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OUTSIDE VIEWS ON THE STRATEGY FOR IRAQ AND SYRIA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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OUTSIDE VIEWS ON THE STRATEGY FOR IRAQ AND SYRIA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, November 18, 2015.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:26 p.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William M. "Mac" Thornberry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM M. "MAC" THORNBERRY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM TEXAS, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. And I appreciate the patience of our witnesses and guests while we had a vote. But the good news is, now we should be uninterrupted for the rest of our hearing. The committee meets today to get some outside expert perspectives on the strategy moving forward against ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] in Iraq and Syria. And members should know that this hearing will be complemented by some further roundtable discussions with some former military leaders, as well as a hearing with the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs scheduled for December 1. Of course, all of these hearings were scheduled before the Paris attacks, but they only add urgency, I think, to the subject before us.

I think all of us probably agree that this problem has festered and gotten worse over time, so that easy solutions do not exist. At the same time, throwing up our hands and saying it is too hard is not really an option. I think most of the American people believe that the President's statements that this is the JV [junior varsity] team, or that the threat is contained, don't find those credible. And so I am hopeful that with a series of hearings and roundtables, we can help shed a little light on a better path forward to deal with this situation in all of its complexity.

So let me yield to Mr. Smith for any comments he will make before I turn to our witnesses.

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a longer statement, which I will just submit for the record. But I think this hearing is perfectly appropriate to really think broadly about what is our strategy. And I think it is not just against ISIS, but all of the groups affiliated with that ideology, Al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Ansar al-Sharia in Libya. This is an ideology that we need

to figure out how to defeat. For a long time it was Al Qaeda. Gosh, 10 years ago, no such thing as Al Qaeda in Iraq or ISIS. Now they are the great threat. And I agree with the chairman, I think this is a very significant threat, precisely because they have the same willingness that Osama bin Laden had to reach out and try to attack Western targets wherever they can find them. This is in our vital national security interests to figure out how best to contain this. But I think the lesson that has been learned is the ability of the United States to go militarily into a Muslim country and pacify it, if you will, and force it into a different direction. And Ambassador Crocker is very familiar with those struggles and those difficulties.

The issue isn't could we, in the short term, militarily defeat ISIS? Certainly. You know, we could, with our Western allies, have a force that could, you know, destroy them in the short term. But in the long term, do we create more of them? Do we then create a situation where we have even more of the Muslim world against us? How do we thread that needle? And I think that is the key. And what I want to hear most from our witnesses, how do we find allies in the Muslim, Sunni Muslim world in particular, since these groups are Sunni, and how do we assist them in defeating groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda, and convincing their populations that these are groups not to be supported and not to be joined?

How, in essence, does the Muslim world, do places like Iraq and Syria, offer a better alternative going forward? And a big part of this is this part of the world has a massive youth bulge, huge youth population, and almost no jobs. Nothing for these people to do. That makes these sort of ideologies even more attractive.

So a comprehensive solution is needed. I think we have two great witnesses here to offer us that perspective. And I look forward to their testimony. I thank the chairman for the hearing. With that, I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith can be found in the Appendix on page 41.]

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Let me, again, express our appreciation to both our witnesses for being here. John McLaughlin, as members know, was the deputy director and then the acting director of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] during the crucial beginning time of this fight against terrorists, shortly after 9/11. He now teaches at Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies.

Ryan Crocker has been a Foreign Service Officer for 30-something years, ambassador to a whole variety of countries, including Iraq and Syria, and is now the dean at the George Bush School down in College Station. So we are very grateful to both of you for being here. I think the ranking member is exactly right, we are looking for the broader strategic perspective on what we are facing.

Without objection, your full written statements will be made part of the record. And I will turn to you first, Mr. McLaughlin, for any comments you would like to make.

STATEMENT OF JOHN E. McLAUGHLIN, FORMER ACTING DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Chairman Thornberry and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to share my views today. I always enjoyed visiting this committee back when I worked at CIA for 30 years. And as a U.S. Army veteran with service in Vietnam, I understand the importance of the work you do. The United States confronts, in Syria and Iraq, the most complex set of national security problems I have ever seen, in a way, unprecedented even for the Middle East. At least six region-wide conflicts converge in these two countries: Persian versus Arab, Sunni versus Shia, modernizers versus traditionalists, terrorists versus regimes, terrorists versus terrorists, and great powers versus great powers. You know, at the center of this is the most vicious and capable terrorist group I have ever seen.

My last 4 years in government, as the chairman alluded, were focused on the battle against Al Qaeda in the post-9/11 period. The battle against ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] will be harder because ISIL has at least six strengths that Al Qaeda never had. First, it has an ambitious strategy focused on establishing concentric circles of influence and operational activity well beyond its Syrian base. Second, it possesses territory extensive enough to credibly claim a caliphate. Third, it has money in the hundreds of millions of dollars that buys expertise, loyalty, weapons, training, and influence. Fourth, it has barely impeded access to the West by virtue of the 4,500 Western passport holders in its ranks. Fifth, a narrative far more powerful than Al Qaeda's, promising jobs, families, fellowship, and power to people to whom it appeals. Its recruiting emphasizes these things, not the brutality we see on television.

Finally, unlike Al Qaeda, it has won grudging acquiescence in many areas it controls by providing rudimentary public services. So any effort to form a counter-ISIL strategy and settle the Syrian conflict has to begin with an appreciation of the realities we face.

First, time matters. Timetables slip for offensives to reclaim Mosul or Ramadi or to train fighters. Meanwhile, 1,000 fighters a month join ISIL. Its roots grow deeper. Second, the interests of major powers have to be reconciled. A Syrian settlement is unlikely without some Russian, Iranian, and perhaps Saudi acquiescence or cooperation. Third, progress will be impossible without meeting the grievances of abused and alienated Sunni populations, which constitutes 70 percent of Syria, about 20 percent of Iraq.

Fourth, substantial territory must be reclaimed from ISIL to erode the image of invulnerability and its claim to a caliphate. And fifth, air power is important, but probably won't be enough.

So in light of those realities, what are the elements of a successful strategy? First, be clear about priorities. Trying to get rid of Assad and ISIL at the same time led us into what I would call a catch-22 cul-de-sac. Hurting one invariably helps the other. Time to say destroying ISIL comes first, and we will do the necessary to achieve that. Now, in making these recommendations, I want to be clear, I don't have access to the data and the capabilities of the Joint Staff. So many of the things I am about to say here are aspirational. They would need careful planning. And I don't minimize the difficulty.

But second, we can, more robustly, arm forces that have shown success against ISIL, such as the Kurds in Syria and Iraq. Third, increase the intensity of the air campaign and the number of U.S. special operators in theater, empowering them to go forward with trusted forces to advise and assist with targeting, something we did in the early days of the Afghan war. Fourth, move, finally, to establish a safe zone in Syria for fighters and refugees, as General Petraeus has suggested, defended by coalition aircraft with U.S. advisers present, and with a warning to Assad to stay out.

Fifth, and most challenging, lead in the formation of a multinational force that could bring the air and ground components of our strategy into better balance. And finally, in the Vienna talks on the political solution for Syria currently taking place among 19 nations, seek traction on what must be the single element of consensus among them that none can see benefit in having another failed state, another Libya, if you will, in the heart of the Middle East.

Finally, let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by saying it is impossible to overestimate the importance of vigorous engagement with Baghdad for a government more inclusive of Sunnis and all Iraqi elements. Otherwise, Iraq can neither survive as a unitary state nor field an effective fighting force. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McLaughlin can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir. Mr. Ambassador.

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR RYAN C. CROCKER, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ AND SYRIA

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee. It is a privilege to be before you today on issues of such great consequence. It has been a very grim 3 weeks. The downing of the Russian airliner, the bombings in Beirut, the horrific attacks in Paris, make it clear to all of us the enormous threat that the Islamic State poses. These attacks come against a backdrop of chaos and violence unprecedented in the modern history of the Middle East, which I date back to the end of World War I.

Three states have failed completely: Syria, Libya, and Yemen. I would argue that Iraq is very, very close. And with the failure of states, we have seen the rise of nonstate actors, most prominently Islamic State, but also Al Qaeda, Iranian-backed Shia militias in Iraq, and a host of others. The stability of the entire region is at risk, as are some core U.S. interests, the security of our friends in the region, including Israel, the flow of oil to our allies around the world, and our own security. As we saw so tragically in Paris and in Beirut, as my friend and former wingman Dave Petraeus said, what happens in the Middle East does not stay in the Middle East.

The emergence of Islamic State and other nonstate actors has its roots in an even larger problem, the pervasive failure of governance in the region. The history of the modern Middle East is a history of failed "isms": colonialism, monarchism, Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, communism, authoritarianism. We can hope Islamic State's twisted form of Islamism is the next to fail, but hope is a poor policy. John McLaughlin said something very important. Is-

lamic State gets this. They know it is not just about the bloody sword, it is about picking up the garbage. Wherever they move in, they attempt to establish services, a very brutal but predictable form of justice, and above all, to demonstrate that unlike the regimes that came before them in Syria and Iraq, they are not personally corrupt.

If you want to look for an indicator on the longevity of ISIS or Islamic State, look to how they govern in the areas they control. I say this to situate recent developments in a larger context, and to underscore how enormously complex these problems are. If there are any fixes at all, they will not be quick. There are things that we can and should do, I believe, short of deploying ground forces. I agree with John McLaughlin, we need to ramp up our air campaign significantly, to actually degrade Islamic State.

We need to go after their resources. We need to go after their money, as we did with Al Qaeda in Iraq when I was there. The targeting of their oil infrastructure, I think, is an important step in this direction. I have argued for some time that we need to establish no-fly zones, covering safe zones, as John McLaughlin and Dave Petraeus have both said. This is important as a humanitarian step to stop the wholesale slaughter by the Assad regime of Syria's own citizens. It is also important politically at two levels. First, it will weaken the Assad regime. It will not bring it down, but it will weaken it. And it might cause Assad and his backers, Syria and Russia—I am sorry, Iran and Russia, to recalculate and perhaps move them toward a negotiating posture that would actually make the only solution that is possible come into focus, which is a political settlement.

The second point for behind a no-fly zone is it would be a signal to the region, particularly to Syria's Sunnis, that all the bombs are not falling on Sunni heads, even if they are ISIS. So this is going to have to be a very carefully calculated process. We have got to fight a Sunni group that is fighting us. We also have to signal that we understand and are taking steps to protect a Sunni population from a regime that is killing so many of them.

Implicit in this is my belief that Russia and the Iranians are absolutely not our allies. Any perception of U.S. association with Russia or Iran in a fight against Islamic State is going to turn the Sunni world in Syria and outside of it even further against us. As John McLaughlin says, there is a broader conflict here, hot and somewhat a cold war. Iran and Saudi Arabia are the two principal protagonists: The Persians, the Shia; the Arabs and the Sunnis. Russia and Iran are squarely on one side of that divide. We have to be careful we are not perceived as joining them there.

I have argued for a substantial increase in Syrian refugee admission after thorough vetting. This blunts the Islamic State narrative that we are the enemies of Arabs and Muslims, and it increases our leverage with others who can do more, either on resettlement or financially. And it is a way, Congressman Smith, that I believe we can start to pull Arab and Muslim states more toward us, to have that serious conversation we so badly need to have about what the future of the area is as we look ahead.

A couple of other points. John Allen, one of the greatest officers, in my view, ever to wear a military uniform, is stepping down as

our envoy to the anti-ISIS coalition. I would urge that the next envoy be a Presidential envoy, not an envoy of the Secretary of State. If we want to say that we are serious about this, the weight of the White House needs to be behind our point person in this struggle. Dave Petraeus and I have argued that there are other steps that we can take. Move our military headquarters from Kuwait to Baghdad. If we are fighting a war, we need to be on the battlefield. And in terms of civil-military cooperation, as I saw with Dave Petraeus, Ray Odierno, and John Allen, when my military counterpart was just across the hall, it certainly made the necessary unity of effort and objective that much easier.

Mr. Chairman, the center of gravity for Islamic State is in Iraq. That is where it emerged, and that is where its key leaders are from. It grew in the sectarian canyons that were created as Iraqi Sunnis were increasingly alienated from the sectarian Shia government influenced by Iran. So John McLaughlin and I would, I think, agree completely, the primary focus of our efforts has to be political, and it has to be getting at some of these root issues of a sense of disenfranchisement and isolation of Sunnis within their own states. U.S. reengagement, at a sustained and high level, can make a difference in Iraq. I learned through two long hard years that different Iraqi factions cannot compromise among each other. They simply cannot because of the legacy of literal blood between them.

But what they can do is give us something that we can then take to another faction and leader and start to put together transactions that they all want, or many of them want, that they can't do on their own. We are the indispensable actor. We played that role during my time in Iraq, 2007 to 2009. I urge that we play it again. I am calling, therefore, not for the deployment of the 101st Airborne, but for the deployment of the Secretary of State to go out to Baghdad and to sit there for a week or 10 days, banging heads together, seeing what compromises can be forged. The Iranians are doing it all the time. We need to do it as well.

So U.S. leadership cannot solve the problems of the Middle East or anything close to it, but it can make a difference. Most crucially, it can make a difference in preserving Iraq and Syria as unitary states. I know this is an issue of concern to this committee. It is my view that de facto partitioning favors only Islamic State and Iran and its proxies. A division into a Kurdistan, a jihadistan controlled by Islamic State, and a Shiastan dominated by Iran in Iraq may be to the interests of those parties; it is not to the U.S. interests. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Crocker can be found in the Appendix on page 54.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Lots of interesting comments. I would like to follow up, but I will try to restrain myself to just a couple questions. I think everybody acknowledges that the military alone cannot solve the problem of Iraq, Syria, or ISIS. But I would appreciate it if each of you could briefly comment on the role you think military action could and should play. Mr. McLaughlin mentioned that time slippage is a factor. When we say we are going to do something, we don't take the town—or the town is not taken, then that reduces credibility. I know Dr. Kissinger, among others, have argued that ineffectual military action actually helps ISIS, be-

cause they are seen to withstand bombing, or whatever it is that we do, and it strengthens their prestige. So could each of you briefly comment on the role the military action, not just by us, but military action should play in this conflict?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, again, Mr. Chairman, with the caveat that I am not sitting in the Joint Chiefs, and therefore, don't have access to—basically, what I am trying to say is at the end of the day, any military action you plan is difficult, complicated, and has to be carefully thought through. With that caveat—so I don't want to seem breezy about this. With that caveat, I guess my thought is you cannot settle these problems militarily, but you cannot settle them without a significant military component, in my judgment. We are now at the point of weighing what should that component be? It may be that air power can do a lot of the job if it is precise, if it is effective. But it seems to me that the military piece of this is somewhat out of balance between air and ground. So I can't, without a lot of time and data, make an estimate of what numbers we are talking about here, or what the composition of a force should be. But even if, for example, you were to take through air power to destroy ISIL in one of these towns, let's say Mosul or Ramadi or Fallujah, someone still has to go into that town on the ground, and see what is there and take it over and organize it. And that could be Iraqis, but probably they can't do it themselves.

