AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

AFTER SAN BERNARDINO: THE FUTURE OF ISIS–INSPIRED ATTACKS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FEBRUARY 10, 2016

Serial No. 114–137

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/ or http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

98–601PDF WASHINGTON : 2016

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EDWARD R. ROYCE, California, *Chairman*

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida
DANA ROHRABACHER, California
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
JOE WILSON, South Carolina
MICHAEL T. McCAUL, Texas
TED POE, Texas
MATT SALMON, Arizona
DARRELL E. ISSA, California
TOM MARINO, Pennsylvania
JEFF DUNCAN, South Carolina
MO BROOKS, Alabama
PAUL COOK, California
RANDY K. WEBER SR., Texas
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania
RON DeSANTIS, Florida
MARK MEADOWS, North Carolina
TED S. YOHO, Florida
CURT CLAWSON, Florida
SCOTT DesJARLAIS, Tennessee
REID J. RIBBLE, Wisconsin
DAVID A. TROTT, Michigan
LEE M. ZELDIN, New York
DANIEL DONOVAN, New York

ELIOT L. ENGEL, New York
BRAD SHERMAN, California
GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York
ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey
GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida
BRIAN HIGGINS, New York
KAREN BASS, California
WILLIAM KEATING, Massachusetts
DAVID CICILLINE, Rhode Island
ALAN GRAYSON, Florida
AMI BERA, California
ALAN S. LOWENTHAL, California
GRACE MENG, New York
LOIS FRANKEL, Florida
TULSI GABBARD, Hawaii
JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
ROBIN L. KELLY, Illinois
BRENDAN F. BOYLE, Pennsylvania

AMY PORTER, *Chief of Staff* THOMAS SHEEHY, *Staff Director*
JASON STEINBAUM, *Democratic Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

TED POE, Texas, *Chairman*

JOE WILSON, South Carolina
DARRELL E. ISSA, California
PAUL COOK, California
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania
REID J. RIBBLE, Wisconsin
LEE M. ZELDIN, New York

WILLIAM KEATING, Massachusetts
BRAD SHERMAN, California
BRIAN HIGGINS, New York
JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
ROBIN L. KELLY, Illinois

CONTENTS

Page

WITNESSES

General Jack Keane, USA, Retired, chairman of the board, Institute for the Study of War 5
The Honorable Alberto M. Fernandez, vice president, Middle East Media Research Institute 16
Christopher Swift, Ph.D., adjunct professor, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University 30

LETTERS, STATEMENTS, ETC., SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING

General Jack Keane, USA, Retired: Prepared statement 8
The Honorable Alberto M. Fernandez: Prepared statement 18
Christopher Swift, Ph.D.: Prepared statement 33

APPENDIX

Hearing notice 50
Hearing minutes 57

AFTER SAN BERNARDINO: THE FUTURE OF ISIS–INSPIRED ATTACKS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 o'clock p.m., in room 2200 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ted Poe (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. POE. Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

On December 3, 2015, husband and wife, Syed Farook, 28, and Tashfeen Malik, 29, carried out the worst terror attack in the United States since 9/11. They killed 14 people, seriously injured at least 22 others in San Bernardino, California. This was not the first ISIS inspired attack in the United States, nor would it be the last.

On October 23, 2014, a man believed to be self-radicalized attacked four police officers in New York City with a hatchet. On May 3, 2015, two men opened fire outside of a Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest in a Dallas suburb, at least one of the gunmen appeared to have contact with ISIS operative via social media. Last month, a man was arrested in Philadelphia after shooting and wounding a police officer. The attacker claimed to have committed the attack on behalf of ISIS.

In all, ISIS has conducted over 60 attacks in 20 countries. The map that is to the General's right, and I think all of you have a copy of that map—I don't know if you can see this or not. The map shows where these attacks have taken place, and they stretch from California to Australia and many places in between. The fact is the death toll from terrorism is on the rise. The chart shows global deaths from terrorism since 2001. Global deaths from terrorism are three times higher than when the President took office, and it is hard to say that the world is a safer place because it is not.

One of the main questions of this hearing is can these kinds of ISIS inspired attacks be stopped? If they can't be eliminated entirely, is there more that we can be doing to make sure that there are less of these ISIS attacks? ISIS feeds on a narrative of strength. If we can puncture the narrative and show that ISIS is on the run and collapsing, that could significantly impact ISIS' ability to inspire attacks in the United States and the world.

Our current strategy is not doing that, in my opinion. In a national televised address in September of '14, the President stated that the United States would degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS. Today, 17 months later, we have not accomplished that goal. It took a year from the President's speech before he finally allowed air strikes to target the oil infrastructure that ISIS is using to rake in millions of dollars a day.

The number of strike sorties flown per day against ISIS are a quarter of what we flew in Libya in 2011, and only 2 percent of what we flew in Iraq in 2003. Of the sorties that did fly out, 76 percent returned to base without dropping any munitions. While we all know air strikes alone can't defeat ISIS, we have yet to corral a ground force in Syria that will fight against ISIS. And the $500 million train and equip program was a failure, and the President even admits that it was a failure.

The President has been unsuccessfully getting the Sunnis in Iraq to fight against ISIS mostly because he has been equally unsuccessful in getting the Iranian Government in Baghdad to stop its sectarian ways. The latest round of peace talks were seen as so dismal that they were delayed until later this month, but the war rages on.

Part of ISIS' strength comes from its ability to disseminate its propaganda online. Following the San Bernardino attack, it was revealed that the attackers had been communicating online where they bonded over their commitment to jihad before Malik was granted a visa to come into the United States.

Malik had also advocated jihad and her desire to join the fight in several private messages on social media to her friends in Pakistan. It was later discovered that at roughly the same time of the shooting, Malik declared allegiance to ISIS on Facebook.

The other main question of this hearing is what role social media is playing in the fight against ISIS. In October, ISIS issued a new instruction manual on how terrorists can use social media. Are private companies doing enough to stop this? Facebook and Twitter both have policies prohibiting the promotion of terrorism on their platforms. While we have seen a dramatic drop of terrorist content on Facebook, there are still over 40,000 Twitter accounts used by ISIS supporters.

What is the role the U.S. Government has in all of this? The administration promised a strategy to counter online radicalization 5 years ago, but we don't have that strategy yet. I have introduced legislation requiring the strategy that passed the House unanimously in December and is currently pending in the U.S. Senate. The administration's strategy leaves us with little confidence that it would be enough to defeat ISIS.

The amendment to the Omnibus that was signed into law in December required the President to come up with a strategy that would actually defeat ISIS, and that strategy must be given to the American people and Congress in the summer of this year. ISIS has American blood on its hands. What are we going to do about it?

I will now yield to the ranking member, Mr. Keating from Massachusetts, for his opening statement.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for conducting the hearing today. I would also like to thank our witnesses, General Keane, Ambassador Fernandez, and Dr. Swift, for being here to discuss this very important topic, and for their flexibility in rescheduling for today's panel.

As details emerged of the December 2, 2015, cold-blooded attack in San Bernardino, we were left shocked and horrified by the calculation and the savagery. Fourteen innocent Americans died and dozens more wounded at the hands of two self-radicalized assailants. Let us keep in mind those that lost their lives, their family members and their loved ones again here today as we conduct this hearing.

While the severity of the attack caused it to resonate so strongly, we are reminded that San Bernardino is not the first attack inspired by ISIL in the United States. In fact, there have been three attacks in the U.S. dating back to 2014, which were carried out by individuals inspired by ISIL.

It is clear that ISIL poses a threat to the United States through its ability to appeal to a vulnerable demographic predominately of young adults. As of last October, FBI Director Comey reported that his agency is pursuing over 900 active investigations against homegrown violent extremists, the majority of which are linked to ISIL.

Separately, over 20,000 foreign fighters have traveled to join rebel or terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria, including ISIL. These movements are increasingly difficult to track in our globalized world, and the risk of their return to the U.S. is a great challenge to agencies overseeing foreign fighter travel. As the title of this hearing suggests, it is critical that we understand the nature of the threat posed by ISIL, be it an evolving threat, and in order to degrade and ultimately defeat a foreign terrorist organization like ISIL, we need to bring together various stakeholders such as federal, state, and local first responders and investigatory agencies, and equip them with the best resources necessary to respond.

To this end, I have been proud to partner with my colleagues both on this committee and Homeland Security to study the threat posed by foreign fighter travel and authorize the Department of Homeland Security to develop a strategy in response while bolstering the arsenal of fusion centers and intelligence agencies. Coordination and support from the private sector is also necessary, since many ISIL members use technology and social media platforms for communication, fundraising and recruitment.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the threat posed by ISIL, and how the United States and its partners can work together to overcome it. I yield back.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts. The Chair will yield a minute to General—not General, excuse me—Colonel Cook for his opening statement.

Mr. COOK. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The promotional system was seriously flawed when I made colonel. Didn't make it any higher. Anyway, this is a very, very important hearing. Many years ago, I was part of the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, 1983. I left that and they went afloat and went into a place called Lebanon. There was a group called Hezbollah that went in there, blew up the barracks, and over 260 Marine-Army-Navy personnel were killed that day.

And then it always stayed in my head, and then recently in my home county that I represent, San Bernardino County, had almost deja vu all over again with, once again, Islamic terrorism.

The one thing I did want to comment on, and I will talk more about knowing your enemy and everything else, was just the tremendous job that the local police department, the sheriff's office, the state, the county, everybody worked together. It was like we have a terrorist incident and they knew right away and instead of 14 killed, and I don't know how many wounded, it changes. We could have had even more.

So this is an extremely important hearing. Obviously it is right in my backyard, and I want to thank you very much for calling such an important hearing. Thank you.

Mr. POE. The Chair will yield a minute to Mr. Higgins from New York for his opening statement.

Mr. HIGGINS. Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think when we are talking about terrorism in the United States, I think it is very important to distinguish between fact and fiction. The fearmongering that goes on this country is extraordinary, and public polling indicates that it is very, very effective.

But I think when you look at the most recent book by Peter Bergen, "The United States of Jihad," who is a CNN national security analyst, wrote four other books on terrorism, you see that there is a real distinction between Islamic terrorists and how many people have been killed in the United States since 9/11. It is 45. The neo-Nazi and anti-government terrorists have killed over 48 people.

The profile that we presume about terrorists, I think, has been shattered at least in terms of perception, and not enough credit is given also to our counterterrorism and law enforcement efforts, be it at the fusion level, at the local level. On 9/11 there were 16 people on the no-fly list, today there is 47,000. One-point-five million people, if they tried to get on a plane bound for the United States, would be set aside for secondary screening. So I think it is also important to recognize the effectiveness of our counterterrorism activities.

And, unfortunately, in counterterrorism you never get credit for what didn't happen, and in counterterrorism it is all about what didn't happen. So I think we should give recognition to those facts as well as we move forward with this discussion. I yield back.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman from New York. I will introduce each witness and let them give their opening statements. General Jack Keane is a retired four-star general, former vice chief of staff of the U.S. Army, and currently serves as chairman of the Institute for the Study of War.

Ambassador Alberto Fernandez is vice president of the Middle East Media Research Institute. Ambassador Fernandez served as a U.S. Foreign Service officer and as the State Department's coordinator for the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications.

And then we also have Dr. Christopher Swift. He is an adjunct professor of National Security Studies at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. Dr. Swift has conducted extensive research on terrorism, armed conflict, and the intersection between international law and national security.

