THE PARIS ATTACKS: A STRATEGIC SHIFT BY ISIS?

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

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THE PARIS ATTACKS: A STRATEGIC SHIFT BY ISIS?

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2015

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

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:05 p.m., in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ted Poe (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. POE. The subcommittee will come to order. Without objection, all members will have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

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

At least 130 people were killed and hundreds more were wounded on November the 13th in Paris as a result of the terrorist rampage by ISIS. My condolences go out to all of those who lost their loved ones, their family and their friends on that day.

The shocking attack came in the context of a growing international aggression on the part of ISIS. Just the day before the Paris attacks, ISIS claimed credit for a twin suicide bombing in Beirut that killed at least 42 people. Two weeks before that, ISIS claimed to have downed a Russian airliner over the Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 people onboard. ISIS has claimed the lives of more than 800 people this year outside its so-called caliphate.

While the world has witnessed the strengthening of ISIS, the President had a different interpretation. On the same day, before the Paris attacks, the President said that ISIS was "contained" in Iraq and Syria. They may not be expanding their caliphate, but ISIS does not look contained to me.

American and European intelligence officials are now saying that ISIS has dedicated cell planning more terrorist attacks overseas. It is becoming clear that ISIS is not just a regional threat in the Middle East and that its overseas campaign of terror may have only just begun.

It has been over a year since the President promised to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS. U.S. air strikes have done little to reduce the number of ISIS fighters. Foreign fighters are being replenished each day. There simply have not been enough air strikes targeting vital ISIS locations.

Right after the Paris attacks, the French, God bless them, didn't take them long to start hitting ISIS' strategic locations in Syria guided by the U.S. Two weeks ago, we finally started to bomb trucks transporting oil for ISIS. It did not seem to happen earlier. The question is why.

ISIS made $100 million through oil trafficking in 2014. I am curious why there has only been one air strike on the group's oil operations since November.

And why don't we go after the oil fields that produced that oil that is being sold on the black market? According to the former CIA Director, there were environmental concerns about blowing up oil fields. So now we are fighting an environmentally correct war and trying to defeat ISIS. No wonder there is no success.

The President himself was forced to cancel the train and equip program that cost $½ billion after several false starts. Apparently, we need a strategy. We are failing in our efforts to counter foreign fighter travel. The majority of the Paris attackers were EU citizens who had traveled back and forth from fighting in Syria. The U.S. still does not have a national strategy to combat fighter travel.

We also have yet to devise a real strategy to combat terrorist use of social media. ISIS uses social media to advertise its propaganda, radicalize and recruit people all over the world. Right after the Paris attacks, ISIS supporters took to social media to praise the terrorists. How revolting is that? ISIS has released videos praising the attacks and calling for now attacks in New York and Washington, DC.

The administration has promised a strategy to counter online radicalization. That was in 2011. Four years later, we are still waiting on the strategy.

Not only that, we need to find better ways to deprive ISIS of their money. Their reign of terror is a result of having money to kill folks. Last year alone, ISIS made over $1 billion. They get money from ransom, killing endangered species in Africa, big dollar donors in the Middle East, taxing of locals that they control, and of course blood oil.

We need to start implementing a winning strategy against ISIS. Are we waiting to take the gloves off until ISIS commits a crime in the United States? It appears to me that we are on the defense, not the offense, when it comes to eliminating ISIS.

The first step toward a better strategy is acknowledging the one that we have now is really not enough. So we must be honest with ourselves, and we must do everything possible.

The bottom line is, it is our obligation to protect the American people. Continuing to believe in a policy that doesn't fit the bill will continue to endanger us all. So what is the plan? What is the road to defeating ISIS?

And I will now yield to the ranking member for his opening comments.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing. I would like to thank our witnesses for being here.

As we conduct today's hearing it is important to keep in our minds first and foremost the victims and their families of these attacks in all the countries. I am the cochair of the French Caucus

in the House. Just a few months ago, I was in Paris talking to counterterrorism officials and other officials who have worked very hard and were very aggressive in trying to deal with terrorist issues there, and still it just shows once again that these terrible events can occur despite how hard you work to prevent them from occurring.

And the title of the hearing asks whether the attacks in Paris represent a strategic shift in Daesh or ISIL. It clearly does. I am interested in our witnesses' perspectives on this question and hope that we will be able to have an informative discussion.

Whether or not they signal a major strategic shift—I think they do—however, the Paris attacks, together with the recent bombings in Beirut and the bombing of the Russian Metrojet in Egypt demonstrate an escalation of ISIL's or Daesh's terrorist activities outside of its bases for power in Iraq and Syria.

This is a concerning development, to say the least, one that has been met with a range of reactions from France and Turkey and Russia and the United States. What remains clear is that the United States and our international partners must work and communicate on all fronts to defeat ISIL.

ISIL is a unique threat because it is a global terrorist organization. Because it is, they have an apocalyptic view. And certainly it is a concern because they are translating that into significant territory. Its occupation provides substantial revenue through theft, extortion, taxation, and attracts foreign fighters drawn to the cause and supporting the supposed caliphate.

To defeat ISIL, we need to continue to assist our allies militarily to reverse the territorial gains made by ISIL, and we are making progress in this area. However, while ISIL suffers territorial losses in Iraq and Syria, it may ask to increasingly lash out at its enemies outside of the immediate region.

And in the longer term, however, according to its ideology, ISIL needs to control its territory to justify its existence. And ISIL, without significant territory, would be severely weakened.

But it is important to keep in mind that countering ISIL will require much more than military force. For example, we must do more to cut off ISIL's supply of money and manpower by more effectively countering terrorist recruitment, terrorist travel, and terrorist financing. We also need to work to counter ISIL's expanding influence beyond Iraq and Syria into its so-called provinces of Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, as well as other locations in Africa and Asia. And it is critical that we enhance and share counterterrorism intelligence and information with and among our international partners, particularly our European allies who are geographically closer to the Middle East and have seen greater numbers of foreign fighters travel to Iraq and Syria.

Ultimately, we also need to identify and address the root causes of why so many predominantly young adults are prepared to kill themselves in support of such a savage and morally bankrupt cause.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about this threat post-Paris and how the United States and its partners can work together to mitigate and eventually overcome this threat.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts.

I will now introduce the other cochair of the French Caucus, the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Judge Poe, for your leadership on what is so important, the attacks in Paris.

And, indeed, this is bipartisan. I am grateful to work with Congressman Keating as cochair of the French Caucus. And it is personal to me. I am of French heritage and very grateful for that. And we appreciate and have great sympathy for America's first ally, France.

The Parisian attacks came just 1 day after the President claimed that ISIL was contained, further showing that his policy, I believe, to protect American families is a legacy of failure.

What we have, sadly, ISIL, Daesh, is an ability to effectively coordinate mass murders of civilians across the world. We must never forget 9/11. It is clear that defeating ISIL will require a much more coordinated effort comprised of a broad coalition of America and its allies in Europe and the Middle East. I look forward to the recommendations of the distinguished panel here today and the insights on how we might counter ISIL's strategy to commit atrocities worldwide.

Thank you.

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

Mr. COOK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to be very, very brief. I just want to mention a hearing that I had this morning. I am also on the House Armed Services Committee, and we had an individual by the name of David Ignatius. He is actually a reporter for The Washington Post. And the subject was about ISIS. We talked about Paris, obviously. I thought the focus was going to be primarily on the military. But after listening to him, because he was talking about the history and the origins and everything else, which you really, really need to understand, where ISIS has been and where it is going and objectives and some of the things which the chair talked about.

It was an outstanding hearing. And I came away from it that I said maybe sometimes we have got to actually have a combination, like we did on that hearing that you had last week with Homeland Security, and where sometimes in the House Armed Services we are only focused on the military and we don't understand a lot of the foreign policy implications, the history, the religion, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, something that was talked about.

But, anyway, I recommend that in the future. Maybe if we could do this. I was just shocked how at knowledgeable this individual was. His father, by the way, was the former Secretary of the Navy many years ago, probably when I was coming into the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant. As I remind everybody, the most dangerous weapon in the world is a second lieutenant with a map and a compass.

But it was a great hearing. And I look forward to the witnesses that we have today. The French, now more than ever, are one of our strongest allies and we have to make sure we stand with them.

Thank you.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Colonel Cook.

The other gentleman from California Representative, Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for letting me participate.

Two weeks ago I was in Paris, which was just a matter of days after the massacre, and it was an honor for me, along with Representative Gabbard, that we were able to place a crossed American and French flag there at the sight of the slaughter that took place and for us to meet with French officials at a very high level to reassure them that Americans stand with them.

We have had a special relationship with the French people since their crucial support for American independence during our struggle for our own freedom. Such a relationship and the supporting relationship as we have had is going to be ever more important in the years ahead, because we are entering into a new era of history. The Cold War is over. The post-Cold War is over. And this era may well be known as the era of Islamic terrorism.

But whatever they call it, we need to be supportive of all of those who are attacking and trying to defeat radical Islam, and that is especially true of countries like France.

Thank you.

Mr. POE. Does any other member wish to make an opening statement?

If not, I will introduce the witnesses that we have. And without objection, all the witnesses' prepared statements will be made part of the record.

I ask that each witness please keep your presentation to no more than 5 minutes. I will advise everyone that we are supposed to have a series of votes in the next 20 to 30 minutes, but we will proceed with all of the statements of the witnesses first.

Mr. Max Boot is the Jeane Kirkpatrick senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is a military historian and foreign policy analyst, who has served as an adviser to the United States commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dr. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. His work focuses on al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other jihadist organizations with transnational ambitions.

Mr. Michael Weiss is the co-author of "ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror." He also appears on on-air analysis for CNN focusing on Syria, Iraq, ISIS, Russia, and Ukraine.

And Dr. Thomas Sanderson is the director and senior fellow for the Transnational Threats Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He currently investigates violent extremist activity across Africa and the Middle East.

I want to welcome all four of our experts this afternoon. And we will start with Mr. Boot.

STATEMENT OF MR. MAX BOOT, JEANE J. KIRKPATRICK SENIOR FELLOW FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BOOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is a privilege to be here to talk about such an important subject.

You know, I don't think that the President is being honest about what our strategy against ISIS actually is, because the President says we are out to degrade and defeat ISIS. In fact, I think what we are really trying to do at the moment is to contain it. We don't have a strategy to defeat and to destroy ISIS. What we have is barely a strategy to contain it, which has not been successful, as we have seen.

While it is true that the scope of ISIS' territorial control in Iraq and Syria has been slightly decreased over the course of the last 6 months or so, shrunk slightly at the periphery, nevertheless, ISIS remains a potent threat. It maintains its hold on Mosul, Raqqa, Ramadi, Palmyra, and a lot of other territory. And it is not content to dominate this Islamic State, so-called, in Iraq and Syria. It is expanding rapidly to places like Libya. And as we have seen, of course, in the case of Paris, it is also expanding its terror networks abroad so that it can strike literally anywhere in the world.

I believe that we actually need a strategy to make good on what the President said we must do, which is to destroy ISIS. And what is that going to take? Well, it is going to take a lot more than what we are doing at the moment, even notwithstanding the slight escalation announced yesterday by Secretary Carter when he said that a joint special operations task force was going to join the fight. That is a good step, something I have called for, for more than a year, but it is going to be insufficient. We need an integrated military and political strategy to destroy ISIS.

And it is not sufficient simply to focus on areas such as countering ISIS finance or countering ISIS propaganda online. Those are both things that we need to do, but in the end they will not be decisive. As long as ISIS controls a state the size of the United Kingdom, it will continue to have a potent appeal for jihadists around the world.

The only way to break its appeal is to destroy its hold on its territory. And how do we do that? Well, I think what we need is more military action on the part of the United States and our allies, but we also need a political strategy, and those two have to be closely intertwined, something that is not the case today.

In terms of military action, clearly, I think we need a more intensive bombing campaign. I mean, it is literally incomprehensible to me why 75 percent of U.S. attack sorties are coming back to base without dropping their weapons. That suggests that we are waging an extraordinarily restrained campaign. As Mike Vickers, the former under secretary of defense for intelligence, pointed out recently, in 2 months in Afghanistan, in the fall of 2001, we have dropped more bombs than we have in the case of Iraq and Syria in something like a year and a half.

So clearly, we need to step up the bombing campaign. We need to make that bombing campaign more effective by allowing our joint tactical air controllers onto the battlefield where they can actually call in strikes in an aggressive and precise way while avoiding civilian collateral damage.

We need special operations teams on the battlefield. Again, as I mentioned a second ago, the fact that we are putting JSOC into the fight, I think, is a good step, but it is insufficient. At the end of the day, I don't think that special operators alone are going to be

enough to win this battle. I think we also need to put more conventional forces onto the battlefield. And I would estimate something on the order of 20,000 to 30,000 troops will probably be required, which is well beyond the current level of about 3,500, but still well short of the 100,000-plus levels that we reached in Iraq at the height of the Iraq war.

I think those troops are necessary in order to galvanize and support a Sunni uprising against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. And this is really the way that we are going to defeat this organization. We are going to turn its constituency against it.

And what is that going to take? Well, in the first place, we have to give the Sunnis some assurance that if they rise up, that we will stand with them, that we will fight alongside of them, that they will not simply be slaughtered by these butchers in ISIS. And to give them any kind of assurance, we need to have more troops who can work alongside of them and protect them and enable them to be effective against ISIS.

But we also and crucially need a political strategy. We need to assure them that if they get rid of ISIS, they are not going to simply replace the tyranny of ISIS with the tyranny of Iran. We need to push for Sunni autonomy within Iraq. We need to push in Syria for the ouster of Bashar Assad, who has killed far more people than ISIS ever has. We need to offer the Sunnis a political end state that is worth fighting for. And if we do that, and if we provide them with a slightly greater level of support, I believe we can be more far successful against ISIS than we have been to date.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Boot follows:]

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

December 2, 2015

How to Defeat ISIS

Prepared statement by
Max Boot
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the
Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
United States House of Representatives
1st Session, *114*th Congress

Hearing on "The Paris Attacks: A Strategic Shift by ISIS?"

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me here to testify about the most pressing national security threat that we face—the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq, a.k.a. ISIS or ISIL. The recent terrorist attack in Paris which killed 129 people, along with other attacks from Sharm al-Sheikh to Beirut to Tunis, demonstrate this group's range and murderous effectiveness. ISIS is spawning "provinces" from Libya to Afghanistan to Nigeria. That ISIS is now threatening to attack the United States should cause us great concern. Mass-casualty attacks such as the one in Paris (or earlier in Mumbai) are easy to carry out and hard to stop. We are every bit as vulnerable as France.

And ISIS poses a threat not just with its terrorism but also with its impact on refugee flows from Syria. With hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the fighting in Syria, our Muslim and European allies are having trouble absorbing the inflow, and states such as Jordan risk being overwhelmed by this mass wave of migration.

There are many suggestions made for how to combat the spread of ISIS, particularly by concentrating on its finances and its use of the Internet to spread propaganda and draw in recruits. Counter-propaganda and counter-finance initiatives are worthwhile but they are unlikely to prove decisive. As long as ISIS continues

to control a "caliphate"—a state stretching across the borders of Syria and Iraq—it will be able to attract and train recruits. Inevitably some subset of those recruits will make their way out of Syria and Iraq and pose a threat to other countries especially the countries where they came from. In this regard it is particularly ominous to note that ISIS has hundreds of European recruits and dozens of Americans. And of course ISIS has the ability to inspire terrorists who never visit Syria at all but who simply come into contact with its online propaganda.

I am pessimistic that the US and allied governments will make much headway in isolating ISIS from the outside world—both the Internet and the physical borders of Syria and Iraq are too porous to make that a realistic possibility. This suggests that ISIS cannot be contained. It must be defeated.

But how?

As an immediate step I believe the U.S. must step up its bombing of Syria and Iraq. As former Undersecretary of Defense Michael Vickers has pointed out, the U.S. air campaign, which has been going on since August 2014, has dropped fewer bombs than we did in just two months in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. Some three-quarters of U.S. aircraft are returning to base without having dropped their payloads because of overly restrictive rules of engagement that need to be relaxed. In order to call in effective air strikes, U.S. Joint Tactical Air Controllers must be allowed to operate on the battlefield as they did in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. This will greatly increase the accuracy and effectiveness of U.S. air strikes.

But, important as air power is, it has never won a war by itself. Effective military action requires a combined-arms offensive. The U.S. can readily provide the air component. What about the ground component?

Obviously it would be ideal if someone else other than American soldiers could do the hard fighting on the ground needed to oust ISIS from Ramadi, Fallujah, Mosul, Tal Afar, Palmyra, Raqqa, and other strongholds. But we haven't had much luck in mobilizing such a proxy force so far.

Our greatest success has come with Kurdish forces in northern Syria and Iraq. Backed by U.S. airpower, they have managed to liberate a few towns such as Kobani in Syria and Sinjar in Iraq from the black-clad fanatics of ISIS. But there is a limit beyond which Kurdish forces will not and should not advance. They can be effective only in areas with a Kurdish majority. Once they enter Arab areas, they risk enflaming the situation and exacerbating sectarian tensions in ways that will redound to ISIS's advantage. Kurds cannot take and hold cities such as Raqqa and Ramadi.

Nor can the Shiite militias, the Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) and others, that Iran has mobilized in Iraq. These militias can prevent ISIS from advancing into Baghdad or into the Shiite heartland but, like the Kurds, they have little interest or ability in taking Arab areas. Some units of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) that remain under nonsectarian, professional leadership can have greater credibility in fighting in Sunni areas, but at the moment they are far too weak to advance by themselves even with U.S. air support. Unfortunately much of the leadership of the ISF has now been compromised by Shiite sectarian influence. These sectarian forces have no more interest in advancing into Ramadi than the Kurdish YPG has in advancing into Raqqa.

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So if the ground forces needed to defeat ISIS will not come from the Kurds or from the Shiites, where will they come? They must come from the Sunnis themselves. We somehow need to replicate the Anbar Awakening of 2006-2007 which flipped the Sunni population of Iraq against Al Qaeda in Iraq, the ISIS predecessor, and enabled the success of the "surge." This will be no easy feat given that we do not have 150,000 troops in Iraq, as we did then, and, even more importantly, we do not have much credibility with the Sunnis, because we abandoned them when we pulled our troops out of Iraq in 2011.

For the past couple of years U.S. diplomatic representatives have been urging leaders in Baghdad to create a National Guard that would incorporate the Sunni tribes. Baghdad has refused to do so, for the simple reason that Shiite powerbrokers have no interest in arming Sunnis. They see Sunnis in general, not just ISIS, as the enemy. I believe it is worthwhile to try one last time to achieve a more inclusive policy in Baghdad by sending high-level representatives such as Ryan Crocker and David Petraeus to negotiate on Washington's behalf and by threatening Baghdad with a cut-off of U.S. aid unless it does more to reach out to Sunnis. But given the level of Iranian influence in Baghdad—the Iranian-backed militias are far more important militarily to the regime than is American aid—I do not have much hope that such an initiative will succeed.

If Baghdad persists in refusing to reach out to Sunnis, I believe we must go around Baghdad and train and arm the Sunnis ourselves. There are already many thousands of Sunni refugees, including former Iraqi army officers, in the Kurdish Regional Government. This would be a safe area for the U.S. to train them into a force that, working with reconstituted Iraqi army divisions, could retake Mosul and then Ramadi.

To give the Sunnis confidence in rising up, we need to offer them more military support than is possible for 3,000 advisers—the current U.S. strength in Iraq—to do. I believe we will need a force of 20,000 to 30,000 personnel organized into five Assist and Advise Brigades and including a substantial Special Operations task force in order to galvanize and support a Sunni uprising in Iraq and Syria. If we make such a commitment, allies such as France, Britain, and Egypt are likely to step forward as well. As important as sending more troops is the need to loosen the overly restrictive rules of engagement which currently apply to our forces.

Our Special Operators need to directly target ISIS networks with regular raids as they once targeted AQI. This will yield valuable intelligence that will make the overall campaign much more effective. And our Special Operations, army and marine personnel need to work directly as combat advisers with Kurds, Sunni tribes, Yazidis, and elements of the Iraqi Security Forces to give them the confidence and capability to smash ISIS strongholds. Once that happens our forces could pull back and local allies, especially among the Sunnis, could provide the "hold" force needed to stabilize the post-ISIS environment.

I want to stress that to be successful this strategy needs a political as well as a military component. It is not enough to pledge more military aid to the Sunnis. We also need to give them some assurance of a political end-state that is attractive enough that they will be willing to fight for it. At the moment, when Sunnis on both sides of the border are being asked to substitute the tyranny of Iran and its sectarian proxies for the tyranny of ISIS, Sunnis see no particularly compelling reason to fight. We need to give them an objective worth fighting for.

