

**ISIS STATEMENT REGARDING "A STRIKE IN THE DARK" IN THE
FEBRUARY 11 ISSUE OF THE NEW YORKER, BY SEYMOUR HERSH**

**THE INSTITUTE FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY (ISIS)
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Seymour Hersh [recently published](#) an article for the *New Yorker* magazine in which he seeks to find reasons behind the September 6, 2007 Israeli strike against a facility in eastern Syria. Mr. Hersh took one quote from David Albright out of its original context and used it to imply that ISIS had earlier concluded that the site attacked was a reactor and had since backed away from that conclusion. In fact, ISIS's analysis of the suspect site has been consistent since October 2007. Our continuing assessment is that the building is consistent with reactor construction, and thus consistent with credible reports in the media that U.S. and Israeli officials have concluded that the site represents a reactor under construction.

Mr. Hersh met with David Albright and Paul Brannan in January at ISIS's office to discuss the Israeli strike and ISIS's analysis of the imagery of the site. On the third page of his article, Hersh writes, "Albright, when I spoke with him in December, was far more circumspect than he had been in October." Hersh then quotes Albright as saying, "We never said 'we know' it was a reactor, based on the image. We wanted to make sure that the image was *consistent* with a reactor, and, from my point of view, it was. But that doesn't confirm that it was a reactor."

This quote was drawn from a point in our discussion related to the process by which ISIS confirmed the location of the attacked site in October by providing the imagery to the *Washington Post*. We did this by first analyzing a large, 2000 square kilometer area of Syria and identifying a site that was consistent with a nuclear reactor. The goal was also to show that the site was consistent with earlier reporting by the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* that U.S. and Israeli officials had concluded the site was a reactor under construction. The fact that we independently found this site by searching for a reactor either is one of the world's most remarkable coincidences or is further evidence that the site could be a reactor.

Hersh, who we at ISIS greatly respect, is correct to raise the issue of whether Israeli and U.S. intelligence are right about the purpose of the site. We are committed to developing that information publicly. Moreover, the bombing of the site raises troubling questions that require public answers. Hersh has added interesting and important information to this critical debate. He clearly believes that the site did not house a reactor, and he is entitled to his opinion. But much of his argument hinges on Albright's statement that was taken out of context. His other evidence is from people who do not have direct knowledge of the case, or are limited to analyzing satellite imagery of the site, which we know cannot on its own answer the question of whether or not the site is a reactor.