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## Video Shows Beheading of Second U.S. Journalist; 'I'm Back, Obama'

By David Lerman and Roxana Tiron - Sep 2, 2014

The extremist Islamic State group released a video today showing the beheading of a man identified as American journalist Steven Joel Sotloff.

The killing marks the second American to be executed by Islamic State, the militant Sunni group that controls a swath of eastern Syria and northern [Iraq](#). James Foley, also a journalist, was beheaded in a video released last month.

"I'm back, Obama," a masked fighter says in the latest video, which was obtained by the SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks jihadist activity. "I'm back because of your arrogant foreign policy toward the Islamic State, because of your insistence on continuing your bombings."

The recording ends with another prisoner, kneeling in an orange jumpsuit, just as Sotloff was shown at the end of the recording on Foley's killing. The man in the new video is identified as David Cawthorne Haines, a British citizen.

U.S. lawmakers responded to the video by urging President [Barack Obama](#) to step up efforts to forge a broad coalition of nations that would take on Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria. Obama said last week that he will send Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) to the Mideast to seek support from nations in the region.

"There is a growing awareness internationally that we have to form an unprecedented international program of cooperation," Representative Ed Royce of [California](#), the Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said on a conference call with reporters today.

### Defining Conflict

Some Obama administration officials said they and the president are wary of expanding the overt U.S. military role. Doing so risks assisting the extremists' efforts to define the conflict as part of a centuries-old Christian crusader and Jewish war against Islam, according to six officials who asked for anonymity to discuss internal policy deliberations.

Additional U.S. troops are being sent to Iraq "to protect our diplomatic facilities and personnel" in the capital of [Baghdad](#), which will bring the total providing such security to about 820, the Pentagon said

in a statement tonight.

Obama approved a State Department request to add about 350 troops to the security contingent deployed to Baghdad earlier this year, the White House said in a statement. “These additional forces will not serve in a combat role,” the statement said.

## Cameron Comment

In a statement calling Sotloff’s murder “despicable and barbaric” if confirmed, U.K. Prime Minister [David Cameron](#) said Islamic State terrorists “speak for no religion. They threaten Syrians, Iraqis, American and British people alike and make no distinction between Muslims, Christians or any other faith.”

### [Al-Qaeda's Heirs](#)

While SITE said it confirmed the authenticity of the videotaped execution, U.S. officials said they couldn’t yet do so. “If the video is genuine, we are sickened by this brutal act,” State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said today at a briefing in [Washington](#).

The masked executioner appears to be the same U.K. citizen who was seen in the video of Foley’s beheading.

“We take this opportunity to warn those governments that enter this evil alliance of America against the Islamic State to back off and leave our people alone,” the man in black says as he stands over the captured U.K. citizen.

## Video Timing

A U.S. official said Islamic State’s decision to release the video just as Americans returned to work after the long Labor Day holiday suggests its relative political sophistication and underscores that it has fighters from western [Europe](#) and the U.S. who are familiar with work routines.

The official, who requested anonymity to discuss intelligence information, said evidence indicates that Sotloff was executed last month, when many Americans and Europeans were on vacation, and that the video of his murder was withheld until today to maximize its impact.

The official said that given Islamic State’s political acumen, the group probably doesn’t expect the murders of Foley and Sotloff and the threat against Haines to change U.S. or U.K. policy, and that the videos also are intended to terrorize residents and leaders of [Syria](#), Iraq and other predominantly Muslim nations that the group seeks to incorporate in its proclaimed caliphate.

Asked if the U.S. had evidence that Sotloff had been executed some time ago, Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman, told reporters today, “I don’t know anyone had definitive knowledge one way

or another.”

## Arabic Speaker

Sotloff, who was from Miami, worked as a journalist in [Libya](#) and spoke fluent Arabic, according to a former colleague. He was kidnapped near Aleppo, Syria, on Aug. 4, 2013. He had reported for publications including Time magazine and the Christian Science Monitor.

While Obama has authorized limited airstrikes against Islamic State in Iraq for humanitarian purposes and to protect U.S. personnel, he said last week that “we don’t have a strategy yet” to extend the fight into Syria. The U.S. backs what it calls moderate rebels seeking to overthrow Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad, even as Islamic State has made greater headway against Assad’s forces.

[Senator Lindsey Graham](#), a South Carolina Republican, said in an e-mailed statement today that American airpower, employed “in coordination with reliable partners on the ground,” should be “aggressively pursued both in Syria and Iraq.”

## ‘Barbaric Cruelty’

Senator [Bill Nelson](#), a Florida Democrat, said today in a statement that America must go after Islamic State “right away because the U.S. is the only one that can put together a coalition to stop this group that’s intent on barbaric cruelty.”

Some Democrats have joined Republicans in urging more forceful action by Obama.

“I’ve learned one thing about this president, and that is he’s very cautious -- maybe in this instance too cautious,” Senator [Dianne Feinstein](#), the California Democrat who heads the Senate intelligence committee, said Aug. 31 on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Royce, the head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he will call Kerry before the panel this month to testify on efforts at “rolling back” Islamic State’s gains.

Royce and Representative Eliot Engel of [New York](#), the committee’s top Democrat, told reporters they expect Congress to vote on airstrikes in Iraq and possibly Syria.

“We anticipate that there would be a vote for authorization,” Royce said.

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