3

John Bolton has proposed creating a new "Sunni-stan" out of both Syria and Iraq. I would not go quite that far because I think that Syrian and Iraqi Sunnis do not regard themselves as members of a single state and there are too many problems in trying to create a new country.

But I do think it is important to offer Iraqi Sunnis, if not independence, then autonomy within Iraq. We need to create a Sunni Regional Government, akin to the KRG, which would be protected by its own militia, the Sons of Iraq, and whose security ultimately would be guaranteed by the United States. To assure Sunnis that we will not again abandon them, we should pledge to maintain a U.S. garrison for the long haul in at least the KRG and possibly in Anbar and in Iraq proper as well. Obviously it would be ideal to get Baghdad's acquiescence to this new arrangement, but it can be implemented even over Baghdad's opposition. The SRG would be a viable political entity even if Baghdad refuses to share oil revenues from the southern oil fields, because geological surveys have shown that Anbar has considerable oil and gas deposits of its own which could be exploited once peace comes.

For the Sunnis of Syria, we need to offer a different deal. We need to assure them that we will act to remove Bashar Assad, who has killed far more people than ISIS. Until now we have been asking Syrian rebels to pledge to fight only ISIS and not Assad, and we are mystified that so few are willing to sign up under those terms. If we establish safe zones and no-fly zones, this would encourage Syrian Sunnis to see that the West is serious about toppling the homicidal Assad regime, and many more young men will be willing to sign up for military training under those circumstances. The initial protection of the safe zones would require some deployment of U.S. troops—one Assist and Advise brigade in the north along the Turkish border, another in the south along the Jordanian border. If we make such a commitment, European and Muslim allies are likely to join in. Eventually the protection of these safe zones could be turned over to moderate rebel forces that will be trained there.

No-fly zones and safe zones would have important benefits: They would allow Syrians to stay in their own country instead of becoming refugees; they would allow Syrian opposition leaders to exercise sovereignty over Syrian territory, preparing for the task of ruling the entire country once Assad is deposed; and they would allow moderate rebel fighters to be trained and armed in the territory of Syria itself. The northern safe zone is particularly important: It could be a launching pad for an offensive to take Raqqa, the ISIS capital, whose loss would split ISIS's line of communications between Iraq and Syria and deal it an important symbolic and substantive blow.

Against these benefits must be weighed the potential risk of confrontation with Russia, whose air force is already bombing U.S.-supported rebels in Syria. This is a very real concern, but we must not let fear of Putin paralyze us from acting. Make it clear to Russia that, while we do not seek confrontation, its forces will challenge ours at their own peril. Vladimir Putin is a classic bully who has shown that he advances when he meets no resistance but falls back when he knows that he will be confronting powerful adversaries. (This is why he has invaded Georgia and Ukraine, which are not NATO members, rather than Poland and the Baltic States, which are.) The Turkish shoot-down of a Russian jet has exposed Putin's bluster and is likely to make him think twice about confronting NATO forces in Syria.

The strategy I have laid out here today—call it "Afghanistan Plus" because it is modeled after the strategy used to take down the Taliban in the fall of 2001--is not easy to implement. It involves greater U.S. resources

and runs the risk of greater U.S. casualties. Those are not risks that can be taken lightly. But this plan also has a reasonable chance of success.

The same cannot be said for today's Operation Inherent Resolve, which seems to be premised on doing as little as possible. While we have been bombing ISIS since August 2014, its fundamentalist empire has shrunk slightly but it has become more dangerous than ever. We cannot afford to live with this extremist "caliphate." We cannot afford to ignore it or "contain" it. The existence of the Islamic State is a clear and pressing danger to the security of the United States and that of our allies. This threat must be confronted and destroyed before ISIS operatives attack us right here in Washington and in other American cities.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Boot.
Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, please, sir.

STATEMENT OF DAVEED GARTENSTEIN–ROSS, PH.D., SENIOR FELLOW, FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished members, it is an honor to be here to testify before you at this grave time. Apologies in advance for the fact that I am somewhat losing my voice. An infant plague has been running around my house, as many of you are familiar with.

On the specific question that the hearing asks, whether we are seeing a strategic shift on ISIS' part, my answer is no. I don't think this is the key question in the hearing. But I would submit that, in general, when the argument has been that a strategic shift is taking place, the presumption is that previously ISIS was much more focused in their own box. They were much more focus on building the caliphate and less so on carrying out attacks externally.

I would argue that they have been interested from the outset in carrying out external attacks. The best comprehensive treatment of this is written by two of my colleagues, Nathaniel Barr and Bridget Moreng, in Foreign Affairs recently. I have cited it in my testimony and actually adapted part of my testimony from their piece.

To quickly go over it, I think the rhetoric of ISIS has always suggested they were interested in carrying out attacks abroad.

Secondly, I think lone wolf attacks are very much misunderstood. Some of the lone wolf attacks they have engendered have indeed just been inspired by ISIS and had no connect to the organization. But others have been lone wolf attacks of individuals in Western societies who are actually taking orders from ISIS centrally. This was the case for several attackers in the United States who were inspired and directed by Junaid Hussein. This was also the case for a cell in Australia.

Finally, they previously attempted to carry out similar urban warfare-style attacks in the West. There is the plot that was broken up in Belgium back in January of this year, just about a week after the Charlie Hebdo massacre, in which the would-be attackers had grenades, small arms, and the kinds of things that were used in the Paris attack. Indeed, Abaaoud, one of the people who prepared the Paris attack, the ringleader of the Paris attack, had been in Belgium. So I think that previously they were trying to do this.

I do think that there are a couple of shifts we are likely to see on ISIS' part. One is, as they lose territory in Iraq and Syria, they are likely to devote more resources to carrying out terrorist attacks abroad. They have a narrative of strength. It is very important to them to demonstrate to their constituency that they are strong, that they are winning. That is one reason why their propaganda has always been so brutal. And I think that to show that they are strong, they will devote more resources to carrying out terrorist attacks abroad.

Secondly, I think that ISIS will show more of a focus on its near abroad, not just Iraq and Syria, but if you look at places like Libya in particular that they have expanded into, they clearly—and it was reported recently in a major publication—that ISIS is looking

to make sure that they have continuity, that if they lose enough ground in Iraq and Syria that the caliphate is no longer viable there that they may shift the locus of their caliphate over to Sirte, a city in Libya that they currently control.

This is a very thorny problem set. Let's make no mistake about that. This is difficult because of all the many players that you have on the ground.

So a few things to consider. The first is that I do think that defeating ISIS on the battlefield is key. They made a very bold move when they declared a caliphate, and in declaring a caliphate, they staked their legitimacy upon maintaining territory. Territoriality is very important to them. And if they no longer have a viable caliphate, that threatens upending their legitimacy in a way that other jihadist groups are not vulnerable to.

Secondly, I agree with the note about social media and its importance to ISIS. Their narrative of strength is key. I testified before the Senate on this issue earlier this year. I cite to my Senate testimony in the written testimony you have received. But I think that we have not done a good job of puncturing this narrative of strength.

A lot of their so-called gains have often been very exaggerated, and in fact they have experienced a number of major losses, especially in Africa, over the course of this year that are virtually unknown. There is a lot of opportunity to puncture this narrative of invulnerability that they have set up for themselves.

Another thing I would like to point to is Sirte. I mentioned that, but right now we know that the Islamic State is very strong there. We aren't taking any sort of action to counter this other base that they have outside of Iraq and Syria. I think that we should heavily consider what we should do to counter their strength outside of their immediate theater and in their near abroad.

As I said, this is a very thorny problem set. ISIS does have vulnerabilities, and significant vulnerabilities, and I think part of solving this problem set is not just looking at their strengths, but also seeing how we can make their own vulnerabilities work against them.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gartenstein-Ross follows:]

Congressional Testimony

The Paris Attacks: A Strategic Shift by ISIS?

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross
Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies
Chief Executive Officer, Valens Global

Hearing before the
U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

Washington, DC
December 2, 2015

FDD
FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES
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Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss the implications of the Paris attacks, and the broader questions that they raise about U.S. policy toward Syria.

In the immediate wake of the terrorist attack that brought down a Metrojet plane in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and the recent urban warfare-style attacks in Paris, many analysts concluded that these events marked a significant strategic shift on the part of the Islamic State (referred to hereafter as ISIS).[1] The most prominent articulation of the argument that ISIS had undertaken a strategic shift held that until the most recent wave of attacks, ISIS focused almost exclusively on establishing a caliphate and expanding the boundaries of its state in Syria, Iraq, and the surrounding regions. Thus, this view held that unlike al-Qaeda, which had long focused on planning terrorist attacks against the "far enemy" (the United States and other Western countries), ISIS confined its operations outside of its immediate region to inspiring attacks by sympathizers and adherents living in the West.

The view that ISIS has undertaken a major shift in its use of terrorist attacks abroad is fundamentally flawed. Rather than marking a strategic shift by ISIS, the Paris and Sinai attacks represent the culmination of the group's long-standing ambitions to carry out mass-casualty, high-profile attacks in Western states. For over a year, ISIS's top propagandists have made clear the group's intentions to strike the West. And the group has tried to make good on its threats: Since the beginning of 2015, ISIS operatives in Syria and Iraq have been involved in planning several high-profile plots against Western targets even prior to the most recent attacks.

ISIS's Attacks on the "Far Enemy": Not a Strategic Shift

A close reading of ISIS's propaganda reveals its longstanding intentions to cause mass destruction in the West. In January 2015, ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani released a statement praising ISIS sympathizers for carrying out plots in Australia, Belgium, Canada, and France, and called on Muslims to use any weapon available to inflict damage on the "crusaders."[2] After encouraging more lone wolf attacks in the West, Adnani issued a more ominous threat, saying that "what lies ahead will be worse—with Allah's permission—and more bitter, for you haven't seen anything from us just yet." While Adnani's statement divulged little about ISIS's operational plans, it suggested that the group harbored grander ambitions for striking the West.

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[1] The view that the attacks represented a strategic shift for ISIS is articulated in, for example, Eric Schmitt and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Strategy Shift for ISIS: Inflicting Terror in Distant Lands," *New York Times*, November 14, 2015.

Note that this section of my testimony was adapted from an article written by Nathaniel Barr and Bridget Moreng, analysts at my consulting firm Valens Global. See Nathaniel Barr and Bridget Moreng, "Preventing the Next Attack," *Foreign Affairs*, November 23, 2015. Barr and Moreng helped to produce the first draft of this testimony. Since they had written an article that directly—and comprehensively—addressed one of the key questions posed in this hearing just before I was asked to testify, we decided not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to take the somewhat unconventional step of adapting material written by other authors than myself (obviously, with their explicit permission).

[2] Abu Muhammed al-Adnani, "Say, 'Die in Your Rage!'," January 26, 2015, available at https://pietervanostaeyen.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/al-adnani-say-die-in-your-rage.pdf.

Statements in *Dabiq*, ISIS's English-language online magazine, also provide a window into the organization's intentions toward the West. In the fourth issue (released October 2014), ISIS noted that it is "very important that attacks take place in every country that has entered into the alliance against the Islamic State, especially the US, UK, France, Australia, and Germany."[3] This declaration, unlike Adnani's, was unambiguous.

If any further proof of ISIS's global terrorist aspirations is needed, the group provided it in the eighth issue of *Dabiq*, released in March 2015. In an article bearing the byline of John Cantlie, a British hostage and a gruesomely conscripted ISIS propagandist, a provocative question was posed: "How many more Westerners will die? The way things are going at the moment, the answer is many. France, Belgium, Denmark, Australia, and Canada, have all been the targets of mujahidin attacks over the last three months alone, and as more Islamic fighters ... pledge allegiance to the Islamic State, such attacks will surely only become more numerous and better-executed."[4]

Though ISIS has frequently threatened to attack the West, many analysts have long argued that the group's rhetoric did not match its actual ambitions. Some experts reasoned that the organization's central leadership was concentrating on fighting local regimes and non-state Shiite forces, and was thus unwilling to invest serious resources in plotting complex attacks against the West. According to this view, ISIS instead relied heavily on its social media capabilities to inspire sympathizers to carry out opportunistic attacks in the West. If its Western strategy were based primarily on lone wolf attacks, ISIS's threat to the homeland would be manageable—and, most likely, minimal. As noted by Juliette Kayyem, former Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security: "We can withstand random guys with low-level attacks and minimal consequences."[5]

But ISIS also possessed grander and deadlier ambitions. The group's efforts to inspire lone wolf attacks did not preclude it from pursuing a parallel track of planning large-scale operations. Indeed, the preoccupation that previously existed with the lone wolf phenomenon caused analysts to underestimate the threat of an ISIS-directed terrorist attack against the West.

ISIS's external operations capabilities have significantly evolved since the group declared its caliphate in June 2014. In the early months of the caliphate, the group's external operations were relatively limited, and lone wolves were indeed the primary means through which ISIS could strike the West. But by early 2015, ISIS had scaled up its external operations capabilities, thanks in large part to the involvement of several key European ISIS fighters, including the British nationals Reyaad Khan and Junaid Hussain (the latter of whom was linked to several plots in the United Kingdom and United States, including the May 2015 shooting at a Garland, Texas venue hosting a "Draw Muhammad" contest).[6] Another key player was Salim Benghalem, a French

[3] "Reflections on the Final Crusade," *Dabiq*, issue 4, September/October 2014, p. 44.
[4] John Cantlie, "Paradigm Shift," *Dabiq*, issue 8, March/April 2015, p. 64.
[5] Peter Baker and Eric Schmitt, "Paris Terror Attacks May Prompt More Aggressive U.S. Strategy on ISIS," *New York Times*, November 14, 2015.
[6] Elliott C. McLaughlin, "ISIS Jihadi Linked to Garland Attack has Long History as Hacker," CNN, May 7, 2015.

jihadist described as the commander of ISIS's French foreign fighter network, whom Western intelligence agencies have implicated in the recent Paris attacks.[7]

The group soon began plotting high-profile attacks on Europe. The first concrete sign of ISIS's European ambitions came just days after the notorious January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attack, when Belgian police killed two militants and arrested another in a raid in the town of Verviers.[8] Investigations revealed that all three men had fought with ISIS in Syria, and were using a house in the town to store weapons and build explosives.[9] Belgian officials warned that the cell was preparing for a major attack in their country.[10] They also learned that the Verviers cell was in contact with Belgian ISIS member Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who is believed to have served as the key intermediary between ISIS's senior leadership and the Verviers cell, and also played a central role in the Paris attacks.[11]

In an interview published in *Dabiq* in February 2015, Abaaoud revealed that he and two other Belgian ISIS members had traveled from Syria to Belgium to "terrorize the crusaders waging war against the Muslims."[12] Abaaoud explained that his foreign fighter cell had managed to "obtain weapons and set up a safe house while [they] planned operations against the crusaders." Though the Verviers plot was a clear indication of ISIS's ambitions to strike the West, it went largely unnoticed amid the tumult that followed the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.

In the months between the Verviers plot and the Russian plane crash, several more plots demonstrated the geographic reach—though not necessarily the competence—of ISIS's external operations. In April 2015, several teenagers were arrested in Melbourne, Australia in police described as a "major counterterrorism operation."[13] Australian authorities later revealed that the Melbourne cell had planned a gruesome attack on Anzac Day (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps Day), in which the plotters would run over a police officer, behead him, and use his weapon to carry out a shooting spree in Melbourne.[14] Investigators concluded that the plot's ringleaders had been in contact with Australian ISIS member Neil Prakash, who had attended Melbourne's al-Furqan center (a mosque that the Melbourne operatives had also frequented) before he left for Syria.[15] Prakash reportedly maintained relationships with al-Furqan attendees after he arrived in Syria, directing them to carry out domestic attacks.[16]

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[7] Shane Harris, "The Hunt for ISIS' French Chief 'Executioner,'" *Daily Beast*, November 14, 2015.
[8] "Belgian Anti-Terror Raid in Verviers Leaves Two Dead," BBC, January 16, 2015.
[9] Paul Cruickshank, "Inside the ISIS Plot to Attack the Heart of Europe," CNN, February 13, 2015.
[10] Andrew Higgins and Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, "An ISIS Militant From Belgium Whose Own Family Wanted Him Dead," *New York Times*, November 17, 2015.
[11] Aurelien Breeden, Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura and Katrin Benhold, "Call to Arms in France Amid Hunt for Belgian Suspect in Paris Attacks," *New York Times*, November 16, 2015.
[12] The interview with Abdelhamid Abaaoud can be found in "Interview with Abu Umar al-Baljiki," *Dabiq*, issue 7, February 2015, p. 72.
[13] Ralph Ellis and Ben Brumfield, "Australian Teens Held after 'ISIS-inspired' Plot Foiled," CNN, April 19, 2015.
[14] David Wroe, "Anzac Day Terrorism Plot Payback for Haider Shooting," *The Age* (Australia), April 20, 2015.
[15] David Wroe, "Terror Plot: Teenagers Linked to Top Islamic State Recruiter Abu Khalid al-Kambodi," *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 20, 2015.
[16] Paul Maley and Mark Schliebs, "Alleged Anzac Day Plotters Were Groomed From Frontline," *The Australian*, April 20, 2015.

Prakash was not the only ISIS foreign fighter with aspirations to strike his homeland. As previously mentioned, Junaid Hussain, a British citizen, was involved in several plots against the United Kingdom. Hussain, who was killed by a U.S. air strike in August 2015, was also involved in organizing what could have been a major attack in the United States. In the weeks prior to the Fourth of July holiday, the FBI publicly voiced concerns about an increase in chatter related to an ISIS attack. At least ten U.S. citizens were arrested in the lead-up to the July 4 weekend, and intelligence officials later revealed that strikes had been planned across the country, with ISIS recruiters based in Syria identifying potential operatives in the United States, and encouraging them to strike around the holiday weekend.[17]

After months of failed and foiled plots against Western targets, a confluence of factors enabled ISIS to succeed in Paris. Luck was certainly involved, as is the case for any successful terrorist attack. However, luck typically favors terrorists, especially if they make consistent efforts. More important than luck, however, was the ability of ISIS operatives to learn from their mistakes and to exploit holes in European security and intelligence capabilities. The Paris attacks provided definitive proof that European intelligence agencies are overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge posed by foreign fighters and domestic radicals. At least five of the operatives involved in the Paris attack had traveled to Syria to fight for ISIS. Abaaoud, the plot's ringleader, managed to move back and forth between Europe and Syria even after he was implicated in the Verviers plot, and was thus a highly wanted man.[18]

When viewed against the backdrop of nearly a year's worth of ISIS-directed plots against Western targets, the Paris and Sinai attacks seem less like a shift and more an indication of strategic continuity. These two attacks mark a shift not in intention but in outcome. However, if ISIS continues to lose ground in Syria and Iraq—as it has done lately—it may undertake a strategic shift of another variety, investing more resources in terrorist attacks to maintain its image of victory and momentum.

ISIS has several goals in attacking the West. There is no question its competition with al-Qaeda for supremacy over the global jihadist movement has factored into ISIS's strategic calculus. By carrying out high-profile attacks against Western targets, ISIS can increase its appeal to jihadist foot soldiers and impatient affiliates who may be tiring of al-Qaeda's strategic patience and pragmatism. In the days following the Paris attacks, ISIS released at least two videos directed at supporters of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, both of which highlighted ISIS's attacks as a reason that AQAP members should join its ranks. In considering U.S. policy toward Syria, it is important to understand not only ISIS's posture but also al-Qaeda's, as both are key players in that theater.

Al-Qaeda's Rebranding Campaign

[17] Pamela Brown and Jim Sciutto, "U.S. Law Enforcement Thwarted Plots Timed to July 4," CNN, July 10, 2015.
[18] Andrew Higgins and Kimiko De Freytas-Tamura, "Paris Attacks Suspect Killed in Shootout Had Plotted Terror For 11 Months," *New York Times*, November 19, 2015.

The Paris and Sinai attacks provide yet another example of how ISIS's rise has challenged al-Qaeda's position as the standard-bearer of the jihadist community. But ISIS's emergence and headline-grabbing behavior has also presented al-Qaeda with a strategic opportunity. For years, al-Qaeda has sought to remake its image, hoping to rid itself of the reputation for brutality it earned in large part through the excesses of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)—the group that would later rechristen itself as ISIS. Thanks to two parallel developments—ISIS's emergence and rising Sunni–Shia sectarian tensions in the Middle East—al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign has been invigorated. Al-Qaeda has taken on the image of a more reasonable, and perhaps controllable, alternative to ISIS. And as the rivalry between Iran and Sunni states rages, including proxy wars in Syria and Yemen, al-Qaeda can present itself as a bulwark against Iranian expansion.

