

**THE RISE OF RADICALISM: GROWING TERRORIST
SANCTUARIES AND THE THREAT TO THE U.S.
HOMELAND**

JOINT HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Serial No. 114-45
(Committee on Homeland Security)

Serial No. 114-178
(Committee on Foreign Affairs)

Printed for the use of the Committee on Homeland Security and
the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

99-750 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2016

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

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL, Texas, *Chairman*

LAMAR SMITH, Texas	BENNIE G. THOMPSON, Mississippi
PETER T. KING, New York	LORETTA SANCHEZ, California
MIKE ROGERS, Alabama	SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas
CANDICE S. MILLER, Michigan, <i>Vice Chair</i>	JAMES R. LANGEVIN, Rhode Island
JEFF DUNCAN, South Carolina	BRIAN HIGGINS, New York
TOM MARINO, Pennsylvania	CEDRIC L. RICHMOND, Louisiana
LOU BARLETTA, Pennsylvania	WILLIAM R. KEATING, Massachusetts
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania	DONALD M. PAYNE, JR., New Jersey
CURT CLAWSON, Florida	FILEMON VELA, Texas
JOHN KATKO, New York	BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN, New Jersey
WILL HURD, Texas	KATHLEEN M. RICE, New York
EARL L. "BUDDY" CARTER, Georgia	NORMA J. TORRES, California
MARK WALKER, North Carolina	
BARRY LOUDERMILK, Georgia	
MARTHA MCSALLY, Arizona	
JOHN RATCLIFFE, Texas	
DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR., New York	

BRENDAN P. SHIELDS, *Staff Director*
JOAN V. O'HARA, *General Counsel*
MICHAEL S. TWINCHEK, *Chief Clerk*
I. LANIER AVANT, *Minority Staff Director*

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EDWARD R. ROYCE, California, *Chairman*

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey	ELIOT L. ENGEL, New York
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida	BRAD SHERMAN, California
DANA ROHRBACHER, California	GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio	ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey
JOE WILSON, South Carolina	GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
MICHAEL T. MCCAUL, Texas	THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida
TED POE, Texas	BRIAN HIGGINS, New York
MATT SALMON, Arizona	KAREN BASS, California
DARRELL E. ISSA, California	WILLIAM R. KEATING, Massachusetts
TOM MARINO, Pennsylvania	DAVID CICILLINE, Rhode Island
JEFF DUNCAN, South Carolina	ALAN GRAYSON, Florida
MO BROOKS, Alabama	AMI BERA, California
PAUL COOK, California	ALAN S. LOWENTHAL, California
RANDY K. WEBER, SR., Texas	GRACE MENG, New York
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania	LOIS FRANKEL, Florida
RON DESANTIS, Florida	TULSI GABBARD, Hawaii
MARK MEADOWS, North Carolina	JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
TED S. YOHO, Florida	ROBIN L. KELLY, Illinois
CURT CLAWSON, Florida	BRENDAN F. BOYLE, Pennsylvania
SCOTT DESJARLAIS, Tennessee	
REID J. RIBBLE, Wisconsin	
DAVID A. TROTT, Michigan	
LEE M. ZELDIN, New York	
DANIEL M. DONOVAN, JR., New York	

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

CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENTS	
The Honorable Michael T. McCaul, a Representative in Congress From the State of Texas, and Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security:	
Oral Statement	1
Prepared Statement	3
The Honorable Edward R. Royce, a Representative in Congress From the State of California, and Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs:	
Oral Statement	4
Prepared Statement	6
The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, a Representative in Congress From the State of Mississippi, and Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security:	
Oral Statement	7
Prepared Statement	8
The Honorable Eliot L. Engel, a Representative in Congress From the State of New York, and Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs:	
Oral Statement	9
Prepared Statement	11
The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee, a Representative in Congress From the State of Texas:	
Prepared Statement	13
WITNESSES	
General John M. Keane (Ret. U.S. Army), Chairman of the Board, Institute for the Study of War:	
Oral Statement	18
Prepared Statement	20
Mr. Matthew G. Olsen, Co-founder and President, Business Development and Strategy, IronNet Cybersecurity:	
Oral Statement	23
Prepared Statement	25
Mr. Peter Bergen, Vice President, Director, International Security and Fellows Programs, New America:	
Oral Statement	26
Prepared Statement	28
FOR THE RECORD	
The Honorable Candice S. Miller, a Representative in Congress From the State of Michigan:	
Letters	59
The Honorable Sheila Jackson Lee, a Representative in Congress From the State of Texas:	
Article	89
Statement of the Syrian American Council	90
Statement of the Syrian Community Network (Chicago, IL); Syrian American Medical Society; Karam Foundation; Syria Relief and Development; Syrian Expatriates Organization; Watan USA; Rahma Relief Foundation; Hope for Syria	91
Statement of Brian Michael Jenkins, RAND Office of External Affairs	93