General Keane, we will start with you for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JACK KEANE, USA, RETIRED, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR

General KEANE. Thank you, Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, distinguished members of the committee, for inviting me back today to talk about such an important subject. I am honored to be here on the panel with my distinguished colleagues. Please refer to the map that we provided by the Institute of the Study of War, which I will reference in my remarks.

The primary objective of the United States Government remains protecting the homeland and the American people, including safeguarding American values both in the homeland and abroad. The San Bernardino attack following the Paris attacks, the downing of the Russian airliner, and multiple attacks by ISIS in Lebanon and Turkey, all once again dramatically emphasize the danger and vulnerability of civilian population to terrorism.

The Director of National Intelligence James Clapper in his recent report to the Congress stated that homegrown extremists pose the most significant threat to the United States homeland in 2016. While I believe this is a daunting task to prevent all such attacks, I am confident in the United States law enforcement and intelligence capabilities to rise to the challenge. Having the best defensive security system in America is not sufficient. We must have as good an offense to stop and defeat ISIS, which is where I will concentrate my remarks.

While the United States' offensive capability is there, the strategy is not. Indeed, without an effective strategy we are destined to prolong the barbarism and the killing in the region while driving up the risk at home. Radical Islam is morphing into a global jihad with the expansion of al-Qaeda and the extraordinary success of ISIS which has rapidly become the most successful terrorist organization in modern history.

ISIS has three major goals. The first is to defend Syria and Iraq. While ISIS has lost some territory, it views operations in Syria and Iraq as largely successful because it still controls large swaths of territory, it is recruiting well—1,500 to 2,000 per month—it is maintaining initiative, and it is able to logistically sustain its forces.

The second goal is to use its headquarters in Syria to expand in what ISIS terms the near abroad—it is in orange on your map with black or blue stars—by establishing affiliate organizations with a formal relationship in nine countries and regions, with three in the blue about to be formed. ISIS provides guidance and resources to most of these affiliates.

The third major goal is to influence the far abroad—on your map see areas in yellow—which are Muslim lands and countries that are supporting the coalition against ISIS, the United States, Europe, and Australia to name some. ISIS does so by inspiring, motivating or directing followers to kill their fellow citizens, by averaging thousands of social media posts per day, and by returning fighters from Syria who are trained and motivated to attack their

own citizens at home. ISIS attempts to divide and polarize these societies by weakening the people's resolve to support their government's effort and to fragment and polarize the non-Muslim and Muslim populations.

What can be done? First, defeat the idea. National leaders and Muslim clerics must undermine the political and religious ideology with not just what is wrong, but what is right. The battle is within Islam itself, where in the Arab world this battle is intersecting with authoritarian regimes and family monarchy's failure to politically reform and to adjust to the needs of their societies. Therefore, we are fighting a political and religious ideology which draws its origin from the very strict interpretation of the Quran and Hadith as well as the intolerance of Wahhabism and Salafism.

Political leaders such as el-Sisi and King Abdullah have referred to it as a religious revolution, yet U.S. policy fails to define radical Islam or explain it nor understand it. How can we possibly defeat radical Islam if we don't understand it? Knowing the kind of war you are fighting is the first priority of a national or military leader. We must challenge ISIS not simply in mosques and schools and other gathering places, op-eds and the like, but also, certainly, on the Internet.

Second, destroy the safe havens. No insurgency was ever defeated where a safe haven existed. The major lesson of 9/11 was that the al-Qaeda safe haven was allowed to exist in Afghanistan for many years even after the al-Qaeda successfully attacked the U.S. Embassy in Africa and the USS Cole. The longer terrorists are allowed safe haven, history advises that terrorists become more experienced, more lethal and more ambitious. Iraq and particularly Syria are ISIS safe havens.

Recognize that the current strategy of relying on local defense forces without sufficient numbers, arms, training, and not maximizing effective air power, protracts the war against ISIS for years unnecessarily. In my judgment, throw out strategic patience and replace it with strategic urgency to defeat ISIS. While the military effort in Iraq and Syria is significantly under-resourced, the political effort which is so necessary to achieve a military victory is also flawed. I would be willing to take that on in Q&A.

Third, marginalize the affiliates. The 9–11 Commission recommended a global alliance to defeat radical Islam. In parallel with destroying ISIS safe havens in Iraq and Syria, partnering with allies to marginalize and, where possible, defeat affiliates is critical. Otherwise, ISIS will reemerge at an affiliate location, now likely, Libya. The U.S. is beginning an effort in Libya against ISIS. Sharing intelligence, technology, equipment and training is a proven winner in harnessing the collective resources of an alliance in defeating a common enemy.

In conclusion, ISIS and al-Qaeda pose the most imminent threat to the security and values of the United States and Europe. The success of these radical Islamist military organizations comes only partly from their own strength and will. It results also from a general collapse of the international order driven partly by the withdrawal of the United States from supporting that order, partly by the irresponsible passivity and free-riding of most European states, partly by the unrealized expectations of the people of the Middle

East, and partly from the active attempts of Iran, China, and Russia to dismantle all or part of a global order designed to favor our values and interests and to replace it with one that favors theirs.

Understanding what is happening and why is the basic ingredient to developing achievable strategies. The United States is facing global security challenges on a scale not seen since the rise of the Soviet Union post World War II. While complex and difficult, it is certainly not hopeless and the world has never needed American leadership more than it does today.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]

Testimony

United States House of Representatives

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

By

General John M. Keane, USA (Ret)

on

After San Bernardino: The Future of ISIS-Inspired Attacks

1400 hours, 10 February 2016

Rayburn House Office Building

Room 2200

Thank you Chairman Poe, ranking member Keating, distinguished members of the committee for inviting me back today to discuss: After San Bernardino: The Future of ISIS Inspired Attacks. Am honored to be with my distinguished colleagues the Honorable Alberto Fernandez and Dr Christopher Swift. Please refer to the map provided by The Institute for The Study of War (ISW) which I will reference in my remarks.

The primary objective of the U.S. government remains protecting the homeland and the American people, including safeguarding American values both in the homeland and abroad. The San Bernardino attack following the Paris attacks, the downing of the Russian airliner and multiple attacks by ISIS in Lebanon and Turkey, all, once again, dramatically emphasize the danger and vulnerability of civilian populations to terrorism. While Americans who joined ISIS may return as terrorists, or other terrorists posing as refugees entering the U.S., or using liberal visa policies to enter from Europe, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, believes that homegrown extremists pose the most significant threat to the U.S. homeland in 2016. These are most likely Americans or green card holders living in the U.S. who are motivated and inspired by the tenets of radical Islam to kill their fellow citizens. While I believe this is a daunting task to prevent such attacks, I am confident in U.S. law enforcement and intelligence capabilities, which are the best in the world, save for the 65 year experience of the Israelis, to rise to the challenge. Having the best defensive security systems in America is not sufficient, we must have as good an offense to stop and defeat ISIS. While the offensive capability is there, the strategy is not. Indeed, without an effective strategy we are destined to prolong the barbarism and the killing in the region while driving up the risk at home.

ISIS is part of our multi-generational struggle against radical Islam which will likely dominate the first half of the 21st century similar to the fight against communism, which dominated the second half of the 20th century. Radical Islam is morphing into a global Jihad with the expansion of Al Qaeda (AQ) and the extraordinary success of ISIS which has rapidly become the most successful terrorist organization in modern history. It is driven by a religious-based ideology with significant geopolitical objectives to establish an extensive caliphate that touches the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe, by dominating all Muslim lands, causing an apocalyptic event in Europe that carves out an ISIS enclave, and breaking down international order and systems as we know it today.

ISIS has 3 major goals:

The first is to defend Syria and Iraq. While ISIS has lost some territory, it views operations in Syria and Iraq as largely successful, because it still controls large swaths of territory, is recruiting successfully, 1.5 to 2k per month, maintaining tactical and operational initiative, and is able to logistically sustain its forces.

The second goal is to use its headquarters in Syria to expand in what ISIS terms the "near abroad" (in orange on your map with black or blue stars) by establishing affiliate organizations (Wilayats), which is a formal relationship in 9 countries and regions: Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Nigeria, North Caucasus, and Algeria, with three in blue about to be formed. ISIS provides guidance and resources to these affiliates. The affiliates are attempting to control a swath of territory inside these countries and regions while undermining the local government. As we know, Wilayat Sinai is suspected of downing a Russian aircraft.

The third major goal is to influence the "far abroad," (on your map see areas in yellow) which are Muslim lands and countries that are supporting the coalition against ISIS (U.S., Europe, and Australia) by inspiring, motivating or directing followers to kill their fellow citizens, by averaging thousands of social media posts per day, and by returning fighters from Syria who are trained and motivated to attack their own citizens at home. ISIS attempts to divide and polarize these societies by weakening the people's resolve to support their government's efforts against ISIS and to fragment and polarize the non-Muslim and Muslim populations (non assimilated Muslim countries in Europe are particularly susceptible).

WHAT CAN BE DONE:

1. Defeat the Idea – National leaders and Muslim clerics must undermine the political and religious ideology with not just what is wrong, but what is right. The battle is within Islam itself where in the Arab world this battle is intersecting with authoritarian regimes and family monarchies failure to politically reform and to adjust to the needs of their societies. Therefore, we are fighting a political and religious ideology which draws its origin from the very strict interpretation of the Quran and Hadith as well as the intolerance of Wahhabism and Salafism . Political leaders such as al-Sisi and King Abdullah have referred to it as a "religious revolution." Yet U.S. policy fails to define radical Islam, or explain it, nor understand it. How can we possibly defeat radical Islam if we don't understand it? Knowing the kind of war you are fighting is the first priority of a national or military leader. Given this purposeful misunderstanding or self deception, at best, by not acknowledging this narrowly focused Islamic ideology, it creates an unnecessary condition where all Muslims are brought under suspicion. Law abiding, faith based, traditional or modern Muslims who would do no harm to their fellow man and resent any association with radical Islam, deserve better treatment.

2. Destroy the Safe Havens – No insurgency was ever defeated where a safe haven existed. The major lesson of 9/11 was that the AQ safe haven was allowed to exist in Afghanistan for many years even after the AQ successful attacks on the US Embassies in Africa (1998) and the USS Cole (2000). The longer terrorists are allowed safe haven, history advises, the terrorists become more experienced, lethal and ambitious. The result was 9/11. Iraq and Syria, particularly Syria, are ISIS safe havens. Their recruiting, command and control, logistics, and ambitious expansion all originates in the safe haven.

Recognize that the current strategy of relying on local defense forces without sufficient numbers, arms, training, and not maximizing air power protracts the war against ISIS for years, unnecessarily. Throw out "strategic patience" and replace it with "strategic urgency" to defeat ISIS. While the military effort in Iraq and Syria is significantly under-resourced, the political effort which is so necessary to achieve a military victory is also flawed.

-- Iraq – The strategic political objective should be to reduce Iranian influence in Iraq while moving PM Abadi to enfranchise the reconcilable Sunnis. Sunni lands cannot be reclaimed and held without a sizeable Sunni commitment of tens of thousands (during the Iraq surge, in 2007, the Sunni Sons of Iraq peaked at 102K). This must be a major diplomatic effort which can be assisted by former Ambassador Ryan Crocker, who enjoyed previous success with the same issue during the surge.

-- Syria – The civil war must end if the Sunnis are to reclaim territory held by ISIS and AQ. Conceding to the Russians that Assad and the Alawite regime will stay, in contradiction to U.S. policy since 2011 that Assad must go, is a

huge strategic mistake. The opposition forces will not stop fighting while Assad remains. A better option is to attempt to change the momentum against the Assad regime with safe zones for refugees and a NFZ to protect them. Also an effort should be made to separate from Jabat Al Nusra (AQ), the Islamic organizations that are not radical and reunite them with the moderate opposition. The Sunni Arab states will assist such a Syrian Sunni force on the ground to destroy the ISIS safe haven.