Al-Qaeda's belief that it needed to remake its image dates back to the group's campaign in Iraq in the mid-2000s. AQI ascended rapidly to the fore of the global jihadist movement, then burnt out just as quickly, scorching al-Qaeda's image as well. AQI's early success during the U.S. occupation derived in part from its ability to spark sectarian strife through attacks into Shia areas: AQI correctly believed that it could interject itself into a sectarian civil war by presenting itself as the Sunnis' protector. Yet even while it offered protection from the Shia reprisals that it provoked, the group oppressed those same Sunnis by imposing an alien form of religious law through its reign of terror in Anbar province. An intelligence assessment written in August 2006 described AQI as the "dominant organization of influence" in Anbar.[19]

AQI's proclivity for brutality and indiscriminate violence raised concerns within al-Qaeda's senior leadership (AQSL), which feared that AQI would alienate Iraqis. Members of AQSL sent at least two letters—from then-deputy emir Ayman al-Zawahiri and *masul aqalim* (head of regions) Atiyah Abd al-Rahman—to AQI's emir Abu Musab al-Zarqawi exhorting the hotheaded Jordanian to moderate his approach. Zawahiri reprimanded Zarqawi for his videotaped beheadings of victims, warning the former street thug not to "be deceived by the praise of some of the zealous young men and their description of you as the shaykh of the slaughterers."[20] Both Zawahiri and Atiyah emphasized the need to win over the population, with Atiyah instructing him to gain Iraqis' support in a gradualist manner by "lauding them for the good they do, and being quiet about their shortcomings."[21]

The objections offered by Zawahiri and Atiyah were strategic rather than moral. Indeed, Zawahiri noted that rather than beheading AQI's prisoners, "we can kill the captives by bullet." The preeminence of strategic over moral concerns can be discerned also in al-Qaeda's current rebranding efforts, where rather than avoiding atrocities, al-Qaeda appears more concerned with keeping them off-camera and minimizing negative attention.

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[19] Col. Peter Devlin, "State of the Insurgency in al-Anbar," intelligence assessment, August 17, 2006, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/02/AR2007020201197.html.

[20] Ayman al-Zawahiri letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, July 2005, available at https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Zawahiris-Letter-to-Zarqawi-Translation.pdf.

[21] Atiyah Abd al-Rahman letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, late 2005, available at https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Atiyahs-Letter-to-Zarqawi-Translation.pdf.

Zarqawi disregarded these AQSL leaders' instructions, and after a period of repression, the Sunni population in Anbar rebelled in an uprising known as the *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement. The Sahwa soon spread to other provinces and, along with a "surge" in U.S. troops and American shift to population-centric counterinsurgency, contributed to AQI's downfall.

The damage done by AQI and its successor organizations was so severe that in January 2011 Adam Gadahn, an American-born al-Qaeda media strategist, wrote a letter to Osama bin Laden arguing that al-Qaeda should cut ties with its Iraqi branch. Gadahn contended that if al-Qaeda did not expel AQI, al-Qaeda's "reputation will be damaged more and more as a result of the acts and statements of" that group, "which is labeled under our organization."[22] There is no indication that Gadahn's suggestion was seriously entertained at the time.

AQI's failed experiment was a strategic inflection point for both al-Qaeda and the group that would become ISIS. AQSL viewed AQI's defeat as a repudiation of the group's approach, while it saw the U.S.'s population-centric approach as a success. Consequently, al-Qaeda began to adopt a more population-centric approach in its global operations in the wake of the Iraq war. ISIS, in contrast, viewed Zarqawi as a founding father who was above reproach. ISIS's continued adherence to Zarqawi's approach would drive tensions with its parent organization and contribute to its eventual expulsion from al-Qaeda.

Perhaps the clearest evidence that al-Qaeda had been making rebranding efforts before ISIS's rise can be found in a letter that bin Laden wrote to Atiyah in May 2010.[23] Bin Laden lamented the damage that affiliates had done to al-Qaeda's image, noting that indiscriminate violence had "led to the loss of the Muslims' sympathetic approach towards the mujahedin." Bin Laden proposed commencing a "new phase" in al-Qaeda's operations that would "regain the trust of a large portion of those who had lost their trust." Bin Laden emphasized minimizing Muslim casualties. He urged a new media strategy, ordering media operatives to avoid "everything that would have a negative impact on the perception of the nation towards the mujahedin."

AQSL even considered changing the organization's name. In a letter found in Abbottabad, an unidentified official remarked that the group's name had become dissociated from Islam, allowing Western states to claim that their war was with al-Qaeda and not the broader Muslim community.[24] The official asserted that al-Qaeda (*the base* in Arabic) had become associated solely with a "military base," without any "reference to our broader mission to unify the nation." The official proposed several alternative names that he believed would have greater resonance with the global Muslim community.

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[22] Adam Gadahn, letter to unknown recipient, January 2011, SOCOM-2012-0000004-HT, available at http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/SOCOM-2012-0000004-Trans.pdf.

[23] Letter from Osama bin Laden to Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, SOCOM-2012-00000019, May 2010, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2012/05/03/Foreign/Graphics/osama-bin-laden-documents-combined.pdf.

[24] Letter from unknown al-Qaeda official, SOCOM-2012-0000009, date unknown, available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2012/05/03/Foreign/Graphics/osama-bin-laden-documents-combined.pdf.

The Arab Spring was another watershed moment in al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign. With the fall of autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, al-Qaeda perceived an opportunity to expand into new theaters and introduce itself to populations that had little experience with al-Qaeda's ideology and worldview. In these post-revolutionary environments, al-Qaeda adopted a population-centric approach that included cooperation with local actors, gradual introduction of *sharia* law, and expansion through popular front groups, a tactic intended to avoid alienating or intimidating local populations for whom the al-Qaeda brand had negative connotations. The group also placed a premium on *dawa* (evangelism), with the goal of introducing local populations to the salafi jihadist methodology in a relatively unthreatening manner.

In September 2013, Zawahiri released a document entitled "General Guidelines for Jihad" that made public al-Qaeda's new, population-centric approach.[25] Zawahiri instructed affiliates to avoid conflict with Middle Eastern governments when possible, asserting that conflict with local regimes would distract from efforts to build bases of support. Zawahiri also instructed affiliates to minimize violent conflict with Shias and non-Muslims in order to prevent local uprisings, and to abstain from attacks that could result in Muslim civilian casualties. A purportedly leaked letter that Zawahiri wrote to IS's caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in September 2013 notes that the General Guidelines were distributed to all of al-Qaeda's affiliates for review prior to their publication to allow for comments and objections, thus suggesting that the document represents the unified policies of al-Qaeda as a whole.

Early efforts to change al-Qaeda's image yielded mixed results, as some affiliates executed the rebranding strategy poorly or inconsistently. However, al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign has benefitted from ISIS's emergence. While al-Qaeda's missteps prior to ISIS's rise received considerable media scrutiny (including in Mali and Yemen), the group's use of violence has been eclipsed by ISIS's unchecked atrocities. ISIS's beheadings, immolations, and mass executions have allowed al-Qaeda to change its image in a way that would have been unthinkable when the "Arab Spring" revolutions first gripped the region in 2011.

As part of its rebranding initiative, al-Qaeda has launched a full-blown media campaign in recent months, deploying top officials to give interviews with mainstream media outlets. These officials downplay the threat the group poses to the West, and sometimes even encourage the perception of al-Qaeda's weakness. One of the first concrete signs of this media offensive came in early 2015, when Zawahiri issued a directive to Abu Muhammad al-Julani, the emir of al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, ordering Julani to improve Nusra's ties with the Syrian population and other rebel groups.[26] Since then, Syria has become a primary testing ground for al-Qaeda's rebranding strategy. In March 2015, Al Jazeera aired an interview with Abu Sulayman al-Muhajir, an Australian cleric who became one of Nusra's top religious officials. Muhajir contrasted Nusra with ISIS, stating that Nusra's primary goal was to topple Assad and "restore the right of the

[25] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "General Guidelines for Jihad," September 2013, available at https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/dr-ayman-al-e1ba93awc481hirc4ab-22general-guidelines-for-the-work-of-a-jihc481dc4ab22-en.pdf.

[26] Charles Lister, "An Internal Struggle: Al-Qaeda's Syrian Affiliate Is Grappling With Its Identity," *Huffington Post*, May 31, 2015.

Muslim people to choose their leaders independently."[27] His emphasis on popular representation and claim that Nusra focused on national objectives would become hallmarks of Nusra's media campaign.

After Muhajir's interview, Nusra granted Al Jazeera a conversation with Julani. In May 2015, Nusra's emir sat for a 47-minute interview in which he too contrasted Nusra's approach with ISIS's extremism.[28] Julani asserted that Nusra's sole goal was to topple the Assad regime. He hedged on the question of whether Nusra would establish an Islamic state once Assad was removed, claiming that all rebel groups would be consulted. Julani adopted a comparatively tolerant stance toward religious minorities, promising that Nusra would neither target Druze nor Alawites. (Julani did say that Alawites would have to renounce elements of their faith that contradicted Islam, and Al Jazeera's English-language reporting on the interview charitably omitted these ominous statements.)[29]

Al-Qaeda ideologues have also been involved in rebranding efforts. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada, two of al-Qaeda's most prominent religious figures, gave an in-depth interview to the U.K.'s *Guardian* for an article published in June 2015.[30] Both Abu Qatada and Maqdisi slammed ISIS, while claiming that the group's emergence had caused al-Qaeda's organization to "collapse." The two clerics' statements look different when examined in the context of al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign: their portrayal of al-Qaeda as a dying organization fits the group's strategy of understating its strength in order to both avoid drawing the attention of Western militaries and alleviate Gulf states' fears.

Nusra has buttressed this media offensive by adopting a more collaborative approach toward other Syrian rebel factions. In March 2015, Nusra and several other prominent rebel groups, including the hardline salafi group Ahrar al-Sham, announced the establishment of a new coalition, Jaysh al-Fatah (Army of Conquest).[31] Since then, Nusra and its allies have made considerable gains in Idlib province. Nusra has exported this collaborative model to other provinces, and has signaled that it is open to sharing power with other organizations: After Jaysh al-Fatah captured Idlib city, Julani stated that Nusra would not "strive to rule the city or to monopolize it without others."[32] (Consistent with the uneven implementation of al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign—and the general

[27] "People & Power—Western Jihadis in Syria," Al Jazeera English, March 4, 2015, video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD_A3CHzyjQ.
[28] For video of Al Jazeera's Arabic-language interview with Julani, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QBaywzg0Gc.
[29] "Nusra Front Leader: We Will Not Target Syria's Alawites." Al Jazeera, May 27, 2015. In reality, Nusra's policies toward the Druze in areas it controls have been genocidal. It has generally employed "softer" genocidal policies (forced renunciation of the Druze faith and religious reeducation) rather than IS's mass executions, but that does not make Nusra's intent to destroy these religious minorities any less real. See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Druze Clues: Al-Nusra's Rebranding and What It Means for Syria," *Foreign Affairs*, October 6, 2015.
[30] Shiv Malik, Ali Younes, Spencer Ackerman and Mustafa Khalili, "How Isis Crippled Al-Qaida," *Guardian* (U.K.), June 10, 2015.
[31] Thomas Joscelyn, "Al-Qaeda and Allies Form Coalition to Battle Syrian Regime in Idlib," *Long War Journal*, March 24, 2015.
[32] "Al-Qaeda in Syria Signals Sharia Law for Captured City," Reuters, April 1, 2015.

tension between adopting a moderate face but remaining brutal in practice—some of Nusra's actions have departed from its goal of appearing more moderate to the world.)

Al-Qaeda is also implementing its rebranding strategy in Yemen, where the conflict between Iranian-backed Houthis and a Saudi-led military coalition, as well as ISIS's emergence, have enabled al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to recast itself as a force that can counter both the Houthis and ISIS. AQAP sometimes fights the Houthis alongside the Saudi-led coalition, as it did in the summer of 2015 in the coastal city of Aden.[33] At the same time, AQAP has engaged in a careful balancing act where it carries out attacks against Houthi militants while distancing itself from ISIS's terrorist operations against Houthi civilians.[34]

AQAP has also capitalized on the anarchic conditions in Yemen to carve out territory for itself, and has exhibited its new gradualist approach to governance. In April 2015, AQAP seized the city of Mukalla, the capital of Hadramawt province. The group refrained from hoisting jihadist banners, and even issued a statement refuting rumors that it would ban music and shorts for men.[35] AQAP established an umbrella group to rule Mukalla known as the Sons of Hadramawt, a name intended to emphasize local roots, and has generally avoided measures that could alienate the local population. AQAP will likely export this model of governance to other provinces as it continues to exploit Yemen's chaotic situation.

Al-Qaeda's rebranding efforts have already found some traction with local populations and Sunni states, and even some Western analysts. In both Syria and Yemen, al-Qaeda affiliates have received support from, or fought alongside, Sunni states. The Jaysh al-Fatah coalition in Syria has become a favorite aid recipient for Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, AQAP has benefitted from the Saudi-led coalition's preoccupation with the Houthi and Iranian threats. Mukalla residents say the tribes that run the city receive Saudi aid, some of which certainly reaches AQAP.[36] Saudi Arabia has refrained from carrying out air strikes against AQAP strongholds, and has turned a blind eye to AQAP developing a foothold in other parts of southern Yemen.[37] Prince Faisal bin Saud bin Abdulmohsen, a scholar at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, explained the Saudis' divergent approach toward al-Qaeda and ISIS: "At this point we must really differentiate between fanaticism and outright monstrosity."[38]

Though al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign poses definite risks for the organization, analysts seem to be underestimating al-Qaeda's strategic capacity to adapt and thrive in part due to ISIS's

[33] Maria Abi-Habib and Mohamed al-Kibsi, "Al-Qaeda Fights on Same Side as Saudi-Backed Militias in Yemen," *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2015.
[34] Thomas Joscelyn, "Why AQAP Quickly Denied Any Connection to Mosque Attacks," *Long War Journal*, March 20, 2015.
[35] Lee Keath and Maggie Michael, "In the Face of IS Successes, al-Qaeda Adapts, Grows Stronger," Associated Press, May 4, 2015.
[36] Maria Abi-Habib and Mohammed al-Kibsi, "Al-Qaeda Fights on Same Side as Saudi-Backed Militias in Yemen," *Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2015.
[37] Rene Slama, "Saudis Turn a Blind Eye as Qaeda Gains Ground in Yemen," Agence France Presse, August 24, 2015.
[38] Yaroslav Trofimov, "To U.S. Allies, al-Qaeda Affiliate in Syria Becomes the Lesser Evil," *Wall Street Journal*, June 11, 2015.

dominance over the headlines. Yet al-Qaeda's rebranding campaign leaves it well positioned to exploit political conditions in the Middle East for years to come.

Empowering Jabhat al-Nusra

In fact, recent reporting makes it seems that the U.S.'s policy of supporting "moderate" Syrian rebel factions is emboldening and empowering Jabhat al-Nusra. As part of the U.S.'s strategy to weaken Bashar al-Assad, the CIA has provided training and support, including weapons, ammunition and funds, to a variety of rebel factions fighting the regime. While the CIA has vetted the groups that receive lethal aid, some CIA-backed groups have gone on to collaborate with Nusra and the Jaysh al-Fatah coalition. This collaboration is not necessarily due to these groups being extremist, but may reflect the ground realities in Syria, where moderate factions have little choice but to play by the rules set by Nusra and other extremist factions that dominate the battlefield. But whether CIA-backed groups' cooperation with Nusra is borne out of necessity or choice, the end result is that weapons provided by the CIA are being put to use in Nusra-led offensives, allowing Nusra to expand its areas of control, and its influence, in northern Syria.

The CIA program has received relatively little media and congressional attention thus far, but clearly deserves greater scrutiny. Launched in 2013, the program was primarily intended as a means to increase military pressure on the Assad regime. Even with the U.S. strictly regulating arms flows to rebel factions, Nusra has gained access to weapons or functioned as a cobelligerent with U.S.-backed groups. In December 2014, Nusra and allied groups seized control of a Syrian military base in Idlib province, with CIA-backed rebel factions acknowledging that they had used TOW missiles, provided by the CIA, in the Nusra-led offensive. Rebel commanders claimed they had been forced by Nusra to use the TOW anti-tank missiles in the operation, and that Nusra had allowed the CIA-backed groups to retain control of the TOW missiles so that they could continue to receive support from the CIA in the future.[39] This incident provided one clear-cut example of how Nusra coerces weaker rebel factions, including CIA-backed groups, into supporting its efforts.

This trend continued into 2015, with CIA-backed rebel factions providing firepower as Nusra and allied groups made sweeping gains across northern Syria. In the spring of 2015, the Jaysh al-Fatah coalition seized broad swaths of territory in Idlib and Hama provinces, driving back regime forces and threatening the Assad regime's stronghold in Latakia Province. CIA-backed forces played an important, if little recognized, role in the offensive:

- One analyst remarked that the alacrity with which Nusra and aligned factions acquired territory in Idlib was due to two factors: suicide bombers and U.S.-provided TOW missiles.[40]

[39] Anne Barnard, "As Syria's Revolution Sputters, a Chaotic Stalemate," *New York Times*, December 28, 2014. Barnard writes: "One commander of a group that received antitank missiles said that some F.S.A. fighters were forced to operate them in the battle on behalf of the Nusra Front, which had captured them from American-backed groups—a turn of events that he worried would lead the United States to cut off support."

[40] Hassan Hassan, "Syria's Revitalized Rebels Make Big Gains in Assad's Heartland," *Foreign Policy*, April 28, 2015.

- Fursan ul-Haq and Division 13, two CIA-backed groups that have received lethal aid, including TOW missiles, have both publicly acknowledged that they operated alongside Nusra.[41]
- A Fursan ul-Haq commander, noting that TOW missiles had helped to repel Syrian tanks in Idlib, remarked: "There is something misunderstood by world powers: We have to work with Nusra Front and other groups to fight the regime and Daesh."[42]
- A spokesperson for Suquor al-Ghab, a CIA-backed group based in Hama Province that has received TOW missiles, defended his group's collaboration with Nusra, noting: "We work with all factions when there are attacks on the regime, either through direct cooperation or just coordinating the movements of troops so we don't fire at each other."[43]
- In southern Syria, CIA-backed factions such as the Southern Front collaborated with Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham in a June offensive in the city of Deraa.[44]

In piecing together the various reports about collaboration between CIA-backed rebel factions and Nusra, a clear picture emerges about the state of the battlefield in Syria. Nusra is one of the dominant players on the ground in northern Syria, and is thus able to dictate terms to smaller Syrian rebel factions, which have little choice but to accede to Nusra's demands or risk annihilation. The experience of Harakat Hazm and the Syrian Revolutionary Front, two CIA-backed groups that were virtually obliterated by Nusra in late 2014, present a cautionary tale to other Syria rebel factions.[45] Left with few viable alternatives, CIA-backed factions have entered into a "marriage of necessity" with Nusra.[46] This uneasy alliance plays directly into the hands of Nusra, which gains access to TOW missiles and other U.S. weapons by incorporating CIA-backed groups into its military operations.

The Obama administration has acknowledged that some CIA-backed factions have coordinated their operations with Nusra and other jihadist factions, but has not taken steps to cut weapons flows to those groups.[47] To the contrary, the United States, alongside Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, is currently ramping up support for Syrian rebel factions in response to the Russian military intervention in Syria. With Russian jets pounding anti-Assad rebel groups, including several CIA-backed units, the U.S. and its Sunni allies have drastically increased the amount of lethal aid, particularly anti-tank missiles, being provided to Syrian rebel factions.[48]

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[41] Dasha Afanasieva, "Shared Battlefield Goals Trump Ideology among Syria Rebels—for Now," Reuters, April 30, 2015.
[42] Nabih Bulos, "A 'Kaleidoscopic' Mix of Rebel Alliances on Syria's Battlefield," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2015.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ruth Sherlock, "Syrian Rebels Armed and Trained by US Surrender to al-Qaeda," *Telegraph*, November 2, 2014.
[46] Anne Barnard and Karam Shoumali, "U.S. Weaponry Is Turning Syria into Proxy War with Russia," *New York Times*, October 12, 2015.
[47] Karen DeYoung and Liz Sly, "U.S. Allies in Middle East Ramping Up Support for Rebel Forces in Syria," *Washington Post*, April 29, 2015.
[48] Adam Entous, "U.S., Allies to Boost Aid to Syria Rebels," *Wall Street Journal*, October 13, 2015.

This flow of weapons has had a noticeable impact on the battlefield. The commander of Fursan ul-Haq has noted that his forces had received a consistent supply of TOW missiles since the Russian campaign commenced.[49] Another rebel commander explained that when it came to TOW missiles, at this point "we can get as much as we need and whenever we need them."[50] The decision to increase support to Syrian rebel factions comes at a steep, albeit unappreciated, price.