And in addition to that, you know, I just respect the judgment of a lot of military people who say, and it accords with my own instincts here, that at some point, you have got to meet these people on the ground with a larger force than we are currently meeting them. Now, the Kurds in the north, the YPG [Kurdish People's Protection Units] inside Syria, is doing very well with our assistance. The Iraqi Kurds, of course, have retaken Sinjar with our assistance. Those are good signs. I don't think they are enough. And I don't think that the pace of this campaign is such that time will permit us to go with a slow strangulation policy if there is a prospect of more attacks like we have seen in Paris, Turkey, Lebanon, and elsewhere, and particularly if they are intending to come here.

One final comment on this. Maybe at the center of the military component here is the effectiveness of Iraq's forces. I mean, the ambassador says, and I agree, that in many ways Iraq is the center of gravity here even though ISIL's headquarters are in Syria. But the Iraqi forces have to take back these towns, perhaps with our assistance. Unless there is a political reformation, if you will, in Iraq that convinces Sunnis they are part of this country, those Iraqi forces, to the extent they are effective, will be effective largely through Shiite militias, backed by and augmented by Iran.

So that is not a good outcome. Essentially, we are yielding this part of the Middle East to Iran, with bad consequences. So that is another military piece of this that happens to be very closely woven with the political part. So bottom line in all of this, military component is important. I think it needs to be increased in terms of ground forces. The intensity of the air campaign needs to be looked at. And the Iraqi piece of this needs to take priority, starting at the political level.

Ambassador CROCKER. I would agree with John McLaughlin that there is no military solution to this problem. However, military ac-

tion can establish conditions and a context that are more favorable to a political settlement eventually than the circumstances now. You know, that is the logic behind my suggestion that we ramp up the air campaign to significantly degrade ISIS. We can't defeat them from the air. But I do believe we can degrade them and should. And at the same time, degrading, if you will, the Assad regime's ability to murder its own citizens. The establishment of safe zones under a no-fly zone could do that. It could also bring buy-in at a level we haven't had before from both Turkey in the north, that has long advocated for this, and Jordan in the south. A safe zone would have to be secured. They would be the ones to secure it.

But we have to show we are serious. If we are prepared to say we will enforce the no-fly zone, then we can turn to them and say, and you have got to do your bit on the ground. And then we see where we are if we take those two steps. That could change the climate. It will certainly put us in a position to be better able to make the judgment about what other steps may be necessary than we are right now. So that is where I would start.

In Iraq, I cannot underscore the point strongly enough that this isn't about reclaiming territory from Islamic State so much as it is about seeing whether some basic political accords are possible that will make Iraqi Sunnis feel, once again, that they are part of this state and have a future in it.

I had a conversation with the speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, a Sunni. As his position indicates, he has bought into the new order in Iraq, unlike many other Sunnis. But he said that anyone who expects Iraqi Sunnis to stand against ISIS is first going to have to persuade them that life will be better under an Iraqi Government than it is under the Islamic State now. And given the sectarian nature of the Iraqi Government now, that is a hard case to make.

So that fundamental political dynamic has to change. It isn't going to happen by itself. It can only happen if the U.S. is directly engaged as a catalyst. Because right now, it isn't Iraqi Security Forces who are in the vanguard in many of these clashes, it is Shia militias. And for Iraqi Sunnis, that is the ultimate nightmare. And there is another issue, the Kurds. It is absolutely the case that they have fought hard and well in both northern Syria and in northern Iraq. But the Kurds are not the answer to a strategy to liberate Sunni Arab areas.

In many of those areas, the Kurds are viewed with just about as much suspicion as the sectarian Baghdad government is. So we have got to be very careful how far and where we go with the Kurds. So again, there are military steps we can take that can change the political context. I can see that more clearly in Syria. In Iraq, if we are going to significantly ramp up our effort, we have to look at what force is going to hold. Because if it is a force that is perceived by Sunnis to be Shia-dominated and Iran-oriented, we might be better off never having cleared it in the first place.

The CHAIRMAN. No one can speak with greater authority about the internal political dynamics of Iraq than you. Thank you. Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I have a couple other questions, but just following up on that point. The root cause of the problem here is we don't have a legitimate Sunni force in Syria or Iraq that—well, that exists, basically. You mentioned the problem with the Kurds, you mentioned the problem with the Iraqi Government. And when you are going to get into the Sunni portions of Syria and Iraq, you are going to need a legitimate Sunni force to hold it.

And you listed all the problems with the existing forces. I would merely submit that 10,000, 20,000, 30,000 U.S. troops down on the ground going into Ramadi or going into Fallujah or any of these towns doesn't change that dynamic. And as hard as it would be for a Shia militia to hold a Sunni town or a Kurdish-backed force to hold a Sunni town, I would submit it would be even harder for a Western force to hold a Muslim town. And that is the frustration that we find ourselves in. But leaping into that mess and simply making it worse at the cost of greater lives and more money is something I would be very, very cautious about doing.

Now, the struggle is, like I said, where are the Sunni—forget the word moderate, where are the anti-ISIL Sunnis who could actually hold? That is what we have got to find. That is where we have got to get to. That is not going to happen tomorrow or next month or even next year. That is going to take a lot of time. You were there for the Sunni Awakening, largely because of Al Qaeda's overstepping its bounds, and also, a lot of very, very good work by the Marine Corps in terms of building relationships with the tribes. I mean that is the kind of thing that needs to happen. A U.S.-led force is going to be no more welcome in these Muslim towns than the Kurds and the Shia, in my opinion.

Two issues I want to raise. One is on the refugee issue. And aren't we playing right into ISIS's hands by saying, you know, keep the refugees out, we don't trust them? When, in fact, I think what is interesting is if you look at what actually happened in Paris, there is not really any evidence that any of the people who perpetrated those attacks were refugees. It is fascinating they found this passport, which, by the way, there is a duplicate of that passport that was forged by somebody else someplace else. So it appears not even to be a legitimate passport. And also, you know, find it interesting that, you know, a suicide bomber would think to take his passport with him on the mission. It seems like a rather odd choice. And it seems likely that ISIS, which has been trying to drum up opposition to these refugees, could easily have planted it. And certainly it is to their benefit if we are seen as hostile to refugees. I know you have written about this, Ambassador Crocker. I have one other line of questioning. If you could quickly hit on that and how it affects this overall fight if we appear unwilling to accept Syrian refugees?

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Congressman. As I have stated on a number of occasions going back some time, I think it is important for the United States to be able to demonstrate to Sunni Muslims that this is not a confrontation between the West, led by us, and Sunni Islam. It is a confrontation between all of the civilized world, including the vast majority of Sunni Arabs, and a hateful terrorist group that has terrorized and killed far more Sunni Arabs than it has any other group. I think it is important

to stake that out to kind of defeat the persistent Islamic State narrative that this is the West, the Crusaders against the true faith. We need to take that away from them. This is an important way to do it. Now, nothing is more important than the security of our country.

Mr. SMITH. Absolutely.

Ambassador CROCKER. So this has to be done in a way that gives us confidence that anyone trying to get to this country for malign purposes can be screened out. There are no absolute guarantees.

Mr. SMITH. No. And there is no absolute guarantees if you forget refugees. People come to this country for any reason for that matter, I don't know if we screen them—or domestic. I mean, as I pointed out, in Paris, it was Belgian and French citizens, born there, who were radicalized who moved in this direction. So we have to be very, very diligent to protect our country, not just from refugees, but from, you know, gosh, our own citizens, or anybody who is here for any reason to make sure that they are not being radicalized.

That happens with regrettable frequency, and our jails are full of homegrown radicals that fortunately we were able to catch in most instances. I want to ask one other question about this whole debate about whether or not—about who we are fighting. And this came up during the Bush administration, actually, that there was a reluctance to use any Islam, Islamist, Islamic, anything that sort of gave our enemy the title of being affiliated with the Muslim religion. Because we do not, as you very articulately stated, want ISIS to be able to claim that they are defending the Muslim world against Western aggression. And that is the reason why both the Bush administration and the Obama administration have gone to great lengths to not give ISIS, to not say that they are Islamic terrorists or Islamic radicals or whatever, that they are violent extremists.

However, I think that looking at the broader issue, aside from just ISIS or Al Qaeda, the idea of whether or not we are at war with radical Islam, you know, there are a lot of Salafists and Wahhabis and others who right now don't support violence against the West or violence against anybody, but I still think their ideology is a big problem. And they wind up funding those people.

So how do we work with allies like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and others who have, at the same time, given sympathy to the very ideology that threatens us, even if the ideology they support tries and frequently fails to stop short of the violence element? How should we handle the issue of who we are fighting and whether or not we bring religion into it?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. To me, I think you can do this without bringing religion into it. I think the whole debate over what we label these people is overblown and gets in the way. I mean, we have all said it, it is absolutely true, Islam is not a violent religion. There is a portion of Islam that is perverted by these people and that works with social conditions that are conducive to recruiting alienated young people, end of story. It is the reality. We shouldn't really spend a lot of time on what we want to label it, it seems to me. It is a perverted sect of Islam that causes this, end of story. And we went through this at the time of 9/11, because prior to 9/11, we

had trouble getting the kind of cooperation that we wanted from, for example, Saudi Arabia. After 9/11, we still struggled with it. About 2003, there were compound bombings in Saudi Arabia and——

Mr. SMITH. Until it hit home——

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Until it hit home. But I must say, to give the Saudis their credit, once it hit home, at least at an official level in terms of our dealings with the government, people like Muhammad bin Nayef and others who were and still are in charge of counterterrorism, they swiveled, and they were good partners, very good partners. And they have since helped in a number of ways, including warning us on a couple of occasions. Recall the incident in which they warned us of a—according to the press—warned us of a bomb that was being placed on a FedEx plane and so forth.

So they are pretty good partners in this. But, you are absolutely right, we are all paying the price, and they are paying the price for policies that they and others followed years ago, which are having now unintended consequences. That is the reality of it.

Mr. SMITH. I want to let other people get in here. I will just say I don't believe that those policies have been completely abandoned by that part of the world. It is not a matter of years ago. I think they still are too, too open to a more radical interpretation of their religion that creates a larger problem. And that is something we need to work with our allies to confront. With that, I will yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Forbes.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding the hearing. Gentlemen, thank you for your service to our country and for being willing to help us today. The two phrases that I picked out that you indicated, one was that the U.S. was an indispensable actor, if I understood that correctly. And the second one was that Iraq was the center of gravity for ISIS. As we look at the realization that a military component cannot, in and of itself, settle this problem, we all know, and I think all of us have always known you need the political and the economic and diplomatic. But you have also indicated that you cannot settle it without a significant military component. So that we can make sure we have learned from our mistakes and don't commit them going forward, what was the impact of not having a significant military component in Iraq in terms of allowing the strengthening of ISIS?

Ambassador CROCKER. An important question, Congressman. In 2011, of course, we withdrew all of our military forces from Iraq. But in my view, that was not the most significant withdrawal. Really in 2011, we also pulled back from serious, sustained political engagement with Iraqi political leaders. You can argue we shouldn't have to do this, shouldn't be in the middle of somebody else's internal affairs, but it is a hard truth that the Iraqi political system will not function in any positive manner unless there is someone in the middle between and among the different factions.

So it wasn't the withdrawal of U.S. combat power that I think set us on such a grim road from 2011 until today, so much as it was a withdrawal of U.S. political engagement. And that is why I have urged, for some time, and I am sure Secretary Kerry wonders what he ever did to me, but I would like to see him out there,

backed up by the President, with a series of phone calls, not just to the prime minister, but to political leaders of every faction to try to get them to the point where they can pass, for example, national guard legislation, which has been stalled in parliament now for months. That would permit provinces to raise their own national guards, which would be paid and equipped by the central government, but much like our own National Guard system, would be under the authority of a provincial governor. That is how you get your hold force for places like Mosul and Ramadi. But it can only happen if the politics work. The politics manifestly will not work.

Mr. FORBES. Would it be unfair to say that it would be difficult to make the politics work, even had we had that kind of engagement, if we didn't have at least a significant military component to buttress that politics?

Ambassador CROCKER. It is very hard to know, sir. Yes, I argued for and would like to have seen a long-term military presence, precisely for the reasons I think you are suggesting, not so much for the combat power they would bring, but as an indication that we are serious about what goes on in Iraq, we have got our men and women in this game in harm's way. You better pay attention.

Mr. FORBES. Can you give us a snapshot of what 2011 looked like with ISIS then compared to today?

Ambassador CROCKER. I would have to go back 2 years further to 2009, because that was when I left Iraq. Through a sustained civil-military, multi-agency effort, we had beaten back Al Qaeda pretty soundly. But even with the surge, we couldn't quite eliminate them. There were little pockets in Mosul, up the river valley to the Syrian border. We could never quite get at it. Or if we did get it, they would recreate. And this was because, in spite of the progress that was made, lingering sectarian divisions in the country. Well, those divisions widened into canyons after 2011. And that is what we are dealing with today.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you both for being here. Good to see you, Mr. Ambassador. I wanted to follow up briefly with the discussion that you had earlier, because we know that the issue of refugees has also morphed into how we fight ISIS right now. And so, I wanted to—just speaking to the narrative if we were to move in a fairly strong push to push back refugees, whether it is seen as incremental by us, perhaps, but not necessarily interpreted that way elsewhere, how do you see that assisting ISIS, actually, if we were to do that?

Ambassador CROCKER. It reinforces their narrative that the Islamic State is the only force that will defend the faith and defend the believers in the faith, but that the West are the successors of the Crusaders, they are fundamentally the enemies of all right-thinking Muslims. So it is in that sense that I think it can feed that narrative. It was very interesting when Angela Merkel, when she was asked this, I think in September, when she took a public position basically saying refugees, Syrian refugees are welcome in Germany.

Well, my colleagues tell me that ISIS kind of got really spun up over that, and on their social media saying it is all a plot. They

don't mean it. They are just trying to lure you in so they can destroy you later once you have surrendered yourself to this Crusader government. It suggests that they saw that as a threat. So, you know, that would be my thought on this. Am I laying this out there as if we do, they will? No, I can't say that for certain. I think it is, though, an issue we should take into account as we consider this very serious problem.

Mrs. DAVIS. And Mr. Ambassador, you actually identified a fairly large number of refugees to make the point that, in fact, we are not turning our back on those who are fleeing ISIS. Where did you come up with that number? Why would that be something to propose?