3. Marginalize the Affiliates - The 9/11 Commission recommended a global alliance to defeat radical Islam. In parallel with destroying ISIS safe havens in Iraq and Syria, partnering with allies to marginalize or where possible defeat ISIS affiliates is critical. Otherwise ISIS will reemerge at an affiliate location, likely, Libya. Sharing intelligence, technology, equipment and training is a proven winner in harnessing the collective resources of an alliance in defeating a common enemy. It was after all NATO's proven success in helping to collapse the Soviet Union.

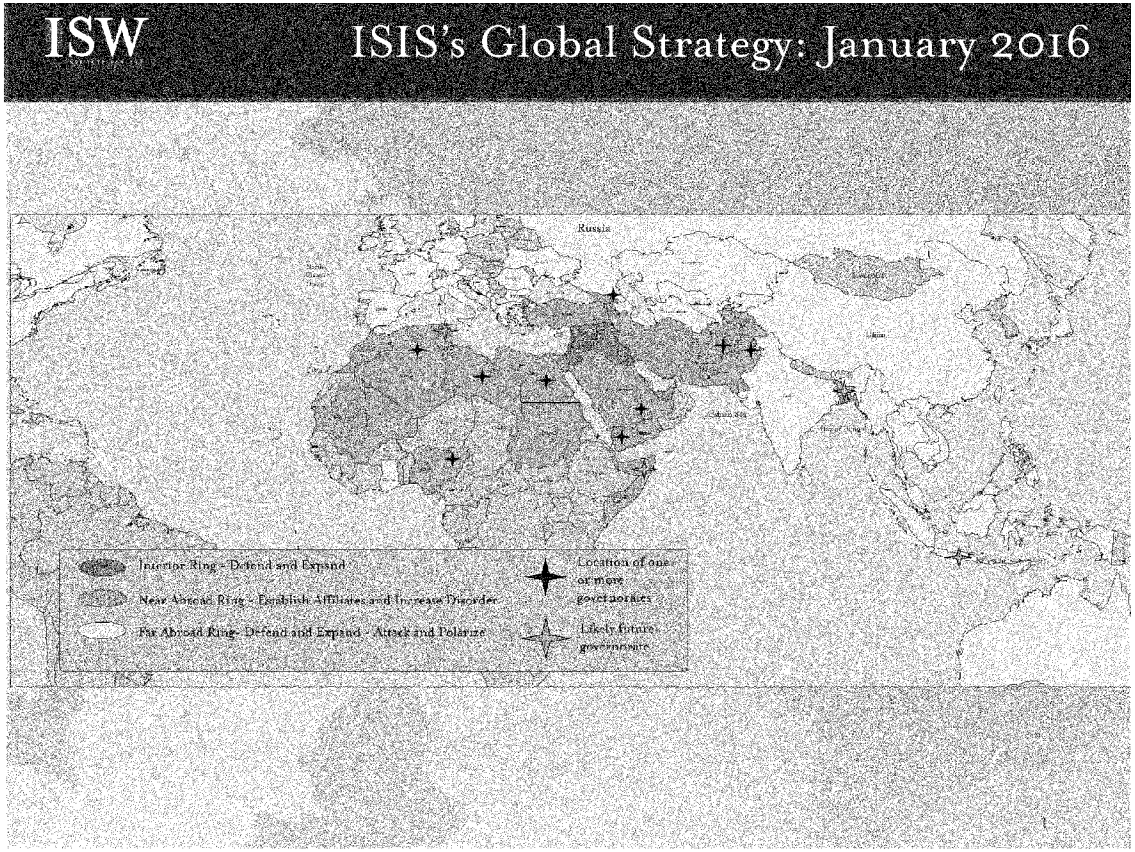
In conclusion, the following, extracted in part from a recent ISW report: ISIS and AQ pose the most imminent threat to the security and values of the United States and Europe. Although these groups currently lack the ability to destroy us militarily, the danger they present is no less existential for that. Already their actions are causing the peoples of the West to turn against one another, to fear and suspect their neighbors, to constrain their freedoms, and to disrupt their ordinary lives. The nearly-unprecedented flow of refugees from the horrors of constant and brutal warfare threatens to overwhelm many peaceful societies, creating new conflicts and reviving old ones. ISIS and AQ have shattered states, undermined others, and are threatening more. They are destroying the international

order in the Middle East and Africa and seeking to spread that destruction to Europe and Asia.

The success of these radical Islamist military organizations comes only partly from their own strength and skill. It results also from a general collapse of the international order driven partly by the withdrawal of the U.S. from supporting that order, partly by the irresponsible passivity and free-riding of most European states, partly by the unrealized expectations of the people of the Middle East and partly from the active attempts of Iran, China, and Russia to dismantle all or part of a global order designed to favor our values and interests and to replace it with one that favors theirs.

Understanding what is happening and why, is the basic ingredient to developing achievable strategies. The U.S. is facing global security challenges on a scale not seen since the rise of the Soviet Union post World War II. While complex and difficult, it is certainly not hopeless and the world has never needed American leadership more than it does today.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.


ISW
ISIS's Global Strategy: January 2016
Russia
Interior Ring - Defend and Expand
Near Abroad Ring - Establish Affiliates and Increase Disorder
Far Abroad Ring - Defend and Expand - Attack and Polarize
Location of one or more governorates
Likely future governorate

Mr. POE. Thank you, General Keane.
Ambassador Fernandez.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ALBERTO M. FERNANDEZ, VICE PRESIDENT, MIDDLE EAST MEDIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Ambassador FERNANDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, members of the committee for having me today. It is great to be back again.

Measured in comparison with most other terrorist groups and insurgent movements, the ISIS brand is a major success. The fact that it has mobilized tens of thousands to flee their countries, thousands of them leaving very comfortable circumstances in the West, is testimony to the enduring power of its message. It most certainly does represent a revolutionary, contemporary appeal. This is not going back to the Middle Ages.

But despite being so new, its success now is that it is not a specific video or statement or act that mobilizes, but rather the concept, the image of the organization. This is an idea and a symbol which has matured and has been internalized by those people that support it. That is one of the lessons of San Bernardino and other places.

One result of these attacks is to make the Islamic State look even more ubiquitous, powerful and conquering than it actually is. It is something that we see in the West, including in the government and media, sometimes unwittingly helping to suggest that they are actually more powerful than they are. They are actually quite extraordinary, but we make them look even more than they are.

While the actual state in its Syrian-Iraqi heartland is slowly, all too slowly weakening, the virtual caliphate, the idea of the state, its image, its sense, remains relatively intact and powerful. The ISIS victory narrative has been sustained to this day by two elements, the actions and growth of the ISIS franchises and these continued attacks in the West such as Paris, which mimic and, in a way, replace the preferred image of ISIS of military victory on the ground. They would rather be marching into Baghdad and Damascus, but in lieu of that they will take what they can get, whether in San Bernardino or Paris or Sinai or wherever.

This image can still be sustained for awhile, especially if a continued progress against ISIS on the ground remains slow and gradual. As long as the idea of the ISIS caliphate remains plausible, it will continue to attract recruits, spawn terrorist operations focusing on targets of opportunity worldwide, and spin off copy cat operations. You cannot contain the ISIS brand if the ISIS caliphate is merely contained.

So you see this seeming paradox. The best way to weaken the ISIS brand is to crush it in the field militarily, but the more you push the greater the incentive they will have to lash out in both planned operations and encourage zealous, young devotees to act. That is the price we are going to have to pay. Success in planned operations will no doubt lead to attempts by lone wolves in the future.

So obviously ISIS needs to lose and even more importantly to be seen to lose. In addition to military progress powerfully and graphi-

cally portrayed, technical means used by both social media companies and government need to shrink the size of the online state. But while those two things are important, the core message of the ISIS brand also needs to be answered. Some of this work is beginning, albeit all too slowly and weakly.

Given the importance of Iraq and especially Syria in the ISIS discourse and how it is sold to Westerners and even to people in the Middle East distant from the front, there is real value in empowering Syrian and Iraqi Sunni Muslim voices who can speak directly to wavering individuals outside the Middle East. This hasn't been done yet. The voices of recanters and defectors need to be raised much higher than they have been.

Governments receiving returnees from ISIS ranks should find creative ways to incentivize counter-radicalization media outreach as much as integration and law enforcement. And we actually have a great template because we have ISIS' own way of producing these personal testimony videos. There should also be room for a well-funded effort promoting tolerant, liberal Arab Muslim values in contradistinction to the vision of Salafi jihadism. ISIS is a really important phenomenon, but it is part of a much wider phenomenon occurring.

Governments should also look to empower and expand the scope of nongovernmental messaging platforms and organizations within the Middle East with the goal toward building sustainable messaging efforts against Salafi jihadism. It is not something that only the U.S. Government or friendly governments can do. So the ISIS brand or way of doing things has now metastasized and been internalized. But it can at least be chipped away by a combination of military, technical and counter-messaging efforts.

I am concerned that steps have been too little and too late so far, but I see that we are slowly beginning to move in the right direction, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Fernandez follows:]

After San Bernardino: The Future of ISIS-Inspired Attacks

Written testimony submitted to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs/Sub-Committee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Trade, February 2, 2016

The Honorable Alberto M. Fernandez, Vice-President, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Washington, D.C.

(Image and words taken from ISIS Digital Magazine "Dabiq," #13, January 2016)

Two weeks ago a 15 year old boy tried to stab to death a Jewish teacher in Marseilles, France. When he was arraigned, he said that he was "ashamed" that he had failed and when asked whether he represented ISIS – he had claimed the attempted murder in the name of the Islamic State – he noted "I don't represent them, they represent me."

The San Bernardino attack and the one thousand open investigations on alleged ISIS members inside the United States are ample testimony to the enduring appeal of the Islamic State.

A SUCCESSFUL BRAND

Measured in comparison with most other terrorist groups and insurgent movements, the ISIS brand is a huge success. The fact that it has mobilized tens of thousands to flee their countries, thousands of those leaving very comfortable circumstances in the West, is testimony to the power of its message. It most certainly does represent, as one scholar noted recently, very much a revolutionary, contemporary appeal. Many of the components of this message are not new but the message is nothing if not contemporary.

This is a compelling package, which includes a strong Salafi Jihadist ideological component, a political project which is portrayed incessantly as seemingly successful and growing, and a 21st century appeal to substantive and consequential participation aimed at youth searching for purpose and identity in a apparently aimless, empty and hedonistic world; fame and notoriety, vicarious violence, sex, and the end of the world.

It is actually remarkable that MORE people haven't joined and been mobilized given the vast potential pool of recruits existing out there. But what the Islamic State has succeeded in doing, at least for some, is creating a post-modern Salafi Jihadist sub-culture: high tech, cool, ultra-traditional, and non-compromising.

The brand is a "condensed symbol" which has multiple layers of meaning, different things to different people and here I can refer you to the work of many researchers and scholars such as Charlie Winter, Will McCants, J.M. Berger, Peter Neumann, Lorenzo Vidino, Javier Lesaca and Aaron Zelin. One of the few good things which have come out of the spectacular rise of ISIS is some first rate research and insight.