THE RISE OF RADICALISM: GROWING TERRORIST SANCTUARIES AND THE THREAT TO THE U.S. HOMELAND

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
JOINT WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committees met, pursuant to call, at 10:08 a.m., in Room 210, HVC, Hon. Michael T. McCaul [Chairman of the Homeland Security committee] presiding.

Present from Committee on Homeland Security: Representatives McCaul, King, Rogers, Miller, Duncan, Marino, Barletta, Perry, Clawson, Katko, Hurd, Carter, Walker, Loudermilk, McSally, Ratcliffe, Donovan, Thompson, Sanchez, Jackson Lee, Langevin, Higgins, Keating, Payne, Vela, Watson Coleman, Rice, and Torres.

Present from Committee on Foreign Affairs: Representatives Royce, Smith of New Jersey, Rohrabacher, Chabot, Wilson, Salmon, Cook, Weber, DeSantis, Yoho, DesJarlais, Zeldin, Engel, Sherman, Meeks, Connolly, Deutch, Cicilline, Bera, Lowenthal, Meng, Frankel, Gabbard, Castro, Kelly, and Boyle.

Chairman McCAUL. The Committee on Homeland Security and Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order. The purpose of this hearing is to examine current and evolving terrorist sanctuaries abroad and the threats they pose to the United States homeland.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Before we begin, I would like to have a moment of silence in memory of those who lost their lives in the attacks in Paris and in honor of those who were wounded.

Today, we must make this much clear. We are at war. The world was reminded last week that Islamic terrorists are seeking to harm our people, destroy our way of life and undermine the foundational principles of the free world. The Paris attacks also confirmed our worst fears, that of the thousands of foreign fighters who have gone to Syria and Iraq to join access, some would be deployed to bring terror back to the West.

For more than a year, my committee has warned of this growing threat. We launched a bipartisan Congressional task force to focus on closing security gaps both at home and abroad to make it harder for terrorists and foreign fighters to slip across the border undetected.

More than 5,000 individuals with Western passports, including Americans, have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq, and some have already returned, battle-hardened and prepared to strike. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks, we traveled to Paris and met with the counterterrorism officials on the ground who have known that Europe was wide open to this danger. We conducted site visits along the jihadi super-highway from Western Europe to Turkey and then into the conflict zone.

Our findings were alarming. This September, the committee's final task force report concluded that we are losing the struggle to stop Americans from going overseas to join jihadist groups. It announced that the gaping security weaknesses overseas are putting the U.S. homeland and our allies in danger.

These worries have materialized. We know that jihadists exploited these gaps to plot and execute the worst terrorist attack on French soil since World War II. The world is now looking to America for leadership and for a clear eye to understanding of the threat.

ISIS is not contained as the President says. ISIS is expanding globally and is plotting aggressively. In a matter of weeks it executed major external terrorist plots on 3 continents, destroying a Russian airliner, conducting suicide bombings in Lebanon and launching a mass attack in the streets in Paris.

ISIS is now responsible for more than 60 terrorist plots against Western targets, including 18 in the United States. Here at home, we have arrested more than 70 ISIS supporters over the last year. That is on average more than 1 per week, and the FBI says it has nearly 1,000 ISIS-related investigations in all 50 States. If this is not a war, then I don't know what is.

America cannot wait for terrorists to launch their next attack. The security of the free world depends on our response, and we must respond immediately. We can start by securing the homeland. Our task force report will not sit on the shelf. We are taking action to turn our recommendations into reality. Soon we will release legislation designed to help close security loopholes and keep terrorists from reaching our shores.

We will also work to make sure terrorists do not infiltrate refugee flows to sneak into our country as some apparently did to reach France.

