fit better into western society. Most have only faint resonance among practicing Muslims here or in the Muslim world. Since the late 1980s, successive Paris governments have tried but failed to nurture a liberal "Islam of France" that would help integrate the faith into this mostly secular society. The French Muslim community, torn apart by ethnic divisions and power politics, has for its part failed to unite to oppose radical Salafist groups that have established their presence in some mosques and neighborhoods as well as on the Internet. Recently elected as CFCM president, Kbibech brought together the often rival federations and grand mosques to pledge to do more to train imams, fight radicalization and educate young Muslims in the principles of Islam. "After the time for emotion, for condemnation and compassion, now is the time for action," he said. "French Muslims are ready to play their part ... to understand and prevent the drift of some of our youths into violence." Islam played a part in this radicalization, even if only as a source for religious pretexts misused to justify violence, he said, but many political, economic and social factors also pushed young Muslims to extremism. "We are witnessing an Islamization of their radicalism, not a radicalization of Islam," he said, citing a recent analysis by Olivier Roy, a leading

French academic expert on Islam. Cazeneuve, who announced a meeting with Muslim leaders about radicalization for early January, said French Muslims should develop a "Gallican Islam, that keeps abreast of modern society's concerns and resolves issues that (Islam) never had to resolve in its societies of origin". [Source: Reuters]

Cazeneuve 'enlightened Islam' is very similar to Musharraf's enlightened moderation and efforts by others to reform Islam. The common thread in all of these initiatives is to secularize Islam, and prevent the emergence of political Islam, which is viewed as a threat to Western domination over Muslim lands.

Russia, Turkey Trade Accusations over who Bought Oil from ISIS

Russian military officials laid out Wednesday what they say is "hard evidence" that Turkey is involved in an oil trade with ISIS, offering more detail on earlier claims that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has flatly denied. "We presented evidence how the illegal oil trade is carried out to finance the terrorist groups," Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov said, as reported by state-run Sputnik news. "We know how much Erdogan's words are worth. Officials presented photographs and videos that they said show links between Turkey and oil refineries in ISIS-controlled territory in Syria, estimating \$3 million worth of oil per day was traversing this route before Russian airstrikes cut that roughly in half. Sergey Rudskoy, one of the military leaders, pointed to "three main routes (that) have been exposed for the transportation of oil to Turkey" -- one ending in Turkish ports on the Mediterranean Sea, another at an oil refinery in Batman and a third in Cizre. Antonov said, "The highest political leadership of the country -- President Erdogan and his family -- are involved in this criminal business," crediting Russian journalists for their reports tying one of Erdogan's sons to a role in the scheme. "If they think the evidence is fake, let them make these areas available to journalists," Antonov said, placing the burden on the Turks to disprove Russia's claims. Keeping up his own tough talk, the Turkish President blasted the allegations as wrong Wednesday during a speech at Qatar University. "No one has the right to slander Turkey, especially the slander of Turkey buying ISIS oil," Erdogan said. "Turkey has not lost its moral values to buy oil from a terror organization." Turkey insists it's had nothing to do with buying oil from ISIS, but says that's not the case for Syria's government, led by embattled President Bashar al-Assad. A report from Turkey's semiofficial Anadolu news agency noted recent comments by German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Sawsan Chebli saying Tuesday that her country has not seen any solid proof of the Russian claims. "But what we know, for example, is that the Assad regime has received large amounts of oil from ISIL," said Chebli, using another name for the terrorist group. "We have evidence." Last week, the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions targeting, among others, George Haswani, "a Syrian businessman who serves as a middleman for oil purchases by the Syrian regime from ISIL." An Anadolu report pointed to a European Council document from March noting that Haswani "provides support and benefits from" Assad's government through the ISIS oil purchases. "He also benefits from the regime through favorable treatment including the award of a contract (as a subcontractor) with Stroytransgaz, a major Russian oil company," the document said. [Source: CNN]

It is well know that ISIL cannot function without the support of external powers. However, what is completely missing from the debate is how the whole world is now propping up Assad's regime and fighting anyone opposed to his tyranny.

America is still paying for its wars: The enduring catastrophes of Iraq and Afghanistan

Let's begin with the \$12 billion in shrink-wrapped \$100 bills, Iraqi oil money held in the U.S. The Bush administration began flying it into Baghdad on C-130s soon after U.S. troops entered that city in April 2003. Essentially dumped into the void that had once been the Iraqi state, at least \$1.2 to \$1.6 billion of it was stolen and ended up years later in a mysterious bunker in Lebanon. And that's just what happened as the starting gun went off. It's never ended. In 2011, the final report of the congressionally mandated Commission on Wartime Contracting estimated that somewhere between \$31 billion and \$60 billion taxpayer dollars had been lost to fraud and waste in the American "reconstruction" of Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, for instance, there was that \$75 million police academy, initially hailed "as crucial to U.S. efforts to prepare Iraqis to take control of the country's security." It was, however, so poorly constructed that it proved a health hazard. In 2006, "feces and urine rained from the ceilings in [its] student barracks" and that was only the beginning of its problems. When the bad press started, Parsons Corporation, the private contractor that built it, agreed to fix it for nothing more than the princely sum already paid. A year later, a *New York Times* reporter visited and found that "the ceilings are still stained with excrement, parts of the structures are crumbling, and sections of the buildings are unusable because the toilets are filthy and nonfunctioning." This seems to have been par for the course. Typically enough, the Khan Bani Saad Correctional Facility, a \$40 million prison Parsons also contracted to build, was never even finished. And why stick to buildings, when there were those Iraqi roads to nowhere paid for by American dollars? At least one of them did at least prove useful to insurgent groups moving their guerrillas around (like the \$37 million bridge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built between Afghanistan and Tajikistan that helped facilitate the region's booming drug trade in opium and heroin). In Afghanistan, Highway 1 between the capital Kabul and the southern city of Kandahar, unofficially dubbed the "highway to nowhere," was so poorly constructed that it began crumbling in its first Afghan winter. And don't think that this was an aberration. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) hired an American nonprofit, International Relief and Development (IRD), to oversee an ambitious road-building program meant to gain the support of rural villagers. Almost \$300 million later, it could point to "less than 100 miles of gravel road completed." Each mile of road had, by then, cost U.S. taxpayers \$2.8 million, instead of the expected \$290,000, while a quarter of the road-building funds reportedly went directly to IRD for administrative and staff costs. Needless to say, as the road program failed, USAID hired IRD to oversee other non-transportation projects. In these years, the cost of reconstruction never stopped growing. In 2011, McClatchy News reported that "U.S. government funding for at least 15 large-scale programs and projects grew from just over \$1 billion to nearly \$3 billion despite the government's questions about their effectiveness or cost." [Source: Salon.com]

America not only steals from the countries it occupies, its armies also steal from their own government.