The fully formed brand as we know it today is really new, about 18 months old, dating from the double blow of June 2014: the fall of Mosul and the declaration of the Caliphate. Despite being so new, its success is complete in that it is now not a specific video or statement that mobilizes but rather the concept or image of the

organization that does so. Certainly there was ISIS Spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's September 2014 message calling for attacks in the West, but aside from planned events like Paris, we see a wider range of inspired individual actions like San Bernardino that are evidently not centrally directed. We know the ideas of "leaderless jihad" and Lone Wolves are not new and we usually shouldn't compare anything to the Nazis, or compare ISIS to National Socialism, but when thinking of the ISIS brand I can't help but think of Ian Kershaw's concept of "working towards the Fuhrer" where individuals felt that they were in a way going along the broad lines indicated by the general stance of the German dictator and not necessarily following a specific order. It is the big idea that mattered, the meaning embedded in the High Concept. One result, clearly, of such attacks is to make the Islamic State look even more ubiquitous, powerful and conquering than it actually is, something that we in the West – including in government and the media – are sometimes unwitting accomplices in helping to suggest.

Of course, much of the elements in this spanking new ISIS brand are much older: Salafism is a couple of centuries old. The particular Salafi Jihadist template that we know is a few decades old. The conflict in Syria, which served as a powerful mobilizing agent for so many young Muslims, is entering its fifth year. And the organization itself, Zarqawi's creation, began in the 1990s and was forged in the crucible of the confrontation with the Americans in Iraq.

Zarqawi himself was something of a showman and a video pioneer, he certainly talked about that end-times battle of Dabiq and marked a line independent of Al-Qa'ida from the beginning. It also must be said that one element that you DON'T see in the ISIS brand is much that comes from the way the Iraqi Ba'ath Party did media, some of the grotesque violence, perhaps, but it doesn't look or sound like material put out by any Arab regime. The ISIS of today, which has roots both in Zarqawi and in elements of the previous Iraqi regime has far superseded both of them.

If I was to try to be as precise and narrow in the words to describe the ISIS brand, it would be "Khilafa Rebellion Now." These three words sum up thousands of videos, tens of thousands of graphics and millions of tweets. They encompass the mobilizing appeal to both Westerners and to people who have never set foot in the West.

"Al-Khilafa" (the Caliphate) summarizes both the religious and state-building efforts that are unique features of the Islamic State. "Rebellion" captures the youth revolt, the "insurrectionist" nature of the movement, this is a revolt against "the way things are now," the status quo, the mundane both in bourgeois Western democracies and Arab dictatorships. This also rebellion against "the Other," the

Jews, the Shia, the Christians and all those described in these words of power that ISIS uses: *Kufar* (Infidels), *Mushrikeen* (Polytheists), *Rafida Najas* ("Dirty Shia"), *Taghut* (Tyrant). And "Now" because the call is for action now, it includes a palpable sense of urgency, not something to be done in some fuzzy future.

But "Khilafa Rebellion Now" is only part of the problem. Imagine it as the core, the smallest in a series of Russian nesting dolls. The next size doll is that old chestnut, the slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), "Islam is the Solution." Of course, the MB are bitter enemies of ISIS and vice versa. But the ISIS message is one part of a much larger ongoing Islamist ferment, a spectrum of great variety, ranging from contending political Islamist movements to complex regimes to different and divergent Salafi Jihadist insurgent factions. The ISIS message is one part of this larger construct, it reacts to and draws strength from this milieu, from a wider range of beliefs and attitudes within this Islamist spectrum.

So for example, when Saudis – who are both key targets of ISIS subversion and also share some of those same Salafi views – promote the over the top sectarianism of media outlets like "Wesal TV" as MEMRI pointed out recently in an exhaustive study, they are in a way helping to propagate elements of the ISIS message. Of course, many Islamists who are bitter foes of the Islamic State share views quite similar to that of ISIS when it comes to the *Kufar*, *Mushrikeen*, *Rafida Najas*, *Taghut*.

The fact that "Islamism" is now, in a way "fashionable," even in the West is also part of this political stew. And even though the very broad definitions of Islamism and even Jihadism are not exactly the same thing as ISIS, there is a focus and a forward motion on "things Islamist" (this includes people saying bad things about it and obsessing about it) which is useful to ISIS radicalization. "Islamism" and all sorts of (positive and negative) reactions to it and about it are "trending" if you go by the amount of media coverage the issue receives.

Just like an extremist political candidate who seems to be doing well, can drag the discourse on certain issues in a certain direction, so does the seeming success of ISIS drag others - rivals, critics and imitators - into a sort of ideological and propaganda arms race. ISIS itself has succeeded in resurrecting, of course, both the concept and reality of *Khilafa* and *Jizya*, the historic, humiliating tax imposed on non-Muslims living under Islamic rule.

This fierce competition is certainly very clear with the production and actions of groups like Nusrah Front in Syria and AQAP in Yemen. And this deadly rivalry could bear fruit even beyond the possible defeat of the Islamic State in its Syria/Iraq heartland given the shakiness of so many regimes in the region. I know

that when I was in government as recently as 2013, we hoped that the struggle between ISIS and Al-Qa'ida would have them fighting over the same finite pie, as a result discrediting both, but what has happened is that their struggle continues within the context of a growing pie.

If "Khilafa Rebellion Now" and "Islam is the Answer" are two of those nesting dolls which have a very clear Islamic connection, the third one which informs that brand, does not. It is something I wrote about recently for MEMRI and someone similar to what anthropologist Scott Atran wrote about in even greater length and that is that while ISIS is one high profile part of a rising wave of "radical Arab Sunni revivalism," it can also be seen as part of a larger trend of a deterioration of traditional culture and deep crisis of authority and institutions occurring most drastically and dangerously in the Middle East but also occurring – to a real if much less extent – in the West. In this reading, a wide range of disparate elements that have nothing at all to do with the Islamic State– Occupy Wall Street, the Tea Party, paramilitary groups, the Far Right, the Far Left, anti-Capitalist extremists and anarchists, the "lostness" of so many people in a changing and seemingly pitiless world – suggest some sort of sense of rebellion and can provide an inkling into some of the pressures and fissures many contemporary societies worldwide are experiencing. This is a clash of civilizations but it is not Samuel Huffington, rather a clash WITHIN civilizations happening both in the East and West.

If this internal civilizational shaking is even a little bit true, then the disarray we see in the Middle East is not a blast from the past but ONE possible vision of a future, even our future. I don't mean to suggest that we will ever descend into the brutal depths we see in the region today, but there is little doubt that the globalized, deracinated lumpen youth we see today in many places is at risk to all sorts of very different social and political pathologies. The Islamic State is only one of them, although perhaps one of the most spectacular and strangest ones of all.

We see today an Arab Middle East unmoored as most of the pillars of power and authority are shaken but you can read something like, for example, George Mason University Professor's Tyler Cowen's recent utopian/dystopian book "Average is Over" and see the dawning of a future which could drastically change our own civilization if not unmoor it. This may seem a bit something out of a "Mad Max" apocalyptic movie but I am not talking so much about what actually WILL happen but about how some young people in the West feel, and the ISIS image is, among other things, a lot about feelings and young people.

KINETIC PROPAGANDA BREAKS THE BRAND

So what to do with this really successful Islamic State brand? It has some real weaknesses despite the impressive success. It is in a way – part Ferrari and part donkey-cart – with this incredible powerful and shiny image tethered to a less shiny, actually sordid reality on the ground. This ISIS brand is a tremendous media success, the ISIS "state" is also an impressive accomplishment but has demonstrated somewhat less sticking ability than the virtual state online. I have frequently said that the best way to weaken the ISIS propaganda appeal is on the battlefield and that is really true.

One thing I watched closely when the Coalition began bombing ISIS in August 2014 to this day was to see how much the ISIS discourse of victory and indomitable progress would have to adapt to account for and explain away the inevitable battlefield reverses. It would be logical to take such a step but ISIS has done little to address this. There are calls, including most recently by Baghdadi, to persevere and stand fast, there are a handful of videos of civilian victims of Coalition bombing, playing the victim card, but not much.

The ISIS victory narrative has been sustained by the use of two elements – the actions and growth of the ISIS franchises and these continued attacks in the West such as Paris, which mimic and in a way replace the image of military victory on the ground. This still can be sustained for a while especially if the continued progress against ISIS on the ground in Iraq and Syria remains slow and gradual. As long as the idea of the ISIS *Khilafa*, the unsullied brand, remains plausible it will continue to attract recruits, copy cats and spawn terrorist operations focusing on targets of opportunity worldwide. You cannot "contain" the ISIS brand if the ISIS Caliphate is merely contained.

Only a few days ago, we read the well-connected David Ignatius say that victory against ISIS will take decades. Obviously this depends on how you define "victory" but I do not think that is the case, as able as the organization is and as much as the region is in disarray. Matthew Levitt and my old boss Ambassador Jim Jeffrey at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy have recently spelled out some commonsense political-military steps on the ground which could accelerate the process of defeating ISIS in its core-Caliphate area. I defer to military experts on what would be the most realistic timetable for accelerating this campaign.

Certainly the shedding of the ISIS "proto-state façade" is something to be achieved as soon as possible and will have important ramifications for their power to mobilize. But unfortunately, the sheer number of ISIS supporters, the volume of the organization and its adherents – as propagandists and as fighters – means that the organization's decline back into mere "Al-Qa'idism" – a terrorist group

targeting enemies in the region and beyond – will take longer than it should. And as long as it has a critical mass of numbers made of up of people of various nationalities, the group will be able to a certain extent, "surge" into wherever in the region governance may collapse or weaken. We see this, for example, in Libya and Yemen.

While it is certainly possible that additional pressure in the Middle East on the ISIS state will make it lash out and motivate its supporters in the West to more action like San Bernardino, this pressure can tarnish not just the ISIS brand but disrupt the actual propaganda cycle. This has actually happened in the past such as in 2012 when Yemeni military action against safe havens in South Yemen disrupted AQAP's production of material. You certainly can't produce material about the great life in the Caliphate if your propagandists and support structure are on the run.

In any case, there is a problem in that the actual reverses that the Islamic State has suffered from Mosul Dam in September 2014 to Ramadi in January 2016 are rarely if ever personalized or presented in a way that would be appealing or impactful to our target audience – that is to Sunni Arab Muslims or Westernized Muslims living in the diaspora. We have actually never extracted the full propaganda value from these victories in the way that ISIS has actually done so with some lesser accomplishments. The Iraqi military has made some small efforts in this direction in Arabic, some material was produced after the fall of most of Ramadi recently, but it was nothing like the volume, human dimension, immediacy, high quality and multiple foreign languages that ISIS provides in its material. Look at an ISIS battle video and look at anything produced by its adversaries and you will see the contrast.

LOWERING THE VOLUME

In addition to this political-military dimension, another way to weaken the ISIS brand is to interrupt its propaganda cycle. This may seem like bolting the door after the horses have fled the barn but it still has value in cutting up the ISIS online network and blowing up the image of constant volume and production. It is the sheer scale of the ISIS network that gives it some of its power. The distribution system now is well known and is mostly involving a few high-profile platforms such as Twitter, Germany-based Telegram, San Francisco-based Archive.org and Justpaste.it. That is just four key platforms – Facebook and YouTube are somewhat less problematic now.

To give you a sense of the rapid rise of Telegram, especially in the past six weeks, for most of 2015 MEMRI mined ISIS material principally from Twitter, followed

by Facebook and then YouTube. Since October of 2015, 35% of our material comes from Telegram, 34% from Twitter. 10% from Internet Archive, 7% from YouTube and 10% from Jihadi forums. Facebook as a source declined from 25% to 2%.