Today we released a report laying out the preliminary findings of a nearly year-long investigation into counterterrorism challenges associated with Syrian refugee flows. The results of this review are sobering. While we are proud of our humanitarian tradition of welcoming refugees into our country, this is a special case. The President's own intelligence and law enforcement officials have warned this committee of the risk involved with the Syrian refugee program and the high-threat environment and I have to take them at their word.

I have called upon the President to temporarily suspend Syrian refugee admissions into the United States until we can improve the screening and vetting process. But we cannot wait for the President to take action. Congress will act immediately to make sure the system is more secure.

Americans are worried about the terror threat level, and my promise to the American people is that we are working hard to strengthen this country's defenses. My promise to our allies is that we stand ready to help you to do the same.

But as we will discuss today, the rise of radicalism cannot be reversed without confronting the problem at its source. Terrorist sanctuaries for jihadists recruit, train, and plot against us. In Syria, we are witnessing the largest global convergence of jihadists in world history; yet, the President's plan is to contain rather than roll back the threat. What we have seen as a policy of containment leads to a constant stream of terror.

We need a strategy for victory in the war against Islamist terror and that strategy must begin in Syria. Our enemies have said that the latest attack is just the beginning of a storm, and our message back to them must be clear. You have fired the first shot in this struggle but rest assured America will fire the last.

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us here today. Each of you worked in different ways on our front lines in this long struggle. Look forward to your insights.

[The statement of Chairman McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Before we begin, I would like to have a moment of silence in memory of those who lost their lives in the attacks in Paris and in honor of those who were wounded. Today we must make this much clear: We are at war.

The world was reminded last week that Islamist terrorists are seeking to harm our people, destroy our way of life, and undermine the foundational principles of the free world.

The Paris attacks also confirmed our worst fears—that of the thousands of foreign fighters who have gone to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS, some would be deployed to bring terror back to the West.

For more than a year, my committee has warned of this growing threat.

We launched a bipartisan Congressional task force to focus on closing security gaps—both at home and abroad—to make it harder for terrorists and foreign fighters to slip across the border undetected.

More than 5,000 individuals with Western passports, including Americans, have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq. And some have already returned battle-hardened and prepared to strike.

After the Charlie Hebdo attacks, we traveled to Paris and met with counterterrorism officials on the ground who have known that Europe was wide-open to this danger.

And we conducted site visits along the “jihadi superhighway,” from Western Europe to Turkey and then into the conflict zone.

Our findings were alarming.

This September, the committee's final task force report concluded that we are losing the struggle to stop Americans from going overseas to join jihadist groups, and it announced that gaping security weaknesses overseas are putting the U.S. homeland and our allies in danger.

Those worries have materialized.

We know that jihadists exploited these gaps to plot and execute the worst terrorist attack on French soil since World War II.

The world is now looking to America for leadership and for a clear-eyed understanding of the threat.

ISIS is not “contained,” as the President says. ISIS is expanding globally and is plotting aggressively.

In a matter of weeks it executed major external terrorist plots on 3 continents, destroying a Russian airliner, conducting suicide bombings in Lebanon, and launching a mass attack on the streets of Paris.

ISIS is now responsible for more than 60 terrorist plots against Western targets, including 18 in the United States. Here at home we have arrested more than one

ISIS supporter a week, on average, in the past year, and the FBI says it has nearly 1,000 ISIS-related investigations in all 50 States.

If this is not a war, then I don't know what is.

America cannot wait for terrorists to launch their next attack. The security of the free world depends on our response—and we must respond immediately.

We can start by securing the homeland.

Our task force report will not sit on a shelf. We are taking action to turn our recommendations into reality.

Soon we will release legislation designed to help close security loopholes and keep terrorists from reaching our shores.

We will also work to make sure terrorists do not infiltrate refugee flows to sneak into our country, as some apparently did to reach France.

Today we released a report laying out the preliminary findings of a nearly year-long investigation into counterterrorism challenges associated with Syrian refugee flows. The results of this review are sobering.

While we are proud of our humanitarian tradition of welcoming refugees into our country, this is a special case.

The President's own intelligence and law enforcement officials have warned this committee of the risks involved with the Syrian refugee program in this high-threat environment, and I have got to take them at their word.

I have called upon the President to temporarily suspend Syrian refugee admissions into the United States until we can improve the screening and vetting process. But we will not wait for the President to take action. Congress will act immediately to make sure the system is more secure.