Navigating Problem Sets in Syria and Iraq

As legislators weigh options in the Syria campaign, they will have to address a complex web of tensions and rivalries. The anti-ISIS "coalition" is fissiparous and riven with internal conflicts involving both state and non-state actors. This testimony concludes with several key challenges that the U.S. should address as it seeks to degrade and destroy ISIS in its stronghold of Syria and Iraq:

1. *Addressing coordination between CIA-backed rebels and extremist factions in Syria.* As the previous section discusses, al-Qaeda affiliates and associated groups have directly benefited from the CIA's program in Syria. This issue has not received sufficient attention from the Congress. Al-Qaeda is preparing itself for a multi-generational battle in the Middle East, and overlooking the group's gains in Syria today will present far more significant challenges down the road. This issue is of particular importance as the U.S. is considering providing even more high-end weapons, such as MANPADs.

2. *The designation of Syrian jihadist factions.* A number of key jihadist factions and coalitions in Syria—including Ahrar al-Sham, Jund al-Aqsa, and Jaysh al-Fatah—are not designated as terrorist organizations. There may be pragmatic reasons not to designate them, but there are also some pragmatic considerations weighing in favor of designation. This is an issue worthy of legislative consideration.

3. *Countering ISIS's "winner's message."* Though its recent attacks are a stunning success, ISIS has lost significant ground in Syria and Iraq, and has also experienced deep setbacks in Africa. Even many professionals who work on these issues are unaware of the group's many losses, not to mention the general public. Given that ISIS recruits around its message of strength, and inspires both recruits and lone wolf attackers in this way, the U.S. should more effectively counter this specific aspect of the group's messaging.[51]

4. *Overcoming infighting among Kurdish factions.* Many analysts have pointed to the Kurds as the ground force best positioned to reverse ISIS's gains in both Syria and Iraq

[49] Bassem Mroue, "Despite Russian Strikes, Syrian Rebels Hold Ground," Associated Press, November 6, 2015.
[50] Anne Barnard and Karam Shoumali, "U.S. Weaponry Is Turning Syria Into Proxy War With Russia," *New York Times*, October 12, 2015.
[51] I have discussed this in depth in a previous legislative testimony. See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Jihad 2.0: Social Media in the Next Evolution of Terrorist Recruitment," hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, May 7, 2015.

(a claim that is often disputed because of their difficulty making incursions into Arab areas). However, infighting between Kurdish political parties in Iraq has hindered security cooperation, disrupted economic growth, and threatened to upend stability in Iraqi Kurdistan.[52] Even the operation to retake the strategic city of Sinjar in Iraq was delayed by backbiting and political squabbles between various Kurdish factions.[53] If Iraq's Kurds cannot resolve their internal squabbles, it will be nearly impossible for them to mobilize against a determined opponent such as ISIS.

5. *Reining in the Popular Mobilization Committees (PMC).* With the Iraqi military still in a rebuilding stage, the Iraqi government has had to rely heavily on Iranian-backed PMCs to reverse ISIS's gains. PMC violence against Sunni populations fans the flames of sectarian hatred in Iraq, and sets the stage for an ongoing cycle of violence. ISIS's brutality is horrific, and is no way minimized by saying that we should pay attention the atrocities committed by the anti-ISIS forces as well.

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[52] Loveday Morris, "As Their Power Grows, Iraq's Kurds are Fighting Among Themselves," *Washington Post*, October 12, 2015. Morris's article notes:

> In recent months, Iraq's northern Kurdish region has seen unprecedented political and economic independence as relations with Baghdad have frayed. But now the region's own unity appears on the brink of collapse, at a time when it is battling the Islamic State militant group. At the center of the crisis is a political standoff between the dominant Kurdish Democratic Party, or the KDP, and the rival Movement for Change, or Gorran. The KDP accuses Gorran of fomenting a week of violent protests in which KDP offices have been attacked and at least five people have been killed. Gorran, in turn, says the KDP has flouted the democratic process to stay in power.

[53] Denise Natali, "Lessons from the Liberation of Sinjar," *War on the Rocks*, November 25, 2015.

Mr. POE. Thank you.
Mr. Weiss, statement, please.

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL WEISS, CO–AUTHOR, "ISIS: INSIDE THE ARMY OF TERROR"

Mr. WEISS. Thank you, Chairman Poe and Ranking Member Keating. It is an honor and pleasure, while slightly depressing to be here, given the circumstances of the mass murder in one of the world's best and cosmopolitan cities 2 weeks ago.

Last month I was in Istanbul on assignment, interviewing a defector from ISIS. Not just any defector, he had actually served in what is called the amn al-dawleh, which is their state security apparatus. This is the branch of their intelligence wing, which has four main pillars, that Mohammed Emwazi, also known as Jihadi John, had served in. They are responsible for interrogation and detention. They are also responsible for essentially creating a border guard. If you leave their territory, you have to pass through checkpoints.

In some cases, they are responsible for training foreign operatives. And the guy that I was interviewing, I gave him the pseudonym Abu Khaled, told me—this was in mid-October, or late October—that he remembers training two French fighters. And I asked him, where did they go, where are they now? He said they went back to France.

After the Paris attacks, I got in touch with him, and he said, "You know, I am more than 50 percent certain, if they weren't one of the suicide bombers or one of the gunmen who perpetrated the attacks, that they were involved in some way." He said to me, "Michael, ISIS has got sleeper cells all over the world." They have from the very beginning had a foreign expeditionary wing and a foreign policy.

And one of the things that struck me by his relay of what it was like in the 11 months he spent in this organization, they are a state. They conceive of themselves as a state. I know that the United States likes to downplay this and pretend that, no, this is just a terrorist organization, it can and will be defeated quite easily, but that is not how ISIS portrays themselves. And more importantly, as some of the other witnesses have said, that is not how the constituents of ISIS, Sunni Arabs, particularly in the tribal regions of eastern Syria and western-central Iraq see it.

If you are a member of ISIS, gentlemen, you have free health care. And what do I mean by free health care? If you could go to the eye doctor, if you have a toothache, that is all paid for. If you have cancer, they will send you to Turkey so you can get chemotherapy and put you up in a hotel.

You get a salary that beats the band, particularly in war-torn Syria. If you have a wife, you get a subsidy for her. Your rent is free. If you have children, you get subsidies for each child. If you take care of your parents and your in-laws, you get subsidies for them as well. It is like joining the Communist Party in the decaying days of the Soviet Union. There is a nomenklatura, a new class of jihadists.

And part of this ideological propaganda and exportation is what I would call a jihadist internationale. There are main planks to

this. We have all heard about the messianic, apocalyptic vision that they espouse. The end days will come in Dabiq, the suburb of Aleppo, where the armies of Rome will meet the armies of Islam, and Islam will be victorious.

But there is also a political project that underwrites this. Let's not forget, the people who run this organization standing behind Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, where did they come from? A lot of them had served in Saddam Hussein's intelligence service, in his military, in the Ba'ath Party. They had training from the Soviet KGB and the Stasi. Abu Khaled, the ISIS defector, told me, "Now, ISIS doesn't fight so well on the battlefield." And he would know, because he trained a lot of the infantry soldiers who went like lemmings to their death in Kobani. In fact, many of them defected or deserted and said, "We don't want any part of this. We just get bombed the minute we turn up in a house in that city."

I said, "So how did they manage to take all this territory?" He says, "They have very good tradecraft." They are great at spying. They infiltrate rival organizations. If it is the Free Syrian Army, they send an agent into a brigade or battalion of the FSA equipped with $200,000 to $300,000 cash to essentially bribe his way to the top of that organization or the top of that military unit, and all of a sudden he starts manipulating and finessing the activities of the FSA. Some of these groups are backed by the United States and the so-called Friends of Syria.

ISIS takes over territory before the advancing columns of tanks and Humvees and shock troops. They have already cultivated a constituency. They spend a fortune.

Most of the money they are making, by the way—you talk a lot about oil sales, you talk a lot about smuggling of artifacts or human trafficking, that is not it. They have an entire bureaucracy that levies fines and taxes and surcharge on any violation that they deem to be abuse of their penal code or their sharia law.

If you are caught smoking cigarettes, you have to sit for 3 days in a cage in the town al-Bab, if you are in al-Bab, and Aleppo. You also have to pay a fine. If you flee from ISIS-held territory, your house, your property, all of your assets are confiscated. They have a very sophisticated repossession and eminent domain policy. Okay?

This is the reason they want to terrain, because with terrain comes people. They are "governing," lording it over millions of people. And those millions of people are duty bound to pay taxes. I don't have to tell you what happens if they don't or if they defy ISIS or they try to flee.

Like any totalitarian political organization, the likes of which we have seen in the 20th century, there is a carrot-and-stick approach. There is a social outreach program: Come to the paradise of the caliphate, and you can have your Nutella, you can have your video games, you can have your bride, we will populate this land with the cubs and pearls of new generations who will know only life under the true Islam as it should be taught. And then, if you don't, or if you try to stand up or resist ISIS, you will be slaughtered.

You all remember the Al Anbar awakening in the mid-2000 period in Iraq, which was essentially a pragmatic relationship struck between the Sunni tribes and the U.S. military, not because the

U.S. military was seen as a liberating force, but it was seen as a more credible alternative than al-Qaeda in Iraq, the head loppers and butchers and rapists and monopolists, the gangsters who stole money from these tribes.

There is no 101st Airborne. There is no 1st Armored Division in Iraq. What there is today, we call it the Iraqi Security Forces, but in reality it is a consortium of Shia militias backed and trained and armed by the Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran. And many people in the Sunni heartland of Iraq see them as worse occupiers and worse conquerors than ISIS.

I know it is difficult to wrap your head around this. The Western imagination is very limited in this respect. But believe you me, in Syria we are paying a lot of attention to the Kurds. And every time I go on television or I talk to somebody, all of a sudden the Kurds are going to liberate all of the Middle East.

I have a great deal of respect for the Kurds. I want an independent State of Kurdistan. But I respect them so much that I don't think they would be so foolhardy or stupid to march into Raqqa city or their Deir Ezzor city, much less Palmyra, much less Fallujah or Ramadi. That is just not their game. They are not interested in that, because they know they will be slaughtered.

This what I would call, this sort of strategic region, the Euphrates River Valley, where they are still very much entrenched—I mean, they have lost terrain in northern Syria, they have lost Sinjar, their supply lines across Syria and Iraq have been interdicted—but they are entrenched in the part of those two countries that matters most to them. And the reason is because nobody is coming and presenting a more credible alternative to ISIS. This is the fundamental reality that needs to be appreciated by the United States Government.

A final point. In 2003, when the U.S. invaded Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of the organization known as ISIS, essentially made the case that the United States stupidly blundered into this country and accidentally handed it to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Today, ISIS isn't so sure it was an accident. What they are saying is, actually, no, there is a new coalition of the willing. It is the United States, Russia, mobilized, of course, by the Jews, backed now by Iran, the Shia militias and death squads of Syria and Iraq, Lebanese Hezbollah, and all the apostate or tyrannical Arab regimes in the Middle East and Turkey. There is what I would call a caliphate contra mundum conspiracy theory that ISIS is putting forward.

And the dangerous thing is, if you travel to the region, and I do it a lot, and you talk to Sunnis, they have a hard time telling where ISIS conspiracy theory ends and U.S. foreign policy begins. On a bad day, so do I, frankly. You know, how is that Russia has been allowed to establish a no-fly zone, bombing not ISIS, as even ISIS says in its latest issue of Dabiq, its propaganda magazine, but bombing Free Syrian Army and rebel groups that are fighting both Assad—actually, Assad, Hezbollah, the IRGC, ISIS, and Jabhat al-Nusra all at once, and doing so with, on occasion, sophisticated weapons, but more often than not AK–47s and hand grenades.

You know, this is the thing, geopolitics matters to ISIS. They pay much closer attention to our policy debates and our discussions—

they may be watching us on C–SPAN for all I know—than we do to what they are doing in their own terrain, in their own territory.

And, look, if you look at the profiles of these foreign fighters, if you look at the profiles of people who are conducting these terror spectaculars or operations abroad, it is almost out of central casting. They are not fanatical Muslims by birth. In fact, they are first generation. Their parents came to Europe. They made a good trade. They had a good living. They sent their kids to good universities or good finishing schools. And these kids become radicalized remotely. They turn on the television. They see American warplanes dropping bombs on Muslim babies. ISIS is exploiting that like you wouldn't believe.

We look at their atrocities, the immolation of a Jordanian airman. What we are not paying attention to is the other 20 minutes of the video where they are showing literally infants being pulled from the rubble and saying this was courtesy of a Jordanian or Saudi or American bomb. It is very compelling. It is very compelling.

And you don't have to be even a Muslim, much less a pious one or an Islamist, to find it so. And this is the pool of not even hardcore ideologues and supporters, but what I would call the fellow travelers of ISIS that they are drawing strength from. And, indeed, I mean, you may not be interested in the Middle East, but the Middle East is interested in you.

And this is the thing. The leitmotif of U.S. foreign policy today is the more we absent ourselves, the more equilibrium will rise. Qasem Soleimani can be the next David Petraeus. I have got news for you: We are at a more dangerous period now than we were immediately after 9/11, because right now the level of anti-Americanism, it is actually—some of it is grounded in fact. Some of it is grounded in a crushing reality. Five years of attritional warfare, where Bashar Assad has dropped chemical weapons, barrel bombs, you name it, everything but biological and nuclear weapons on his own people, targeting whom? The Sunnis, the exact people we are going to need to fight and defeat ISIS.

And in Iraq, 5 years of tolerating the thuggish regime of Nouri al-Maliki and now providing close air support to who? IRGC-backed proxy groups and militias who are liberating Tikrit only after U.S. F–16s come in. The Sunnis look at us like they hope this is a conspiracy, because if it is incompetence, then they absolutely have no faith in the United States.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weiss follows:]

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL WEISS

Co-Author of *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* and Senior Editor at The Daily Beast.

United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs

December 2, 2015

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, Members of the Committee: I'm honored and also more than a little depressed to be here today, because the occasion that warrants my testimony is the mass murder of 130 innocent people two weeks ago in one of the most cosmopolitan and well-trafficked cities in the world. The purpose of this hearing is to determine whether or not ISIS has altered its strategy of late and to weigh any possible U.S. policy responses to the Paris attacks. No doubt an implicit consideration of this discussion is that what has just transpired in France can and will happen in the United States eventually, and so this hearing is as much an effort to suss out ISIS's desire and capability to hit us in the homeland.

I hope I'm not stating the obvious when I point out that ISIS has every intention of doing just that, and it's largely a matter of luck that it hasn't been able to already. The jihadist organization refers to two symbolic milestones on the calendar as symbols to inspire and thrill all *mujahidin*. The first is 9/11, the butcher's bill and national psychological trauma of which ISIS would love nothing better than to replicate and improve upon; the second is the establishment of the so-called "Islamic State" nine years ago, in Iraq, when well over 100,000 American soldiers were still stationed in country and engaged in major combat operations to help pull an actual state out of the morass of an ISIS-instigated civil war. As the specific date of the birth of ISIS referenced in their propaganda remains unknown, this opens the possibility that any large-scale attack can become the Islamic State's national holiday.

Shocking events have an unfortunate habit of resetting our mental clock to Year Zero. Policymakers here and abroad often speak as if ISIS only debuted as a significant insurgency and international terror threat in June 2014, when its soldiers stormed into Iraq's second-largest city of Mosul, almost uncontested. The president surely forgot himself when, in conversation with the *New Yorker*'s David Remnick, he referred to the group that had dispatched mentally disabled girls in Tal Afar as suicide bombers and blew up on the Golden Mosque in Samarra as the "JV team." But as you well know, this is a jihadist franchise, which with we have grown intimately acquainted for over a decade. It has long memory and is playing an even longer game.

Has it altered its strategy? No, not really, although it has placed greater tactical emphasis on its foreign operations since its capacity for receiving emigrating jihadists from New Jersey to Peshawar has shrunk, thanks to better policing and the relative closure of the Syrian-Turkish border. Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, officially ISIS's spokesman but in reality the man in charge of its dominion in Syria, defined the "state's" foreign policy rather plainly in September: "If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State," he said, "then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be."

But Adnani was only reiterating what has *always* been ISIS's global ambition — to export its holy war well beyond its immediate precincts or purview. The domestic pillar of ISIS's project is what it calls "remaining and expanding" — the pushing of the borders of the caliphate in the Levant and Mesopotamia and the swelling of the ranks of its fighters and supporters there. We may pretend that ISIS is no state, but its ideologues and bureaucrats and petty officials behave as if they fully believe their own propaganda.

The foreign pillar is the opportunistic spreading of chaos, harm and wanton destruction in the West, relying upon agents who come *from* the West and who may or may not be returning veterans from a regional battlefield but rather everymen, Muslim or non-Muslim, who have been radicalized remotely. These jihadists are encouraged to strike at the *kufar*, the unbelievers, on the latter's home turf or wherever they may be found, using methods both clever and crude: "an explosive device, a bullet, a knife, a car, a rock, or even a boot or a fist," as al-Adnani elsewhere specified.

The two pillars have been in existence since the era of ISIS's founder and godfather, the Jordanian jailbird Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Lest we forget, Zarqawi personally beheaded the American contracter Nicholas Berg in Iraq in 2004; two years before that, he had a direct hand in the assassination of 60 year-old American citizen and USAID worker Laurence Foley in Amman. Even at the level of terrorist "spectaculars," Zarqawi never had foreign targets far from his mind. His first two in Iraq, after all, hit within twelve days of each other in 2003, were the Jordanian embassy and the United Nations headquarters, both in Baghdad. In 2004, Zarqawi's network was found to be planning larger-scale chemical weapons attacks against the U.S. embassy in Amman, the headquarters of Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate, and the Jordanian Prime Minister's Office — all of them, thankfully, interdicted by Jordanian authorities.

A year on, though, Jordan wasn't so lucky. In 2005, al-Qaeda in Iraq-linked suicide bombers blew themselves up at three separate hotels in Amman, killing 60. (One of those terrorists, Sajida al-Rishawi, whose bomb-belt failed to detonate, was hanged in February in retaliation for ISIS's immolation of Muadh al-Kasasbeh, the Jordanian pilot whose ejected from his crashing fighter jet into ISIS-held Syria earlier this year.)

In the mid-aughts, Germany's domestic intelligence arm, the BND, reportedly uncovered a Zarqawist cell operating in the Ruhr region of Germany, responsible for manu-

facture of fake passports for use in Afghanistan. Agents of that cell were plotting grenade attacks against the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

As it happens, a decade later, a different Jewish Museum — this one in Brussels — was assaulted by one of Zarqawi's heirs, the 29 year-old French-Algerian Mehdi Nemmouche, who shot and killed three people following his return from Syria, where he'd not only trained with ISIS but also acted a prison guard and particularly zealous torturer of Western hostages. Such was his penchant for sadism that Nemmouche's departure from the caliphate caused ISIS to breathe a sigh of relief, although he nevertheless perpetrated his slaughter as a willing executioner of the Islamic State.

In the first week of January 2015, a little more than a month after the formation of the anti-ISIS coalition, Amedy Coulibaly, another French national who had earlier pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, shot sixteen people in France in the space of two days, five of them dead, including an unarmed policewoman in Montrouge and every Jewish shopper who had the bad luck of being at the Hypercasher kosher supermarket at Porte de Vincennes, Paris. Prior to this attack, Coulibaly had managed to dispatch his wife, Umm Basīr al-Muhājirah, to Syria. And not long after Coulibaly and his victims had met their end, Umm Basīr told ISIS's propaganda rag *Dabiq:* "His eyes shined every time he would watch the videos of the Islamic State. He would say, 'Don't show me this,' because when he would watch the videos, it would make him want to perform *hijrah* [emigration] immediately and that would have conflicted with his intent to carry out the operations in France."

On January 15, within days of Coulibaly's carnage in Paris, Belgium experienced its largest firefight since the close of the Second World War, much of it filmed on amateur video by onlookers, when Belgian police raided a safe house used by three ISIS operatives in the city of Verviers. Two of the operatives were killed in the gun battle, while another was captured. Inside the safe house police discovered large amounts of cash,

automatic weapons, fake identification documents, chemical precursors of triacetone triperoxide, or TATP, a high-explosive agent, along with police uniforms and GoPro cameras, suggesting that the terrorists not only planned to pose as law enforcement officials but also exhibit their forthcoming atrocities in Belgium for later distribution by ISIS's carefully tended media organs.

It was later established by Brussels that all three ISIS sleepers had been in contact via a cellphone traced to Greece with a 27 year-old Belgian-Moroccan named Abdelhamid Abbaoud. If that name sounds familiar then it's because he is now said to be the alleged "mastermind" of last month's Paris attacks.

