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- Rebuilding Shattered Aleppo will take billions-and peace (Interview with ESCWA Deputy Executive Secretary Abdallah Al Dardari and reporting on Sketch for Syria)

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REBUILDING SHATTERED ALEPPO WILL TAKE BILLIONS - AND PEACE

BY BASSEM MROUE AND SARAH EL DEEB
ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Rebuilding Shattered Aleppo Will Take Billions—And Peace

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  FEB. 2, 2017, 1:27 A.M. E.S.T.

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International officials are informally discussing whether to pursue country-by-country reconstruction or a regional Marshall Plan-type project.

But the money being discussed currently is "small, incremental," suitable for some stabilization projects but not reconstruction on a large scale. The UN says there are still 2 million displaced people back to their homes. "This is not the time for reconstruction," he said of the discussions. He spoke about the behind-the-scenes talks on condition of anonymity.

Officials in Russia — in the midst of a two-year recession — have not commented on rebuilding. Moscow may instead encourage companies and other entities to lend support. Russia's province of Chechnya said it will help restore Aleppo's Umayyad Mosque.

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Despite the loss of a seasoned Navy SEAL and civilians caught in crossfire between al-Qaeda and U.S. commandos, the weekend raid in Yemen seized "actionable intelligence" on the terror group, officials said today.

It was the first step in an aggressive action plan aimed at crippling Islamist extremists based in Yemen who have been fixated on attacking U.S. aviation since 2008, a counterterrorism official said.

"I can confirm for you that based on initial indications valuable and actionable intelligence was taken in this operation," Pentagon spokesperson Capt. Jeff Davis said Thursday.

The raid to capture key intelligence on top al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leadership and terrorist plots against the west came at a high price -- one American special operator made the ultimate sacrifice and several of his teammates were critically wounded, U.S. officials have said.
The U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, also concluded yesterday a team had determined "civilian non-combatants likely were killed," during the SEAL Team Six raid on an AQAP compound in Yemen's remote mountains.

But a counterterrorism official familiar with the operation's details and after-action assessments told ABC News, "There definitely were civilian casualties."

Efforts by the U.S. military's special operations forces to determine whether a weekend Navy SEAL raid on al-Qaeda's dangerous Yemen branch resulted in civilian deaths has been almost as intense as the months of planning that went into the combat operation itself, counterterrorism officials said today.

Among the civilian dead, according to a statement by AQAP just hours after the shooting had stopped, was an 8-year old girl whose father was the Yemeni-American AQAP external operations leader and propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki. Presumably born in Yemen, she likely was considered a "U.S. person" but not a U.S. citizen under the law since her father's American citizenship was never revoked.

The elder Awlaki once led one of the largest mosques in the U.S., a few miles outside of Washington in Virginia's suburbs, before joining AQAP and helping the group become the No. 1 terror threat to his former homeland.

He was killed in a 2011 CIA drone strike in Yemen, followed weeks later by what the Obama administration later said was the accidental killing in an airstrike of Awlaki's 16-year old American son, Abdulrahman.

American officials have not confirmed that Awlaki's daughter was among those killed in the intense firefight on Saturday, a moonless night in which the SEALs apparently lost the element of surprise, ABC News has reported. Photos of a bloodied young girl and a baby accompanied the AQAP statement distributed through the encrypted app Telegram.

The intense analysis of possible civilian casualties in the Yemen strike by military experts has been drawn from a mix of intelligence streams including overhead video surveillance and communications intercepts following the gunfire on the ground between AQAP operatives and the SEALs, who were dropped off by Marine Ospreys
and walked in several miles to the objective, several houses in a remote mountain range, officials said.

Al-Qaeda fighters including women opened fire as soon as they approached and from every direction, CENTCOM has said.

"They had them surrounded 360 degrees. When that happens, all bets are off," said one counterterrorism official briefed on the operation.

Airstrikes were called in and the SEALs fought back.