Telegram today is probably the single most important online safe haven for ISIS. In a recent discussion by ISIS supporters that we at MEMRI monitored, one well-known figure described Telegram as his "hideout" and lamented that he wasn't able to keep up with the many suspensions on Twitter. "Remember Twitter back in 2014 when we hijacked hashtags and spread the news for the entire world," he noted wistfully. It seems clear that Telegram's encrypted chats were used as a platform to recruit people in Southeast Asia with Malaysian police recently arresting several who has been recruited through this particular messaging service.

Suspension of accounts and deleting material is not some sort of panacea in the fight against the Islamic State, especially given the larger military and ideological dimensions, but it does strike a blow. Cyberwarfare and better policing of the terms of service of social media companies are not a crutch we should rely on but they are a real tool, even if some ISIS fanboy posts a picture of a cake celebrating the 100th time he was suspended on Twitter.

A 2016 MEMRI special report described in detail the developments that have been made over the past few months by the ISIS propaganda network to maintain a high production tempo and respond to an increase in disruption attempts by digital adversaries:

> ISIS has slowly integrated the whole media apparatus into its own internal structure, from production to distribution. ISIS operatives were always part of the distribution process, passing on the media content and relying on pro-ISIS supporter networks to distribute to a wide audience. However, with disruption making the job harder by shutting down key accounts, ISIS media now needs to rely on more systematic methods, such as robot accounts to automatically distribute content through hundreds of accounts simultaneously and thus reduce the overall effect of shutdowns.
>
> High definition videos, as are daily published by ISIS, require broadband connections and large remote storage space in order to be made available to a large public. At this stage of the distribution process, the data flow is concentrated between ISIS media production operatives who are locally holding onto the data, and public hosting services on which they are dependent on for wide distribution. This dependency on free public hosting services is a double edged sword: on the one hand, it makes ISIS less

vulnerable to cyber-attacks and allows them to use privacy protecting laws in their own favor; on the other hand, they are subject to censorship and the content may be deleted fairly fast.

ISIS operatives need to find a hosting platform where this voluminous, large size data will stay long enough for the entire distribution process to take effect and thus generate dozens of copies of the new material. At that moment, the data has lost its early vulnerability to disruption by opponents. The well-documented use of "bots", automatic distribution accounts, enables ISIS media managers to rapidly get the links out to primary distributors before any kind of censoring response has been made.

For those who seek to disrupt this cycle, the issue is the stemming of the data flow prior to it getting out of potential control within the network. There is a critical, vulnerable point in time when the data is shared but not yet copied in enough different places.

THE IDEOLOGICAL FIGHT AND USG EFFORTS

The third element – after the political-military and the technical – is the ideological. Here again, what needs to be done seems relatively straightforward if difficult. The difficulty factor is increased, in my view, by the suspicion and ambivalence which this Administration's policies have created among key partners, our Sunni Arab Muslim allies stretching from Morocco to the Gulf. Given the current crisis of authority and its profound political implications for these states, it will be difficult to convince all of them to take on the public war of ideas to discredit the very premises of Jihadist Salafism when some of these countries use these same premises for their own ends.

On the surface, the rebranding of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) into the Global Engagement Center seems to be nothing but more than a public relations gambit. In the State Department press release announcing it, not one of the responsibilities listed was new. All of them had been within CSCC's mandate and were things CSCC had worked on, with its limited funds, as far back as 2011. According to press accounts, the new Center will no longer be in the direct messaging business which would mean – if the budget is not increased and remains at the old amount of about $5.5 million – freeing up about $3.5 million a year for the creation of proxies and indirect messaging platforms. Certainly a reasonable increase earmarked for the Center's budget to fund overseas proxies is worth trying, along with solid performance metrics and Congressional oversight.

The coordination of counter-terrorism communications efforts, often highlighted as a key part of the old office, or the new office's work, is important. But all too often in government, and including in this particular effort, it becomes a way of prioritizing process over actual results and activity over real forward mention. And coordinating a stagnant or shrinking effort is of limited utility.

One way not to do it is – at least not yet – the single public signature State Department effort launched this year. I am on delicate ground here since I had a very small role to play in this process very early on in mid-2014, and I believe that there is a grain of a potentially good nascent effort here, and of course CSCC was intimately involved in this start-up working closely with the Bureau of Near East Affairs (NEA) in the State Department. Launched to great fanfare in July 2015, the Sawab Center in the United Arab Emirates is a largely UAE funded operation contracted out but also including two American FSOs detailed to the operation. It is, six months after its launch, a bit underwhelming with 2624 tweets since it was launched. This is like a smaller, more timid version of CSCC's digital outreach team.

Although it should have greater freedom to do things that overt USG communications lacked, Sawab so far is missing two things the ISIS brand has in abundance: volume and passion. Reportedly, there were deep individual tensions between NEA and CSCC at the launch of this initiative. One can hope that this initiative will mature and others in the pipeline like it will evolve into something more substantive and be replicated in ways that will be more consequential.

I don't want to dwell on it too much because it may seem like Schadenfreude but the USG basically wasted an entire year in the propaganda war in 2015. When I left CSCC in early February 2015, I assumed that the powers that be would go in a radically different direction from me but that whatever they did it would be well funded, politically supported and focused. None of those things seemed to have happened. The apparent micro-managing from the NSC, the risk adverse mentality, and the obsession of form over substance prevailed. One hopes something has been learned from this debacle and that the new leadership will be empowered and given freedom to work, but it is too early to tell.

I do want to recognize some of the valuable work CSCC seems to have done in 2015 in facilitating information on ISIS defectors and recanters. It is still early days, but is certainly a very worthwhile effort that should be supported and expanded. Governments receiving returnees from ISIS ranks should find creative ways to incentivize counter-radicalization media outreach as much as integration and law enforcement. And certainly, the leadership disorder at the top does not detract from the dogged and valuable work being done in this field by the

dedicated civil servants, Foreign Service Officers, and detailees from other government agencies involved in this effort.

Given the importance of Iraq and, especially, Syria, in the ISIS discourse and how it is sold to Western audiences and even non-Western populations distant from the Front, there is real value in empowering Syrian and Iraqi Sunni Muslim voices who can speak directly to wavering individuals outside the Middle East and say to them directly: "I am one of those Muslims whom ISIS claims to be defending and I am speaking from personal knowledge and the image you are being presented of our reality is a false one."

Look at the faces of the people talking in ISIS videos, how so many of them speak clearly and directly, stating with uncovered faces all sorts of (often awful) things with tremendous conviction and clarity. This is the power of personal testimony. I noticed a recent effort by the London Police to use Syrian mothers speaking in Arabic in one video to reach out to UK populations and that is a small step in the right direction. This is a worthy experiment. The question is whether this can be deepened and individualized to replicate the peer to peer radicalization process which is so often a key factor in influencing the actions of new recruits. It should be.

There should also be room for a well-funded regional media effort promoting tolerant, liberal Arab Muslim values in contradistinction to the vision of Salafi Jihadism. This is a longer term project that has value in promoting the pluralism, tolerance and open discourse which is anathema to Takfiri Salafi Jihadists like ISIS and Al-Qa'ida. Certainly there are enough eloquent individuals – Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians and others, even in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia – who believe in such a worldview but are rarely empowered by us or by anyone else for that matter, certainly not on a consistent basis and not like the support lavished on a range of Salafi – non-ISIS - media.

Again, this is not something the United States can do directly, but it can certainly promote. But attempting such an initiative also underscores a deficit in our counter-terrorism communications efforts. The default for our government is all too often to work with either friendly governments or to contract out our efforts to companies or organizations inside the Beltway. Nothing wrong with that but more is needed. Government should also look to empower and expand the scope of non-governmental messaging platforms and organizations within the Middle East with a goal towards building sustainable messaging efforts against Salafi Jihadists.

An ISIS Nineveh video a couple of days ago launched as part of a coordinated campaign on North Africa spent almost as much time attacking Sufi Muslims and

liberals as it did in criticizing the political authorities. The Salafi "sea" where ISIS rises from matters and it would seem to me to be good policy to seek to push back on a political and societal discourse which sets the stage for violence. This is not something the US Government can do directly but certainly something that needs to be prioritized. The Islamic State is ONE prominent and extreme part of a larger trend that inimical to our values and our foreign policy interests.

So this is the state of play in bringing down the ISIS brand. It isn't rocket science nor particularly exciting. Despite my profound policy differences with the Administration I do see that some of the basic elements needed in this fight are more or less in place, and slowly moving in the right direction, albeit in a weak, confused or poorly directed form. Certainly more tangible progress on the ground against ISIS is not unachievable this year even if we will have to rely on very problematic sectarian or ethnic local forces which do not contribute to solving some of the basic problems of governance and extreme sectarianism and can make it even worse.

Turning the ISIS Caliphate back into a terrorist/insurgent group running around in the wilderness of Syria and Iraq and which tries to launch attacks in the West, is not a definitive solution to the problem but it would definitely lead to a qualitative change in its current unique appeal. It removes some, but not all, of the motivation for individual San Bernardino-type action. It particularly damages the concept of the Islamic State as an ongoing concern with a bright future that a young person would want to support.

Disrupting the delivery system and ramping up the quantity and quality of the anti-ISIS material being generated on a daily basis are also important steps to blunt the utility and freshness of ISIS propaganda.

This revolutionary ISIS brand rose and flourished not because it was so startling effective – it very much is that, in relative terms – but because of the political, military and propaganda vacuum which allowed it to flourish and present a stance and an option – political and religious – that was both extreme and plausible. Working on the former part - the extreme message - is a longer term project, but working on the "plausible" part is something we need to do now and we do have some tools to do so.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Ambassador Fernandez.
Dr. Swift.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER SWIFT, PH.D., ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Mr. SWIFT. Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, honorable members, it is a pleasure to be here before you today and to be with my esteemed colleagues. I agree with General Keane that the first step in any war is to know your adversary and to know the nature of the war you are embarking upon, not changing it to or turning it into something alien to its own nature.

And I agree with Ambassador Fernandez that ISIS has a remarkable tendency to amplify its own importance and influence through messaging and narrative. But at the same time, we have to see the messaging as a symptom of the disease and understand the disease in its own context. And so what I would like to do with my statement today is provide you with a framework for understanding how individualized action contributes to and aggregates global jihad.

And so what I would like to do is start with a discussion of two major shifts in the global Salafi jihadi movement, and then put them into a practical context in terms of what we are seeing with ISIS-inspired attacks not just in the United States but also in western Europe.

There are two major trends in the Salafi jihadi movement today. The first is the localization of global jihad, and the second is the atomization of global jihad. These two things are distinct but complementary. This is how they work. Localization is a product of a generational shift in leadership from the individuals who started al-Qaeda and fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan to the deputies that survived al-Qaeda's failures and fought against the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We see this generational shift and we see with it a geographic shift in this focus of the Salafi jihadi movement from the cultural and geographic periphery of the Islamic world to the Sunni Arab core. In fact, if you look at the map provided by the Institute for the Study of War, you can see the drawing in to the Sunni Arab core as a fundamental part of this localization strategy.

Now what does localization do? Well, for the first time in nearly two decades, Salafi jihadi groups are fighting in Arab countries with a Sunni majority, where they speak the language, recognize the local tribal structure and can build roots, something that al-Qaeda was never able to do. This is why al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, initially, in Yemen, and now ISIS in Syria and Iraq has become the true base that al-Qaeda was never able to become. It has a population, it has a way of generating resources, it has a way of deploying and organizing manpower, money and materiel.

At the same time, we see the atomization of global jihad, and that is to say, violence undertaken by individuals who have a desire to become part of a broader imagined community. We see this in the attacks that we have experienced in the United States over the space of the last two decades, we see it in the messaging that

Ambassador Fernandez was discussing earlier, and we see it in the tragic events of San Bernardino.