European intelligence officials have claimed that Abbaoud was no ordinary "lone wolf" but rather a direct operational link between ISIS's network of sleeper agents in France and Belgium and ISIS's High Command in Raqqa. He joined the elite al-Battar battalion of ISIS, which formerly consisted exclusively of Libyan fighters but has since been made ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous.

Abbaoud may have also known and directly liaised with al-Baghdadi in coming up with at least the broad contours of his European plots. His initial attempts to unleash hell on the continent were, it's true, more farcical than scary. But Abbaoud learned from his mistakes and seemed to operate on the old IRA principle: his enemies had to be lucky all the time whereas he only had to be lucky once. For instance, he used encrypted communication with his cell in Paris, after the Verviers affair. He also may have faked his own death in Syria in October, the better to re-infiltrate, undetected, into Europe.

Well before the six coordinated suicide bomb and gun attacks in Paris, Abbaoud made his own cameo appearance in *Dabiq* – in the same issue, in fact, in which Coulibaly's wife was interviewed – to brag about how easy it was for him to move about in the

land of unbelievers. Photographed with two other Belgian nationals who had joined ISIS while in Syria, Abbaoud told the magazine that he had serially managed to slip a European security dragnet, even after his photograph had been widely shared in the press. "I was even stopped by an officer who contemplated me so as to compare me to the picture," Abbaoud said, "but he let me go, as he did not see the resemblance! This was nothing but a gift from Allah."

ISIS has given many other "gifts" in the space of just three months.

On October 10, Ankara suffered its worst terrorist attack in modern Turkish history when two bombs killed over 100 and wounded over 400 more at a Kurdish protest rally outside the city's central rail terminal.

On October 31, Russia's Metrojet Flight 9268 broke apart in midair, killing all 224 passengers on board, owing to a small IED — a soda can — planted by an ISIS operative in the aircraft's fuel lining. That operation was facilitated, if ISIS is to be believed, by an inside man or men at Sharm el-Sheikh Airport in Egypt's Sinai peninsula.

On November 12, a mere day before the Paris attacks, two ISIS suicide bombers blew themselves up in Hezbollah's Beirut stronghold of Bourj el-Barajneh, killing 43 civilians and wounded 239 in what is now the worst terror atrocity in Lebanon since the end of that country's devastating civil war in 1990.

ISIS, needless to add, has also been busy beyond its heartland territory in Syria and Iraq, establishing *wilayats*, or provinces, in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, the Sinai, the Caucasus, Nigeria, the Palestinian territories and elsewhere. These largely autonomous fiefs, many of which are administered by different jihadist groups which pledge allegiance to ISIS, may not have the wherewithal to sack and hold terrain as ably as soldiers

of the caliphate can, but they are no doubt planning their own terror operations, at home and abroad, the better to redound to a globally franchised jihadist "brand."

In October, I traveled to Istanbul to interview a defector from ISIS's internal security service, or *amn al-dawleh*, one of four main intelligence arms of the caliphate. This was the arm to which Mohammed Emwazi, or "Jihadi John" -- the decapitator of James Foley, Stephen Sotloff and other Western hostages -- once belonged. My source, whom I've called "Abu Khaled," explained that ISIS's strength lies not in any special military prowess, whatever the sensationalized portrayal of its advancing tank and Humvee columns or *blitzkrieg* raids in Deir Ezzor and al-Anbar would have us believe. In fact, Abu Khaled said, ISIS was quite pathetic at conventional warfare. And he would know: he trained many of ISIS's infantry soldiers who subsequently fought, died or deserted at the Battle of Kobani.

Rather, what distinguished ISIS as an insurgency and terror organization, he told me, was its tradecraft, which allows it to take terrain, and its totalitarian cocktail of patronage and brutality — the phrase he used was "Islamic welfare state" — which allows it to hold terrain. Both assets were clearly an inheritance from the very henchmen of Saddam Hussein's toppled regime whose military and *mukhabarat* officers now populate the ranks of ISIS's decision-making upper cadres and who were themselves, at one point, trained by the Soviet KGB and East German Stasi. ISIS, in other words, is very good at spying. It infiltrates rival organizations and takes them over from within through persuasion or bribery. Villages, towns, whole cities thus give themselves over to ISIS in advance of any arriving shock troops. And, Abu Khaled added, this talent for clandestine cultivation and recruitment is highly exportable.

In additional to cannon fodder for Kobani, Abu Khaled trained foreign expeditionary forces, those sent "behind enemy lines," be these in Syria and Iraq or overseas. He remembered two French nationals he met and trained in the Aleppo suburb of al-Bab.

Weeks before the Paris attacks, sitting in a cafe in Istanbul, Abu Khaled said that these men had returned to France, presumably undetected by French intelligence. After the Paris attacks, he was convinced that one or both of them had been involved in the carnage.

So what makes ISIS a going concern after a year of attritional air war, the loss of (maybe) 20,000 ISIS fighters, and a worldwide campaign of vilification and exposure waged by every government committed to destroying the army of terror?

For one thing, ISIS is still hugely successful as a regional guerrilla insurgency, much less a global terrorist organization. It occupies an expanse of about 1,000 miles of territory, which it describes as larger than Great Britain, eight times the size of Belgium and thirty times the size of Qatar. It currently holds three provincial capitals in the Middle East, whereas at the start of Operation Inherent Resolve it held two. And though it has lost territory in Syria and Iraq in the last year, it is still very much entrenched all along the strategic Euphrates River Valley. It's incredibly rich, and makes the bulk of its money not through oil sales or artifact smuggling (although it makes plenty of money that way, too) but primarily through its petty-bureaucratic system of fines and levies, which it imposes on those it "governs." These aren't just the sharia equivalent of parking tickets. ISIS wages unforgiving forms of repossession and eminent domain. Anyone deemed an enemy of ISIS or deserter from the "Land of Belief" will have his property and assets seized. (This is yet another reason why it *wants* territory and people: to generate revenue.)

What ISIS lacks in manpower or martial acumen, it makes up for in bravado. As I speak, ISIS has a mere 300 to 400 militants holding one of the aforementioned three provincial capitals, Ramadi. They are facing off against 10,000 pro-Iraqi government force preparing to retake the city, on the back of U.S. air power and what may yet prove to be the quiet insertion of U.S. Special Forces. Those who rightly loathe ISIS can't help but be

impressed by this enemy's ability to do so much with so little. Moreover, unlike Kobani or Sinjar, where Sunni Arabs were the minority population, Ramadi is ISIS's briar patch: quite comfortable for them to hide in, but very painful for others not accustomed to invading. Where ISIS has been expelled from more naturally favorable geography, such as Tikrit, many inhabitants have mistaken liberation — coming largely at the hands of Iranian-backed Shia militias — for conquest. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented acts of retributive violence by these militias (some of which are U.S.-designated terror organizations responsible for the killing of American soldiers in Iraq), such as looting, ethnic cleansing, the burning down of houses, summary executions and torture. The victims don't even have to be Sunni Arabs but anyone who stands accused of having "collaborated" with ISIS. Indeed, when one watches the many videos being sharing enthusiastically by some of our ground partners in this war, showing them playing bongos with severed heads or make *shwarma* out of charred, strung-up corpses, one realizes that ISIS's return to places from which it's been expelled is inevitable.

Also, ISIS's propaganda is impressive by any objective measure. Its latest video, titled "And No Respite," released on November 24, resembles a cross between the trailer for a highly anticipated multiplayer video game and a demoniacal U.S. Army recruitment video. In existential "us v. them" fashion, it preys upon our awkward societal vulnerabilities, such as American racial tension (the caliphate is color-blind, you see), and contrasts their brave and willing martyrs on the battlefield with the high suicide rate among veterans of the U.S. armed forces, which, the ISIS narrator assures us in his voiceover-fluent Hollywood English, are "still scarred from their defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan." Finally, "And No Respite" also utilizes U.S. hypocrisy and falsehood in the war against ISIS, such as the report first broken by my publication The Daily Beast that Defense Intelligence Agency officials have been cooking intelligence to give a rosier appraisal on the coalition's progress than the facts merit. (ISIS has long maintained that the West's depiction of ISIS is a mountain of lies; which is why "hear from us, not about

us," is a mantra of its agitprop and an engine of its social media outreach and visual and written propaganda.)

Another way to put the foregoing is that ISIS pays closer attention to the minutiae of U.S. policy debate and how our politicians and pundits view ISIS than does the average American. There's every chance a few jihadists are watching this hearing right now on C-SPAN.

And here I come to the main reason that ISIS's recruitment drive remains undiminished and its reach beyond the borders of its self-declared "state" ever-growing. Its ability to proselyte and brainwash has been made all the easier by what many non-jihadists and non-Islamists today perceive of as a legitimation of ISIS's grand, paranoid narrative of *caliphate contra mundum*. For ISIS hasn't just an apocalyptic religious ambition, it has temporal political one. And the U.S. is unwittingly furthering the latter.

ISIS presents itself as the sole custodian and defender of Sunni Islam, practitioners of which, it argues, have been systematically targeted for murder, dispossession and disinheritance since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, when a Sunni-minority regime led by Saddam was toppled and a Shia-majority government came to power through democratic vote. At first, the jihadists believed, the U.S. blundered into Iraq and accidentally handed the country over to Iran and its hireling militias, such as the Badr Corps, a notable bugbear of Zarqawi. But now the jihadists aren't so sure it was an accident after all…

According to ISIS, there's a new coalition of the willing, Mr. Chairman, and it is led by the United States and Russia, abetted by the Shia of Iran and Iraq, the "tyrannical" regime of the Arab world. Anyone who has recently spent time in the Middle East will note that however imaginative or feverish this assessment of twenty-first century geopolitics may seem, much of it appears persuasive, compelling and ever more empirical-

ly verifiable to the very people upon whom ISIS relies to maintain its totalitarian order, and upon whom we will ultimately rely to defeat ISIS: Sunni Arabs.

Even the ablest State Department emissary will find it increasingly difficult to explain to the ordinary Syrian victimized by Damascus where terrorist conspiracy theory ends and actual U.S. foreign policy begins.

Why else, after all, do American warplanes and drones bomb only Sunni extremists but not those extremists loyal to Bashar al-Assad, who have burnt people alive, and ethnically cleansed villages, and disappeared tens of thousands in dungeons, and displaced millions either internally or externally, and killed hundreds of thousands using every weapon in his arsenal, including sarin gas and the specially devised "barrel bomb"? And that's when al-Assad isn't buying oil from ISIS. Why, anyone traveling to Sunni communities in the region will hear, is the U.S. not just acquiescing to the military campaigns of Hezbollah and Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force in Syria but actually providing both with close air support in Iraq? And why, it's been asked in the last two months, has the U.S. allowed Russia to install its own no-fly zone in Syria, not for the purpose of bombing ISIS, as Vladimir Putin falsely claims (and as ISIS mockingly disclaims in its most recent issue of *Dabiq*), but for protecting al-Assad and eliminating any credible rebel challenge to his regime, including those U.S.-backed Free Syrian Army brigades and battalions that have fought and beaten ISIS?

Al-Baghdadi listens to these laments by Sunni Arabs and rubs his hands with glee for two reasons. One, he thinks he'll never lack for a receptive audience, and two, our diplomats and press secretaries grope for a "counter-narrative" without realizing that U.S. policy *is* the ISIS narrative.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Weiss.
Mr. Sanderson.

STATEMENT OF MR. THOMAS M. SANDERSON, DIRECTOR AND SENIOR FELLOW, TRANSNATIONAL THREATS PROJECT, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Mr. SANDERSON. Thank you, Chairman Poe and Ranking Member Keating and distinguished members of the subcommittee for the honor and opportunity to testify before you today on the challenge of ISIS following these recent attacks in Paris, Beirut, and in the skies over Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. I come to you with a perspective of from field work on terrorism and conflict across nearly 70 countries over the last 15 years. This includes interviews this year with current and former ISIS members who ply the border on Turkey's side quite freely.

The question before us today is whether these attacks represent a strategic shift for ISIS, what policy options the U.S. might have, and how those attacks are impacting our understanding of ISIS.

First, the attacks. I do not believe that the three strikes represent a fundamental shift for ISIS, but rather a logical evolution for an organization that is under heavy pressure in some areas, has always looked to strike its enemies, and one which has designs on territory well beyond Syria and Iraq.

But just because these attacks may not be unsurprising does not mean we should not be alarmed. ISIS has claimed three strikes, two conducted by cells trained in Syria and one in Egypt conducted by an ISIS affiliate, which signal that the threat is growing, is very bold, technically adept with both encrypted communications and bomb miniaturization, and that expeditionary, out-of-area attacks are to be expected. We should act aggressively and smartly in countering them.

ISIS has long called for strikes on states such as France, a nation for which ISIS has tremendous hatred and disdain. ISIS also counts hundreds, if not thousands of members who hail from France, affording them plenty of French passport holders who can maneuver in the country, across Europe, and into the United States.

The attack in Lebanon was a bold move for ISIS and was likely carried out in retaliation for Hezbollah's support to the Syrian military. In Egypt, the ISIS affiliate, Sinai Province, has battled with Egyptian forces for years. The group is well aware of Russia's friendship with President Sisi of Egypt and with President Assad of Syria and is certainly mindful of Russia's disposition toward its own citizens who have joined ISIS. And of course, it is likely that the attack on the Russian airliner was as much targeted at Egypt's tourism industry, and by extension the Sisi government in Cairo, as it was on the Russians themselves.

It is important for us to look at statements from ISIS over the past couple of years to understand how these attacks, especially Paris, fit in with the ISIS strategy. The ISIS strategy is focused on establishing and protecting its territory along the Syria-Iraq border and to build influence beyond that space. ISIS has reached out to Muslims the world over calling them to help run, build, and defend the Muslim caliphate. These calls often came with encouragement

to attack ISIS enemies and promises that one day they will conquer Rome, shorthand for much of the West.

In the October 2014 issue of their English language publication Dabiq, ISIS spoke of targeting the West and others in the coalition. This included statements such as,

> "At this point in the crusade against the Islamic State, it is important that attacks take place in every country that has entered into the alliance against the Islamic State, especially the U.S., U.K., France, Australia, and Germany. Every Muslim should get out of his house, find a crusader and kill them, and the Islamic State will remain until its banner flies over Rome."

It is also important to note that over the last 2 years ISIS has accepted pledges of loyalty from fighters from around the globe, including Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Nigeria, Russia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and many others, further expanding the ISIS footprint on the globe and reminding us that their base in Syria and Iraq is not the extent of their ambition.

What should these attacks tell us about ISIS? Well, the attacks signal that ISIS intends to strike where necessary and when pressured. I fully expect them to target the United States and other members of the anti-ISIS coalition, and of course they have said that they are going to do that. For a group that is so focused on imagery, as seen in the thousands of well-choreographed messages, images, videos distributed every day, this is a group that must be seen as making progress.

These three attacks also tell us that ISIS, its affiliates, and supported cells, are able to strike successfully in hostile territory. In Paris, ISIS executed multiple attacks with several individuals moving between France, Syria, and Belgium, and did so in the midst of very competent law enforcement and intelligence agencies. In Lebanon, ISIS was able to operate covertly in a denied area crawling with highly suspicious, alert, and well-armed, well-trained Lebanese Hezbollah. Finally, in Egypt, ISIS affiliate Sinai Province was able to penetrate airport security and emplace a bomb that destroyed a Russian airliner, killing 224 people.

These successful attacks are alarming for reasons far beyond the skillful tradecraft that was put on display. The impact is also felt in the recruiting realm. Given that ISIS offers a sense of mission, purpose, adventure, and revenge for young radicalized people, such attacks serve as a tremendous stimulant for these potential recruits. The attacks also demonstrate the possibilities for lone wolves or organized cells and signal that ISIS can make them happen over distance, in unfriendly spaces, and for little cost. From their perch on the margins of society, potential ISIS members witnessed the Paris, Beirut, and Sinai operations, and they want in on that action.

Let's now consider the implications and possible responses. The most recent ISIS attacks present troubling implications for U.S. security and our anti-ISIS strategy. In Lebanon, ISIS has struck the state that remains fragile and which borders Israel and is home to 1 million Syrian refugees. The attack on the Russian airliner demonstrates that commercial aviation remains a very attractive, viable target for terrorists.

The Paris attack offers the most significant concern for U.S. security. This long distance, sophisticated, high-risk ISIS operation succeeded on all levels. A leading member of the anti-ISIS coalition and close ally of the U.S. suffered a dramatic blow.

With these examples and others in hand, it is not difficult to envision ISIS supporting a cell or lone wolves in similar operations inside the U.S. This would represent a bigger challenge for ISIS, but I do not think it is impossible by any means.

Our response must be well conceived, precise, forceful, multidimensional, integrated, and enduring. But I will state upfront, I do not have a lot of confidence that we will succeed in many visible and tangible ways. Our country is not currently in the right frame of mind to take on this challenge. Many of our partners are incredibly problematic and the conditions and factors at play are so numerous and immensely complicated that I hardly know where to begin.

Let me suggest some of the key actions that are needed in a campaign to gain some advantage in what will turn out to be an evolution in the violence and not a clear-cut victory. The Obama administration's objection to putting large forces on the ground is well-founded, but we need a much more aggressive posture in what we are doing now.

The most important things we can strive for are political progress in both Syria and Iraq, ISIS leadership decapitation, more targeted strikes from the air, more flexible ROE with those strikes, territory denial, counterfinance and countermessaging.

To make some progress in these areas we need to strengthen efforts at diplomacy, intelligence, special operations, the air strikes, training local forces, anticorruption, counterradicalization, good governance, and by addressing socioeconomic and political conditions where ISIS operates and, importantly, where they recruit. That list is a very tall order and it is not even exhaustive.

I realize that we have ongoing efforts in each of these areas, but we clearly need to do more. We know what ISIS can do and we know where else they want to take the battle. So it is time to come together politically and to attack ISIS aggressively and intelligently. And if we as Americans lead, others will stand with us. Let's not wait for Washington to be hit before doing what is right and what is possible.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sanderson follows:]

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Statement before the

House Foreign Affairs Committee

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

"THE PARIS ATTACKS: A STRATEGIC SHIFT BY ISIS?"

A Testimony by:

Thomas M. Sanderson

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ISIS background: rising amid chaos across the MENA region

The advent of the Syrian civil war in 2011 offered ISIS—then known as the Islamic State of Iraq and still a member of the al Qaeda network—an opportunity to assert itself on a broader stage. As ISIS expanded into Syria in 2013 and was later officially excommunicated from the al Qaeda network in February 2014, many Arab States were collapsing across the region, leaving the region in disarray and its populations wanting. The Islamic State rose in parallel to these developments, growing in size and strength despite a sustained assault by several countries and other non-state groups. ISIS' rise and appeal stands as a glaring and dangerous counterpoint to failed Middle Eastern states.

For many, the self-declared ISIS caliphate is seen as a life raft for the marginalized and a beacon of purity and justice for the religiously radicalized. Those that make it there can serve in battle while others can build the society. Many others who believe in the promise and goals of ISIS—and observe coalition attacks against them—remain at home, ready to be called to action by the terrorist group.

Indeed, that call went out and has been answered. In September 2014 ISIS spokesman Mohammed Adnani called on followers to "kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the filthy and spiteful French." And in May of this year, ISIS declared that every Muslim who could not make the journey to the Islamic State must "attack the crusaders, their allies [and others, such as the Shia] wherever he might be with any means available to him."

These commands should deeply concern us—they clearly identify a role for violent extremists wherever they may be, while specifying targets such as American citizens. Paris, Beirut, and the Russian airliner over the Sinai are the grim results.

ISIS is many things to many people. For millions of followers, ISIS does represent a state. Though we seek to deny them this—and we should continue to do so—we must also act in light of certain realities on the ground. ISIS controls territory, adjudicates disputes, maintains forces, levies taxes, and provides services. ISIS rules and acts in a despicable manner—but looking around the neighborhood, for many people, they rise above others in viability and legitimacy.

ISIS is also a terrorist group, conducting violent and ruthless operations locally and abroad to further its aims. And ISIS is an idea and a virtual entity—with an unmatched social media presence and a firm place in the minds of countless young men and women who are marginalized, radicalized, and eager to be mobilized. From beheading Christians on Libyan beaches to attacking mosques in Saudi Arabia, British tourists in Tunisia, and Kurdish activists in Turkey, ISIS is our greatest security challenge today.

Let me now move to your specific questions for today's hearing.

Do the attacks in Paris indicate a strategic shift by ISIS?

In short, I believe that the Paris attack—organized and directed by ISIS—does not represent a dramatic change for ISIS. Worrisome and impactful as it is, I believe the strikes on November 13 constitute an evolution for a group that had previously and frequently indicated a desire to strike France and to expand operations beyond its current caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Indeed, ISIS expanded long ago.

We need to look at what ISIS itself has said about striking targets outside of its self-proclaimed caliphate. After taking Mosul, Iraq in June 2014, ISIS leader Omar al-Baghdadi called on followers worldwide to rush to their state, with the promise that if they do so, one day they would conquer "Rome"— shorthand for the West.