Despite suffering the loss of an experienced SEAL operator, Ryan Owens, and an MV-22 Osprey that experienced a hard landing away from the objective, the team killed all the adversaries and recovered computers, phones and documents with intelligence value they had sought, which are now being studied by analysts, said two officials who bristled at media criticism of the operation's success as touted by President Trump.

"In a successful raid against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) headquarters, brave U.S. forces were instrumental in killing an estimated 14 AQAP members and capturing important intelligence that will assist the U.S. in preventing terrorism against its citizens and people around the world," Trump said in a statement on Monday.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer also characterized the operation in positive terms, saying, "It's hard to ever call something a complete success when you have the loss of life or people injured. But... it is a successful operation by all standards."

A veteran Naval Special Warfare senior officer who has deployed in combat with SEAL teams in recent years said the loss of an experienced operator, Ryan Owens, "sucks," but the intelligence captured by the team was clearly judged to be worth huge risks to gain invaluable information to protect the U.S. and its interests.

"These guys have a different gut-check. You're not bullet-proof. You've got to accomplish the objective, otherwise everything is for naught," the recently retired senior officer said. "Risk is inherent to success."

In Dam Neck, Virginia, Owens' death stunned his comrades in arms, as the commander of the covert Naval Special Warfare Development Group, known as SEAL Team Six, personally informed the fallen...
On Wednesday, Trump and his daughter travelled to Dover Air Force base to pay their respects to the fallen operator as his remains were returned home to the U.S.

*ABC News’ Luis Martinez and Paul Blake contributed to this report.*
In war-ravaged Aleppo, few answers on how to rebuild Syria’s second city

Dozens of residents have filtered in to inspect their properties, climbing over debris to reach hollowed-out, punctured buildings littered with unexploded ordnance.

ALEPPO, Syria: Aleppo has been scarred beyond recognition: Weeks after fighting stopped, a pall of dust covers its eastern districts, where streets are lined for blocks with buildings smashed to metal and brick rubble in scenes reminiscent of cities devastated in World War II. The destruction is the worst wreaked on any city in Syria’s war. No one has any quick answers on how to rebuild Aleppo, Syria’s largest city, much less the rest of a country that has seen appalling desolation.

Costs for reconstruction in Aleppo, once Syria’s economic hub, could run in the tens of billions of dollars, far beyond the country’s capabilities. Western nations are unlikely to give funds to the government of President Bashar Assad, which remains under U.S., European, and Arab sanctions that bar aid. Even Assad’s allies, Russia and Iran, which are bankrolling his rule, show little enthusiasm to shoulder rebuilding costs.

And there is the question of how to discuss reconstruction while the war still rages. Much depends on the shape of any eventual political settlement ending the war.

Rebuilding without a deal may only entrench demographic changes caused by the war – that have run along sectarian lines. The fear among some is that Assad’s government will rebuild opposition areas like east Aleppo for its supporters and do little to draw back millions of refugees, most from parts of the country that joined the rebellion.

Still, the European Union, where nearly 1 million Syrians are seeking asylum, says planning must start now. It wants to host a conference in the spring on the future of Syria with a focus on reconstruction. U.N. officials are scrambling to form a vision for a future Syria and find ways to tackle financing.

“I remember people were telling us, ‘Are you mad? You start planning for rebuilding now?’ And my reaction was, ‘It is already too late,’” said Abdullah al-Dardari, deputy executive secretary for the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for West Asia.
“One day soon, hopefully, when there is a peace agreement of some sort and we need to deliver to the people of Syria on basic services and housing and schooling and all this, you will see how much time we really needed for planning.”

The EU move may be in part be aimed at gaining a voice in Syria – and a carrot of reconstruction aid to dangle before Assad – at a time when Moscow dominates the political process. Russia’s warplanes helped Assad’s forces recapture east Aleppo, the government’s greatest victory of the war, and now Russia along with opposition-backer Turkey is pushing to jump-start negotiations.

A comprehensive political solution remains far off. But any settlement in current circumstances would no doubt leave Assad in office and therefore running rebuilding efforts.

Dardari estimated war damages across Syria so far at $350 billion, including physical damage amid loss of economic activity. Aleppo’s share is about 15 percent, or over $52 billion, he said, though others put the estimate at nearly double that.