Ambassador CROCKER. It is just that, it is a number. I sit on the board of Mercy Corps International. Mercy Corps, along with its companion organizations, you know, developed that number with no more science than I did, basically. A number big enough to say we are serious. You know, 100,000 would still be symbolic given the magnitude of these flows. I mean there are a million Syrian refugees in Lebanon right now, or over, in a country of 4 million people. So even if we went up to 100,000, in the face of the biggest refugee crisis since World War II, it is a gesture, but an important one. And it would establish us as being able to lead an international response to a global problem, which we are not doing now. We need to do it. This is not a European crisis, it is not a Middle Eastern crisis, it is a global crisis, and it is our crisis. We need to be in this fight as well as other ones, in my view.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. Mr. McLaughlin, do you concur generally with that point of view?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. I do. I do concur. I think the other message it sends that ISIS would not like is you are welcome here. ISIS would like you to think you are welcome only in their caliphate.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. One of the other issues that we grapple with is we are not very patient when it comes to strategies. And one of the things you also point out is overreacting, and how really counter that is to what we are actually trying to achieve. So I wonder if you could just speak to that very briefly. You mentioned several elements of that, a no-fly zone that could reshape the context more favorably, not necessarily from the air, but in other contexts. What do you think is the single most important thing that we could do that sort of helps people to understand it is a patient move, but it is also one that makes a difference?

Ambassador CROCKER. That is a great point, Congresswoman. In my long experience in the Middle East, I came to understand painfully that our allies, from Pakistan to North Africa, have come to fear our impatience. We are here today in a big way and we are gone tomorrow. And our adversaries have come to count on it. So it is a great way to frame it. What we really need to do is establish, in the eyes of allies and adversaries both, that we are engaged and we are engaged for the long term. These are our interests as well as the region's. We are going to be involved. We are not going to throw up our hands and go home.

So that needs to be—in any step we take going forward, that has to be the message we articulate, that this is part of U.S. engagement in the region for the long term. And we need to do that, obvi-

ously, in concert with regional powers and with our allies around the world.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Director McLaughlin, thank you for being here. Ambassador Crocker, thank you. And I have had the extraordinary opportunity to visit, Ambassador Crocker, you in Baghdad, also in Kabul, and to visit with you around the Middle East. And every time I have been there, I have seen your great appreciation of the citizens of those countries. In particular, I was there for the earthquake relief in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan. It is very clear that you are representing American interests, but it is on behalf of the people in the countries that you were serving in. I also share very much the point that you just made, and that is, that we need to have a consistency, we need to have a long-term approach. And that is why there are two quotes that come to mind to me that the American people need to know. And that is that President Bush, on July 12, George W. Bush, on July 12, 2007, quote, "To begin withdrawing before our commanders tell us that we are ready would be dangerous for Iraq, for the region, and for the United States. It would mean surrendering the future of Iraq to Al Qaeda. It would mean we would be risking mass killings on a horrific scale. It would mean we would allow the terrorists to establish a safe haven in Iraq to replace the one they lost in Afghanistan," end of quote.

And then President Barack Obama on December 14, 2011, he claimed and announced, quote, "Everything that American troops have done in Iraq, all the fighting and all the dying, the bleeding and the building, and the training and the partnering, all of this has led to this moment of success. We are leaving behind a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq," end of quote.

It bothers me that there is simply not—that proves your point of a lack of consistency. In line with that, what do you see the political difficulties in Iraq of Prime Minister Abadi, what he is facing? And what role does the former Prime Minister Maliki play in progress, or lack of progress, in the country?

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Congressman. Yes, we recall we first met a decade ago in Islamabad, and then later in Kabul and in Baghdad. You go to only the best places.

Mr. WILSON. You are the great public servant. Thank you.

Ambassador CROCKER. I believe that Prime Minister Abadi, who came to office at the height of the Islamic State storm into Iraq, understands what needs to be done and wants to do it, wants to take the steps that will bring the Sunni community into Iraqi society and the Iraqi state. But he is in a dangerously weak position. The rise of the extremist Shia militias, and these are, if anything, as evil as Islamic State. They are commanded in two cases by individuals who kidnapped and murdered U.S. service members in Iraq. They just didn't do a video of it. They are now in command positions.

Does Prime Minister Abadi like it? Absolutely not. Can he do anything about it? No, he really can't. Again, which is why I think our engagement is so important. The Iranians are running the show right now for all major purposes in Iraq. They do not have

a stable unitary Iraq as their goal. They have the opposite. They would like to see its permanent division, because that would give them the ultimate victory in the Iran-Iraq war that eluded them in 1988. ISIS is not the strategic threat to Iran in Iranian eyes, it is Iraq. Because Iraq almost overran them in 1980. And a vicious ground war took up the next 8 years. So they want a divided Iraq. That is in their interest. It isn't in ours. Prime Minister Abadi is not in a position to push back against them. Our sustained engagement might make a difference.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much. And my time is up. Director McLaughlin, you had indicated, too, about including the Sunnis in the regime. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate very much the thoughtful testimony you are both giving today. And to think over and over again you reinforce the complexity of the challenge that we face. But we all know that, bottom line, we do have a fundamental obligation in this very complex environment to best protect our country and be sure that we keep this country and our people safe. And given the dynamics of the Middle East, it does raise a lot of questions. I appreciate, Ambassador Crocker, that you have a lot of confidence in our Secretary Kerry, that in your testimony, you have suggested that he should become more engaged in Baghdad, that we as a country, through him, have an important role to play in bridging some of the divides between the different elements of the fight. But much of his attention is now turned to Russia. And I am curious as to your thoughts, both of your thoughts, really, as to whether or not Russia is changing its calculations at all given the downing of their jet and their seeming openness, at least through Mr. Lavrov, to engage in some way with Secretary Kerry, what you see as the possibilities there.

You suggested, I think, Ambassador Crocker, we have to be very wary that what they seek is something quite different. But I would be curious as to your thoughts. Is there a diplomatic option here, at least in the context of Syria, that at least might slow the outflow and the humanitarian crisis that we are witnessing?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, one thing I learned about Russia over my career is, the Russians will follow their own interests. So we always have to ask what are their interests in all of this? They approach this rather rationally and unemotionally.

And in this case, I think Putin got involved in the Middle East for a number of very hardheaded reasons. One, he wanted to show the world that Russia is still a great power. Two, he has accomplished one of his goals, I think, which is to distract us somewhat from Ukraine. It would be very hard now to really muster a consensus on Ukraine in the aftermath of what we are seeing. Number three—here is an interesting point—he actually has, in some ways, as big a problem with ISIL as we do, maybe bigger.

The head of the Russian security service, their internal service, FSB, said that there are about 2,400 Russians fighting with ISIS. Most of them probably come from the part of Russia called the Caucasus, places like Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria, and so forth. And we saw a couple of people socialized in that environment show up at the Boston bombing, if you recall.

So he has to worry that people fighting for ISIS in Syria will go back to a part of Russia where he, in his early days, fought a war to keep Chechnya within the Russian Federation. So that is another interest he has.

Now, whether this inclines him to be our partner in all of this is hard to gauge, but I think—here is the way I would think about it—maybe Ambassador Crocker and I may differ a little on this—I think that we may have to work with him, if he is willing, in a limited sense, limited time-wise and issue-wise, in much the way that—because this is the Middle East. Nothing works like this. It is always like this. It is always a little crooked, a little off base.

So in this case, we should have no illusions that we are making an alliance with him, or anything like that, but if we can find a way to gain Russian cooperation without sacrificing too much of our own interests, I don't see that that is counterproductive. And in my testimony, I said, I think it is going to be hard to get a political solution in Syria without Russian acquiescence or cooperation. Just because they——

Ms. TSONGAS. I want to give Ambassador Crocker just a moment. I am about out of time, but I appreciate your comments thus far.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, I will just wrap it up by saying that, that the Russians have sufficient influence in Syria; that unless we find a way independently, or through other means to destroy Assad, where we don't have to deal with that factor anymore, the factor of a Syrian Government that has to be somehow brought to the table and managed through a transition, Russia is going to have some sort of voice in that, which, of course, is another interest of his, another reason why he went into Syria to make sure that he didn't lose his base at Tartus and the land installation he has at Latakia.

So that is my general perspective on this, which is proceed with caution, but get what you can in terms of interests.

Ms. TSONGAS. I am sorry, Ambassador Crocker, we won't be able to hear you.

The CHAIRMAN. I bet we will come back around to that question because it is a very important issue in solving all this.

Mr. Turner.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. McLaughlin, Ambassador Crocker, thank you for being here.

Ambassador Crocker, I appreciated your briefings that I, too, received in Iraq when you were there, and I appreciated your dedication. Your written statement is incredibly helpful. I mean, there are three things that I think are points that need to be emphasized: And one is that when you left Iraq in 2009, that you could never have imagined how it looks today, even in your worst nightmares; and two, you state further on in that paragraph, on page 2, "Withdrawal of our forces and a virtual end to sustained political engagement in Iraq after 2010 did not end the war. It simply left the field to our enemies."

And then you end that paragraph with, "This is an unacceptable threat to the United States national security." I think that is why everyone is so concerned is because of the clarity of that this is, in fact, an unacceptable threat to our national security.

Now, there are three things that we could debate that I think would be meaningless debates, and one of which is whether or not we use the word "Islamic" extremists or "Islamic" terrorists. I think ISIS and ISIL resolves that for us. The "I" in ISIS and ISIL is Islamic.

The debate on the issue of refugees should really be a debate about the fact that the failure of our policies has resulted in these refugees because they are not safe at home. It is not the issue of our compassion to those that flee the Syrian regime and flee ISIS, because neither of them have compassion for them and are trying to kill them. The issue is how do we have compassion for them to provide safety in the area of Syria and Iraq and stability where they can stay at home.

And another debate I think that is meaningless is the issue of boots on the ground or not on the ground, because that somehow has become a threshold litmus test of whether or not you have a correct policy. The correct policy is having a policy and a strategy for defeating ISIS and ISIL.

And so I am going to turn to you and your great expertise, in the time that you spent in Iraq. I appreciate the comments that you have made. But in order to determine boots on the ground or not boots on the ground, we have to have a strategy. You certainly indicated it is going to take diplomacy. I agree. I think Secretary Kerry should go and do as you have said and dedicate himself to this.

But there does have to be a military component. And what are some of the elements that you would see, sir, in that military strategy? Because I think there is great frustration in the American public as we hear that there are attacks now happening to ISIS and ISIL training camps, that we have known where they are, but no one is attacking them. Logistic supply lines, sales of oil, other, you know, operations of ISIS and ISIL are going without challenge.

So clearly, the strategy that we are doing is not working, and is threatening our national security. What are just some of the basic elements that we are not doing that you believe should be that overall military strategy as policy elements? Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Congressman.

The two that I think are important for us to do and do swiftly is, first, amp up significantly the air campaign against Islamic State. Paris changed a lot of things, and I think it should certainly change how we look at a target list. Let's look at it again. If there are key facilities for Islamic State that we have identified, we need to go nail them. And, again, money counts.

I hope that we are significantly ramping up an effort to figure out how they are making it and cut it off, whether that is politically or militarily inside Iraq or inside Syria. They are making a lot of money out of oil. Well, they have got to move the oil somehow. We should be able to figure out how and just absolutely stop it.

The second thing, as I suggested, is the establishment of no-fly and safe zones. And I don't mean to be glib about this. I mean, there is risk associated with that. There is cost associated with it. I am in the enviable position for the first time before this com-

mittee where I am not responsible for anything, but you are. So these are thoughts.

But I think that the establishment of no-fly and safe zones could bring in our Arab and—or Jordanian and Turkish partners in a way they are not engaged now, including with the possibility of a ground component. It could set the Russians back, getting at the Congresswoman's question. It would be fundamentally a military step, but it would have political significance.

Both of these together could then change the political environment we are looking at now that might make a political approach that is hard to imagine imaginable.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Walz.

Mr. WALZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both again. You have been incredibly helpful.

I think, I find the need to do this, if we are quoting quotes about what happened to set our policy going forward, I just want to remind people of two. March 16, 2002, from Vice President Cheney: Things have gotten so bad in Iraq from the standpoint of the Iraqi people, we will be greeted as liberators; I think we will go relatively quickly. Weeks rather than months, he predicted, significant elements of the Republican Guard will step aside.

Later, June 20, 2005: The insurgency in Iraq is in the last throes; this will be over during the Bush Presidency.

Certainly mistakes have been made. Certainly things have been quoted. If we are using these things, we better learn from what was said as we are going forward. And I appreciate both of you for your thoughtfulness on that. You have always been there. You are giving us great testimonies today. With that, I think, as Members of Congress, it is important to keep that in mind.

Ambassador Crocker, my question to you is, are we synchronizing with State Department in all of these elements as we deal with, look at Syria, look at Iraq, as you are talking about? Because I keep hearing here, and you hear it in this disjointed silo talk of military action and everything else. In your experience, do you see a synchronized plan, if you will?

Ambassador CROCKER. I certainly think this would be the time to develop one. One thing that Dave Petraeus and I did—we were sort of working on this before either of us ever got to Iraq—was to establish a joint civil-military team to begin framing a joint campaign plan. We developed it. It was blessed by the White House, and it was the plan for the whole of government, all the civilian agencies, DOD, and the military. It was, again, our joint campaign plan.

And I think the circumstances now, even less favorable and more complex, badly call out for that kind of broad strategy and a unified strategy. In our system, the only way you get there is for the White House, the President to say, this is what we are going to have. Go out and do it. And I certainly think this is the moment to do that.

Mr. WALZ. Well, I agree, and I think, in candor, that is a fair criticism. Because I am trying to understand, one, as you said,

what the strategy is, and how that nests in the broader strategy of national security from the 50,000-foot view, if you will.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. If I could add a point to what the ambassador said, with which I completely agree, when we talk about military component here, and in my testimony, I do, as the ambassador does, recommend some amping up of a number of things. And I would underline, I think, that maybe the safe zone would be—to answer another question that came here—maybe the most dramatic and consequential thing that could be done, because it would be visible, it would be different, it would require leadership, it would require risk, it would require coalition activity, and it would grab the attention of the region, and it would send a good message to Sunnis.

That said, when we talk about military action, going to your point, Congressman, I think we always have to remember to ask the question, what comes next? So you have got to go through phase one, phase two, phase three, and the important phase, phase four.

What happens when we do amp up our military and we go in and we—through one means or another, hard to calibrate here—manage to get Mosul back or Ramadi or Fallujah and break down Raqqah, what is our plan then? Who goes in? What is the governance structure that we contemplate? Who is in charge of it? What is our role in bringing it about?

So I just urge everyone, even though the two of us seem to favor a greater military component, that we all need to step back and say, and then what?

Mr. WALZ. Would it be both your hopes that as Members of Congress, we should all be able to articulate that fairly clearly what that would be? Does it trouble you that you do not hear that or you see, again, in the midst of all this, and it is certainly rightful to be concerned, but as the refugee crisis dominates the discussion as opposed to the root cause of the refugee crisis?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, we are in the early days of recalibrating our thinking about this, I believe, as a result of Paris. And as I said to the chairman just before we began, this feels a lot like post-9/11 to me in terms of the barrage of conflicting reports we are getting from the media, and in terms of the emotions we have about it and the frustration we feel.