And as noted above, it was later that year, in September 2014, several weeks into the US-led bombing campaign in Syria and Iraq, that the ISIS spokesman Adnani called on followers to attack those in the anti-ISIS coalition. And one month later, in October 2014, ISIS' English-language magazine Dabiq called for sympathizers to strike the West:

> "At this point of the crusade against the Islamic State, it is very important that attacks take place in every country that has entered into the alliance against the Islamic State, especially the US, [the] UK, France, Australia and Germany. Every Muslim should get out of his house, find a crusader and kill him."[1]

I mention these statements by ISIS and earlier identify the attacks in Libya, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey to suggest that such expeditionary, out-of-area strikes by ISIS are not necessarily a deviation from plan. ISIS called for, planned, and executed these attacks well before the November 2015 Paris attacks.

Though the Paris assault may not be completely out of line with what ISIS was planning all along, we might also consider that the course of events over the past year—and in particular the summer and early fall of 2015—may have precipitated the series of attacks we saw between October 31 and November 13.

Momentum seemed to be shifting—however slightly—towards the anti-ISIS coalition. Those developments may have induced a change in ISIS' direction or pace. Some of the advances against ISIS include:

- December 2014 – ISIS' defeat at Kobane, Syria
- 2015 - Syrian Kurds sharply expand control of the border with Turkey
- April 2015 - Retaking of Tikrit, Iraq by Iraqi Security Forces

[1] International Business Times, "Dabiq Threatens Rome Crusaders," http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-magazine-dabiq-threatens-rome-crusaders-flying-islamic-state-flag-vatican-front-cover-1469712 (Oct. 2014)

- May 2015 - U.S. Special Operations killing of ISIS CFO, Abu Sayyaf
- June 2015 - Loss of ISIS territory and supply lines at Tel Abyad, Syria
- July 2015 - Loss of territory at Derna, Libya
- November 2015 - Peshmerga fighters take control of Sinjar, and cut a key ISIS supply line between Raqqa and Mosul.

So it is possible that ISIS initiated high-profile operations in Paris, Beirut, and the Sinai to distract from the above losses while trying to meet some of the following goals:

- Penalize and raise costs for France's involvement in the anti-ISIS coalition (French airstrikes against ISIS began on September 27, 2015)
- Punish Hezbollah for combat operations against ISIS
- Wound Russia and Hezbollah for their roles in prolonging the reign of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and for doing the bidding of Iran
- Generate popular discontent over refugees in coalition host states
- Frighten civilians and induce opposition to participating in the anti-ISIS coalition
- Draw foreign forces into a failed ground war
- Burnish ISIS' position as the vanguard of global jihad
- Stimulate foreign fighter recruitment
- Buttress the cohesion of civilians under ISIS control
- Justify ISIS' widespread taxation and extortion
- Expand territory and influence to advance strategic goals

It is also important to consider the possibility that ISIS leaders did not directly command or approve of all three operations—and that we should not use these events out of context to make a call on the direction of ISIS—nor to monopolize the conversation on what our response should be.

Paris appears to have been directly engineered by ISIS, and perhaps the same goes for Beirut. But it is also likely that earlier calls to jihad opened to door to independent, high-level action by ISIS affiliates, such as the Sinai Province group in Egypt.

The Sinai Province may have been more interested in hurting tourism and the regime of Egyptian President Sisi than in killing Russians. As it turns out, Russia responded to the killing of 224 airline passengers by shifting some of its airstrikes to ISIS and away from the group's adversaries in the anti-Assad opposition—a potential indicator of independent action by the Sinai Province—or simply bad planning by ISIS (unless a Russian overreaction was the goal).

What is the impact of these most recent attacks?

If we begin with the bombing of the Russian airliner over Egypt's Sinai, we already note that the attack backfired on ISIS by altering Russia's target set to include a greater focus on ISIS. Prior to the attack in the Sinai, there was little if any Russian interest in ISIS targets, with Moscow

clearly seeking to disable the moderate Syrian opposition forces that were imperiling its ally, Bashar al-Assad.

But with the death of so many Russian civilian vacationers, Moscow was in the mood for revenge. One result has been more aggressive bombing and more aggressive action in the air. The bombing may help the anti-ISIS effort if it is accurate and effective—but if the end result is a spike in the number of civilian casualties, it becomes a propaganda victory for ISIS and a complication for the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition. And the downing of the Russian SU-24 bomber by a Turkish F-16 did generate unwanted tension and complications for the U.S.

Furthermore, the Sinai attack on foreign tourists damages one of the most important sectors of the still struggling Egyptian economy, further weakening an important U.S. ally in the Middle East.

Impacts related to the Beirut attacks are also serious. Lebanon is already under tremendous strain from the battle in Syria, and the November 12 ISIS bombings put further strain on a fragile state that plays host to roughly one million Syrian refugees. And though the fighting in Syria has cost Hezbollah lives and other resources, it also sharpens their battlefield experience and adds to their influence in the region—unwelcome developments in the eyes of Israel, the U.S. and others.

Paris offers the most profound conclusion, though it leaves many questions unanswered. First, the attacks demonstrated that ISIS has the ability to plan and execute attacks in the heart of a key coalition member, using French and Belgian citizens trained in Syria and equipped in Belgium. This all took place despite France having superb law enforcement and intelligence capabilities, and despite efforts to share intelligence within and between nations.

The Paris attacks have also prompted responses that should trouble all who stand for democracy, openness, and the free movement of trade, people, and ideas. At least one of the Paris attackers appears to have moved into Europe posing as a refugee, while other members of the ISIS cell were able to move freely between EU states to plan and conduct the November 13 operation. These developments have provoked disturbing statements from some in both the United States and France.

The United States—an immigrant nation long a safe-haven for refugees and the persecuted, has sounded calls to block the arrival of Syrian war refugees. Given America's history, its moral leadership across the globe, and our own degree of responsibility for some of the conditions in the Syria-Iraq battlespace—the anti-refugee reaction by some has been regrettable.

Americans are right to be concerned for their security—and having an ISIS member hide among the desperate refugees moving into Europe is certainly a frightening development. And now that

ISIS recognizes the discord and concern it can ignite by using refugee flows to move its terrorist operators, it will probably deliberately repeat this action for the disruptive value alone.

We should firmly repel this tactic. President Obama, Congress, and U.S. State Governors need to come together and discuss a solution that protects our security, moral authority, and global standing. The House of Representatives has passed the American SAFE Act, so the debate has begun. We cannot reduce the risk to zero, but an eventual solution is not beyond our reach.

The European Union has also been seriously disrupted by the Paris attacks. The EU's open border agreement, the Schengen Zone, allows visa free-travel between almost all of the EU's 28 members. This arrangement is one of the pillars of the European project promoting openness, cultural exchange, and the free movement of people, business, and ideas. The ISIS attack has placed that in jeopardy. We should all be taken aback by this development and see it as a threat to free and open societies.

Finally—and bridging Europe and America on these topics, is the U.S. visa waiver program. This regime allows visa-free travel between the U.S. and 38 nations, 30 of which are European. The fact that members of the ISIS Paris cell were EU passport holding residents highlights the security challenge posed by visa-free travel to the United States. Admittedly, though, concerns over the visa waiver program predate the Paris attacks given that 3,000 and 5,000 violent extremists have traveled to the Syria-Iraq battlefield over the past few years. This past Monday, November 30, the Administration did announce additional, if limited improvements to the program.

We cannot dismiss legitimate security threats, nor should we refrain from patching holes that facilitate attacks. Doing so together as a nation and as allies is critical. But the fact that a terrorist group has forced the United States and the European Union to consider changes to our open societies and to produce such strident anti-refugee rhetoric can only be considered a victory for ISIS.

What do the three most recent attacks mean for the development of ISIS?

ISIS is not on its back foot. Yes, there were some victories against the terrorist group in 2015, and these may have played a small part in precipitating or advancing the timeline of attacks in Beirut, Sinai, and Paris. But these actions are well within expectations for a group that has already established overseas affiliates and accepted pledges of support and allegiance form pre-existing terrorist groups. On balance, the three recent, high-profile attacks represent a marginal evolution in ISIS tactics and strategies.

What is the value of Paris, Beirut, and Sinai for ISIS recruitment? In all likelihood, it has boosted the overall appeal of ISIS. Striking such blows against Shiites in Lebanon, against the Egyptian Government and the Assad-backing Russians, while going to the heart of the French nation and killing 130 civilians stirs the pride of all who gravitate towards ISIS. ISIS is very image

conscious, and these dramatic attacks boost their appeal and empower young people across the globe. It was a total victory with respect to recruitment.

ISIS recruits some individuals who are already radicalized, and who see all of these recent targets as infidels and apostates deserving of death and disruption. These people see glory and redemption in fighting and dying for what they consider a divinely sanctioned and just state. But an even larger pool of recruits—many yet to be radicalized online or through by fighting and indoctrination within the ISIS "state" and its battlefields, join for different reasons. These are the marginalized, the socio-economically deprived, aimless young men with no prospects for advancement, marriage, or success in life. They are without a sense of mission, a sense of belonging (especially the recent immigrants to Europe), and have yet to find dignity and respect.

ISIS' propaganda machine and legion of recruits are adept at marketing their message to these downtrodden individuals, portraying ISIS as a panacea for what ails them. When these young people witness the Paris, Beirut, and Sinai operations, they want in.

The operations may also have an impact on ISIS' interests and activities in other states. ISIS movements and followers in Russia, Libya, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Philippines, Nigeria, Somalia—along with lone wolves the world over, are offered yet more evidence and instruction on what is possible when responding to ISIS spokesman Adnani's call to strike those attacking ISIS.

How might these operations impact ISIS finances?

In brief, the recent ISIS strikes will have both negative and positive results. These dramatic attacks will likely produce greater contributions (and easier compliance with a 10% zakat (tax) requirement both locally and from abroad. Just as al Qaeda received greater donations after its shocking attacks of 2001, a smaller, yet similar benefit will redound to ISIS after taking the battle to the streets of Paris, Beirut, and to the skies over the Sinai. Yet as happened with al Qaeda, the attacks have also led to greater efforts to restrict funding—witness the airstrikes on ISIS oil facilities and trucks soon after the Paris attacks.

Overall, however, ISIS will continue to succeed financially. ISIS established a resilient and diversified income portfolio as it expanded across Syria and Iraq from 2013-2015. There is no donors' leash on ISIS that can be pulled by financiers in the Arabian Gulf. The vast majority of their income comes from local sources under their control. It also seems clear that ISIS has linked key funding flows to humanitarian needs, which makes it more difficult to attack them. Specifically, ISIS' role in providing fuel for hospitals, schools, and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps within Syria, and their control of granaries and other food resources make us face a difficult decision over whether to cut off access to resources that might wind up impacting civilians.

Implications for U.S. policy and security

All three attacks offer implications for U.S. security and the anti-ISIS strategy, but for different reasons and to varying degrees. In Beirut, ISIS inserted a few terrorists over a nearby border to strike at Hezbollah and its supporters. Such violence threatens to overwhelm an already fragile state that borders Israel and is home to countless Syrian refugees. But, while the Beirut attack, killing 43, is significant, tragic, and disruptive, it is not fundamentally threating to U.S. security and our strategies for countering ISIS.

The downing of the Russian commercial airliner plane over the Sinai, killing 224 people, is more significant on both a tactical and strategic level. Compromising airport security and using such a small device to destroy an aircraft in mid-air is a serious change in strategy—and one we have seen previously with al Qaeda. It reminds us that aircraft remain a vulnerable target, that airports with lax safety protocols constitute a weak link in aviation security, and that the impact on commercial aviation is real and costly.

But the Paris attack offers the most serious and far-reaching implications for U.S. security and our counter-ISIS strategy. This was a long-distance, sophisticated, high-risk operation for ISIS—and they succeeded on all accounts. While ISIS initially focused on establishing a caliphate and fighting local enemies in 2013 and 2014, this attack demonstrated that its direct involvement and large community of sympathizers enabled them to inflict a very sharp blow to one of America's closest allies and a frontline member of the anti-ISIS coalition.

Could the Paris attack in fact signal a shift to training cells to strike long distance targets, including the U.S.? And what if ISIS' battle-tested foreign fighters are instructed to join and fortify those cells after returning to their home countries? Could ISIS also pair these two approaches with stronger encouragement and guidance to lone wolves in America and elsewhere? With the FBI investigating more than 900 individuals with interest in or connections to ISIS, these concerns are well founded.

In light of this, was should the U.S. do?

It is a long and difficult to-do list—many will only be achieved in part, some will fail altogether: reduce ISIS territory and financial flows; arrive at a political settlement in Damascus; expand training and equipping of local forces, including Peshmerga; add U.S. Special Operations Forces to Iraqi Security Force and Kurdish Peshmerga units; establish greater intelligence resources to aid in targeting ISIS leadership; loosen highly restrictive rules of engagement on U.S. Special Operations Forces and on air strikes; exert greater diplomatic pressure on anti-ISIS coalition members to do more in parallel with the U.S.; strongly encourage the Iraqi Government to do more on Sunni political and economic inclusion; and, end the partisanship that hobbles our response. Longer-term: address the core underlying causes and conditions that led us to where we are today, by addressing poor governance, corruption, job creation, demographic strains,

religious radicalism and education. Expanded and focused CVE programming in high-risk countries is key.

Sustained leadership on and off the battlefield is essential. This is a long-term project involving high financial costs, forceful diplomacy, and the potential for lives being lost. This approach is risky and will entail sacrifice. And we must show the world that as we take a more assertive approach to destroying ISIS and reducing the conditions that gave rise to it and similar groups, we must also show restraint, good judgment, moral leadership, and an enduring commitment.

I believe that President Obama has been wise to keep larger U.S. forces out of the battlespace in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. We would massively stimulate ISIS with large troop deployments. The ISIS mission would be given greater significance, recruitment would soar, external funding would increase, and a worldwide network of followers would be set into motion. It will be counterproductive. But we must be more aggressive and broad-based in our approach that we are now.

Denying new territory to ISIS and rolling back land currently under control would make the biggest impact. This action requires forces on the ground to engage ISIS, to train local forces, and to hold and develop the space that is won. Unfortunately, this approach carries a very high risk of making matters worse and of incurring extremely steep costs. And it can only be done as a coalition.

Any additional U.S. forces should also include troops from America's local Arab allies and other members of the anti-ISIS coalition. Doing so blunts the charge of disproportionate American force while putting a good share of the responsibility of regional governments. One thing is clear the world over when it comes to making hard choices and putting lives, and treasure at risk: when the U.S. leads a just and essential mission, others will join in.

As the U.S. plans its next move and hopefully makes intelligent changes to the existing strategy, it is essential to consider the following: even if we kill all ISIS members tomorrow, the multitude of conditions and factors underpinning their rise and success and appeal to recruits…remain firmly in place. Furthermore, both Iraq and Syria are very weak states. A comprehensive recovery plan would have to begin even before major fighting ceases—which it may never do. Leaving battered citizens, returning refugees, and feeble governments with dismembered nations and no rescue plan will prolong chaos and provide openings for violent extremists.

Unaddressed sectarian and ethnic divisions must also be dealt with---or progress will be fleeting, if it ever emerges. Turkey's disposition towards Kurdish forces currently occupying much of the Syrian side of their border will make securing Ankara's cooperation unlikely. As it is, Turkey has yet to fully roll-up the welcome mat for foreign fighters and stop trafficking across their border.

Thus, even successful military operations against ISIS would do little to keep a new group from emerging. For the religiously radicalized and for too many of the world's marginalized young men and women, ISIS represents a path to progress, justice, revenge, and salvation. As we begin a more assertive counter-ISIS strategy, we must address these individuals and the local circumstances of those who are the audience, foot soldiers, and financiers of ISIS. Nothing short of a well-conceived, multi-dimensional, and assertive approach will work.

Mr. POE. I want to thank all of our experts for your testimony. I found it fascinating and disturbing.

We are in the midst of votes at this time, and so we will recess until approximately 1:30, and we will start questioning at 1:30—or 2:30, 2:30. And we will start at 2:30, not 1:30. It wasn't a trick.

Thank you very much. We are recessed till 2:30.

[Recess.]

Mr. POE. Thank you once again.

Gentlemen, I have been in a lot of hearings, and I find that this hearing has turned out to be one of the most informative and disturbing of any hearing that I have conducted. You have given us a lot of information. Most of the information is alarming. And so I want to try to take the information all four of you experts have given Members of Congress on both sides about the threat of ISIS and try to narrow down some proactive things that we ought to be doing.

It seems to me that our dealing with ISIS is reactionary. They do something, we react. Sometimes we do. Sometimes we don't react. But it is all reactionary. And being on the defense, our bunker mentality is not going to solve the problem of ISIS.

So the question is with all of these conflicts—and Mr. Weiss made a flow chart to figure out all of the different entities about whose side they are on today and whose side they are on tomorrow and who these folks are—it is very complicated. So what is our answer to this? What is something we can do?

And I agree with you totally, it has got to be a political answer. Long range, it has got to be a political answer. There has to be a military answer, maybe a financial answer.

The United States doesn't have a real good track record, I don't think, of going into a region, eliminating whoever is in charge of the country, and then the result doesn't turn out too well. And sometimes it is worse than the government we got rid of or the regime or the dictator, whatever. So we destroy ISIS, there is a vacuum there. What happens when we eliminate them?

First of all, what is the way we can policy-wise have a plan to eliminate them? But on the political front, what should we be doing as a replacement for all of those concerns that you mentioned about the people in the region, who they are looking to for leadership?

So that is the question. So if each one of you would weigh in on some specifics, political results, military results, or things that we ought to be doing, long-term, short-term, to give us some guidance on America's role and ISIS.

I have one question that I just need a yes or no from all of you on. Do you think that the United States should invoke Article 5, make this a NATO operation? Just like 9/11, after 9/11, that became a NATO operation because we were attacked. Should this be a NATO operation or not? And then each one of you weigh in on the previous question that I just mentioned to you. So go down the row on the NATO operation.

Mr. Boot.

Mr. BOOT. Mr. Chairman, I think there is some symbolic value to invoking Article 5, although, from what I understand, our French allies don't actually want to invoke it because they are hop-

ing to get Russia on board and they don't want the NATO sponsorship to turn off Putin.

Now, I think that, frankly, President Hollande is smoking something if he thinks that we are going to get President Putin on board with our agenda in Syria and Iraq, because Putin has a very different agenda. He is there to support Assad. He is not there to destroy ISIS. So I think this is not going to amount to anything.

But I think there is some symbolic value to invoking Article 5 if we can get the French to go along with it. But I don't necessarily think that we need to turn this into a very complex NATO command structure, which we have had in the case of Afghanistan and which, to my mind, has actually been in some ways a small impediment to getting results because it becomes a question of balancing and having different officers from different nations who are put into this command structure for largely political, not for reasons of military effectiveness. And that is not necessarily the best way to go about business.

But for the symbolic value, I think there is something to be said for that; and also, by the way, for passing a declaration of war or a stripped-down AUMF, not like the one the administration has submitted, but one that really gives the President, as the Commander in Chief, a great deal of authority to wage war and to destroy ISIS in any way he sees fit. I think there is something to be said for that too for the symbolic value that it has, even if at a practical level we can still do most of what we need to do without it.

Mr. POE. So would you recommend that Congress debate the issue of an authorization to use military force in the box of ISIS?

Mr. BOOT. Absolutely. I think that would be a good thing. I mean certainly the administration lawyers argue that they have the authority they need from the 2001 AUMF. But at this point I think anybody who is not in the administration understands that they are stretching things a little bit to use this authorization after 9/11 to attack ISIS, which is a group that basically did not exist on 9/11. I think they can do it. I am not saying that they can't. But I think it would be better if there were a stripped-down AUMF, one that did not include all the restrictions that the administration has put into their version of it.

Now, on your other question, which I think is a very good one, about what happens after—well, first off, how do you get rid of ISIS and what happens after ISIS is gone. I think those are very good questions. In my testimony, I tried to address the question of how do you get rid of ISIS, which I think is a political-military strategy that involves slightly more commitment of forces on our part, but also a political strategy, which is key, to give the Sunnis a reason to fight against ISIS, which they really don't have at the moment because they are afraid that if they get rid of ISIS, they are simply going to trade the butchers of ISIS for the butchers of the Quds Force and Hezbollah and all these other Iranian-backed groups.

So I think what you have to do, as I suggested earlier, is to offer Sunnis autonomy within Iraq in much the same way as we have done with the Kurds. Remember that going back to 1991, we have been protecting the Kurds. We have used our air power to say,

"Okay, Saddam Hussein, you are not going to be able to slaughter the Kurds." And out of that has grown up one of the few success stories in the Middle East in the last couple of decades, which is the Kurdish Regional Government which is, when you go from the rest of Iraq to the KRG, it is like leaving hell and winding up in heaven. I mean, they have done tremendously well under American military protection for the last couple of decades.