“The economic damage is beyond calculation at the moment,” Dardari said, who later this month will move to the World Bank as an adviser on reconstruction efforts in the Middle East. “There is no number on earth that can be put on the loss [of] the historical, archaeological and cultural and also the business aspect of it.”

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Rebuilding shattered Aleppo will take billions - and peace

By BASSEM M/ROUE and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press  Feb 2, 2017 Updated 1 hr ago

ALEPPO, Syria (AP) — Fighting has ended in Aleppo, and now talk is beginning to turn to the question of how to rebuild Syria's largest city, where entire blocks have been smashed to rubble in scenes reminiscent of World War II devastation. The task will take tens of billions of dollars.

But hopes for rebuilding collide with daunting realities.

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El Deeb reported from Beirut. Andrea Rosa in Beirut, Hassan Ammar in Aleppo and Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed to this report.
Rebuilding shattered Aleppo will take billions - and peace

WORLD [HTTP://WWW.660NEWS.COM/CATEGORY/WORLD/]

by BASSEM MROUE AND SARAH EL DEEB, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Posted Feb 2, 2017 8:43 am MST Last Updated Feb 2, 2017 at 2:20 pm MST

In this Friday, Jan. 20, 2017 photo, mounds of rubble remain from what used to be high rise apartment buildings in the once rebel-held Ansari neighborhood of eastern Aleppo, Syria. Aleppo, Syria’s largest city, was widely brought to ruin by years of war, and now with Russia and Turkey leading peace efforts, international officials say it is time to start talking about rebuilding Aleppo and other cities. But there are few answers on how to do it, with the world reluctant to donate the billions needed and a political settlement in the war still uncertain and far off. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

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Rebuilding shattered Aleppo will take billions - and peace

WORLD (HTTP://WWW.680NEWS.COM/CATEGORY/WORLD/)

by BASSEM MROUE AND SARAH EL DEEB, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Posted Feb 2, 2017 10:43 am EST Last Updated Feb 2, 2017 at 4:20 pm EST

In this Friday, Jan. 20, 2017 photo, mounds of rubble remain from what used to be high rise apartment buildings in the once rebel-held Anseri neighborhood of eastern Aleppo, Syria. Aleppo, Syria's largest city, was widely brought to ruin by years of war, and now with Russia and Turkey leading peace efforts, international officials say it is time to start talking about rebuilding Aleppo and other cities. But there are few answers on how to do it, with the world reluctant to donate the billions needed and a political settlement in the war still uncertain and far off. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

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But hopes for rebuilding collide with daunting realities.
Without a comprehensive peace deal to Syria’s civil war, Western nations are unlikely to give funds to the government of President Bashar Assad, which remains under U.S., European, and Arab sanctions that bar aid. Even Assad’s allies, Russia and Iran, which are bankrolling his rule, show little enthusiasm to shoulder rebuilding costs.

There is the question of how to discuss reconstruction while the war still rages. Much depends on the shape of any eventual political settlement ending the conflict. Rebuilding without a deal may only entrench demographic changes caused by the war — which have run along sectarian lines.

The fear among some is that Assad’s government will rebuild opposition areas like east Aleppo for its supporters and do little to draw back millions of refugees, most from parts of the country that joined the rebellion.

Still, the European Union, where nearly 1 million Syrians are seeking asylum, says planning must start now. The questions surrounding Aleppo, where fighting ended last month with the government’s capture of the entire city, point to the wider problems that will be faced in rebuilding the appalling destruction across Syria from its six-year civil war.

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“I remember people were telling us, ‘Are you mad? You start planning for rebuilding now?’ And my reaction was, ‘It is already too late,’” said Abdullah Al Dardari, deputy executive secretary for the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for West Asia.

“One day soon, hopefully, when there is a peace agreement of some sort and we need to deliver to the people of Syria on basic services and housing and schooling and all this, you will see how much time we really needed for planning.”