So even though we feel a greater sense of urgency and should—and should—I am the one who said time matters—we need to do it with all due deliberation.

Mr. WALZ. I appreciate that. And I think it goes to my point I started with. We need to make sure we don't go blindly, because we do have the advantage of past both successes and failures.

Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Walorski.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. I appreciate it. And I appreciate your expertise.

I just kind of want to follow up on the last couple of questions. On the issue of taking your expertise and being able to look at this, kind of, from all the expertise you have and looking at it from the outside and saying, you know, here is what really needs to be hap-

pening, but in real time, in this culture and this country and what is happening.

And what is happening right here today in other committees that are meeting, talking about what do we do with refugees, talking about the difference between what we are all saying and what we should be saying and some of the benefits about what you are talking about with refugees and how we look then at all these things being projected back.

What is the role of the President? Because he is saying things too. So he is saying, you know, earlier on, these are JV folks. He is saying, we have contained these people as early as the morning of the attack on Paris. What kind of role does that play? How does that play back to ISIL when there is a disconnect to the American people? They are watching it. Every night we are watching it with them.

The President is here. We are here. Governors are saying no. Federal law, the President says—overrides anything that—and you have Americans all over the place, and they are hearing a mixed message from all of us. What does that say? What kind of signal does that send?

Ambassador CROCKER. Okay. That is a great point, and it weaves in some of the other questions and things we have been talking about. We are, of course, a Presidential system.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Correct.

Ambassador CROCKER. Policies are set at one end of Pennsylvania Avenue, and they are resourced at this end. Our post-9/11 moment, if you will, that you had described, is actually, this time around, maybe a pre-9/11 moment, where we now have the opportunity, as we look at what happened in Paris, and look at what could happen here, to say it is a new day. We are going to move together in developing and implementing a coordinated policy that is truly whole of government, and that involves consultations, meaningful consultations with Congress, and we are going to do it quickly. Now, that has to be a Presidential initiative.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Correct. And let me just throw one wrinkle in this. Because when we are talking about real time, real issues, real problems that we deal with right now—I just talked to some of my folks that just deployed. They were there for 6 months in Iraq, came back, and I was just with them last week. And after the doors were shut, and I said, what is really going on? Because we are hearing horror stories sitting on HASC [House Armed Services Committee].

And the rules of engagement keeps coming up. So I talked to fliers, that when it came to trying to engage on a convoy of American trucks that were left behind when the Iraqis fled their positions, heavy artillery, convoy of ISIL soldiers with artillery in the back, the beat is on, they ask if they can engage, and the decision came back no. And it does not seem to be just the folks I have talked to.

We have had hearings here on the issue of rules of engagement. If the rules of engagement aren't lined up with what you are talking about in potentially a pre-9/11 event, where else do you start and what else can you do if, you know, we are hearing one thing from people on the ground and the message from the White House

seems to be something entirely different, or the message even from Secretary Kerry? What do you do with a great divide in between?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think that we realize that Friday the 13th changed the world, and it needs to change how we think, organize, and act. Let's look at all of it. What are we doing? What are the ROE [rules of engagement]? Do they make sense anymore? Are they going to allow us to degrade Islamic State to the point where, like Al Qaeda in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area, they really don't have the bandwidth to plan complex organizations. How do we get there? This needs to happen. It needs to happen on a whole-of-government basis, and it needs to happen now.

Mrs. WALORSKI. I appreciate it.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Crocker, I want to ask two big questions, and I am going to try to give you 4 minutes to answer. And you can even point me in the right direction if there is not enough time. But to follow up on something the ranking member said, you made a really compelling case about how we need to reverse gains that Iran has made in Iraq, and roll back their hegemony there, and we can't act on that quickly enough.

But within the context of the Iran-Saudi Arabia cold war that was described earlier, it is hard to see how Saudi Arabia is a much better friend than Iran. Their successful exportation of Salafism, Wahhabism, the funding that continues to this day, the mess that they have helped to create in Iraq, in Syria, the fact that they may have a comparable number of beheadings in Saudi Arabia, comparable to ISIS, and the fact that they aren't really accepting refugees, how do we use our influence with Saudi Arabia? What leverage do we have to get them to be a better actor?

And then the other question, with 3 minutes and 30 seconds left is, can you outline at 30,000 feet a comprehensive strategy for the region so that we are not picking one or the other battle, and really addressing things comprehensively? You mentioned the modern area is 100 years. What is the 100-year look at this? Sorry for the short time to respond.

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir. On Saudi Arabia, yes, we have a lot of significant differences with the Saudis that, you know, John McLaughlin has alluded to. At the same time, the U.S.-Saudi relationship has been a pillar of U.S. policy and engagement in the Middle East since the end of World War II. I mean, our policies and our engagement were set on the deck of the USS *Quincy* in Great Bitter Lake in early 1945, the historic meeting between President Roosevelt and Ibn Saud.

So before we kick the prop out from under that keystone, we better really think about it. And think, as you said so well, you know, that when the Saudis finally got engaged, circa 2003, they did a pretty good job cleaning house. We need to build on that.

There is a fundamental issue there, no pun intended, of Salafism, because if you look at the theology of Islamic State, it goes back to the same primary source of Ibn Taymiyya, who is the primary theological source for Saudi Salafism, as it is for Islamic State jihadism. So there are some very tricky issues here. But I think we

have got to be careful with that relationship, particularly at the current time.

The overarching U.S. strategy, I would say, it is the security and the stability of the states in the region, broadly speaking, certainly those who have been close to us. They are facing unprecedented threats. Let's look at it across the board. Who needs what from us?

Lebanon, a country that I spent 6 long, hard years in, including during the Beirut Embassy bombing that I survived, they are facing an existential threat through the refugee flows. You know, one out of five people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. What do they need to ensure their own stability? What does Jordan need? What do the Kurds need? Under the overarching construct that a stable Middle East is a vital U.S. interest, and that it has a lot of components, so that is where I would start.

It raises issues of economic development, of military cooperation. There are a lot of pieces out there. This is the time to knit it into a whole. And the construct I would offer is just that, what is necessary for the security and the stability of the region and of our friends in it. This is an Arab-Israeli discussion. It is an Arab-Kurdish discussion. It is a critical American discussion.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I am struck by the need for strategic thinking, now as much as we ever have needed it.

Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank Mr. McLaughlin, Ambassador Crocker. Thanks so much for joining us.

I wanted to pose a question to both of you as we look at this pretty complex situation. I want to point to two individuals that I think have pretty good perspective on there. They spoke at the Reagan National Defense Forum. And former Under Secretary of Defense Policy Michèle Flournoy argued to make sure we are putting opportunities and solutions in our hands so that we can influence the outcome of any political negotiations, and make sure that we are mindful of all the different pieces of how this fits together.

And Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates argued in a Wall Street Journal article saying that we must create a better military balance of power on the ground if we are to seek a political solution acceptable to us and to our allies. And as you know, with Russia being in there, they seek to influence a political balance there, I think, to try to force a choice: It is either Assad or ISIL, obviously now with the other forces in the region, both with Iran trying to play in that arena and others.

Give us your perspective on how that balance ultimately plays out. What can we do to best predominate in the outcome of what will happen, and we will make an assumption that we do, indeed, defeat and destroy ISIS and that we are left now with what happens in that power vacuum. Give us your perspective on what we should do to make sure the outcomes are different than what has happened in Iraq?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, I think we need to be seen and to be the leader. There is a struggle for leadership going on here, and I think we are two or three beats behind. Just over the last number of

years, it has just worked that way. And there was a time when the U.S. was the power broker and honest broker in the Middle East.

A lot of what Ambassador Crocker is talking about in Baghdad amounts to what I would call the "Honest Broker" rule, the one that everyone can come to in a region that is very, very divided. We have succeeded in the past when we have forcefully seized that role. That is the first thing we need to do.

The second thing we need to do—we have talked about the military component. I think, you know, we agree we need to do more and we need to be seen as the ones organizing that more and bringing others along with a concept of what we are going to do and where it is going to end, what is the exit—not exit. "Exit" is a bad word—what it is going to evolve into. Because I don't think exit is what we want to do in the Middle East.

Finally—and I am going to stop and let Ambassador Crocker have the time here—finally, I think on Assad and the choice that Russia is trying to set up, I think clearly they were trying to set that up, and perhaps they still are, although their calculations are changing a bit, now that they have had a plane taken down. That is not going over well in Russia.

Mr. WITTMAN. Yeah.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. And I think—I cannot prove this to you—but I think Putin went in there with the understanding, at some level, that Assad cannot rule this country again, the Syria we have known. He might have been able to help Assad shrink it down to a small patch that he owns, and I think—in the councils being discussed in Russia, people must sit around and say, our goal is not to preserve this person.

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Our goal is to make sure that when the system changes, we are calling a lot of the shots on who is in. So I think he is not wedded to this individual. Now, we have got to find a way to get into that——

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN [continuing]. Wedge and call the shots.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good.

Ambassador Crocker.

Ambassador CROCKER. I think that is important. I believe that military actions along the lines I outlined—air strikes to weaken Islamic State, no-fly and safe zones to weaken Assad, and kind of shift the dynamics, which now favor Iran, Russia, and Assad—need to use military action to shift those parameters.

Yes, the Russians are going to have to be part of any agreement. I would rather us go into the process of trying to make one on terms that are less favorable to them, more favorable to us, and I think we can do that.

And I find—for once in my life, I find you irrationally optimistic. I never thought I would say that about this great American hero. But I would like to believe this about Russia that they are—in the wake of the airliner, that they are changing their position. I will believe it when I see it.

I noticed that the air strikes that they launched against ISIS targets, they said in one case, and we hit ISIS targets yesterday, the day before, near Idlib in the west. ISIS is nowhere near Idlib. They

hit the Free Syrian Army, again, in Ararashem. Again, groups we support.

Mr. WITTMAN. Sure. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. So as not to seem like Pollyanna here, to disappoint the ambassador, I would just rephrase it a little bit to say I think Russia may be recalculating its interests here, not really changing its desires.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Ashford.

Mr. ASHFORD. Thank you.

And thank you for being here and thank you for everything you have done. This truly is an incredible afternoon for me. And I am new, but I did, in February, did go to the Middle East, and we did speak with many of the leaders you have talked about. And clearly, what was talked about then is what, to some extent, what you are talking about now.

I mean, the national guard issue was very compelling. We talked to the minister of defense who said this is a way for us to get national buy-in to what we are trying to do by having the national guard form up in each one of the provinces.

And then, also, King Abdullah talking about the idea of safe zones in the desert, outside of the cities that could be developed. And none of that seems to have occurred during that 7 or 8 months. And there are other things that were talked about as well.

I just have two basic, general questions. One is, when we talk about containment versus another strategy that is not containment. I have been thinking about this when we use the word "containment," is there even a possibility of a containment strategy in the Middle East? It is so dynamic and changing so quickly. Both of you, maybe that is a very simple question, but I don't see how you can contain something that is changing, especially when you have an ISIS, an organization that can do what it did in Paris?

So, Ambassador.

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you. And I would just say very quickly, I am very pleased that you went out in February. I know what your lives and your schedules are like. I have seen members of this committee in hard places. I just can't underscore strongly enough how important CODELS [congressional delegations] to this troubled region are in ensuring that America has, through its elected representatives, has an understanding of what the realities are. So I hope you will continue to visit.

Yeah. Again, as Dave Petraeus and I have said, what happens in the Middle East doesn't stay in the Middle East. And that has always been true. I was a political counselor in Beirut after the embassy bombing when George Shultz came out as Secretary of State and he said he wished he could just build a 10-mile-high wall around Lebanon. And whatever happens inside it happens, but it doesn't happen to us. Well, you couldn't do it then and you can't do it now.

So you can't contain Islamic State any more than you could contain Al Qaeda. You have got to go after them wherever they are. Again, I do not believe you can defeat or eliminate Islamic State

by air power, but I think we can certainly mess them up enough that it is going to be pretty darn difficult for them to get the bandwidth to plan a complex attack.

So I don't see containment as at all a viable option, and very dangerous to even talk about it. I don't see defeat in the cards anytime soon. But, boy, we should be getting after degrade in a very major way.

Mr. ASHFORD. Sir.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. I think "containment" is a bad term to use with this group. The philosophy that I have always believed in when it comes to defeating a terrorist group has three parts: First, you have to destroy the leadership; second, you have to deny it safe haven; and third, you have to change the conditions that gave rise to the problem.

Okay, with Al Qaeda, we did the first two pretty well. The third, that is a bigger whole-of-government, long-term issue changing the conditions that give rise to this. With ISIS, we haven't destroyed the leadership, they have a safe haven, and the conditions are all in flames. So the idea of containing something that explosive doesn't seem like the right idea.

I am not sure what containment even means. Seems to me, if you bottle these people up, they are still going to keep coming to Paris, Brussels, Turkey, perhaps here.

Mr. ASHFORD. And I think that is what we saw when we were there was that containment can't possibly work. Everyone that we talked to said that very thing.

And then, I don't have much time left, but the other question that always comes to mind when the French talked about we are at war with the Islamic State, is that where we are? Is that the word? Is that the proper terminology? Very briefly. I don't have much time left. Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, that along with some of the other things we have talked about, can be a pretty fruitless linguistic endeavor. We have talked about, you know, is it Islamic terrorism? To me, that is an absolute no-brainer. Islamic State named itself, and it has got a theology. Same thing, war on terror. To me, it doesn't matter what you call it. You just——

Mr. ASHFORD. It is what it is.

Ambassador CROCKER. You just have to do it.

Mr. ASHFORD. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Nugent.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I appreciate your candid remarks.

When I visited Iraq in 2011 at the drawdown, and when we exited Iraq, I had two sons over there serving in the United States Army. And it was interesting their take in regards to what occurred just recently with ISIS, and what occurred within Baghdad, and particularly what, Mr. Ambassador, you had mentioned, the fact that we not only left—took our military out that gave, I think, some backbone, at least had some conversations with the Iraqi military, because my sons did some train-up with the Iraqis.

And there was some brigades that were outstanding combat units, and there were others that were terribly lacking. But then when we pulled out the political engagement, it just seems like

that was a huge mistake that compounded it because we didn't have troops there to back up, or at least on a training end of it, assist the Iraqis.

I mean, we saw that starting to occur, I think, in Afghanistan. The President has since changed that. And I think you hit on this—and I will get to a question here in a second, but, Mr. Ambassador, I believe that a question was asked whether or not we have a strategy today to both of you.

Do you see us having a coherent strategy today from the President to outlining, A, what we expect to accomplish; and then B, how we are going to accomplish that? Do you see a strategy today that is articulable that we are having a hard time with? Do you see that today with the President?

Ambassador CROCKER. I would be just blunt: No, I don't see a comprehensive strategy. And what I was trying to get at in response to Congressman O'Rourke's very good question, you know, maybe it was okay—I don't think it was, but maybe it was—before November 13; it is definitely not okay today. We need that strategy, and the President has to set the course.