Americans are worried about the terror threat level.

My promise to the American people is that we are working hard to strengthen this country's defenses. And my promise to our allies is that we stand ready to help you do the same.

But as we will discuss today, the rise of radicalism cannot be reversed without confronting the problem at the source: Terrorist sanctuaries where jihadists recruit, train, and plot against us.

In Syria, we are witnessing the largest global convergence of jihadists in world history, yet the President's plan is to contain rather than rollback the threat. And what we have seen is that a policy of containment leads to a constant stream of terror.

We need a strategy for victory in the war against Islamist terror, and that strategy must begin in Syria.

Our enemies have said the latest attack is the beginning of "a storm." And our message back to them must be clear: You have fired the first shot in this struggle, but rest assured—America will fire the last.

Chairman McCaul. With that, the Chair now recognizes the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from California, Mr. Royce.

Chairman ROYCE. Well, thank you, Chairman McCaul. I thank my colleagues here too and the witnesses.

I will give you a few of my observations as we get underway with this hearing.

But the first is I think if we go back to the 9/11 Commission and we look at their core finding, what they warned us of in the future is that terrorists should be allowed no sanctuary because if we ever gave them sanctuary again, we would see the consequences of that in terms of attacks potentially on our homeland.

Why did they say that? They said that if they have safe haven. If they have this, this time and space available to them where they are going to be able to go forward with their capabilities of making bombs or training with automatic weapons, we could see them attack the West again as a consequence of allowing them to have that safe haven.

In this particular case with ISIS, we have a terrorist organization that believes that anyone who does not share their world view are apostates. In other words, when you saw their attack on civil-

ians in Beirut, Lebanon, the argument was that those Shia in the marketplace, those women and children were apostates.

The attacks on the young people in Paris. The argument there again. They are apostates. So, when it comes to a philosophy like that, I think the administration is on the wrong track with this strategy of containment. You can't contain a terrorist organization like that—intends to establish a state and use it to train and recruit in order to carry out its attacks overseas.

You have got a second point that the 9/11 commission I think would make. I think they would have been dismayed to have watched ISIS, who say in their playbook, that their goal is to take over territory.

I think they would have been dismayed to watch for 12 full months, as ISIS took town after town, starting with Raqqa. Going into Fallujah and Ramadi and all the way to Mosul. Twelve months, when our air power was not allowed to take off and hit any of these ISIS targets.

Over and over again, we in the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Members on both sides of the aisle called for the use of our air power to stop ISIS from taking these cities and taking territory. We know that we had allies in the Pentagon and we know that we had an ally in the ambassador in Baghdad.

Yet, by the administration, not to take action until finally Mosul itself had fallen. The central bank itself, of Iraq, was in the hands of ISIS, close to a \$1 billion in the hands of this terrorist organization.

So, given that ISIS believed that a necessary step in undermining democracy and setting the stage for their ideology was to expand their territory, this containment strategy is a very flawed position.

Now, the fighting force of ISIS itself is another issue here, because on balance it has not shrunk. It hasn't shrunk because of the virtual caliphate that they have set up on the internet.

They have now attracted 30,000 foreign fighters into ISIS. When you look at the more than 100 countries that they have recruited from, it is clear again, that the containment strategy, far from being a disincentive, has actually allowed them to say that we are advancing in terms of our strategy and our recruitment.

Young men are watching them on the advance. Forty-five hundred hold Western passports, of these ISIS fighters. Two hundred and fifty of them are Americans. In France's case, 1,800 of its citizens are entrenched now, in jihadi networks and this terrorist diaspora is not far from France. It is a plane ride away from here.

So, now with this conundrum that we are in, we hear this argument from ISIS as the FBI director so aptly summed it up. Troubled soul, come to the caliphate. You will live a life of glory. If you can't come, kill somebody where you are.

Now that is the other aspect of what we are now dealing with. The ability to attack is here by recruitment through the internet. So, to hit ISIS from the air. This is a major conundrum because we are hearing that 75 percent of the time, pilots are returning without dropping ordnates.

We are hearing from those pilots who tell us that they are not given the ability to target even when they have a clear sight. There

won't be collateral damage. They still can't get clearance. We heard this last week.

We haven't had an aircraft carrier in the region for 2 months. Frankly, now a year after the U.N. Security Council acted to curb travel by foreign fighters, only 12 countries have databases allowing for quick risk assessments of travelers.