The EU move may in part be aimed at gaining a voice in Syria — and a carrot of reconstruction aid to dangle before Assad — at a time when Moscow dominates the political process. Russia’s warplanes helped Assad’s forces recapture east Aleppo, the government’s greatest victory of the war, and now Russia along with opposition-backer Turkey is pushing to jumpstart negotiations.

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http://www.1310news.com/2017/02/02/in-syrias-ravaged-aleppo-few-answers-on-how-to-rebuild/
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Bassem Mroue And Sarah El Deeb The Associated Press | Posted: Thursday, February 2, 2017 10:43 am

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El Deeb reported from Beirut. Andrea Rosa in Beirut, Hassan Ammar in Aleppo and Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria contributed to this report.
In Syria's ravaged Aleppo, few answers on how to rebuild

Bassem Mroue And Sarah El Deeb The Associated Press | Posted: Thursday, February 2, 2017 10:43 am

ALEPPO, Syria - Aleppo has been scarred beyond recognition: Weeks after fighting stopped, a pall of dust covers its eastern districts, where streets are lined for blocks with buildings smashed to metal and brick rubble in scenes reminiscent of cities devastated in World War II.

The destruction is the worst wreaked on any city in Syria's six-year war. No one has any quick answers on how to rebuild Aleppo, Syria's largest city, much less the rest of a country that has seen appalling desolation.

Costs for reconstruction in Aleppo, once Syria's economic hub, could run in the tens of billions of dollars, far beyond the country's capabilities. Western nations are unlikely to give funds to the government of President Bashar Assad, which remains under U.S., European, and Arab sanctions that bar aid. Even Assad's allies, Russia and Iran, which are bankrolling his rule, show little enthusiasm to shoulder rebuilding costs.

And there is the question of how to discuss reconstruction while the war still rages. Much depends on the shape of any eventual political settlement ending the war. Rebuilding without a deal may only entrench demographic changes caused by the war — which have run along sectarian lines. The fear among some is that Assad's government will rebuild opposition areas like east Aleppo for its supporters and do little to draw back millions of refugees, most from parts of the country that joined the rebellion.

Still, the European Union, where nearly 1 million Syrians are seeking asylum, says planning must start now. It wants to host a conference in the spring on the future of Syria with a focus on reconstruction. U.N. officials are scrambling to form a vision for a future Syria and find ways to tackle financing.

"I remember people were telling us, 'Are you mad? You start planning for rebuilding now?' And my reaction was, 'It is already too late,'" said Abdullah Al Dardari, deputy executive secretary for the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for West Asia.

"One day soon, hopefully, when there is a peace agreement of some sort and we need to deliver to the people of Syria on basic services and housing and schooling and all this, you will see how much time we really needed for planning."

The EU move may in part be aimed at gaining a voice in Syria — and a carrot of reconstruction aid to dangle before Assad — at a time when Moscow dominates the political process. Russia's warplanes helped Assad's forces recapture east Aleppo, the government's greatest victory of the war, and now Russia along with opposition-backer Turkey is pushing to jumpstart negotiations.

A comprehensive political solution remains far off. But any settlement in current circumstances would no doubt leave Assad in office and therefore running rebuilding efforts.

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"The economic damage is beyond calculation at the moment," Al Dardari said, who later this month will move to the World Bank as an adviser on reconstruction efforts in the Middle East. "There is no number on earth that can be put on the loss (of) the historical, archaeological and cultural and also the business aspect of it."

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Rebuilding shattered Aleppo will take billions - and peace

BY BASSEM MROUE AND SARAH EL DEEB ASSOCIATED PRESS  Feb 2, 2017 Updated 1 hr ago

In this Jan. 21, 2017 photo, Syrians walk amid the destruction, in the Old City of Aleppo, Syria, Aleppo, Syria’s largest city, was widely brought to ruin by years of war, and now with Russia and Turkey leading peace efforts, international officials say it is time to start talking about rebuilding Aleppo and other cities. But there are few answers on how to do it, with the world reluctant to donate the billions needed and a political settlement in the war still uncertain and far off. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

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By BASSEM MROUE and SARAH EL DEEB
February 2, 2017 3:40 pm
7 min read

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By BASSSEM MIROU and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press  Feb 2, 2017 Updated 5 hrs ago

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Rebuilding shattered Aleppo will take billions - and peace

ALEPPO, Syria (AP) — Fighting has ended in Aleppo, and now talk is beginning to turn to the question of how to rebuild Syria’s largest city, where entire blocks have been smashed to rubble in scenes reminiscent of World War II devastation. The task will take tens of billions of dollars.