Mr. NUGENT. And I think that is where we struggle is that the President does have to set that course as Commander in Chief. And particularly, I think where you are seeing all this blowback now in regards to the Syrian refugees, you are seeing—now the Governor, I think, from Maryland just said they don't want them—is because I think that—maybe this is just my feeble brain saying this—is that if we had had a strategy, it might make it more palatable to the American people as to what our strategy is, what we expect it to look like in regards to accepting those Syrian refugees.

Because I hear what you are saying, is that if we absolutely say no, you know, we are going to create some other problems off in the future, whatever. But the American people are going, you know, we don't want them here just because we see no leadership. And they are concerned about—and I heard you talk about thorough vetting of the Syrian refugees.

Now, we sat here when we were talking about the Free Syrian Army and how they are going to train them up and how are they going to vet those folks, and we are going to have to rely upon Saudi Arabia as a vetting process, because we didn't really have the ability to vet within Syria.

So I think, how do we do that? I mean, how do you assure the American people that there is truly—not just words, because the President does a great job with that—but truly believe that they are going to be safe with those that we allow in? And I don't have a problem with refugees. I mean, that is not my issue. But it is how do you make America safer, and how do you convince the American people that you are going to do that?

Ambassador CROCKER. I would agree, sir, that the refugee issue has to be woven into a larger whole, and I tried to get at that a bit, saying this step on refugees that gives us leverage with other countries for them to do more to engage them more directly and meaningfully on the broader problem, to establish safe zones, north and south in Syria, so——

Mr. NUGENT. And I think you brought up some good ideas on no-fly zone. But I think the difference is in Syria, it would be, I think

would be difficult for us just because of the ability for the Assad regime if they saw that as a move to take them out by doing the safe zone. With their ability to strike our aircraft, I would just think that we are going to—we are going to ramp up what this looks like. And now that you have Russia flying there, I just don't know how—maybe we could have done that earlier, but I don't know how that works today.

Ambassador CROCKER. Again, part of that larger linked comprehensive discussion. Safe zones, no-fly zones, are linked to the refugee issue, are linked to a weakening, not elimination of Assad, are linked to a degrading of ISIS, are linked to a political push in Iraq. It all has to be sewn together, and that is what I hope we are doing right now.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate that.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Moulton.

Mr. MOULTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, both, for joining us here today.

Ambassador, I was a special assistant to General Petraeus when you were serving in Iraq. And although I was actually out in the field, I reported directly to him, and I can't tell you what a difference it made, the confidence that you and he brought to the troops on the ground with your leadership. So thank you especially for that.

I share your view that the center of gravity here is Iraq with the Islamic State. That is where they were able to dramatically expand their territory and influence. And I also share your view that it is our political withdrawal from the Iraqi Government that essentially set the conditions for them to expand.

I would like to hear from both of you, how, at this point, we should reestablish control or influence in the Iraqi Government?

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, it is a whole lot harder to regain influence once you have lost it than to maintain it when you have got it, but we must make this effort, in my view. And I have given you my initial thought on this: To show we are serious, you send America's top diplomat. And it is not an overnighter. I mean, it is days.

Mr. MOULTON. And I assume we would have to put advisers back into the ministries, back into the prime minister's office as well?

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, we would have to look at that. I think that was important, but maybe not critical. The critical element was the heavy political lift.

I will just give you one example, and it gets at Congressman Nugent's question, what happened to the Iraqi military when we completely disengaged? Well, General Petraeus and I faced this when we were there. Nouri al-Maliki had one criterion for his top field commanders. It wasn't competence. It wasn't battle experience. It was loyalty, could he be absolutely certain that they would not take their division, make a sharp, right turn and overthrow his government?

Mr. MOULTON. Right.

Ambassador CROCKER. So he would put in some pretty awful people or try to. But because we had advisers out there and were on it, we could go in and say, prime minister, not a good idea, here is why. When we stopped doing that, he made all of those appoint-

ments. And the Iraqi army turned into the force that just cut and ran as soon as Islamic State showed up because they had no leadership, because the prime minister, for understandable reasons, in his view, prized loyalty above all, and there was no American counterweight. That is what we have to bring back.

Mr. MOULTON. Mr. McLaughlin, do you have anything to add to that?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. I would just think that—no, I think Ambassador Crocker has authority on this by virtue of his time there and his success and his experience.

The main point I would underline that he made, which I have seen time and time again is, it is much harder to get that influence back than to keep it when you have it. Now, however, I will just elaborate a bit by saying, if we don't get it back—as I say in my testimony, if we don't get it back, the consequences are Iraq will not survive as a unitary state, nor will they ever have an effective fighting force, which, in turn, means that Iran will own this problem.

Mr. MOULTON. Let me propose a very radical idea, and I have to confess, I haven't given this much thought myself. But would there be any virtue to saying, Russia, you take Syria; we will take Iraq?

Ambassador CROCKER. Sir, could you sit under a tree until that thought passes. It would be delivering the Sunni majority of Syrians into the hands of Assad and Iran backed by Russia, and the results of that would make it impossible——

Mr. MOULTON. For Iraq as well?

Ambassador CROCKER [continuing]. For us to do anything in Iraq.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Yeah, this is going to be a long, hard slog involving political, military—and I want to emphasize what the ambassador said a number of times—whole of government. The President has to lead. He has to reach out to this branch of the government, which I have been through seven or eight——

Mr. MOULTON. Let me just ask one more question because——

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN [continuing]. Administrations and I see that rarely happening.

Mr. MOULTON. Right. Just a few seconds left, why is it important in our fight against ISIS to accept refugees and to continue doing so?

Ambassador CROCKER. I tried to lay out the reasons that——

Mr. MOULTON. Right. Mr. McLaughlin, if you could——

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. I think if we refuse to accept them, we send a terrible message that will appear in ISIS propaganda. It will say, you, Sunnis, you refugees, you people who are fleeing, you are welcome only in the Islamic State in the caliphate. You are not welcome in these materialistic, corrupt countries. We will just play into that narrative.

Mr. MOULTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

I was in the Middle East in May, en route to Afghanistan. We stopped in Kuwait and Qatar, met with the joint task force leadership, and we were at the air operation center, which I have spent

time there myself. And they basically told us that, you know, we have got them on the defense, and 2 weeks later, Ramadi fell. And I am sort of simplifying our long conversations.

And then last Friday, the President said, we have got them contained, you know, right before the Paris attack. So clearly, you know, we have got gaps in intelligence and information.

Just, Mr. McLaughlin, with all your experience, what can we do in order to close some of those gaps and, you know, specifically as we are looking at a whole-of-government approach trying to choke off their resources, like what else can we do to build capability growing in the intelligence? Are there other things we can do short term? Long term? Clearly we have gaps.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, ironically, I mean, counterterrorism is the thing we have worked probably most intensely on over the last 12 years. It is the top of the heap in terms of priority. The gap issue is always a hard one to understand. In other words, the way I would put it is, we collectively, our allies and we, the United States, have prevented a lot of terrorist attacks, foiled them, disrupted them.

They get through sometimes. They got through in Paris. I don't know enough about the reporting that flowed back and forth to understand exactly how that happened. I understand, for example, there was a paper written here that referred publicly to one of the perpetrators, to the so-called mastermind. Some of these people were on our lists.

The only thing I can say to explain this without regrouping my colleagues and saying, tell me everything you know, would be that in this particular line of work, it is very labor intensive. And particularly when it comes to surveillance, you run out of resources real fast, particularly in a country like France, which is relatively large, has a—among the Europeans, I would say the French counterintelligence—counterterrorism effort is probably the best. And yet, they probably simply missed it because they were overwhelmed by the task.

So there is an urgency that has to always be present. You have to check out every lead, and then you have got to go to school on your mistakes, go to school on what happened here, which I am sure they are going to be doing to ask what more do we need. You will see them. They have declared this state of emergency. They have very intrusive surveillance laws, as you know, which don't even require court orders, to monitor phones and so forth.

So I think we have to also step back and ask ourselves, for intelligence as a whole, do we have the balance right in the terms of the way we think about it? There is a big debate now, as you know, about strong encryption. The whole Snowden thing, I can tell you that it had a powerful effect in warning terrorists not about specific methods, but about the fact that our surveillance is very good.

And they have tightened up their communication, so that has made the job of intelligence much harder, and when you put—I don't know that strong encryption was involved in the Paris thing yet. I don't know whether we know that, but I have heard Director Comey's testimony about the effect that that has had on our inability to detect certain things here, such as the events that happened in Texas, for example.

Ms. MCSALLY. Right. So I am on the Homeland Security Committee, and I was in the task force that was appointed for the last 6 months just to look at combating the flow of foreign fighters and terrorists. And we had 32 findings. We released our report in September. But one of them is related to going into dark space and then encryption and the challenges with that.

And look, we have been trying to raise the alarm bells for a long time now. Now, there is obviously a tremendous focus since last Friday, appropriately. But my next question, I only have a little bit of time left is, we are now focused on ISIS, but we also need to look at the region.

And you mentioned, Ambassador Crocker, the Sunni-Shia rift is now a canyon. A lot of our Sunni Arab allies are somewhat ambivalent and bystanding because, you know, they are not convinced that ISIS is a threat to them. They see this militant Islam state of Iran with America engaging with them and their influence in the region through Iraq and Assad, Hezbollah, Hamas, and they really think they are the threat.

So can you just speak to—I just have a little bit of time left—you know, the Sunni-Shia rift and how that is impacting the whole region?

Ambassador CROCKER. This is the first time this has happened region-wide. Iran and Saudi Arabia used to be allied under the Shah, so it is not foreordained that it is this way, but it is this way. And that is why I have said several times here, and in my testimony, we have got to be extremely careful not to further fuel the perception among the Sunni Arabs led by Saudi Arabia that we are really cozying up to Iran.

Ms. MCSALLY. Right.

Ambassador CROCKER. Because that is not the side of the canyon we are going to want to be sitting on given our longer-term interests. That is why, as we wade in with a more intensive campaign against Islamic State, we have got to balance that by causing some significant pain to Assad and those behind him.

So this is the problem from hell, trying to calibrate our actions, think them through, be sure we don't leap into motion, we will do something, think later, not a good idea right now. This is the moment to reassess post-Black Friday. We need to do it. We need to do it quickly, and we need to do it very, very thoughtfully.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you. My time is expired. Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you.

Ambassador Crocker, you see no strategy. But I see a strategy working with coalition partners and local partners like the Kurdish forces and the Syrian Arabs to deal with the ground issue, which has resulted in about 25 percent of the area that ISIL covered having been recovered. I see a strategy of working with the Turks to secure the Turkish border, to prevent the revolving door of radicalized terrorists in and out of Syria.

I see a strategy of working to cut off ISIL's financing. I see a strategy of working to disrupt and expose the messaging that ISIL

uses to radicalize and recruit terrorists. I see a strategy of working to stabilize the areas that have been liberated from ISIL control. I see addressing the issue of air power for the last year in both Iraq and Syria.

That is a strategy. That strategy is being tweaked as events occur. So I think it is unfair to say that there is no strategy. I think there is clearly a strategy. And another strategy that has been employed is to protect our homeland from events such as that which happened in Paris last Friday the 13th. And that is what Americans fear the most is an attack here on the homeland.

And what I hear you gentlemen in unison with an old strategy, that, quite frankly, contributed to us being at this point where we are now, with the ill-fated invasion of Iraq as a response to 9/11, you would have us do the same thing now, go into Syria with a no-fly zone, or a safe zone, as you call it, Mr. McLaughlin, but what it is is actually a no-fly zone.

And then both of you argued that the U.S. should lead a multilateral ground invasion, both in Iraq and Syria, but you don't have an end game. You don't tell us how long we are going to be there, how much money it is going to take, how many of Americans' sons and daughters will have to be killed and maimed in an endless war on foreign shores, us occupying basically. I mean, that is what it would result in.

And those two tactics, or those two strategies, ground war and air no-fly zone, do absolutely nothing to stop the development of homegrown radicalized terrorists, which is what most Americans fear. They fear a terrorist attack here in the U.S. How will what you propose prevent or staunch the growth of homeland terrorists that would strike Americans here on American soil? How would a ground war, thousands of miles away from here, stop that?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. It would not. In order to——

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, how can we stop it?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. That, to me, is not exactly a separate problem, but it is a problem——

Mr. JOHNSON. It is the main problem.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. It is a problem not closely connected to—there is two types of attacks we could have: One is one that would originate here from homegrown; another is one that could come here from planning over there.

Mr. JOHNSON. Well, how will a ground invasion over there stop that?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, I don't think either one of us are arguing for a ground invasion.

Mr. JOHNSON. I have heard you say you want to lead, you want the U.S. to lead, and you want us to lead a multinational force to occupy, to basically go in and take and hold land. That is what I have heard both of you say throughout this hearing, and I think I am the last Congressman to ask a question.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. The way I would——

Mr. JOHNSON. That is all I have heard. A lot of blaming of President Obama and his team for what is happening now on the world stage. That is all I have heard.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. You know, before we came in here, Ambassador Crocker and I were talking on the side here, and one of the

points we made to each other was, having been in government, we recognize that government is very hard. It is very hard to do any of this stuff we are talking about here. And I know that the President has a logical approach here. I would call it contain and strangle, if I were giving it a name.

I think what we are all struggling with is Paris happened despite that. And I don't see anything we have said as being inordinately critical of the President. What we are saying basically is, is what we are doing now adequate to prevent further incidents like that and particularly here. And to me, it is not persuasive that the suite of techniques we are using now is up to that task. And that is how I would put it.

Mr. JOHNSON. It is quite easy——

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. And if we were still in government, we would still be struggling with this, I can tell you.

Mr. JOHNSON. It is quite easy to sit back and when you are not involved and criticize. And that is—certainly, we need to hear from voices who disagree, you know. And Congress has a role in this, certainly.

And I am not begrudging you having differences, but I do take issue with the scenario that there is no plan of action, the President is weak and indecisive and, therefore, is responsible for what is going on now with national security. I cannot let that idea, which is being perpetrated on to the American public, to drum us up towards another war that we participate in with ground forces. I just cannot let that go by without commenting critically, as critically as you all have been of the current policies that are taking place now.

And I thank the chairman for indulging me.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. O'Rourke, you have an additional question.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Crocker, I wanted to return to the dialogue that we had earlier. Again, looking at the 100-year period of the modern Middle East, and those borders and some of the dynamics were formed in the cataclysm of a dying empire and the climax of another empire.

And right now, 100 years later, we have some extraordinarily unusual events, the greatest mass migration out of that region, perhaps ever, but certainly the greatest mass migration to Europe, and greatest displacement since World War II, the attacks in Paris, the many failed states, three for certain, perhaps another on the brink.

And I realize it is impossible to answer this adequately in 3½ minutes, but if I boil down your answer about a strategy, it was to better support our friends and strengthen preexisting relationships. And I just want to, again, point to Saudi Arabia, with all the history there and the historic meeting between the Saud family and Roosevelt in 1945 forward, is it time to rethink that relationship?