I think that is a good model to emulate with the Sunnis in Iraq. I am not saying that we should give them a separate country. I don't think that is practical. But we should certainly create a Sunni Regional Government akin to the Kurdish Regional Government. And ideally we would do that by engineering a political deal in Baghdad, but that may not be possible because of the Iranian domination of the Baghdad regime. And if that is not possible, as I have argued before, we can act unilaterally on our own, work with the Sunnis. We can train and arm them in the KRG where there is already a huge number of Sunni refugees. And we can basically create for the Sunnis an autonomy within Iraq. We can train and arm the Sons of Iraq, like the Peshmerga, that will guarantee their autonomy. We can pledge to use American air power, if necessary, to protect them from an onslaught from the Shiite militias.

I think that is the way that we gain the support of the Sunnis, and that is ultimately going to be, I think, the lasting political structure within Iraq, which is a very loose Federal structure and within it basically the Shiite, Kurdish, and Sunni regions.

Now, in the case of Syria it is a much harder process because Syria is much more fragmented right now than even Iraq is. What I have suggested is that we need to have no-fly zones and safe zones in Syria, which would have many benefits, blunting the Assad killing machine, which has killed far more people to date than ISIS has, but also creating a space where you could actually train and arm the Free Syrian Army and, crucially, where you could also give the Syrian opposition movement, which we recognize as the rightful Government of Syria, you could give them a chance to actually govern on some territory so that eventually, once Assad is overthrown, there is more of a hope that a more moderate government can extend its way into ruling the entire country.

I think what might actually happen in the end is that when we get to the point where ISIS and Assad are close to being overthrown in Syria, and we are nowhere close to that right now, once you get to that point, I think there is a case to be made for a Dayton-like process where you would have an international conference with an agreement to deploy international peacekeeping forces that would, for example, give some assurance to the Alawites that they are not going to be slaughtered by the Sunnis that they, themselves, have been slaughtering for so many years, give some assurances to the Kurds, give some assurances to the different Sunni communicates.

But we are nowhere close to that right now, and I think we are not going to get there just by convening conferences in Vienna or Geneva right now. The only way to get there is to change the balance of power on the ground, and that means creating a more viable, moderate opposition in Syria, enabled by greater American aid,

and allowing them to go after not only ISIS, but also after Assad, and helping them by preventing Assad's air force from bombing them and helping them by creating these safe zones where refugees could stay there, the Free Syrian Army could train there, the Syrian opposition could begin to rule there. I think that is the beginning of a solution to the nightmare that is Syria today.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Boot.

The Chair recognizes that he went over the 5-minute rule. And I am going to use a word that I don't use very often: I will be a little more liberal on the time for each of the other members, including you.

Go ahead, Mr. Keating, from Massachusetts.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you. Maybe we can do other rounds too. I will try and stay within that timeframe.

But, Mr. Weiss, the gentleman that you interviewed in Istanbul that fled ISIS, you must have asked him why specifically he left. Could you enlighten us with that story?

Mr. WEISS. Sure. So he spent 11 months with ISIS, and he said within the first 2 he wanted to leave. So he essentially spent 9 months plotting his escape. Because the irony is, when you are a member of amn al-dawleh, you have trained up the very people who will be manning the checkpoints and the border guard to interdict you if you try to flee. And it was sort of out of a le Carre novel, the way he described all the preparation, the obtaining of the false——

Mr. KEATING. But why did he make that choice after 2 months?

Mr. WEISS. So he chose because he said the pervasive climate of paranoia and lies that had been inculcated. Again, he was in a town called al-Bab. I was in al-Bab in 2012. I embedded with the Free Syrian Army when it took this town from the Assad regime and I saw the life and the sort of civic exuberance that was being displayed. I mean, 40 years of totalitarian rule and all of a sudden they are a free people, cleaning up the streets at night, having all-night parties and discussions in the cafes. All of that was put asunder by ISIS when they came in about 5 to 6 months later.

He said to me the sort of turning point moment was what he saw at the farm. What he was referring to is, there was a farmer who came to him and said, "Abu Khaled, I run this olive farm just north of al-Bab, and it is full of bodies. Every time I till the soil, I turn up an arm, a leg, a foot. And, obviously, this is Daesh doing this. Can you intervene?"

So Abu Khaled went to the emir of al-Bab—who drives a BMW, by the way, because, as he put it, "Alhamdulillah, the Islamic State is very rich," and the emir said, "No, this isn't us, we don't know anything about it."

Abu Khaled, a few weeks before, had witnessed the execution of a guy that ISIS said was a spy for the coalition. He had been dropping GPS devices, they accused him of, in al-Bab, the better that coalition warplanes could target positions on the ground. This guy was, as you can imagine, beheaded, and his head was stuck on the pike in the center of al-Bab. He was very distinctive because he was wearing an Adidas track suit, black and white, I think the colors were.

The next time Abu Khaled went to the farm, he saw the body of this man. So he went back to the emir and he said, "Come on, this is you, this is your doing. This is your sort of makeshift burial ground." A day later the emir comes back to him and says, "Ask the farmer how much he wants for his farm." Abu Khaled said, "If you open the Islamic State daily newspaper, it is like reading Pravda or it is like reading Syrian state media."

Mr. KEATING. Why did he initially join?

Mr. WEISS. He said because he thought that the United States was behind Bashar al-Assad and Iran and Russia. Essentially he bought into the ISIS geopolitical narrative, there was this conspiracy.

Mr. KEATING. Now, his story about why he left, do we have enough people telling that story?

What do you think, Mr. Sanderson.

Mr. SANDERSON. Congressman, I wanted to relate a story—to answer your question very quickly, no, of course we do not have enough people telling that story, certainly not in comparison to the numbers within ISIS that are telling their story.

The 16-year-old that I interviewed on the Turkish-Syrian border joined ISIS in January of this year. He was the youngest of 21 children. His father died a year ago. He was in ISIS for 2 months. And the reason he left was because within 2 weeks of entering the training program ISIS vectored these young recruits against an attacking force that was coming to seize a salt mine that ISIS controlled. ISIS made up a story about who those attackers were, said they were bandits, criminals, et cetera. It was the Nusra Front.

And this young man and his friend left because of the lies that ISIS told about the Nusra Front, which is very popular among many Syrians for its high content of Syrian leadership and for its direct attacks again the Syrian Government. So he left because of the lies that ISIS had told him and the other young recruits who just after 2 weeks of training were put into action against the Nusra Front.

Mr. KEATING. So it is very difficult to get out.

Mr. SANDERSON. Oh, yeah.

Mr. KEATING. How common is it that they are killing—I know they take people's passports usually right off the bat if they are coming from——

Mr. WEISS. It is actually a recent phenomenon.

Mr. KEATING. Do they kill a lot of these people if they try to escape, make examples of them?

Mr. WEISS. Oh, yes. Well, there is the recent example of two Bosnian girls from Vienna had gone over. One of them recently tried to escape and they bludgeoned her to death. And it is not because they care that they are losing members of the caliphate. It is because they don't want these people to come to the West or come out and essentially blow the whistle and expose them for what they are.

There is another vulnerability that doesn't get enough attention here, and actually there is precedent for it because the same thing happened in Iraq. Zarqawi had always presented the insurgency in Iraq, at least the al-Qaeda in Iraq insurgency, as a national—well, essentially one made up of native Iraqis. That wasn't true. Remem-

ber, the tip of the spear for the insurgency, the bulk of it was Iraqi, but the tip of the spear were foreigners, Jordanians, Saudis, whatever. He attempted to Iraqize the franchise because he realized that Iraqis were now seeing two forms of occupation, one by the Americans and the coalition, the other by al-Qaeda in Iraq.

The same thing is happening today in Syria. ISIS is run by Iraqis at the top, including, again, members from Saddam's regime, and everybody who is being appointed to serve in the amn'ni, or the amn'niate, which is their security apparatus, they are all non-Syrians. So if you are a 60-year-old woman living in al-Bab and you have lived there your whole life and all of a sudden a 25-year-old Tunisian comes over and says, "Cover your face, go to mosque, what are you doing outside the house without a husband or an escort, go to mosque," this is like having foreign rule, foreign occupation.

That is a, I hate the word "narrative," but I am going to use it anyway, that is a narrative that has not been emphasized. Syrians are very nationalistic, especially the ones that have zero Islamist or jihadist ideology, and they feel now that they are chafing under the kind of occupation that, frankly, is coming from people that they have never met and have countries they have never even be to. We need to emphasize that fact. It is a way to sort of increase the resistance.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you very much. I will yield back to our new chair.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [presiding]. The new chair? I have succeeded. There I am.

Listen, thank you to the witnesses. And I will proceed with my questioning and then to Mr. Higgins.

Let me note that I spent a lot of time in the Reagan White House in the 1980s. I was with him for 7½ years. I was a speechwriter, but also a special assistant to the President. And one thing I noted, that Ronald Reagan took a lot of criticism during the time period, but he ended the Cold War. No one gives that credit to Herbert Walker Bush. They give the credit to Ronald Reagan and justifiably so, because Ronald Reagan prioritized what he wanted to accomplish. He prioritized what we are going to do is we are going to eliminate our major threat. What is our major threat? The Soviet Union isn't the ultimate threat to the United States and the world today.

Unfortunately, it seems like we cannot support people today who are killing the people who want to kill us, the people who are the great threat, the greatest threat to the security of the people of the United States and other Western countries, unlike Ronald Reagan—we did work with some unsavory characters, and we brought down the Soviet Union, and that was the goal—because those other unsavory characters maybe at a smaller level were not good people, but they at least were not threatening to injure the people of the United States or other parts of the free world.

Mr. Boot, I am sorry, but I am appalled at the Council on Foreign Relations and what has been happening with the option of allowing the Russians to play a major role in defeating radical Islam, which is the greatest threat to the security of the people of the United States. Russia is no longer the Soviet Union and it is being

treated as if it is still the Soviet Union. And it is appalling to me when I hear people going out of their way to say what Putin is thinking. So you don't think that Putin is not there to destroy ISIL. How many people were killed in that Russian airliner? Do you think that had anything to do with his judgment? You don't give Putin that credit?

Mr. BOOT. Well, with all due respect, Congressman, Putin was in Syria before that airliner was blown up. And if you actually look at the pattern of Russian air strikes, very few of them are hitting ISIS-held areas. Most of them are hitting areas held around Aleppo and so forth, which are held by moderate opposition groups backed by the United States.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Does anyone else have any information? Because the information I read is that is not true.

Mr. WEISS. Well, Congressman, if ISIS believes that Russia is not hitting ISIS, I would consider that pretty much evidence against interest. If you look at their latest propaganda magazine, Dabiq, they actually laugh, they mock the Russians and they mock us, and they say that the drunken Russian bear is bombing here, there, and everywhere, confusing think tankers and journalists.

In fact, their intervention is targeting the America-backed Sahwa forces. That is to say, Sunni rebel groups that are fighting ISIS, that is who Russia has been bombing. Reuters conducted an investigation a few weeks ago, an independent one, no government sponsorship, found four-fifths of the sorties had been going after non-ISIS targets.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You guys are better read than I am on this. But let me just say——

Mr. WEISS. Well, there is another point that doesn't get enough attention as well.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I have talked to several people from the region. However, let me move—it goes from what you are saying here, and that is—and by the way, I appreciate, you gave me a briefing once, it was excellent, I might add.

Assad being this horrible, evil regime, the people who were rising up against the Assad regime within Syria, did they have any outside support from any Sunni-based governments in the region? Of course they did.

Now, tell me this. Of those other governments that happen to be friendly to us, do you think that if there was an uprising that was sponsored by, let's say, Assad or someone that they didn't like, that those regimes—do you think Qatar, for example, if there is an uprising among those many, many more non-Qatar citizens, were uprising and they were being supported by somebody like Assad, do you think that they would be less likely to commit atrocities against those people?

I think that—I am just—I will just posture, because there is no doubt in my mind, I note that the Qatar people, they are good people, but the fact is, if there was some type of a Shiite-backed uprising among the people who live in Qatar, you would probably have just as many thousands, or proportionately, murdered in order to maintain that government.

And Assad has been portrayed as something different and Putin is portrayed as something different. The fact is that they are

flawed. And right now, neither Assad nor Putin threaten to murder thousands of Americans if they get their chance. If a bomb goes off, a nuclear bomb goes of in Philadelphia or Los Angeles, it is going to be a radical Islamicist bomb and it is not going to be Putin.

Putin is out there trying to at least come to grips. And by the way, what does he have to do with fighting, why is it he is not there to destroy ISIL? How many ISIL soldiers come from Chechnya, Mr. Boot?

Mr. BOOT. I don't know. Some do. But there is certainly evidence that Putin has looked the other way as people from the Russian Caucasus have gone to join ISIS.

But if I could make a longer point——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I will let you make your point. But let me just note the reports that I heard, there have 3,000 and 5,000 Chechnyans in ISIL. Now, don't tell me that what is Putin doing there. They blow up his planes. They have people who are murdering—these Chechnyans who are murdering Russians in Russia.

Yes, Putin may be there and he is a flawed guy, he is a thug, as everybody says, but just like Ronald Reagan, we had to deal—look, we made an alliance with China during the Cold War in order to defeat the Soviet Union. We made a deal with the Russians during World War II to defeat Hitler. That is great. But right now, the Council on Foreign Relations and the people who just can't get over the Cold War is over are basically putting us at a great disadvantage to be working with somebody who shares a common enemy.

Go right ahead and retort that, it is fine.

Mr. BOOT. Congressman, if I thought that Putin was actually going to intently fight ISIS, I would be all in favor of making common cause with him. Unfortunately, what he is doing is he is supporting Bashar Assad, who is the greatest recruiting tool that ISIS ever had. As long as Bashar Assad is out there dropping barrel bombs and killing people, what he is doing is he is driving Sunnis into the arms of ISIS. That is why ISIS is able to have a raison d'etre. That is why ISIS is able to posture itself as the defender of the Sunnis in Syria against the butchery committed by Assad, by Russia, by Iran, by Lebanese Hezbollah, and all these other groups.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. There was an uprising going on, and he was very heavy-handed in trying to defeat that uprising, and there is no doubt about it.

Mr. BOOT. And he is still heavy-handed. And as long as he continues slaughtering Sunnis, that gives ISIS a reason to exist. There is a symbiotic relationship between the Iranian-backed forces like Assad and the Sunni extremists on the other side.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You expect the Saudis and the Qataris and the others would be far more humane than what Assad was?

Mr. BOOT. Well, they may not be. But they are not the ones who are slaughtering 200,000 people at the moment.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right now. Right now they are. But you are putting Assad in a different situation because he was confronted with an uprising being sponsored by an outside power.

Mr. Higgins, you may proceed.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Weiss, you were making a point during my colleague's questioning that you said was important. Do you want to finish it?

Mr. WEISS. You will have to remind me, Congressman, what was the——

Mr. HIGGINS. You were talking about narrative and you were talking about something that hadn't been talked a lot about.

Mr. WEISS. Oh, yes, the idea of foreign occupation, that ISIS is essentially a new form of colonial rulership. That is very powerful. A lot of Syrians, as I said, dislike being governed and lorded over by people that come from other countries.

If I may say, there is another element to this too. We have done nothing, nothing substantive I should say, to really demonstrate to Sunni Arabs that the United States has their plight and their dispossession and ethnic cleansing and murder to heart. A tweet by Samantha Power every now and then doesn't cut it. This has to be backed by fire and steel. Max is 100 percent right.

I actually disagree with Max on one point, though. I think Syria is exactly the place to start. Demographically speaking, it is a Sunni-majority country. That means that, as I mentioned, as everyone here has said, the very constituents you need to turn against Sunni Taqfirism or Sunni jihad are right there, and they are willing and they are able, but they face a lack of credible alternatives.

And here is the thing that sort of gets me. You know, the U.S. puts out this policy of train and equip, right? We are going to create essentially a Sunni—actually it was Sunni-Turkman, not even Sunni-Arab at the start—but a Sunni counterterrorism proxy force, send them in with packs and M–4 rifles and white pickup trucks, and have them fight not only ISIS and make them forswear in a piece of paper that they will not use the weapons and the training they received to go after any of the other manifold groups, which, as Max also pointed out, are responsible for the vast, overwhelming majority of casualties and fatalities.

A study that was done recently found that between January and July of this year, Assad killed seven times the number of people that ISIS has killed. For every atrocity ISIS has committed, Assad has done one better, including burning people alive.

We sent them in with a target painted on their back, right? And it was no surprise that some of them defected to al-Qaeda or sold their weapons.

Now, the one program that is being done with a marked degree of success is the one that nobody wants to talk about, which is the clandestine CIA program to back 39 rebel militias in Syria, provide them, through Saudi Arabia, with TOW antitank missiles. Putin has gone after them expressly, and I know it because I talked to the rebel commanders from those units. And still they hold the line. They have made, as they put it, a graveyard of Syrian tanks in Homs and the al-Ghab plain.

Nobody wants to talk about this because this is the one thing we are doing to actually give the constituents, the indigenous people of Syria, some incentive to work with us. They want to fight Assad first, and they want to fight him for a very pragmatic, simple reason: He is the one killing them.

Mr. HIGGINS. You were embedded with the Free Syrian Army?

Mr. WEISS. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. How long ago?

Mr. WEISS. In 2012.

Mr. HIGGINS. How do you define the Free Syrian Army?

Mr. WEISS. In my personal experience, the people that I saw, they protected me. I did a tour of the entire city with them. I talked to innumerable activists. I mean, I am a journalist for a long time. I can tell when I am being gamed or somebody is giving me a statement that is coerced or not 100 percent truthful.

Mr. HIGGINS. Did you use the number 39 units or militias?

Mr. WEISS. This was way before that program was inaugurated, or I should say before the program gained enough——

Mr. HIGGINS. In your experience, is the Free Syrian Army or was the Free Syrian Army a cohesive, monolithic group?

Mr. WEISS. At the time, there were a lot of different rebel units, but they had a common objective. Now, they were insufficiently backed. You want to talk about external support.

Look, here are the facts, I have been to Turkey many times. All these weapons have been pouring in from Libya, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, you name it. But they sit in warehouses. And you have Western intelligence officers going through the warehouses with a manifest saying, "Yes, you can have this. No, you can't have that." The price of bullets in Syria went up astronomically when the insurgency was in its second or third year, okay? They fire their ammunition. They run out. Then they have to come back and say, "Mother, may I," to get more. All the while they are facing down fighter jets, barrel bombs, Scud missiles, sarin gas.

You are asking these rebels—Derek Harvey, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst who anatomized the Iraqi insurgency, put it best: We are asking them to fight five different enemies at once with slingshots. And you wonder why they have descended into chaos or, in many respects, defected over to al-Qaeda or over to ISIS.

Mr. HIGGINS. We spent, the United States spent about $½ billion, about $500 million, trying to train and equip a moderate fighting force that was vetted through the United States of Free Syrian Army representatives. Was that inaccurate or insincere?

Mr. WEISS. Well, that was the program I referred to, Pentagon's train and equip. As computer programmers say, the bug was a feature, not an accident, right? The conceptualization of the program was completely flawed. The raison d'etre of all Syrian rebels is to go after the regime, not ISIS. They say, "We will get to ISIS eventually, they are our enemy."

There is another program. We say that these groups were vetted. Yeah, the rank-and-file soldiers were vetted. But guess what, I have done deep reporting on this and I helped bury the program because it was so flawed and tainted. The commanders, the brigade commanders we were sending in to lead these guys had not been properly trained or vetted. And it is any wonder that they took our materiel and sold it to al-Qaeda?

So this is the program that, frankly, I opposed from the very beginning, because you have to understand the culture, you have to understand what these people are going through.

Mr. HIGGINS. You make a good point.

Mr. Boot, I just wanted to, on Iraq, you have advocated for a Sunni Regional Government that would be autonomous, protected by its own militia, and guaranteed by the United States. You also

suggested in your testimony the 30,000 or 40,000 U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq to fight with Sunnis and that we would train and arm the Sunnis in Iraq.

As you know, the United States spent $24 billion, $25 billion training an Iraqi Army of some 240,000 fighters, including security and police forces. That failed miserably. How does this work logistically? And how does that affect the relationship if, in fact, it matters, with the Shia-led government.

Mr. BOOT. Well, I would say, based on my personal experience on numerous trips to Iraq going back to 2003, that our train and equip program for the Iraqi Security Forces was actually working pretty well until we completely pulled out in 2011. And what happened after that is that the Shiite sectarian regime in Baghdad completely corrupted and perverted the security forces, which is why when ISIS rose up and struck, the security forces fell apart.