So, given all of this, it is time for a broad, overarching strategy for Syria and beyond Syria. It was also the 9/11 Commission that criticized the U.S. Government. They told us, "You are too stove-piped."

Congress isn't immune to poor communication and coordination. So it makes sense for our committees to work together on a topic like this and I look forward to working with the other Members here as Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to make sure that end of the day we reverse what the administration is doing here and put forward a sound strategy to defeat ISIS.

Thank you, Chairman.

[The statement of Chairman Royce follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN EDWARD R. ROYCE

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Thank you Chairman McCaul. With room to operate abroad, it was only a matter of time before Islamist terrorists struck, hitting Paris, again. They are looking to strike us too.

A core finding of the 9/11 Commission was that terrorists should be allowed "no sanctuaries." The reason is simple: With safe haven, terrorists have the time and space to indoctrinate, plan, and strengthen—and then take the fight to their enemies. In this case, anyone who does not share ISIS's apocalyptic world view is an apostate who must be destroyed—not something easily "contained," as the administration suggests.

The 9/11 Commissioners would likely be dismayed to have watched ISIS take over more and more territory between Iraq and Syria—and sit mainly uncontested. As one observer wrote this month, "The terrorists' own playbook sees the taking and holding of territory as a necessary step to discredit Western democracy and prove that the Caliphate is a real political possibility in the 21st Century."

While ISIS has taken losses, its fighting force has not shrunk—thanks in part to a steady stream of foreign recruits. More than 30,000 fighters have made it to Syria and Iraq from more than 100 countries. Of those, it is estimated that more than 4,500 hold Western passports—including at least 250 Americans. In France's case, 1,800 of its citizens are believed to be entrenched in jihadist networks. This "terrorist diaspora" is a skip away from Europe—and a plane ride to the United States.

With the internet now serving as a "virtual caliphate," young radicals don't have to travel abroad to become indoctrinated or receive terrorist training. Indeed, the FBI has revealed that it is investigating ISIS suspects in all 50 States. As Director Carney noted, ISIS's slick propaganda sends a "siren song" that goes like this: "Troubled soul, come to the caliphate, you will live a life of glory . . . And if you can't come, kill somebody where you are." That includes in the United States.

As is often said, the best defense is a good offense. But this administration has not wanted to play offense. When it had the chance to hit ISIS from the air early on, the White House sat paralyzed. Instead of pummeling ISIS territory, the White House is still proceeding with pinpricks. Last week, Secretary Kerry reported that the President has decided to "pick up the pace" against ISIS. What on earth have they been waiting for?

Worse, our defenses aren't where they should be. A year after the U.N. Security Council acted to curb travel by foreign fighters, only 12 countries have databases allowing for quick risk assessments of travelers. New technologies are making it harder for our authorities to keep up with would-be killers. And our Government is still floundering in understanding and combating the radicalization process.

It's easy to view these problems as being "over there," but like it or not, our National security is ever more connected to the chaos unfolding in Syria, Libya, and other sanctuaries. This reality can feel overwhelming at times. But unfortunately,

the wave of radicalism around the globe shows no signs of receding—making it essential for us to have a broad, overarching strategy for Syria and beyond.

It was also the 9/11 Commission that criticized the U.S. Government for being too “stovepiped.” Congress isn’t immune to poor communication and coordination. So it makes sense for our committees to work together on a topic like this. I look forward to this timely hearing.

Chairman McCAUL. Thank the Chairman.

Chair now recognizes Ranking Member of the Homeland Security Committee, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much. I thank you Chairman McCaul and Chairman Royce for holding today’s hearing.

I also thank the witnesses for their testimony that they will give during this hearing.

I stand with my colleagues in expressing my condolence and support for the people of France. As Americans, we stand in solidarity with our French allies. The terrorist group, ISIL, has claimed responsibility for the attacks that were carried out last Friday in Paris.

The attacks were a chilling manifestation of the reach of the ISIL terrorist network in Europe. On Monday, President Obama announced a new bilateral agreement with France to share intelligence and operational military information more quickly and more often.

This move will close the information gaps that have existed with our European partners. The bipartisan task force organized by Homeland Security, cited this gap as a major finding of its recent report that examined the threat posed by foreign fighters.