Should there be an additional price the Saudis pay for the implicit protection of the United States in terms of accepting refugees, being a signatory to the U.N., refugee compact to ensuring that they are not exporting this extreme fundamentalism, et cetera, et cetera? Just to use Saudi Arabia as one area.

But I don't think we could do more of the same and expect a different result. I really feel if there is ever a time to rethink our approach to the Middle East, it is yesterday, and would love to hear your thoughts on how we might approach that.

Ambassador CROCKER. It is an important question, clearly. At this time of unprecedented upheaval in the region, and the evolution of an Islamic State threat that I have, in the past, styled as Al Qaeda 3.0, I would try to shore things up right now to reverse this really terrifying centrifugal spiral downward, and that, in my view, means working with our established partners.

If we can get somewhere to a better place, clearly, a part of ongoing discussions should be, so, let's sit down and look at how we got into the mess we were facing and are trying to resolve. And I think there is an important conversation I tried to hint at it, and I don't want to take you into the arcane weeds of Islamic theology, but Saudi Salafism and Islamic State jihadism both go back to the medieval Islamic thinker, Ibn Taymiyyah. They split on the concept of jihad. For the Salafists, it is defensive, for Islamic State it is offensive. But the point is, jihadism, as practiced by Islamic State is an offshoot, if you will, of mainstream Salafism. So how is Saudi Arabia going to deal with that? You know, it is the kind of discussion I don't think we often have with them, but we need to have it. Because eventually, as we saw in the 2003 timeframe, you know, it comes home. The ultimate goal of Islamic State is to center the caliphate on the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. That is what they are all about.

So, in the process of shoring up a region, relying on our traditional relationships, we need to have that conversation. But I would not, at this stage, certainly suggest that we give them an "or else," because the relationship is as frayed as I have seen it, frankly. Of all the disturbing things I have seen over this last year, one of the most disturbing is something little remarked. And that is the fact the Saudis decided to launch an air campaign into Yemen without consulting with us.

Mr. O'ROURKE. And yet we are helping them, without going into specifics. I mean, there is some cooperation there. And I am out of time. I appreciate the chairman's indulgence. Thank you for your answers. I appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Ashford.

Mr. ASHFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one clarification question I would like to ask on refugees. I absolutely agree with you that the leadership role in this area is critical, and it is part of the entire strategy, is to deal with refugees and deal with the other things we have talked about. But what troubled me after, and you mentioned, you know, the Friday the 13th changed, Mr. McLaughlin mentioned it, changed the dynamics considerably. Is it not reasonable to at least make certain that as we bring these refugees into the country, that there be some effort put towards making sure that the validation process is in place, that we are thinking about these various things that are into why someone is radicalized and that sort of thing? Is that not reasonable, Ambassador?

Ambassador CROCKER. It is not only absolutely reasonable, it is an obligation. The security of our Nation has to be uppermost. And

clearly, Congress has a role in determining that the measures, the checks, the screening is adequate to assure us of that. You are not going to get it to 100 percent, but to a reasonable degree. I know a fair amount about the vetting process. I helped develop it when I was in Iraq, and we were trying to get Iraqis out of harm's way that had worked for us. I personally think it is adequate.

Obviously, Members of Congress are going to have to satisfy themselves that that is the case. It is clearly a set of questions that can be asked. And maybe it needs to be tweaked. I don't know. But that is important. I think it can be done, I think it is being done. So I would hope that we could move forward for the reasons we have cited. This is not only an important humanitarian step, it is important politically for the reasons we have adduced.

Mr. ASHFORD. I appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I am going to try you all's patience for just a moment more, if you will allow me, and circle back around with a couple things we have talked about. But just to try to pin you down maybe, for lack of a better expression. Mr. Ambassador, talking about trying to help the Iraqi Government become more inclusive, we have a provision in this year's defense bill, which hopefully is about to be signed into law by the President, that allows him to directly arm the Kurds and the Sunni tribes if they cannot certify that the Iraqi Government in Baghdad is inclusive. I mean, obviously, the purpose of that is to push them to be more inclusive out of fear that the Kurds and the Sunni tribes would directly receive arms from us. But I guess my question for you is, as you watch these things, do you think it is still possible for there to be an Iraqi Government that is inclusive of the Sunnis and others or have we gone too far with Iranian influence?

Ambassador CROCKER. It is a critical question, Mr. Chairman. And I don't know the answer, which is why I said at the outset that we have three failed states, and Iraq teeters. What I do strongly believe is we need to find the answer to that question by engaging.

The CHAIRMAN. The only way to know is to try.

Ambassador CROCKER. The only way to know is to try at a high level and over a period of time, which is why I keep urging that we do that.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Fair point. Mr. McLaughlin, I want to go back to the catch-22 that you talked about at the beginning, because it seems to me we are already having some de-confliction with the Russians. Some will see that as working with the Russians, which is working with the Iranians, and working to keep Assad. In any event, removing Assad is a lesser priority. And anything we do along that line and still go after ISIS, does that not fuel the perception that we are more anti-Sunni and willing to work with the Shia in that endeavor? I mean, I am perplexed by this catch-22 also. Assad, ISIS, Sunni, Shia, you go after one versus the other, the other benefits.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, acknowledging, again, that it is hard to sequence something this complicated. It just seems to me that you have to set priorities. And you have to say, in these circumstances, it is more important for us right now to degrade ISIS, and not to

give up the idea of getting rid of Assad. Because the dilemma here is you cannot have—I can't imagine a political solution that preserves Syria and brings in the 70 percent of Syrians who are Sunni if Assad is there. So that is the dilemma. But given what we have in front of us in terms of realities, I don't see how we do both at the same time. And I assume that is why Secretary Kerry is saying—has said a number of times now, and I believe the Russians have also—you can read this between the lines—have said, Secretary Kerry has said Assad doesn't have to go right away. So you look at the Vienna talks, and it appears that the communiqués that have been signed indicate that we have a 6-month period in which we try to figure out how do we get to that point of a transitional government, or a temporary government, and then an 18-month period during which time a new constitution is written and elections occur.

I am sure this is a fragile agreement. I am sure it is just barely hanging by a thread. But I think the table is set for something that ultimately moves Assad out, with the priority being to get to a point with ISIS first where we have some confidence that that part of the equation is under control. That is how I am seeing it.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Fair point. We have a late entrant for a brief question. Mr. Lamborn.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you for indulging my last question here. Thank you for your service, both of you, very distinguished careers serving our country in various ways. I appreciate that. And maybe you have already addressed this. I have been in and out with other committees going on and so on. But I want to ask about the tilt by this administration toward Iran. I asked John Kerry this one time. He denied that there was any tilt toward Iran. And yet all of our Gulf State Arab partners, allies, friends, the Israelis, they are convinced that there is such a tilt.

So, even if it is not reality, it is perception at least. I think it is reality. Can you comment on that? Has there been a tilt? And if so, shouldn't the administration just come out and say that and that they want to see Iran become a regional player and welcomed back into the community of nations and be a good guy even though there is no evidence that they are going to actually pull that off? I am just very, very concerned about this direction. It seems like a huge gamble to me. But am I reading this wrong? Or is there actually a tilt going on toward Iran?

Ambassador CROCKER. It is a very important question. I do not perceive a significant tilt by us toward Iran. But perception is reality. And nowhere is that more the case than the Middle East. And there is a perception that there is such a tilt, which is why I have emphasized in my written testimony, in my remarks today, we have got to make it absolutely clear that our goals and Iran's goals in the region could not be more opposite. That the nuclear agreement in no way implies that we are a party to Iran's nefarious policies and actions throughout the region. It is 20 years ago this month that a great world leader was assassinated, Yitzhak Rabin.

Before he was killed, he said something that I have always remembered. And it was about—it was the time he was negotiating with the Palestinians post-Oslo. He said, "I will negotiate peace as

though there were no terrorism, and I will fight terrorism as though there were no peace negotiations." Well, we need to fight Iranian-backed terrorism as though there were no nuclear agreement. Because that is what the Iranians are doing. They didn't let that agreement, which they wanted, get in the way of all the nefarious things they are doing in Syria and Iraq, and, to a degree, in Yemen. Well, we need to meet them with the same determination to confront them where they are acting as a very malign player.

You know, that doesn't jeopardize the agreement because it doesn't jeopardize the agreement for them as they carry out these malign actions. But I feel very strongly we have got to assert ourselves against them, both because of the damage they are doing, but also because of the perception in the eyes of our Sunni friends.

Mr. LAMBORN. Director McLaughlin.

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. I don't disagree with anything the ambassador said. The only thing I would add is I don't think there has been a tilt toward Iran, perceptions aside. Without knowing precisely what is discussed within the administration, though, I think there is a hope that somehow in this 15-year period that we buy with the nuclear agreement, there is a hope, I am assuming, that there will be some kind of transformation inside Iran. There were some bits of data you can seize upon to strengthen that hope. Generally pro-American views of the man on the street, the large numbers of women, 40 percent of their university graduates are women. A lot of things about Iran that are at odds with the behavior we see on the part of their government. I suspect there is a hope among those who work on Iran that they may change. But 15 years is not a long time.

Mr. LAMBORN. In this recent intercontinental ballistic missile test in violation of U.N. protocols, isn't that a big concern to us?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. Well, as I viewed their behavior since the nuclear agreement, I haven't seen anything that strengthens my hope that they will change. I think the ambassador has it right. Until we see something fundamentally different about them, we have to do exactly as Yitzhak Rabin advised.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you so much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. And to both of you, thank you, again, for all of your expertise and guidance in very difficult matters, and for your time here today. With that, the hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:43 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

November 18, 2015

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Ranking Member Adam Smith Statement for Hearing on "Outside Views on the Strategy for Iraq and Syria"

November 18, 2015

Thank you Mr. Chairman. And I would like to join you in welcoming our witnesses here today and to thank them for their long service on behalf of our nation.

The tragic attacks in Paris, Beirut, Ankara, and Egypt brought home the very reasons why the United States is leading an international coalition to destroy ISIL and set the conditions that will prevent it or a successor from emerging in the future. The second half of this mission, ensuring that local allies can secure the territory from which ISIL is driven, is the key to ensuring our national security—driving ISIL from Raqqa or even Mosul won't be enough unless they can be prevented from coming back.

Unfortunately, to date the forces on the ground have not yet fully demonstrated the ability to drive ISIL out of the territory held by the terrorists, much less to secure it. In Iraq, Prime Minister Abadi appears to mean well, but the Shi'a dominated central government is still unwilling to reach out to Sunnis politically and unwilling or unable to militarily retake areas held by ISIL. Instead, the government has employed Shi'a militias to do their fighting, many of which are back by Iran and have been accused of ethnic cleansing in the past. Unless the government brings the militias under control and demonstrates a willingness to accommodate Sunnis, long-term success against ISIL in Iraq will be extremely difficult.

In Syria, the moderate opposition is splintered at best, while many of the strongest members of the opposition are extremist in orientation. Until Monday night, Russia had at best carried out only intermittent attacks on areas held by ISIL, while Assad has largely focused on any group other than ISIL. Iran and Hezbollah have backed the Assad regime and created Alawite militias that will complicate the situation for years to come.

The United States has adopted a strategy of developing and assisting local partners who can militarily take the fight to ISIL while participating in a political process designed to bring about a transition in Syria. I believe that, broadly, this is the right approach. Lasting security can only be brought about though local partners willing to hold and govern the ground freed from ISIL.

It is tempting to suggest that, particularly in the wake of the Paris attacks, the solution is to send large numbers of U.S. ground troops to clear ISIL from eastern Syria. This would be a mistake. There is no doubt that the U.S. military could push ISIL from Raqqa and other territories they hold in relatively short order. But unless we wanted to station troops there for years, we could not prevent ISIL from coming back or another extremist group from filling that vacuum.

Instead, we must continue to support the local partners we have developed so far—the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, the Syrian Arab Coalition, and those elements of the Syrian moderate opposition that we were able to train—while developing more. The President has correctly decided to support these forces with arms and ammunition and announced that we will deploy a small number of Special Operations Forces to support them even

further. As we identify and develop additional partners on the ground, we should consider supporting them in the same way.

We should also look for additional opportunities to increase the success and volume of our air campaign, while keeping in mind that the cities held by ISIL contain tens of thousands of civilians. This is a war on ISIL, not the innocent civilians they victimize. I hope that we will see more attacks such as the air strikes the other night on ISIL's oil infrastructure. These are meaningful actions that will undermine ISIL's ability to field and support forces.

We should be clear that, despite what some commentators suggest, these actions are having a positive effect. The Iraqi Kurds have taken Sinjar, which will constrict ISIL's lines of communication between Raqqa and Mosul. The Syrian Arab Coalition and the Syrian Kurds have taken many towns away from ISIL and put pressure on the area around Raqqa. Other elements of the Syrian moderate opposition, supported by U.S. airstrikes, are pressuring the area around the last outpost on the Turkish border controlled by ISIL. And reports suggest that the foreign fighter flow into Syria is starting to dry up.

This fight will not be over soon. ISIL is a determined enemy that will try to strike outside of Syria and Iraq, as we have seen in Paris, Egypt, Beirut, and Ankara. We should expect more attempted attacks, particularly as ISIL is pressed on the battlefield. But we are making slow, but measurable, progress.

There are, of course, many areas where we can do better, and I hope the witnesses will help us think through some options. For example, how should we react to Russia's actions and intentions, particularly in the wake of the bombing of their airliner? Are there ways we can help forge a unified Syrian political opposition that can meaningfully participate in a political transition? What, if anything, should we do to deal with the fracturing of Iraq and Syria into ethnic enclaves? How should we deal with Iran's support for militias in both Iraq and Syria?

Finally, I would ask our witnesses how we should proceed regarding the Assad regime. Many commentators have suggested that we should more actively oppose the regime whether through more aggressive actions to degrade Assad's capabilities or through imposing a no-fly zone of some sort. Is this necessary? The House of Representatives has failed to pass an Authorization for the Use of Military Force regarding ISIL and more aggressive action against Assad may require some additional legal authorization—should we take such a step?

Again, I would like to thank our witnesses for appearing here today, and I look forward to their testimony.

Statement Before the Committee on Armed Services

US House of Representatives

"Views on Strategy for Iraq and Syria"

A testimony by

John E. McLaughlin

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November 18, 2015

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Chairman Thornberry and members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about the perilous situation in Syria, Iraq, and the broader Middle East – made so much more vivid by the Paris attacks of last week.

I always enjoyed appearing before this committee during my many years of active service at CIA. Also as a former US Army officer, a veteran of Vietnam, I have always had special regard for this committee and its mission. So it's very good to be with you again, speaking now as a private citizen based at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) here in Washington.

Needless to say, the views I express here are my own and not those of Johns Hopkins University. And I of course, I no longer speak for any part of the US government.