But hopes for rebuilding collide with daunting realities.

Without a comprehensive peace deal to Syria's civil war, Western nations are unlikely to give funds to the government of President Bashar Assad, which remains under U.S., European, and Arab sanctions that bar aid. Even Assad's allies, Russia and Iran, which are bankrolling his rule, show little enthusiasm to shoulder rebuilding costs.

There is the question of how to discuss reconstruction while the war still rages. Much depends on the shape of any eventual political settlement ending the conflict. Rebuilding without a deal may only entrench demographic changes caused by the war — which have run along sectarian lines.

Hassan Ammar

In this Jan. 21, 2017 photo, Syrians walk amid the destruction in the Old City of Aleppo, Syria. Aleppo, Syria's largest city, was widely brought to ruin by years of war, and now with Russia and Turkey leading peace efforts, international officials say it is time to start talking about rebuilding Aleppo and other cities. But there are few answers on how to do it, with the world reluctant to donate the billions needed and a political settlement in the war still uncertain and far off. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar)

View all 12 images in gallery.
The fear among some is that Assad’s government will rebuild opposition areas like east Aleppo for its supporters and do little to draw back millions of refugees, most from parts of the country that joined the rebellion.

Still, the European Union, where nearly 1 million Syrians are seeking asylum, says planning must start now. The questions surrounding Aleppo, where fighting ended last month with the government’s capture of the entire city, point to the wider problems that will be faced in rebuilding the appalling destruction across Syria from its six-year civil war.

The EU wants to host a conference in the spring on the future of Syria with a focus on reconstruction. U.N. officials are scrambling to form a vision for a future Syria and find ways to tackle financing.

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After the destruction: How will Aleppo rise from the ashes?

The destruction is the worst wreaked on any city in Syria’s six-year war

Updated: 6:19 AM PST Feb 2, 2017
ALEPPO, Syria — Aleppo has been scarred beyond recognition: Weeks after fighting stopped, a pall of dust covers its eastern districts, where streets are lined for blocks with buildings smashed to metal and brick rubble in scenes reminiscent of cities devastated in World War II.
The destruction is the worst wreaked on any city in Syria's six-year war. No one has any quick answers on how to rebuild Aleppo, Syria's largest city, much less the rest of a country that has seen appalling desolation.

Costs for reconstruction in Aleppo, once Syria's economic hub, could run in the tens of billions of dollars, far beyond the country's capabilities. Western nations are unlikely to give funds to the government of President Bashar Assad, which remains under U.S., European, and Arab sanctions that bar aid. Even Assad's allies, Russia and Iran, which are bankrolling his rule, show little enthusiasm to shoulder rebuilding costs.

And there is the question of how to discuss reconstruction while the war still rages. Much depends on the shape of any eventual political settlement ending the war. Rebuilding without a deal may only entrench demographic changes caused by the war - which have run along sectarian lines. The fear among some is that Assad's government will rebuild opposition areas like east Aleppo for its supporters and do little to draw back millions of refugees, most from parts of the country that joined the rebellion.

Still, the European Union, where nearly 1 million Syrians are seeking asylum, says planning must start now. It wants to host a conference in the spring on the future of Syria with a focus on reconstruction. U.N. officials are scrambling to form a vision for a future Syria and find ways to tackle financing.

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"One day soon, hopefully, when there is a peace agreement of some sort and we need to deliver to the people of Syria on basic services and housing and schooling and all this, you will see how much time we really needed for planning."

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Rebuilding shattered Aleppo will take billions - and peace

By BASSEM MROJE and SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press  Feb 2, 2017 Updated 5 hrs ago

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