How is this different? Well, unlike the localization of global jihad it doesn't build on organizations, it builds on ideas. And so while the localization of global jihad creates a political caliphate, a political community that provides a foundation, as Ambassador Fernandez noted the atomization of global jihad thrives on an imagined caliphate, an imagined community.

If you look at the thing that distinguishes ISIS from every single transnational terrorist syndicate in the world today it is the combination of this political community that has a foundation in real places and real people and this imagined community that exists online. What are the consequences strategically? Well, they are twofold. The first is, ISIS can organize, recruit and direct violent force to serve its ends. It uses direct action in the places where it has direct access. But ISIS can also recruit, inspire and direct indirect action through social media, through print media and through broadcast media. And that allows them to operate in our strategic depth without the need to commit their regular forces.

There are three implications for that, honorable members, and they are as follows. The first is we need to understand that ISIS is opportunistic. It uses different tools in different theaters depending on what its capabilities are in those places. Chairman Poe, if you look at the map you presented earlier, the number of direct ISIS attacks in Europe is substantially higher while the number of ISIS inspired attacks in the United States is substantially higher.

That breakdown is not surprising at all. Europe has closer proximity to the Syrian civil war, it is in the middle of a major refugee crisis, and they have large, alienated, domestic Muslim populations that are not well integrated into European society. Contrast that with the United States where we have a much more diffuse Muslim population, we are not proximate to a major conflict, and we are not experiencing a major refugee crisis.

The tools that ISIS uses here to influence, disrupt and intimidate are much more tools of facilitation and resonant effects, inspiring people online or engaging in recruiting them through online chat rooms, through Skype and through other sorts of mediated or facilitated dialogues.

So for the United States, the risk of terrorist infiltration is somewhat lower than it is compared to our European allies, but the risk of the homegrown radical, of the individual we are not able to identify early on is much, much higher, in part because that is the strategy ISIS is using here versus the strategy of infiltration that we have seen them use in Paris and elsewhere. This is why the trends we are seeing look so different, even though the underlying motives and ideology and psychology are the same.

Honorable members, I would like to conclude with one last thought before we get to question and answer, and that is that success in one theater does not necessarily create security in another. And here is what I mean by that. Terrorism is a low risk, high return strategy that weaker organizations use to reach beyond their grasp and punch above their weight. Organizations use terrorism when they are not able to confront and defeat their adversary directly.

So the more we contain, degrade, isolate ISIS in the Middle East, the more effective our strategy becomes in places like Iraq and Syria—and I agree with General Keane that we do need a more effective approach—the more likely it is that ISIS will lash out using indirect effects, using unconventional means in western Europe and the United States. Success in one area does not necessarily yield security in the other, and if we are going to turn up the temperature on ISIS in the Middle East we should anticipate, plan, and prepare for, on a whole of government basis, more terrorism here at home. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Swift follows:]

LOCALIZING GLOBAL JIHAD:

CONFRONTING SALAFI-JIHADI EXTREMISM IN THE WAKE OF THE SAN BERNADINO ATTACKS

Testimony by Dr. Christopher Swift

Adjunct Professor of National Security Studies
Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service
Georgetown University

Fellow, Center for National Security Law
University of Virginia School of Law

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs

Subcommittee on Terrorism
Non-Proliferation & Trade

February 10, 2016

Dr. Christopher Swift
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation & Trade

Introduction

Americans greeted the death of Osama bin Laden with a mixture of pride and relief. After ten years of conflict and countless casualties, many hoped that the loss of al-Qaeda's charismatic leader would finally bring the Global War on Terror to an end. Initially the signs seemed hopeful. Decimated by drone strikes and hunted by commandos, bin Laden's successors grew more paranoid, more marginalized, and more isolated from their local allies. Senior al-Qaeda leaders disappeared. Senior officials predicted al-Qaeda's defeat. And as the Arab Spring swept across the Middle East, a growing chorus of pundits and policymakers argued that it was time for United States to declare victory and come home.

These calls proved premature. Far from destroying al-Qaeda, bin Laden's death gave birth to a new generation of terrorist and insurgent leaders. Some of these militants survived prolonged exile in Pakistan and incarceration at Guantanamo Bay. Others came of age fighting U.S. forces in Iraq and found new inspiration amidst the horrors of the Syrian Civil War. Together these experiences produced adaptive terrorist organizations that combine the practical lessons of successful insurgencies with the irrational dictates of millenarian ideology. Grounded in Sunni Arab societies and chastened by bin Laden's failures, the global *salafi-jihad* movement is now more complex, more dynamic, and ultimately more dangerous than ever before.

Confronting these challenges requires a clear view of our adversaries and the threats they pose. Beginning with the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, and continuing through the September 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, transnational terrorist syndicates struck U.S. targets with the goal of inflicting pain, rally their followers, and undermining our will to fight. The same motives drive their efforts to plot, direct, or inspire so-called "lone wolf" attacks on U.S. soil. These circumstances reflect the immutable nature of armed conflict itself. Just as we make war on our adversaries abroad, our adversaries will make war on us here at home.

Hence the question before us is *whether* there is a threat, but rather *how* that threat manifests within western societies. The November 2015 Paris attacks demonstrate that highly motivated operatives from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are able to cross borders, infiltrate communities, and execute brutal operations. Yet incidents like the December 2015 mass shooting in San Bernardino can prove equally deadly – event in the absence of direction,

facilitation, or participation by established terrorist organizations. The result is a spectrum of prospective threats, each with its own unique causes, characteristics, and consequences.

Successfully confronting these theses threats requires three steps. First, policy-makers must identify the characteristics that distinguish organizations like the ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Second, they must describe the processes that dive individuals to join these organizations or act on their behalf. And third, they must avoid the temptation to use religion and nationality as proxies for ideology and psychology. In short, we must discern the character of the unconventional war in which we find ourselves – not mistaking it for, or turning it into, something alien to its true nature.

Localization & Atomization

Two trends drive the evolution of the global *salafi-jihadi* movement. The first is localization. More than two decades ago, al-Qaeda and other transnational terrorist syndicates operated on the cultural and geographic periphery of the Islamic world. From Afghanistan and Bosnia to Chechnya and Somalia, these militants sought to colonize foreign societies, radicalize indigenous populations, and transform local conflicts into new front in a globalize, homogenized jihad. This strategy proved short-sighted. Restrained by cultural, linguistic, and even religious differences, veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War like Ibn al-Khattab and Ayman al-Zawahiri found themselves increasingly dependent on the local hosts.

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq shattered this paradigm. Within weeks, foreign fighters abandoned isolated theatres along Islam's periphery in favor of new wars in its Sunni Arab core. This migration grounded militants in more permissive environments. Rather than adapting to foreign languages and cultures, they now operated in Arabic-speaking societies with familiar tribal structures. The result was more robust and resilient organizations. Whether it is AQAP in Yemen or ISIS in Syria and Iraq, al-Qaeda's most successful successors now wage global jihad by organizing and sustaining local campaigns.

The second key trend is atomization. From the November 2009 shootings at Ft. Hood to the January 2015 massacre at the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters in Paris, a growing number of self-styled *jihadis* now operate with few meaningful ties to a discernable terrorist syndicate. Organizations like AQAP actively encourage this phenomenon, using the online magazine

Inspire to instruct English-speaking sympathizers in basic terrorist tactics while inciting them to strike specific target sets. This approach allows AQAP to profit from the actions of unrelated parties, even when they cannot control the operation or the outcome.

ISIS leverages atomization with far greater effect. Deftly deploying print, broadcast, and social media, the organization engages sympathizers in the West through a steady stream of violent images, false premises, and easy answers. Branding is merely one element in this strategy. Instead, the goal is to surmount ISIS's conventional weakness by inspiring – and in some instances directing – armed attacks in our strategic depth. The fact that these actors have no terrorist training or ties is inconsequential. By claiming their actions, ISIS constructs a "virtual" Caliphate that exceeds the boundaries and capabilities that limit the physical one.

Localization and atomization are distinct phenomena. The former grounds organizations like ISIS in political communities with a discrete population, territory, and resources. The latter casts an "imagined communities" where individuals seek meaning and membership though a common message and mission. Yet these phenomena are also complementary. Localization gives ISIS a foundation for recruiting, radicalizing, and mobilizing supporters. Atomization, in turn, provides a reservoir of alienated individuals willing to fight and die for a cause. More than anything else, it is this unique correlation of a political community with and an imagined community that distinguishes ISIS from other transnational terrorist syndicates.

Radicalization & Mobilization

Like most terrorist and insurgent groups, ISIS engages in direct operations using its own regularly constituted forces. Some of these militants are "foreign fighters" who abandoned conflicts in other countries to participate in Iraq's Sunni insurgency and the Syrian Civil War. Others are exiles, criminals, or zealots from poorly integrated immigrant communities in the West. So it should not surprise us when ISIS operatives cross international borders and attack our allies in Turkey, France, and other countries. Their means may be unconventional, but their motives and methods are familiar.

The same is not necessary true for ISIS-inspired attacks. As the mass shooting in San Bernardino demonstrates, it is not always clear whether militants are acting on behalf of ISIS or whether ISIS is appropriating individual actions. The *Charlie Hebdo* massacre underscores this

ambiguity, with perpetrators embracing both AQAP and ISIS even though the two organizations are competitors. Against this backdrop, understanding the pathways that lead individuals to violent jihad is more important than attributing the violence to a particular organization. This is especially true when it comes to identifying and preventing homegrown terror.

My research reveals four distinct pathways to violent jihad: indoctrination, collaboration, facilitation, and resonant effects.[1] Indoctrination occurs when individuals travel to foreign countries, join terrorist syndicates, and subsequently operate through these organizations. Some of these recruits then return to the West to conduct operations at the direction of their foreign leadership. The classic example is Mohammed Atah, who underwent extensive training at an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan before September 11th. More recent examples include the perpetrators of the November 2015 Paris attacks, who fought with ISIS in Syria before returning to France and Belgium.

Collaboration, by comparison, occurs when individual receive training from terrorist organization without joining its ranks or acting on its behalf. Faisal Shazad's interaction with the Pakistani Taliban is a case in point. Driven by his opposition to the U.S. war in Afghanistan, Shazad traveled to Pakistan, learned to build bombs, and then returned to the United States to orchestrate a failed attack on tourists in Times Square. Yet unlike someone undergoing indoctrination, there is no indication that Shazad fought alongside the Pakistani Taliban or swore fealty to terrorist organization. His jihad was a personal jihad, with other terrorists playing a supporting role.

Facilitation lacks this organizational support. Instead, militants radicalize and mobilize through a relationship with a spiritual mentor. Major Nidal Hassan's email dialogue with the radical Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki may be one such example, with the perpetrator of the Fort Hood shootings seeking guidance on the lawfulness of killing soldiers and civilians. ISIS uses similar strategies, engaging prospective supporters through chat rooms, e-mail, and Skype. This process typically involves an assessment of the individual's piety, an evaluation of their capabilities, and a series of gradually escalating requests designed to test their loyalty. In each instance, the goal is to transform radical beliefs into violent action.

[1] Dr. Joseph Rosen of Dartmouth Medical School first introduced the term "resonant effects" to describe individualized patterns of *salafi-jihadi* violence.

Finally, resonant effects operate without organizational structure, technical support, or spiritual mentors. Instead, militants identify with a community or cause, radicalize by consuming *salafi-jihadi* propaganda, and mobilize through their own self-directed action. This pathway is the most atomized, reflecting individual ideology and psychology rather than organizational dynamics. Notable examples include Tamerlane and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who perpetrated the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing with no discernable assistance or guidance from foreign supporters. Such violence is the most difficult to identify and interdict, and therefore the most likely source of future terrorist attacks.