It has always been difficult to make sense out of events in the Middle East, even in the calmest of times. But with all the crosscurrents sweeping through Syria and Iraq, it is even more challenging. I'd like to approach this by covering *four things* today:

First, region-wide trends that have converged in Syria and Iraq, contributing to the complexity of those problems and the elusiveness of solutions.

Second, a closer look at ISIS in Syria, Iraq, and beyond -- which I believe should be at the very top of our concerns;

Third, the interests of the major powers who are engaged – especially the US, Russia, and Iran.

Fourth, some thoughts about strategies to deal with all of this.

Macro Trends in the Middle East Affecting Iraq and Syria

A look across the entire region teaches us again that ancient lesson: when empires collapse, it takes decades for the dust to settle. Lines drawn on a map by Britain and France when the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1916 have now been redrawn on the ground in what we all say is the most violent sectarian sorting out that we've seen in our lifetimes.

Conflict now occurs in so many dimensions that the usual metaphors, such as "three dimensional chess" fail to capture the complexity of it all. Breaking it down, we see the Middle East – and most vividly Syria and Iraq -- torn by at least *six simultaneous conflicts*:

Persian versus Arab -- with Iran and Saudi Arabia in the lead on their respective sides, maneuvering diplomatically and feeding proxy fighters. We see this in Syria, where Iran has hundreds of direct and proxy fighters on the ground defending the Assad regime, while Saudi Arabia reportedly provides weapons and other support to rebels opposing the regime. And in Yemen, where Iran appears to back the Houthi rebellion, while Saudi Arabia and its allies seek to restore the Hadi government to power.

Sunni versus Shia – a conflict broader than that between Saudi Arabia and Iran, pulling sectarian fighters into Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, and elsewhere, battling over everything from religious primacy to political power.

Modernizers versus traditionalists -- as frustrated people in many parts of the region seek to reclaim or hold on to the rights they sought in the short-lived Arab Spring in 2011, a yearning that barely gained expression in Syria before being suppressed.

Terrorists versus regimes – as ISIL has rampaged across Iraq, established a headquarters in Syria and as remnants of Al Qaeda and other groups have flocked to the combat zone to join the battle.

Terrorist versus terrorist – as Al Qaeda seeks to reassert itself in the shadow of ISIL success and as these two Sunni groups fighting the coalition and the Assad regime come up against Shiite Hezbollah which seeks to defend Assad.

Great power versus great power – as Russia, Iran and the US seek to preserve and extend their interests in the region but especially in Syria.

The ISIL Threat

At the center of all of this is the scourge of ISIL. My last four years in government were largely focused on the post-9/11 battle against Al Qaeda. Dangerous and challenging as that was, the challenge presented by ISIS exceeds it. This is because for at least the last year it has been apparent that ISIL has six things Al Qaeda never had in anything like the measure ISIL possesses them. No one, therefore, should be surprised that ISIL has shown the capabilities it did in Paris – elaborate planning, stealthy access, deadly tactics.

First, ISIL has a more comprehensive strategy. As the Institute for the Study of War has smartly concluded, we are dealing with an enemy that has a strategy, one that the Institute concludes ISIL is executing in three concentric rings:

- An "Interior" Ring: Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine. Here their objective is to conquer, defend, and expand – and as the Paris attacks show, to plan and execute external operations;

- A "Near Abroad" Ring: The rest of the Middle East and North Africa, extending out to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Libya is for now the main external hub. The objective is establish affiliates here and increase disorder.

- A "Far Abroad" Ring: The US, Europe parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Here the goal is attack and polarize.

Second, unlike Al Qaeda, ISIL holds territory: by now as much as half of Iraq and Syria, with a capital in Raqqa, Syria and a secondary center in Iraq's second largest city Mosul. Al Qaeda central never succeeded beyond essentially renting part of Afghanistan before 9/11. As long as ISIL has this territory, it has the "caliphate" it claims and therefore the basis for its appeal – a destination for recruits.

Third, it has money. I have heard US Treasury officials publicly put this somewhere between $500M and $1B. Al Qaeda was always scraping for money and seeking loans from more successful terrorists. ISIL's money comes from taking over about 80 bank branches in Iraq, from taxes, kidnapping, smuggling, and oil.

- I believe we have never fully grasped the importance of ISIL's relative wealth. Much of this may be needed to administer its territory, but I'm convinced it still has more money than Al Qaeda ever had to buy expertise on things like information technology and weaponry, and to send its recruiters and trainers to places like Libya and operatives to places like France.

Fourth, ISIL has easier access to the West. As Paris vividly illustrates, the 4500 or so Western recruits among its 20-30,000 fighters allow ISIL to move among us in ways that are harder to detect than typical Al Qaeda operatives.

Fifth, ISIL has a powerful narrative. Its slick propaganda depicts for alienated youth in the West and elsewhere a better life of jobs, homes, fellowship, and power. We notice mainly the brutality, but in a single month this summer 52 percent of the nearly 900 propaganda messages ISIL sent out were focused on quality of life issues, while 37 percent hit military themes, and only 2 percent touched on brutality. Al Qaeda's narrative was and remains far less sophisticated and appealing – essentially: go attack the West and then enjoy a dangerous life on the run.

Sixth, ISIL now has rudimentary experience in governing. It's hard to get accurate data on this, but in many areas ISIL appears to be providing basic services at a tolerable level. They've incorporated existing bureaucracies where possible and forced workers at utilities and medical facilities to stay. With the exception of some of Al Qaeda's affiliates for limited periods, Al Qaeda never got to this point.

What to Do?

Any effort to formulate a counter-ISIL strategy has to begin with an appreciation of the realities that confront us. They are:

First, time matters. Our timetables keep slipping. We were to have mounted a counteroffensive to retake Mosul in April. We are nowhere on that. The offensive to retake Ramadi stalls repeatedly. We were able to train only a fraction of the 5000 fighters projected for Syria. Reports are that ISIL gains about 1000 new recruits/month, so the beast continues to grow while we ponder strategy. The longer they are in place the deeper their roots and the more resigned people become to their rule.

Every time a decision is put off because the downsides are too uninviting, the next decision only becomes harder. The long inconclusive debates over creating a "no-fly" safe zone, for example, became vastly more complicated after Russia deployed aircraft into Syria.

Second, the larger powers have conflicting interests that will have to be reconciled in any comprehensive settlement.

- *US interests* are multiple and important. At a general level, whether ISIL is defeated will be seen by countries in the region and by our allies as a measure of US leadership. More particularly, there can be little doubt that ISIL will try to mount attacks in the United States like the ones in Paris. We have crucial allies like Israel and Jordan who are directly exposed to ISIL's danger. And while the US is moving toward energy self-sufficiency, our closest Western allies are not and still depend on stability in the region to assure their energy needs.

- *Iranian interests* center on assuring preeminent influence for Iran and for Shia brethren in an arc running from Tehran to Damascus and encompassing Iraq. At the top of its list is making sure that Syria's future evolution permits Iran to support its proxy Hezbollah there and in neighboring Lebanon, as it has for decades.

- *Russian interests* are to assure the existence of some government in Damascus that permits its naval base at Tartus and its ground foothold at Latakia. More broadly, Russia apparently seeks to regain a broadly influential role in the region as part of President Putin's effort to reassert Russia as a great power globally. Russian diplomacy has been extraordinarily active in the Middle East in recent months, with nearly every major country in the region – ranging from Egypt and Saudi Arabia to Jordon, Israel, and Turkey -- sending senior representatives to Moscow for consultations.

- For their part, *Arab countries*, particularly Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf countries, have seemed less seized by the ISIL problem and more focused on their concerns about expanding Iranian influence and its impact in Yemen. An exception is strong US partner Jordan, which is probably most threatened by the ISIL push and most in need to assistance to cope with refugees and defense needs.

- *The one thing that all of these countries can probably agree on is the undesirability of having another completely collapsed state in the heart of the Middle East.* So with Syria heading in that direction, there is probably that narrow room for compromise -- something our diplomats can work with in the ongoing Vienna talks.

Third, progress will not be possible without arrangements that meet the grievances of the Sunni populations – about 70 percent of Syria and roughly 20-25 percent of Iraq. Their experience of exclusion and abuse is the basis of ISIL's appeal.

- In *Iraq*, the Shia-dominated government of Haider al-Abadi has put forth a reform program to meet some of these grievances, but it appears stalled and has met strong opposition. Unless, this is fixed, the government will never gain the support of Sunnis now living in ISIL-dominated territory, nor will it be able to field security forces committed to battling for a government that all can support. *In many ways this is the heart of the problem we face.*

- Similarly in *Syria*, some settlement must be devised that addresses the grievances of Sunnis, who have long been oppressed by Assad's minority-dominated Alawite regime. Their grievances are the most powerful magnet drawing ISIL adherents to the fight.

Fourth, progress requires that substantial territory be recaptured from ISIL – particularly major cities such as Mosul, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Raqqa. Until that happens, ISIL will

appear invulnerable, powerful, and attractive to alienated youth seeking membership in a "caliphate".

Fifth, air power is important but will not be enough. It has killed a fair number of ISIS fighters, has probably disrupted operations and logistics, and may have degraded morale. But they seem to replace fighters at the same rate they lose them. ISIL combines terrorist and conventional tactics and will have to be confronted on the ground by a more substantial ground force than has been in play up to now.

So what does all this imply about policy? First it's important to say that anything the US settles on will take time – there is no quick fix. And second, everything I'm going to mention is easy to say but would be complex and difficult to carry out – and we will have to be agile enough to adjust quickly within an overall strategy when things go wrong, as they inevitably do in any war scenario.

A *strategy requires knowing the goal you want to achieve and how you are going to get there.*

In this case the strategic goal might be phrased as: *preserving the state system in the Middle East, even if in a different configuration, rolling back ISIL's territorial gains, and destroying it as an organization.*

It is often said that there is no military solution to the problem, but as important as is the political dimension, it is impossible to imagine a solution to the ISIL problem without a *military component.*

This has been endlessly debated and there are few new ideas. It is now mostly a task of figuring out how to implement them – with what means, in what measure, and in what sequence.

The following steps are worthy of consideration:

First, establish clear priorities. Throughout the history of this problem, we have tried to do many things at once, for example degrading ISIL while also weakening the Assad regime. The catch 22 is that weakening one strengthens the other.

It is time to say destroying ISIL comes first and that we will do whatever is necessary to achieve that. This may require moving the Assad issue even further to the back burner – we've already signaled he does not have to go anytime soon.

It may also require working more directly with the Russians – if they can be persuaded – who have perhaps even more reasons than the US for concern about ISIL. Russian intelligence has said publicly that there are over 2000 Russian citizens in ISIL's ranks, and Putin has to worry about these returning, particularly to the restive Caucasus region. Moreover, Putin has to take into account that ISIL or an affiliate probably brought down the airliner that blew up over Egypt on October 31.

Second, we can more robustly arm those forces, such as the Kurds in Syria and in Iraq who have demonstrated the will and capability to defeat ISIL, as the Iraqi Kurds recently did in the town of Singar; they severed the logistically important link between the key ISIL strongholds in Syria and Iraq.

Third, increase the intensity of the air campaign and increase the number of US Special Operators in the theater well beyond the 50 already designated by the President, empowering them to go forward with trusted forces for the purpose of advising and helping to designate targets for the air campaign.

Fourth, establish safe enclaves within Syria for fighters and refugees as General Petraeus has suggested, defended by US and coalition aircraft, possibly manned partly by US advisors, and accompanied by a warning to Assad that violating the space would risk us destroying his air force.

Fifth, and perhaps most important and most challenging, lead in the formation of a substantial multinational force capable of destroying ISIL up close. I do not underestimate the leadership challenge here, nor the difficulties of command and control in such a coalition; there will be numerous obstacles and in many quarters little enthusiasm, but it is hard to see a way to deny ISIL its safehaven, from which it can plan operations like the Paris attacks, without this component.

This need not be an exclusively American force. Options could include:

- A coalition of US, Kurdish, and Arab forces;
- A NATO operation under Article 5, the collective defense provision of the treaty. NATO could have a major planning and operational role -- as suggested by former SACEUR Adm (ret.) Jim Stavridis -- spanning everything from training to augmenting air assets, contributing Special Operations forces, and constructing an "open coalition" that could include Russia and some Arab partners. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has emphasized "out-of-area" missions. This certainly seems to qualify.

Regarding the political component of a strategy, the US has the foundation in the diplomatic talks underway in Vienna among 19 countries, including Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. The early communiqués signal broad, but probably fragile, agreement on a few ambitious aims, such as a six month target for establishing a "non-sectarian transitional" government and beginning work on a new constitution as the basis for elections in 18 months. It's a beginning.

At the same time, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of continued vigorous US engagement with the Iraqi government to urge progress toward a government that is more inclusive of Sunnis and all Iraqi elements. Otherwise, Iraq can neither survive as a unitary state nor field an effective counter-ISIL fighting force.

In sum, the bottom line is that eliminating the evil that is ISIL requires two major things:

- Political changes in Iraq and Syria that respond to the grievances of their alienated and abused Sunni populations;

- And a military strategy that rolls back ISIL gains and denies them their claimed "caliphate".

Achieving these goals will require gargantuan effort. But the truth is nothing else will work.

John E. McLaughlin

John E. McLaughlin is Distinguished Practitioner in Residence in the Merrill Center for Strategic Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University.

Mr. McLaughlin, a 1966 graduate of SAIS, served as Acting Director of Central Intelligence from July to September of 2004 and as the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence from 2000 to 2004. Prior to that, he was the Deputy Director for Intelligence at the Central Intelligence Agency, Vice Chairman for Estimates and Acting Chairman of the National Intelligence Council.

Over the course of his career, Mr. McLaughlin has worked on nearly every part of the world and supervised clandestine operations, analysis, and scientific and technical work. He has frequently briefed the President and the Congress, represented the intelligence community in meetings of the National Security Council, and traveled widely to strengthen U.S. relations with national security counterparts in numerous countries.

In early 2010, Mr. McLaughlin led, at the request of the Director of National Intelligence, a study of the failed terrorist attack on a Northwest Airlines flight at Christmas 2009 and developed a series of recommendations for improving intelligence collection and analysis on terrorist plans. He recently served on the Advisory Board that assisted Norway's Statoil in its "lessons learned" study of the January 2013 terrorist attack on its natural gas facility in southern Algeria.

In his position at SAIS, Mr. McLaughlin teaches a graduate level course on American Intelligence, organizes conferences and seminars, and conducts research on national security issues. He continues to testify before congressional committees and to participate in public policy debates through articles in major newspapers and journals and commentary on television and radio.

While Deputy Director for Intelligence from 1997 to 2000, he created the Senior Analytic Service, a CIA career track that enables analysts to rise to very senior rank without branching out into management. He also founded the Sherman Kent School for Intelligence Analysis, an institution dedicated to teaching the history, mission, and essential skills of the analytic profession to new CIA employees.