At the moment, what we have been doing basically is we have been trying to pour new wine into old bottles. We have been trying to provide support for the Iraqi Security Forces as if they still exist in their old pre-2011 from. But the reality is that they don't. They remain hopelessly compromised by the Iranians and the Shiite sectarians who really run the regime there. And most of the energy of the government has been poured not into standing up nonsectarian Iraqi Security Forces, but rather in creating these popular mobilization forces, which are Shiite militias effectively under the control of Iran.

Now you hear from the regime in Baghdad that they don't want U.S. troops in Iraq to fight ISIS. Well, of course they don't want U.S. troop because that would interfere with Iranian designs to dominate the Shiite heartland of Iraq.

Mr. HIGGINS. Let me ask you this. The name of Qasem Soleimani is often invoked. He is a guy that clearly gave Nouri al-Maliki his final term. He is a guy that has demonstrated extraordinary influence with the Shia government with his control of the Shia militias. He probably saved Bashar al-Assad in Syria in the final hour by actually traveling there and conducting ground forces on the ground.

You know, going in there and propping up the Sunnis by promising or committing to a regional government, does that not necessarily—I am not saying that—I am not defending him in any way, shape, or form, the current government or the previous government in Iraq, because I think that whole experiment has been a huge, huge failure for a number of reasons. We have empowered the very people that we are trying to push back. But does that not necessarily sow the seeds of a new civil war between Shia and Sunni in Iraq?

Mr. BOOT. Well, you already have a civil war going on in Iraq. What I am suggesting is to create a more durable balance of power that will actually keep the peace. What I am suggesting is that if we create, whether working through Baghdad or directly on our own, if we create the Sunni Regional Government that would be protected by its own Sons of Iraq militia and ultimately by the guarantee of American air power and American support, I think that could create a balance of power, because essentially you would have the Sunnis in control of the Sunni area, the Shiites in control

of the Shiite area, the Kurds in control of the Kurdish area, and you would have a more peaceful situation of the kind that actually existed in 2011 before we left Iraq.

At the moment, of course, what you have is the most radical and extreme Shiites in control of the Shiite areas, ISIS in control of the Sunni areas, and the Kurds, fairly moderate Kurds, in control of their own areas.

The bottom line is that the Sunnis have no reason to fight ISIS if they think that ISIS is going to be replaced by the kind of Shiite tyranny that they have known after 2011. You have got to give them a reason to fight ISIS. And, basically, the reason is you have to give them a political end state that they would be satisfied with, and the only one that I could foresee right now is some kind of autonomy, which is not going to be easy to do.

And they are not going to trust us very well because they feel like we abandoned them in 2011. But if we show that we are willing to help them, if we are willing to put some troops on the battlefield to work with them, and if we are willing to keep troops long term in, let's say, the KRG, maybe in Anbar, and somewhere else, I think that might give the Sunnis enough confidence and might create a more stable end state under this loose Federal structure in Iraq. I think, at this point, that is really the only good bet that we have.

And simply continuing to support the Shiite sectarian regime in Baghdad, as we are doing now, even sending them F–16s, that doesn't make any sense because essentially what we are doing is we are subsidizing the Iranian power grab in Iraq, where our Air Force is basically acting as the air force for the Iranian militias. That is not helping to defeat ISIS. That is only helping to entrench Iran more deeply in Iraq.

Mr. HIGGINS. Just a final thought, Mr. Chairman. We have been dealing with this issue, whether it is the Foreign Affairs Committee, the whole committee, the subcommittee, joint committees of Homeland Security, Foreign Affairs. And it is like Tom Friedman used to say, he would go to the Middle East and he would say, "I have traveled this area, I have studied it, I have written about it, it is all very clear to me now: What a mess."

But I think the point is there is a book by Marwan Muasher called "The Second Arab Awakening," and in it he argues that the Middle East it a very pluralistic society. And Bashar al-Assad in Syria is an Alawite, which is a variant of Shia, and it is not that everybody supports him, it is that the minority groups that gravitate to him are afraid that they will get slaughtered if a Sunni government takes over in revenge.

And that is a big part of the problem in the Middle East. So long as there is a zero-sum game, the sum will always be zero. And unless and until minority rights are actually respected and guaranteed in some kind of document, not even a constitution or a preamble, whatever.

You know, I look at the situation in Northern Ireland, although it is not perfect today, but you took two warring factions as part of the Good Friday Accord and they both had to denounce violence. You know, there was mutuality. They had to take risks. Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein, his life was not threatened from without, it

was threatened from within because they were moving away from a physical force tradition.

And I think until you have that kind of breakthrough with real leaders that have a vision for Middle East peace, you are going to have a continuation of this horrible situation from which there are nothing but bad decisions for the United States.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you for that insight.

Ms. Kelly.

Ms. KELLY. Since my day has started, it seems like I have been in meetings dealing with this topic. And one thing that came up was about Turkey and their questionable partnership, are they really true partners. Another meeting I was in, they spoke about how porous their borders are and a lot of things are going through Turkey that are causing problems for the United States and others.

What do you think that we can do to truly get them committed to defeating ISIS, or what can NATO do, if you think they aren't true partners or really committed?

Mr. SANDERSON. Thank you, Congresswoman. I would support your suggestion that they have not been true partners. From day one, they have facilitated the movement of extremist fighters through their border to fight Kurds and to fight the Assad regime. Fighting the Assad regime is a good goal, but fighting the Kurds has not been, and they are our best partner on the ground.

They have tightened their borders a little bit, but they still see these elements, these extremist Islamist fighters coming in as doing their bidding against Kurds in particular. They do have a big border, but they have allowed these fighters, fighters I have interviewed, fighters that have been treated in Turkish hospitals, and I have seen those medical records and I have seen those fighters, they still ply the borders from Turkey's side.

I do not know what we can do to turn the screws on them. They seem to have an awful lot of leverage. The President has publicly upbraided them for not doing all that they can. But we take a lot of advantage from using the Incirlik Air Force Base there. That is part of the deal we have with Turkey.

Unfortunately, I think they hold a lot of the cards. And as powerful as the U.S. can be, in this area, the Turks are very much a tier 1 actor and they can call a lot of the shots. But they are not being nearly as helpful as they could be.

Ms. KELLY. That is very disappointing.

Anyone else have a comment?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Congresswoman, thanks for the question. I think it is excellent.

I think that Turkey has taken a very dark turn. In addition to what Mr. Sanderson has said, I would point to two factors that are worth looking into. One is Turkish charities that have been supporting extremist factions throughout the world. There is a lot of information on that. And the second thing is I would look into recent U.N. delisting of extremists who were hosted in Turkey, including Mohammed Islambouli, who, according to open source reporting, is a high-level figure in the Khorasan Group, which is associated with al-Qaeda.

I think that Turkey is not supporting ISIS. I think they are supporting al-Qaeda factions. And that points to one other thing that

I think is worth raising. Mr. Sanderson referred earlier, in the Q&A, to the 16-year-old he spoke to who left ISIS because ISIS conscripted him to fight against Nusra. The Nusra Front is the al-Qaeda affiliate. As Mr. Sanderson said, the Nusra Front is very popular in Syria.

So while we wouldn't like it to be this way, dealing with the problem set of al-Qaeda I think is actually even more complex than dealing with the problem set of ISIS. And our moderate rebels have been helping al-Qaeda to take ground. I mean, this is something that I wish were not the case. But since the Russian bombing started, U.S. officials have been very open about that in the media. They have named areas where moderate rebels were bombed, such as Idlib and Hama, and those correlate with areas where Nusra has control, and Jaish al-Fatah, which is the coalition it is a part of, but where it is the major faction.

Now, I agree with what Mr. Weiss said, which is that if you look at it from the rebel perspective, I don't think this makes them terrible people. I mean, when you are faced with enemies on all sides, you are going to find temporary marriages of convenience.

The real question I have is, are we going to be able to clean this up in some way? Or are we helping al-Qaeda to take ground only to create another mess? I think it is something that really deserves a hearing both with advocates, such as Mr. Weiss, of arming the rebel factions and also those who are opposed to it. Because what I see deeply disturbs me, and I also think it is actually a violation of U.S. law.

Mr. WEISS. I agree with everything Daveed said, including Turkey's dark turn. You will recall the U.S. Special Forces raid that killed Abu Sayyaf, I think somewhat erroneously referred to as ISIS' oil minister or CFO, some of the best reporting done on the aftermath of that raid was done by a friend of mine at the Guardian, Martin Chulov, who said the intelligence that the U.S. took back from that compound has very much implicated the Turkish Government in all kinds of conversations and discussions with senior ISIS officials. Turkish businessmen have been buying more oil from ISIS than even Bashar al-Assad, who remains one of the chief financiers of ISIS through the energy economy trade.

I think that this is exactly as Daveed said, let the Islamists and the jihadists come in and let them be the commandos if NATO doesn't want to have it. Assad will take it by hook or by crook.

I have traveled the Syrian border from Turkey. I can give you a funny anecdote or two. There was a native from Homs, Syria, wearing a keffiyeh, who was stopped by the Turkish Gendarmerie and questioned, interrogated for 20 minutes because the guy didn't think he was Syrian. I went across, no problem. So apparently I look more Syrian than someone from Homs.

Another journalist friend of mine who is Indian was actually stopped once. He has been across that border two dozen times. And the last time he was stopped and arrested, he convinced the Turks that he was a Syrian refugee. I guess he had dark skin. They gave him a refugee card. Now he can go back and forth as he likes. He is a British journalist too, but from India by heritage.

It is a sieve, that border, and it is a sieve not because it is so difficult to invigilate, but because the Turks have chosen to look the other way.

With respect to the rebels, I want to be very clear. David Petraeus, not exactly a squish on radical jihadism, Sunni or Shia, made a very controversial comment actually to the Daily Beast, my publication, several months ago. He said, look, there are elements within Jabhat al-Nusra, which is the official al-Qaeda franchise in Syria, that we can peel away to work with us.

Now, this was remarkable for two reasons. Number one, you will recall the awakening/surge period in Iraq. The only group that the U.S. refused to work with in the Sunni insurgency constellation was al-Qaeda in Iraq. There were every other group, whether nationalist, Islamist, or even, frankly, borderline jihadists, who had been on Tuesday bombing U.S. compounds or military checkpoints or forward operating bases, on Wednesday receiving U.S. weaponry and close air support because they had become essentially a paramilitary squad hunting and killing al-Qaeda in Iraq.

A same dynamic exists today in Syria. Now, Daveed is right, rebel groups that we would consider, quote/unquote, moderate or nationalistic or at least not so bad in the Islamist orientation, work cheek by jowl with Nusra or work at an operational tactical capacity with Nusra because they think Nusra, frankly, most of them are Syrians, they are not so bad, and, yes, the West demonizes them all as al-Qaeda, but we know a lot of these people.

There are interviews. I can acquaint every member on this panel with many of them. People who went from the anti-Assad protest movement to some to FSA battalion to Jabhat al-Nusra to ISIS, then defecting. What does that tell us? Not everybody is born a diehard ideologue. Not everybody who is a jihadi yesterday will remain one tomorrow. There is a lot of human capital that can still be worked with.

But, again, you have to be persuasive. You have to show the Sunni Arabs of that country that we have their back, that their plight matters to us. And right now, they think the opposite is true. And that, ultimately, in addition to Assad's depravity and the IRGC's depravity and Lebanese Hezbollah's depravity, is the greatest recruitment drive for ISIS.

Mr. BOOT. If I could just jump in and make one fast point. I think we have really been hurting ourselves. We have been in this cycle in Syria since 2011 when we say, "Well, we are concerned about who the rebels are, we are concerned that some of the rebels are radical Islamists, so we don't really want to help them, we are going to stand back and watch what happens."

Well, what happens is exactly what my colleagues have been describing, which is that when we are not doing more to help the moderates, that only helps the extremists, because the extremists find support from other countries, from outside backers, what have you, whether it is Turkey, Qatar, whoever, winds up backing the more radical elements and those are the ones that get in power.

And then a few years down the road we are saying, "Oh, my gosh, where are the moderate rebels? They don't exist anymore." Well, what do you expect would happen if we are not providing the

same kind of backing to the moderates that other groups are providing to the extremists?

But to underline the point that Michael has just made, and I think it is an important point, which is that a lot the people who are with the al-Nusra Front or who are with ISIS are not necessarily ideologues, they are not necessarily fanatical jihadists, they are just opportunists looking for a way to arm themselves and to defend themselves against the Bashar al-Assad regime. If we can offer them an alternative way to do that which doesn't involve the imposition of this extreme Salafist brand of Islam on Syria, which is not very popular with ordinary Syrians—I mean, ISIS is out there punishing people for smoking. I mean, if you travel in this part of the world, everybody smokes. This is not a popular position to take.

So people are not embracing groups like ISIS because they love the ideology. They are embracing it because this is the only way they can survive. But if we can offer them a different way to survive, I think you will see that a lot of these opportunists will leave the ranks of the al-Nusra Front, will leave the ranks of ISIS just as quickly as they left the ranks of the Taliban in the fall 2001. When we started fighting against Taliban, all of a sudden all this formidable support that the Taliban had dissolved within a matter of months because people decided that was no longer the winning side. Unfortunately, at the moment, we have not convinced anybody that our side is the winning side.

Mr, KELLY. I am sure my time is up.

Mr. POE [presiding]. I want to thank all the gentlemen.

I would like each member that wishes to make some brief closing comments. We will start with the ranking member.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank all of you.

We have just scratched the surface of all these issues, but it was important to do because I think it demonstrated how complex this is. And simplistic solutions that some people offer can be counterproductive.

One of the dynamics I learned, and I don't have an answer, I think in hearings like this sometimes you walk away with more questions, which is good. But the narrative that if we are just there and have more of a military presence on the ground that suddenly Sunni Arabs are going to feel we have their back and they are going to all of a sudden come up in arms and join us, I don't think it is that simple, based on what Mr. Weiss was talking about. There are other alternatives besides us, like al-Nusra. They are there. And it is not that simple.

I will leave one thought that we didn't get into that I think, with all of the complexities of what will be challenges, there is one thing that we can really—not us, but our allies in Europe can do—they can start taking passenger name records for their own security. They can start checking more than 30 percent of the people at the Schengen exterior border.

I know there are different laws and different privacy laws in those countries. Yet, I would hope that in the wake of the terrible tragedy, the second terrible tragedy in France, that maybe those things can be changed. And they should be things that change im-

mediately. I hope that happens. At every opportunity, I am going to continue to press my European colleagues to do that. It has languished since 2013, the bill to deal with the passenger name records.

So I hope they can move forward on this. They will help their own security. I understand and respect their sovereignty. But they also by making these changes help keep us more secure here as well.

So I thank all of you for—this is a very good hearing and all of you were great contributors to do that.

So I want to thank our witnesses and yield back.

Mr. POE. Thank the gentleman.

Mr. Rohrabacher from California, closing comments.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes, thank you very much. And it has been enlightening.

And, Mr. Boot, let me just suggest that I think your plan for a Sunni Regional Government and that part of your plan is good. It is excellent. It is probably the only, I would say, real plan that I have heard thrown onto the table and it has a lot of validity to it. So I hope that the powers that be will take that seriously, and I will be talking about it myself, although I am not a power that be, I am just here.

Let me ask you this. All over the Internet there is an interview with General Wesley Clark, former, I believe, NATO commander, who immediately after—a day or two after 9/11 went to the Pentagon. And one of his generals he worked with over his life visited him. And the general confided that they were not, this is a couple days after 9/11, they were consumed with the plan to move forward with a forceful regime change against Saddam Hussein in Iraq, not Afghanistan, but against Saddam Hussein.

And then he came back about a couple weeks later, the same general said, "Well, are you still moving forward on Saddam Hussein?" And according to General Clark, he said, "Well, actually, my friend then said, no, we are now preparing to forcefully remove from office the five or six governments in the Middle East that are deemed to be pro-Russian, including Libya, including Assad, including Saddam Hussein, et cetera."

Now, have any of you heard that even after 9/11, that our Government was targeting its activity on that type of—for that type of a mission, to eliminate, basically regime change for those regimes that had been close to Russia during the Cold War?

Mr. SANDERSON. No, Congressman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You haven't heard? Okay. So have you heard Wesley Clark's statement on this? No one has heard it.

I would suggest that you—I am not—listen, Wesley Clark may be making it up. I doubt if a man of his stature would make this up. But I would suggest you take a look at it.

And with that said, one last point on Assad, and that is I know these players. I have never met the son Assad. I did meet his father once a long, long time ago. And Assad in those days was known as the guy who protected Christians in that part of the world. But I know the different players. I don't know one player there in the Middle East that if their government was being confronted with an uprising that was being supported by a Shiite gov-

ernment, that that government wouldn't be just as brutal as what Assad has been in suppressing his regime.

It is okay, listen, I want to say all of you gave me some good insights today. And I remember, as I say, Mr. Weiss gave me a personal, how do you say, briefing one time and it was excellent. All of you did an excellent job. Thank you for actually giving us something to think about.

Mr. POE. The Chair will recognize the gentleman from New York.

Mr. HIGGINS. Dr. Gartenstein-Ross, you had indicated in your opening statement that there is a need to challenge the ISIS narrative of strength, and that ISIS has vulnerabilities and we have to make those vulnerabilities work against them. Do you want to elaborate?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes. So their key vulnerability, the one that actually holds the potential to completely reverse the ISIS' brand, is the territoriality aspect of their mission. When they declared the caliphate, one of the things that they had to do was maintain a legitimate caliphate. If their caliphate reaches the point where it is nonviable, then they have a lot of explaining to do to their constituents.

A second thing is they have a narrative that has rested so much on strength. That is why they don't have a problem burning men alive, drowning them in swimming pools, and putting it on a video, beheading people on video, talking selfies with severed heads. It is a narrative of strength. It works while they are winning.

We saw a complete brand reversible previously with al-Qaeda in Iraq, which was very similar—which ISIS was born out of—very similar to ISIS. Back in the 2005 to 2007 period, they were one of the strongest players. They were the dominant force in Anbar province. They committed massive atrocities. And then when they started to lose, suddenly the narrative shifted from one of strength to one of them having overplayed their hands. Al-Qaeda, in fact, views AQI's loss as devastating to their organization. They have been trying to rebrand themselves ever since.

In terms of their narrative of strength, they have at times exaggerated their victories in ways that they have gotten our media to echo. They claimed falsely that they controlled the city of Derna in Libya, something we now know definitively was not true, but CNN, BBC, and other major outlets reported that they controlled Derna when they actually didn't. They have experienced four major reversals in Africa, the most important of which is the Algerians basically wiping out the entirety of the ISIS branch in their country. They also got kicked out of Derna by the Derna Mujahideen Shura Council. They also had their defector organization from a militant organization called Al-Mourabitoun experience significant losses at the hands of the al-Qaeda leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who went after them ruthlessly. And they have experienced significant losses at the hands of Shabaab's internal security apparatus as they have tried to establish a presence there.

The point being, they have a lot of losses that people just aren't aware of. And I think that one of the key things our own information operation should do is focus on this narrative of strength.

Now, right now doing so will not be particularly helpful, right? They just executed the Paris attacks, the Sinai attack. They are in

a position of strength right now, regardless of their loss of Sinjar and other territorial losses. But there have been ebbs and flows for ISIS. And right now they are at a period that is quite good for them. It is not necessarily going to last, and we need to focus on shattering their narrative of strength.

Mr. POE. I do want to thank you once again. Fascinating, depressing. And I think it is incumbent upon us, Members of Congress, work with the administration, that we look at the big picture of what is taking place with ISIS, the growth, and then have a response, a military response partially, a political response, and important also that we understand the consequences of every act and failure to act. What is the long-term consequence of what we do as a Nation regarding ISIS, how it affects not just us but the whole chaos in the Middle East. I think that is a big job ahead of us.

And I appreciate, personally, and the committee appreciates your insight specifically about what is really taking place in the Middle East.

Thank you very much. The subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:35 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, December 2, 2015

TIME: 1:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: The Paris Attacks: A Strategic Shift by ISIS?

WITNESS: Mr. Max Boot
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Ph.D.
Senior Fellow
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

Mr. Michael Weiss
Co-Author
ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror

Mr. Thomas M. Sanderson
Director and Senior Fellow
Transnational Threats Project
Center for Strategic and International Studies

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 *December 2* Room *2200*

Starting Time *1:05 p.m.* Ending Time *3:35 p.m.*

Recesses [1] (*1:50* to *2:36*) (____ 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:

The Paris Attacks: A Strategic Shift by ISIS?

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Reps. Poe, Keating, Wilson, Sherman, Cook, Higgins, Perry, Zeldin, Kelly

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

Rep. Rohrabacher

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 *3:35 p.m.*

Subcommittee Staff Director