Strategic Implications

These pathways present three key lessons. First, ISIS and other transnational terrorist syndicates are inherently opportunistic. This means that they will use the tools available to them in the theatres where they operate. In Western Europe, those tools include a large population of disaffected Muslim citizens, a growing cohort of foreign fighters with European passports, and an unprecedented refugee crisis that masks the flow of hostile forces. Those conditions favour indoctrination and collaboration, with ISIS using its resources to recruit, direct, or collaborate with individual militants. They also underscore the need for governments to coordinate military intelligence, and law enforcement capabilities across international boarders. Building walls and pointing figures does little to address the threat

Second, the threats we face in the United States are more likely to arise from facilitation and resonant effects. Unlike our European allies, we do share the same proximity to conflict zones in the greater Middle East and do not confront the same intense isolation and alienation within our own Muslim population. These facts do not eliminate the threat of terrorist infiltration from abroad. Yet do they encourage us to take a deeper at the causes and consequences of radicalization here at home. So long as ISIS can reach, inspire, and occasionally direct individuals through its messaging, it will leverage home-grown jihadis to intimidate the American people and undermine our collective will to fight. This is true even if ISIS plays no direct role in the violence itself.

Third, we need to recognize that ISIS uses terrorist strikes in the West to compensate for its own weaknesses in the Middle East. Terrorism is a low-risk, high-return strategy that allows

marginal actors to reach beyond their grasp and punch above their weight. Organizations use when they lack the means to confront their adversaries directly. This means that success in one theatre may not produce security in another. The more we contain and degrade ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the more likely they are strike back in Europe and the United States. This is the immutable nature of war, not an inherent failure of U.S. policy.

These lessons do not diminish the threat. Despite its growing vulnerability, ISIS's capacity to radicalize Islamic discourse, mobilize disaffected Muslims, and inspire violent individuals still presents a clear and present danger. We cannot, and indeed should not, pretend otherwise. But ultimately we decide what to protect and how to respond. If we accept ISIS's vision of civilizational conflict, then ISIS will define the nature of the war. If we overreact to ISIS's provocations, then ISIS will be in a stronger position to catalyze and consolidate its support. And if we surrender reason and tolerance to nativism and fear, then we ultimately undermine our society's capacity to adapt and prevail.

Mr. POE. Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony. It was excellent. I will yield 5 minutes to myself for some questions and get your answers.

I agree with you, Dr. Swift, that this is a multifaceted issue. We need a strategy to combat ISIS, but not just in the United States or not just in Syria, not just in North Africa, but online and all of the other avenues where we see ISIS creeping its ugly head up. We need strategy for all of the above, not just for one area.

General Keane, there has been some talk about—and I see your map and it is very disturbing, got all of North Africa under some part of an influence in areas of ISIS. What is the situation with ISIS' rumored movement toward Libya and moving their headquarters, if I can use that word, to Libya? Explain to us what is taking place here.

General KEANE. Well, first of all, it is much more than a rumor. It is a fact they have been putting fighters and resources into Libya for over a year now. And certainly, the social and political upheaval that is taking place in the Middle East is known to the committee members and certainly everybody at this table that radical Islamist groups take advantage of those events.

And Libya is by definition a failed state, and don't want to revisit why that happened but it is, and they are there taking huge advantage of that. I mean, conservative estimates are somewhere around 3,000 to 4,000 are now there and other estimates are as high as 10. I am skeptical about the higher number, but I don't have access to top secret information. But they have several thousand in there and they intend to expand it. They have put their own leaders on the ground there to assist with training and also with equipping, and I am confident they will be providing guidance to them.

Certainly they can be predators in terms of what is taking place in Africa itself. They have a movement already in the Sinai challenging Egypt and el-Sisi, and certainly they can influence that from Libya. They can also influence Tunisia. But most significantly, I think the thing that concerns most of us is the access it would give them to Europe, because they are a small body of water away from influencing Europe and bringing terrorism there.

So it is a potentially dangerous situation. I think the United States, here, is doing absolutely the right thing by recognizing that we just cannot take away the safe havens, which we are doing as I indicated not with the sense of urgency I think it needs; that we have to look at these affiliates as well, prioritize them in what are the most dangerous and work with partners as much as we can to deal with this. This should not be the burden of the United States military exclusively when we have so many people in the region who are concerned about this threat as much as we are. And that is why I believe that partnering is essential to do this.

But I do believe our special operations are on this. I think the CIA has been collecting on this for some time, and there is also al-Qaeda groups in Libya that are dangerous as well. So that is, I think, where we are. We will make some progress against some of these groups. But I think until we partner with others in the region to take a more holistic approach to it, it won't be nearly effective as we can be.

Mr. POE. Two more questions. I would like for you to define the enemy more than just the name. I mean, they have been called ISIL, ISIS, Daesh, and all types of different names. But how would you define the enemy?

General KEANE. I mean, they are clearly a radical Islamist organization that is grounded in a political and theological ideology. They base it on a very strict interpretation of the Quran and Hadith, and they have huge geopolitical objectives in terms of not only dominating Muslim lands, but also in terms of ISIS stimulating an apocalyptic event in Europe which would carve out a rather large caliphate for them with also eventually seeking world domination.

They are somewhat similar to the al-Qaeda in that respect, but the methodology that they go about achieving it are somewhat different. And so I think ISIS in that terms is the best way to describe it, and I would agree with the Ambassador of how they have been able to achieve success in what they are doing as well.

Mr. POE. My time has expired. I will yield to the ranking member, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One thought I had when we talk about our coalition. We can all get up and sign on together, take pictures together, issue statements together, but one of the things that really doesn't line up and I think it is critical, is the hierarchy of interests in terms of ISIL with our coalition. Now let us set Europe aside as a separate example. I am going around the Mideast region and Northern African region, and who among our coalition has ISIL ranked number one as their concern? Turkey, I think, it is number three or four. Saudi Arabia, it is not number one, in my opinion. So we are lining up with this coalition, but that is primary concern right now in terms of our own. Name another country and the other region outside of our European allies that ranks at number one. Can you?

General KEANE. I think in the Middle East, the country, I believe, that puts ISIS ahead of the Iranian influence in the Middle East, most all these other countries consider, Sunni Arab countries consider Iran the greatest threat, and I agree with that assessment. But Egypt would put it number one.

Mr. KEATING. Any other thoughts on that, the imperfect coalition?

Mr. SWIFT. Ranking Member Keating, I would say that Russia probably puts ISIS number one for the purposes of propaganda, but not for the purposes of operations. And to the extent that ISIS is a threat, it is a threat to a proxy rather than a threat to Russia's own interests.

Mr. KEATING. Ambassador?

Ambassador FERNANDEZ. I would just add, sir, that obviously Iraq would put it as number one. Not out of any special devotion to eliminate ISIS, but because it obviously represents an immediate national security threat. The problem with Iraq seeing it that way is it sees it within the lens of the problem of sectarianism within Iraq. The only problems of the Iraqi Government itself it has with its own Sunni Arab population.

Mr. KEATING. Just to make another observation when I look at the map, General. King Abdullah met with a group of us not long

ago, and he said here is the battlefront, and he had 17 points but they almost juxtapose over your regions as well. I mean, it is important to defeat ISIL, to take away their territory obviously, but we can't lose that perspective that this map presents and what King Abdullah said as well. I mean, that is also our front line and it is spread all over the place. Isn't that an important perspective?

General KEANE. Well, I agree. I mean, I have another map that shows the influence of Iran and put it in red, the countries they are dominating in green, essentially Sunni Arab countries. Most of the Middle East countries look at that map and take that as their largest threat.

I mean, what I was trying to say at the end of my remarks, is that certainly ISIS exists and is succeeding, but it is part of a larger story that is taking place in the Middle East with the collapse of the order that is there, and also a much larger geopolitical story where Iran, Russia, and China are also pushing back on international order which has some impact. I don't think you can look at these threats in isolation that I believe is what you are suggesting.

Mr. KEATING. Yes.

General KEANE. And I would agree with that, Congressman Keating. But nonetheless, as you are working with these threats it does take some intellectual muscle to determine how best to meet these challenges.

Mr. KEATING. This is a great topic and so expansive, but let me just jump to something more recent. The siege in Aleppo, how is that going to change the landscape going forward? Some of the people, they are pretty much—pretty tough choices for people in that area. There is the Assad government, and then the Syrian rebels are now taking a very important hit here. And what about the influence of al-Nusra in this?

Ambassador FERNANDEZ. Sir, if I could add, I think that is a really important question and it goes to what General Keane just said. ISIS is the most prominent part of a larger phenomenon of radical Sunni Arab revivalism. But ISIS' success has also done something else. It has ignited a political, ideological, military arms race among the al-Qaeda franchises.

When al-Qaeda, when ISIS rose in al-Qaeda, it was kind of dumbfounded. Al-Qaeda central was these old men in Waziristan. But the franchises have learned, they have adapted, some better and some worse. The Nusra Front has been in the forefront of being smart, creative, and planning really, really well.

Obviously, and by the way, the fall of Aleppo, one thing that of course it does is it discredits the West, it discredits the United States, and it simplifies both for the two best worst actors' remaining standing, the Assad regime on the one hand and ISIS on the other. That is actually good for them and it is bad for us.

Mr. KEATING. That is a terrible choice.

Just quickly, Dr. Swift.

Mr. SWIFT. Ranking Member Keating, I wanted to go back and ask, point out a broader issue about the map. I think when we look at this particular map we have to distinguish between ISIS' ambitions and their operations, and then we need to distinguish between their operations and their traction.

Traction requires building roots in a society, knowing where the bodies are buried, how to raise money, who the stakeholders are, who the political players are, what tribes to interface with. And if you look at what some of the most successful al-Qaeda successor organizations have done, they have really built themselves into whatever the local political, social and economic framework was in a particular place. That is the localization of global jihad that makes it possible for these organizations to do things that al-Qaeda and other transnational terrorist syndicates were never able to do.

When we are looking at where ISIS is going and what it can do, we really need to be looking at how far it has dug into the societies where it is operating versus the light touch or the ambition we see in their messaging, and break that down very consistently.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. I am going to yield back. My time is over. But I hope that threat can be picked up by other members' questions because that is very important. Thank you.

Mr. POE. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Cook.

Mr. COOK. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to switch gears a little bit. And I understand, by the way, it is a great hearing and everything, but why San Bernardino? I mean, in terms of the impact on it, it just seems—I could understand a military base. I can understand a hospital. But going into a county building and killing 14 people, they are certainly going to have all of San Bernardino County and the city, probably 99 percent of them, they might have been neutral on some of these issues but now to do that and particularly in an area where we have had some success where the different agencies have worked together as opposed to other states, cities, where it was very disjointed.

And as I said, I thought the police response was good. Even though 14 died, I think it could have been in the hundreds if it was a different objective. And could you just comment on that?

General KEANE. Well, I think all the three of us can do is speculate, but yes, there are certainly more vulnerable targets, greater targets for them to access. There has to be some relationship with the fact that Farook was an employee there, and I would suspect the relationship there was in the equation in making the decision. Familiarity is another.

But certainly there are other targets that would have had a significantly greater impact—thank God. And also, I think we all know also, because the police and the FBI reported it, they did intend to kill more people with the bombs that they had, but fortunately they did not go off.