In addition to earning his master's degree in international relations from SAIS/Johns Hopkins, he received a bachelor's degree from Wittenberg University and completed graduate work in comparative politics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. McLaughlin is a graduate of the US Army Infantry Officer Candidate School at Ft. Benning and completed a US Army tour in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969.

Mr. McLaughlin is the recipient of the Distinguished Intelligence Community Service Award and the National Security Medal. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Diplomacy, a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Chairman of the CIA Officers Memorial Foundation. He also serves on the Board of the OSS Society, CIA's External Advisory Board, and the Aspen Homeland Security Advisory Board. He is a Board of Trustees member at the Noblis Corporation. He writes a foreign affairs column at www.ozy.com.

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Witness name: John McLaughlin

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

(•) Individual

( ) Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: _____

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2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Advisory contract	CIA	None - "no fee"	Member CIA External
			Advisory Board. Advice
			to Director, CIA.
			I Receive No
			pay.

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

2013

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

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2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
Personal contract	Statoil (not a gov't	$13,000	Briefings on Mid-East,
	but a Norwegian		Saudia Arabia, and
	oil company in		3-days of consultation on
	which the Norway		terrorism and related
	government holds		matters.
	shares		

Ryan C. Crocker
Testimony Prepared for the House Armed Services Committee
Syria and Iraq
November 18, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Smith, Members of the Committee, I am honored to have the opportunity today to discuss with you the situation in Syria and Iraq. I had the privilege of serving as ambassador to both countries, in Iraq from 2007 to 2009 and in Syria from 1998 to 2001, spanning the death of Hafez al-Assad and the succession of his son Bashar.

I commend the Committee for its focus on these two nations whose complex conflicts are at the heart of the Middle East crisis and which threaten regional and international security, including our own. The horrific attacks in Paris, claimed by the Islamic State, underscore the dangers. I believe there are courses of action available to us that could alter the current catastrophic downward spiral of events in both countries. In order to do that, it is important first to assess the nature and origins of the current situation.

SYRIA. The seeds of the current conflict were sown more than 30 years ago in an incident that very few Americans remember but that no Syrian will ever forget. In early 1982 after a series of bombings and other attacks, the Syrian regime cornered the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in Syria's fourth largest city, Hama. Hafez al-Assad ringed the inner city with armor and artillery under the command of his brother Rifaat and destroyed it. The Muslim Brotherhood was effectively eliminated, but so were some 15,000 – 40,000 overwhelmingly Sunni civilians. It was one of the greatest incidents of mass murder by an Arab government against its own people until the current conflict, and it had several important consequences. First, the al-Assads, father and son, knew that someday Syria's Sunnis might try to even the score against their minority Alawi regime. They spent years perfecting the ultimate police state, with overlapping and interlocking intelligence and security services and a strong sense of solidarity among the Alawis: either they hung with the al-Assads, or they would hang separately. As a result, when the brutal suppression of demonstrations in 2011 led to an armed insurrection, Bashar al-Assad was ready. He was not Mubarak, Qadhafi, or Bin Ali, and he wasn't going.

The second consequence of Hama was a latent radicalization of the Sunni community. The enormity of the regime's actions may have physically eliminated the Muslim Brotherhood, but it also insured that its spirit would live, seeking an opportunity for revenge. It is therefore not really a surprise that when large scale armed opposition to the regime developed, it quickly became denominated in jihadi terms, first with Jabhat al-Nusra (Al-Qaida in Syria) and then Islamic State.

These two defining factors were very knowable at the outset of fighting, and should have informed our policy decisions. A recognition of the regime's durability might have motivated an early effort with the Russians to press for political steps to avoid a larger confrontation. A difficult undertaking, certainly. But with a quarter of a million Syrians dead and many million refugees or displaced with no real prospect for a negotiated settlement in sight, it certainly would have been worth the effort.

With the opposition, I urged in the early phases of the conflict that we not put boots on the ground but wingtips and pumps filled by a small cadre of Arabic speaking, area trained Foreign Service officers to connect with emerging elements of the anti-Assad movement both to assess the actors and to influence the development of a non-jihadi opposition. Such an effort would have required close coordination with the Turks and Jordanians and would have entailed risk. However, the Foreign Service, of which I was a proud member for more than 37 years, is not risk averse, and a handful of good diplomats in a tough place can make an enormous difference. A few of my colleagues and I undertook similar missions in Iraqi Kurdistan before the 2003 war.

Sadly, the time for such initiatives is long past. The Russian intervention and an escalation of Iranian support has enabled the Assad regime to regain some ground. In the process, the prospects for a political settlement, always remote, have become even more distant. Secretary Kerry is making a major effort, but none of the main protagonists is prepared for the steps needed to end the conflict. The fighting will go on; Assad will at least hold his own; thousands more will die; refugee flows will continue; and the risk of more devastating attacks on the West will rise.

IRAQ. When I left Iraq in 2009, I could never have imagined how it looks today, even in my worst nightmares. During three decades in the Middle East, I learned two things. The first is be careful what you get into. Military interventions set in motion consequences to the 30th and 40th order that can't be predicted, let alone planned for. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of militant Islam, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the rise of Hizballah, the American invasion of Iraq and the birth of al-Qaeda in Iraq. The second thing I learned is to be just as careful over what you get out of. Disengagement can have consequences as great or greater than those of the original intervention. In Iraq, we were not careful about either. Withdrawal of our forces and a virtual end to sustained political engagement in Iraq after 2010 did not end the war. It simply left the field to our enemies: Iran, its proxy Shia militias, and the Islamic State. It is the coalition from hell: Iran and the Islamic State do not seek each other's destruction; both seek the disintegration of a unitary Iraqi state into a Jihadistan. For Islamic State, an Iranian dominated Shiastan, and a Kurdistan heavily influenced by Iran. This is an unacceptable threat to U.S. national security.

THE IRANIAN AND RUSSIAN CONTEXT. We have to understand that Iran and Russia are determined adversaries of ours in any anti-Islamic State campaign. It has been evident from the beginning that Russian forces are not in Syria to fight the Islamic State. They are there, along with Iran, to bolster the regime and have primarily targeted non-Islamic State forces, some of which are supported by the U.S. Russia is firmly established in Syrian Sunni eyes as the enemy, and even the appearance of U.S. willingness to work with Moscow runs the risk of associating us with policies and actions that are perceived as seeking to destroy the Sunni community.

The same is even truer of Iran. Some have suggested that in the wake of the nuclear agreement, we should make common cause with Iran against Islamic State. As I have tried to suggest, Iranian aims in Iraq as well as in Syria are profoundly at odds with our own. Iran is using Islamic State to justify the support of Shia militias in Iraq, commanded by men who killed American servicemen, whose purpose is to weaken the Iraqi central government and prevent any

Sunni-Shia reconciliation. Any hint of coordination with Iran would be perceived as a U.S. alliance with the mortal enemies of Iraq's Sunnis.

We should bear in mind that the fractured landscape of the Middle East is increasingly defined by the dynamics of an overarching cold war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It is a struggle denominated in sectarian terms, Sunni versus Shia. Russia clearly stands with Iran, al-Assad, and Hizballah. We will do incalculable damage to our interests in the region if we do not make it unmistakably clear that we are adamantly opposed to their actions.

NEXT STEPS. We should acknowledge that if our policy is to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State as the President stated last year, it is not working. Fifteen months into the U.S.- led air campaign, Islamic State has lost some ground in Iraq, but has also taken Ramadi and Palmyra in Syria. The insertion of 50 Special Operations advisors into primarily Kurdish opposition units in Syria will not likely to turn the tide. The President moved away from a degrade and defeat strategy last week, speaking instead of containment of Islamic State. The horrific attacks in Paris, claimed by Islamic State, following the downing of a Russian airliner and murderous bombings in Beirut, all in a two week period, make it starkly clear that a containment strategy puts our national security at unacceptable risk. Islamic State will not be contained.

So what do we do? First, we must significantly ramp up coalition airstrikes against Islamic State. Recent targeting of the Islamic State oil network is a good step, and it should be expanded. Simply put, we need to be all in with an air campaign that goes after their command and control and ability to conduct offensive operations. In short, to actually degrade the organization.

At the same time, we need to avoid a massive reaction to Paris that would be perceived as the West once again targeting only Sunni Muslims. This is just what Islamic State wants. To ultimately defeat Islamic State and end this terrible conflict, we need to change the political context and to understand that for many Syrian Sunnis, al-Assad is a far worse enemy than Islamic State. In Syria, I have argued for a no-fly zone in the north and south. It would be a clear message that we stand with Syrian civilians against the savage bombings by Assad of his own population and against those who back him in Moscow and Tehran. Depriving Assad of the ability to murder his own people from the air would not mean his defeat, but it could change his calculations as well as those of Russia and Iran, finally enabling a political process. It is an axiom that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict. But military actions can shape the political environment. The Russian intervention did so negatively. A no-fly zone could reshape the context more favorably. According to the Institute for the Study of War, zones could be enforced without putting U.S. aircraft in Syrian airspace by a combination of Patriot and Cruise missiles and aircraft operating in Turkish and Jordanian airspace. With cooperation from these countries, no-fly zones could cover safe zones for civilians and serve as areas where face-to-face coordination with non-jihad opposition elements would be possible.

Another step that would make a positive difference in Sunni perceptions of the U.S. would be for the Administration and Congress to announce we are accepting 100,000 Syrian refugees. This would demonstrate that we care about those Assad is displacing unlike those who are abetting his crimes, and it will undercut Islamic State assertions that the U.S. does not care about Sunni lives.

Security checks are essential. They should and can be done on an expedited basis as a presidential priority, not as an excuse to shut down the process.

Other measures would be to make the anti-Islamic State envoy a presidential envoy. This would demonstrate a seriousness of purpose on the part of the White House and give the envoy authorities he currently lacks. Re-establishing a deputy national security advisor to coordinate the anti-Islamic State campaign in Washington would serve the same end.

In Iraq as in Syria, there is no military solution to the Islamic State threat. The political chasm between Sunni and Shia have given Islamic State the space to fester. Iran has worked to sharpen those divides; and virtual U.S. absence over the last four years has given Iran, its proxies, and Islamic State the scope to act, and they have. The U.S. needs to reengage, not with military force but with sustained, high-level diplomacy led by the President and the Secretary of State. For many reasons, Iraqi leaders find it extraordinarily difficult to make the political compromises necessary to foster a broad sense of inclusion among all of Iraq's communities. Iraqis cannot make the necessary deals on their own, but the U.S. can serve as an effective broker. We have done it before. Only when Iraqi Sunnis feel they have a secure and equitable place in the Iraqi state will the ultimate defeat of the Islamic State be possible.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the most chaotic period in the history of the modern Middle East is also a time of the greatest U.S. disengagement since we stepped onto the regional stage after World War II. We certainly cannot fix all the problems of the Middle East. But U.S. leadership can make a difference. Without it, the current disastrous situation will only get worse. And it will come home to us. As we have all seen so tragically, what happens in the Middle East does not stay in the Middle East.

Ryan Crocker

Ryan Crocker is Dean and Executive Professor at the George Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University where he holds the Edward and Howard Kruse Endowed Chair. He was the James Schlesinger Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia (2012-2014), and he served as the first Kissinger Senior Fellow at Yale University (2012-2013).

He retired from the Foreign Service in April 2009 after a career of over 37 years but was recalled to active duty by President Obama to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan in 2011. He has served as U.S. Ambassador six times: Afghanistan (2011-2012), Iraq (2007-2009), Pakistan (2004-2007), Syria (1998-2001), Kuwait (1994-1997), and Lebanon (1990-1993). He has also served as the International Affairs Advisor at the National War College, where he joined the faculty in 2003. From May to August 2003, he was in Baghdad as the first Director of Governance for the Coalition Provisional Authority and was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from August 2001 to May 2003. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1971, he also has had assignments in Iran, Qatar, Iraq and Egypt, as well as Washington. He was assigned to the American Embassy in Beirut during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the bombings of the embassy and the Marine barracks in 1983.

Born in Spokane, Washington, he grew up in an Air Force family, attending schools in Morocco, Canada and Turkey, as well as the U.S. He received a B.A. in English in 1971 and an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 2001 from Whitman College (Washington). He also holds an honorary Doctorate in National Security Affairs from the National Defense University (2010), honorary Doctor of Laws degrees from Gonzaga University (2009) and Seton Hall University (2012), as well as an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the American University of Afghanistan (2013). He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Diplomacy, and the Association of American Ambassadors. In August 2013, he was confirmed by the United States Senate to serve on the Broadcasting Board of Governors which oversees all U.S. government-supported civilian international media. He is also on the Board of Directors of Mercy Corps International.

Ambassador Crocker received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, in 2009. His other awards include the Veterans of Foreign Wars Dwight D. Eisenhower Award (2014), Presidential Distinguished and Meritorious Service Awards, the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award (2008 and 2012), the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Civilian Service (1997 and 2008) and for Distinguished Public Service (2012), the Award for Valor and the American Foreign Service Association Rivkin Award for creative dissent. He received the National Clandestine Service's Donovan Award in 2009 and the Director of Central Intelligence's Director's Award in 2012. In 2011, he was awarded the Marshall Medal by the Association of the United States Army. In January 2002, he was sent to Afghanistan to reopen the American Embassy in Kabul. He subsequently received the Robert C. Frasure Memorial Award for "exceptional courage and leadership" in Afghanistan. In September 2004, President Bush conferred on him the personal rank of Career Ambassador, the highest in the Foreign Service. In May 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the establishment of the Ryan C. Crocker Award for Outstanding Achievement in Expeditionary Diplomacy. In July 2012, he was named an Honorary Marine, the 75th civilian so honored since the founding of the Corps in 1775.

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Witness name: Ryan Crocker

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

(•) Individual

( ) Representative

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None			

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None			

Ryan Crocker

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. JOHNSON

Mr. JOHNSON. We must have a plan in place that addresses the systemic grievances of disenfranchised Sunni populations in Iraq and Syria, whose grievances with the Damascus and Baghdad governments have directly contributed to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Without confronting these grievances, this region will remain susceptible to further radicalization in the future. As you have discussed in your testimony, the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq seems to be fueled in part by the grievances of Syria's Sunni majority and Iraq's Sunni minority against their respective Alawite and Shia controlled governments. With that in mind, how can we realistically address those grievances while preserving the 1916 borders created by European colonial powers after World War I?

Ambassador CROCKER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. JOHNSON. In the effort to garner sustained buy-in from the Sunni communities in the region, how can the lessons from our collaboration in the Anbar Awakening in 2006 and 2007 be applied today?

Ambassador CROCKER. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. JOHNSON. Any new plans moving forward must incorporate the interests of the wide variety of stakeholders in the region in order to be sustainable in the long run. Given that it appears for the first time since World War II that United States, our NATO allies, and Russia are contemplating military action against a common enemy, what are we doing or can be done to ensure any Russian action does not detract from our aims and our allies in a post-ISIS Syria and Iraq but rather complement our own objectives?

Mr. MCLAUGHLIN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]