Mr. COOK. General, I agree with you. And you had made a comment about intelligence, and I am not sure if I have a warm and fuzzy feeling. I understand national intelligence and everything else, but some of these things, getting down to local agencies in terms of—and any threat assessment is real, real iffy, but if I am somebody down there in the San Bernardino Police Department or the sheriff's department, I am interested if there is a threat on a terrorist activity, whether it is radical Islam, neo-Nazi, you name it, whether we can take action. Do you have any recommendations or suggestions on that?

General KEANE. Well, you are moving out of my expertise, but in dealing with law enforcement leaders, I mean, clearly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation as well as many of our major cities have very good intelligence systems. I think when you get beyond some of that and I believe that is what you are talking about, then there are issues there certainly.

And every time I have had a problem like this in the United States military, what I have always thrown at that problem is training and education and it usually has a payoff. So we have the expertise and we have got to get that expertise out to others, and certainly there is no lack of motivation and how you build effective intelligence systems and what the cues are, et cetera, and I think we can do that. But there is a problem.

Mr. COOK. Do you think it gets down to that level or do we need to do that? Because my experience, sometimes it is classified, we can't talk to you about this or it is too compartmentalized. And I don't know whether that would solve the problem or at least give them a warning, because it is going to happen again someplace. We have had it in Boston and some other place, and I am just wondering whether we have got to do that.

General KEANE. Well, I mean, it shouldn't surprise us when you get beyond major urban centers where they have the resources to be able to put together, actually, intelligence systems—obviously New York is the most notable—that smaller sheriff's departments are not going to have that resource. But also what they have is human intelligence because they are on the ground out there.

And I think the awareness that we are trying to build in this country, when you see something say something and work through the issues that the FBI has reported out that 80 percent of the school shootings and terrorist activities that have taken place in our country, the shooters have spoken to somebody about what they were going to do before they executed the act. So that means there is intelligence out there. Now whether we can educate the public enough so that peers, family members, those in the circle of relationships are willing to come forward is another issue.

Mr. COOK. Dr. Swift, you were going to comment real quick.

Mr. SWIFT. Representative Cook, I have had the pleasure working in fusion centers when I was doing financial intelligence at the Treasury Department and also the pleasure of advising joint terrorism task forces on some of these issues. There were two questions you asked, sir. The first, why San Bernardino, and the second, what can we do about it?

So the answer to the first question is the adversary picks the fight. They pick the weapon and the pick the terrain. And when you are dealing with inspired violence as opposed to directed violence, the terrain is going to be where the person who is inspired and self-motivated happens to find themselves. The weapon is going to be what they can acquire in that place, and the target is going to be whoever they think is the most appropriate target given those circumstances.

So when we are dealing with the self-radicalization phenomenon as opposed to something that is directed, it could be anywhere because what matters is not the direction that a command and con-

trol system is providing, but what exists in the mind of the person who is creating the act.

Mr. COOK. Thank you. I have got to yield back. They are giving me that evil eye.

Mr. POE. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There was a hearing earlier today in Foreign Affairs where it was disclosed that in the past year ISIS has had their footprint reduced in both Iraq and Syria. Iraq it was 40 percent, Syria it was 10 percent, with excessive air strikes led by the United States.

But what is, I think, most disturbing, and I think, General Keane, you had alluded to it is, is ISIS' introduction to the African continent. And there is a lot of instability to exploit in the African continent. There are 55 countries, the newest of which is South Sudan. There are more failed states in that continent than anywhere else, and as you also made reference to, its close proximity to Europe.

And when you look at the United States, I think we have done, again law enforcement and others have done a good job in integrating the Arab Muslim community. It is not the case in most European countries. In fact, Muslims make up about 10 percent of the French population, but they represent about 70 percent of the prison population. That is a disaffected group. That is a group that is ripe for radicalization.

So just if you could elaborate a little bit further on your concerns about the African continent and the ISIS presence in Libya, I think that would be very helpful to us.

General KEANE. Thank you. Well, clearly—by the way, ISW produces this map but this is ISIS' map. This is their graphics not ours. And clearly they are interested in North Africa and they are putting resources into it. I believe part of that is Egypt and part of that is also Europe. I believe they are going to continue to put those resources in there unless we counter them.

And remember, when they go into Europe they are very sensitive to what you just suggested; that there are Muslim communities in Europe that are not assimilated and they really want to foment the Muslim and non-Muslim divide. They want to take advantage of it. That is the apocalyptic event that they are describing. They bring Europe—in their minds; this is their goal—to a calamitous war based on that divide.

And one of the things that we must do in our own country and also in Europe is not overreact to this threat. What I mean by that is over-policing, taking away people's civil liberties, creating the sense of alienation in communities. We have got to be careful about how we deal with this.

So when the French President stands up and he is proud of the fact that he has conducted 800, 800 raids into Muslim communities, well, on the surface of that that sounds like a good thing. But I am willing to speculate that most of those raids did not yield much of anything, and yet he is busting down doors where kids are living and families are living and the rest of it.

I mean, we have the scars of this ourselves in the United States military because we were doing that in the beginning when we

were dealing with al-Qaeda and the Sunni insurgency in Iraq and we learned quickly from our mistakes. But that is exactly what ISIS wants. They want this overreaction. They want over-policing. They want them to take civil liberties away. They want that sense of alienation in Muslim communities to grow and fester to the point where more people are willing to take up arms.

So they are very interested in Europe because they want to take advantage of what is taking place there in those Muslim communities that do feel a sense of isolation. That is what they are about in going to Europe.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman from New York. The gentleman from California, Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. This hearing's title focuses us on ISIS. There is also the Shiite alliance headed by Tehran including Hezbollah, Assad and many of the forces in the Baghdad government. And I believe that that Shiite alliance is more dangerous. I think, General Keane, you agreed with that. They have killed more Americans starting with our Marines in Beirut, and including those they killed with IEDs given to the Taliban and given to forces fighting against us in Iraq. And just the Assad wing of that alliance—and I should mention the alliance also includes the Houthi in Yemen—but just the Assad wing has killed perhaps 200,000 innocent Sunnis. So they have killed more Arab civilians, they have killed more Americans.

But I think the chief difference is when ISIS kills 50 people they put it on YouTube. When Assad, he murders 1,000 civilians, he has the good taste to deny it. And so of course we are focused on ISIS as being the enemy and the great evil.

Twitter has announced that they are going after sites that are being used to recruit. They used to do a much worse job than Facebook; they are now apparently getting better. Gentlemen, I don't know if you have had enough time, because it has been a recent announcement, but do any of you have an opinion on whether Facebook and especially Twitter is going a good job in interrupting terrorist recruitment?

Ambassador?

Ambassador FERNANDEZ. Yes, sir. This is something that both when I was in the government and now at the Middle East Media Research Institute we study very closely. Facebook has actually led in efforts to clean up those platforms that it has, so it has really been a leader. We have seen that over the past year in kind of policing itself rather well.

Twitter was the happy hunting ground of ISIS a year ago. I remember in government it was basically a completely unpoliced state. They have taken these steps very recently. It is not the solution, but it is a very large step in the right direction and they are to be applauded for that.

Mr. SHERMAN. So if Facebook has done a——

Ambassador FERNANDEZ. Great job.

Mr. SHERMAN [continuing]. Great job, what phrase should today's Twitter deserves?

Ambassador FERNANDEZ. I would give them a C+.

Mr. SHERMAN. Ah, okay. I am going to move to the topic we dealt with at the full committee and that is defeating ISIS where it is,

because the existence of a caliphate, even if one that is shrunk, is an inspiration to demented minds in Paris, San Bernardino and elsewhere.

General, in World War II we carried out a serious strategic bombing campaign. And I was told by the French Ambassador we killed 90,000 French civilians in occupied Europe and yet we were greeted as liberators when we arrived. Yet our approach to strategic efforts against ISIS' economics and war building capacity is very different. For example, in the testimony today the administration did not disagree with the decision of the Iraqi Government to provide free electricity to Mosul and other areas controlled by ISIS. I don't remember us trying to provide free electricity, fuel or food to occupied Europe during World War II.

There is also, up until recently, ISIS has been paying persons who live in ISIS area and are subject to their taxation. I don't remember Charles de Gaulle parachuting bank notes into occupied France in order to pay people working for the government there.

And then of course we have had the zero—that we heard the testimony today that when it comes to hitting their tanker trucks, which allow them to sell petroleum, we are only willing to bomb the tanker trucks if we find them parked with the drivers away. We are not willing to hit the tanker trucks while they are moving because that would kill the driver or might endanger the driver.

What language would we be speaking here today if during World War II we had not hit any Nazi train or truck unless it was parked?

General KEANE. Well, I know. I mean, you are frustrated with that, the absurdity of all of it. Look at it. We live in literally different times and our values have shifted. Roosevelt and Churchill made a decision as you well know that it was not enough to defeat the German army and the Nazi military force. They believed they had to defeat the German people so it would not give rise to this kind of behavior for a third time in Europe. So we ran continuous bombing campaigns against major German cities that had no military value.

Mr. SHERMAN. If I can that is no——

General KEANE. We have to put that aside.

Mr. SHERMAN. I am talking about our bombing of occupied Europe where we were hitting strategically useful economic targets in occupied France.

General KEANE. When we bombed targets in Europe certainly we went after their war industry, and certainly most of the people who were working in their war industry were in fact civilians. And it is an absurdity that we would not take down ISIS' economic infrastructure even though civilians are working in it. That is number one.

Number two, and you alluded to it, the bombing campaign is different. I mean, even though I am very critical of this campaign because the rules of engagement is what you just described, in military terms are overly restrictive, the President made a policy decision he wanted zero civilian casualties. He was told that is very unrealistic.

Even though we have the most sophisticated precision guiding munitions and the most sophisticated system to protect the loss of

civilian life, when you are fighting a war in and amongst civilians, civilian deaths are not avoidable.

All that said, we go out of our way to avoid civilian casualties, but the bombing campaign still is not what it should be. Now when people tell you that in the Gulf War in '91 or in the Gulf War in 2003 or in Afghanistan we did thousands and thousands of attacks a day, remember what we were doing. We are going after a nation state's infrastructure which is largely a physical based system that supports a nation state.

In going after ISIS, most of those structures that they are using they have civilians in those structures with us and we know that so we have been unwilling to go after that. That is why I have been a proponent for a long time of conducting large scale, special operation forces raids, probably using rangers to do it, surprise attacks that take down these physical plants that ISIS is occupying in doing its business, all of the things that we have described that a safe haven does.

Some risk involved in that. That is direct combat. We have got the skill sets to do this and we could truly start to handicap this organization in a way that air power cannot.

Mr. POE. I thank all three of you for being here. Very informative, very fascinating. And the committee members may have some more questions for you and they will put those in writing and send them to you and then would expect some answers quickly. So the subcommittee is adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 3:59 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

Ted Poe (R-TX), Chairman

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade in Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Wednesday, February 10, 2016

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: After San Bernardino: The Future of ISIS-Inspired Attacks

WITNESSES: General Jack Keane, USA, Retired
Chairman of the Board
Institute for the Study of War

The Honorable Alberto M. Fernandez
Vice President
Middle East Media Research Institute

Christopher Swift, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor
Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service
Georgetown University

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Terrorism Nonproliferation and Trade* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* Date *February 10, 2016* Room *2200*

Starting Time *2:37 p.m.* Ending Time *3:59 p.m.*

Recesses [ ] (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ted Poe

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]
Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING:

"After San Bernardino: The Future of ISIS-Inspired Attacks"

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Reps. Poe, Cook, Zeldin, Keating, Sherman, Higgins,

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] **No** [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *3:59 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Director