Consequently, we welcome enhanced information sharing with France. It has been reported that a fake Syrian passport was found with one of the terrorists who carried out the deadly Paris attacks. Since 2011, Syria has been a country torn by civil war with an estimated 4.2 million Syrians forced to flee from their homeland.

While the United States is the largest donor of humanitarian aid to Syria, President Obama announced earlier this year that we do more and work with the United Nations to provide shelter to 10,000 refugees who are in refugee camps, primarily in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon.

As we continue to discuss America’s involvement with Syrian refugees, it is important that we as Federal policymakers embrace fact, not fear.

The Syrian people are the primary victims of the violent conflict in Syria and the brutal actions of ISIL. They are the most vulnerable to the violence and know first-hand the cruelty of terrorists have brought to their communities. Syrian refugees, like others who are given safe harbor in the United States, are fleeing dire, even life-threatening, situations.

The migrants who have fled and continue to flee to Western Europe will not be considered for protection in the United States as they will seek protection in European countries. The United States has the benefit of an ocean and time to separate us from the flood of humanity that Europe is struggling to manage. In stark contrast to what is occurring with migrants arriving in Europe, our Government has the time to thoroughly screen refugees before they are admitted.

Our extensive and deliberative vetting process takes on average between 18 and 24 months. An individual seeking refugee status in the United States cannot step foot in the country until the Department of Homeland Security has made a determination of admissibility, having applied a Federal prioritization criteria and subjected the applicant to extensive biometric and biographic checks, multiple in-person interviews and medical screenings.

While concern about the risk associated with unknown persons in refugee population is understandable, particularly in the wake of last week's heinous attacks in Paris, we must not lose sight of the fact that three-quarters of the refugee population are women and children, and the U.S. Government will be highly selective on which applicant it approves. Providing safe harbor to individuals who no longer have a home because of war and violence is a humane and American thing to do.

Furthermore, in our fervor to protect the country from threats, we must not turn a blind eye to the fact that there are people who would seek to do Americans harm and strike at our way of life who were born and raised here in the United States. Lone offenders have been reached not only by ISIL, but by al-Qaeda and domestic groups having conspired to commit domestic terrorism right here on United States soil.

Furthermore, the downing of a Russian airliner on October 31 by ISIL brings into focus that the aviation sector remains a terrorist target and the importance of bolstering our screening procedures at last-point-of-departure airports.

Finally, as we consider foreign terrorist threats to the homeland, we must not ignore the risks associated with the Visa Waiver Program. In fact, the committee's bipartisan task force report acknowledged that while the administration has improved the security of the Visa Waiver Program, continuous enhancements must be made to keep pace with changing terrorist tactics, and to detect violent extremists before they board U.S. planes bound for here.

Mr. Chairman, with that I yield back the balance of my time.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

I stand with my colleagues in expressing my condolences and support for people of France. As Americans, we stand in solidarity with our French allies. The terrorist group ISIL has claimed responsibility for the attacks that were carried out last Friday in Paris. The attacks were a chilling manifestation of the reach of the ISIL terrorist network in Europe.

On Monday, President Obama announced a new bilateral agreement with France to share intelligence and operational military information more quickly and more often. This move will close information gaps that have existed with our European partners. The bipartisan task force organized by the Homeland Security cited this gap as a major finding in its recent report that examined the threat posed by foreign fighters. Consequently, we welcome enhanced information sharing with France.

It has been reported that a fake Syrian passport was found with one of the terrorists who carried out the deadly Paris attacks. Since 2011, Syria has been a country torn by civil war, with an estimated 4.2 million Syrians forced to flee from their homeland. While the United States is the largest donor of humanitarian aid to Syria, President Obama announced earlier this year that we would do more and work with the United Nations to provide shelter to 10,000 refugees who are in refugee camps, primarily in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon.

As we continue to discuss America's involvement with Syrian refugees, it is important that we as Federal policymakers embrace facts, not fear. The Syrian people are the primary victims of the violent conflict in Syria and the brutal actions of ISIL. They are the most vulnerable to the violence and know first-hand the cruelty the terrorists have brought to their communities.

Syrian refugees, like others who are given safe harbor in the United States, are fleeing dire, even life-threatening, situations. The migrants who have fled and continue to flee to Western Europe will not be considered for protection in the United States, as they will seek protection in European countries.

The United States has the benefit of an ocean and time to separate us from the flood of humanity that Europe is struggling to manage. In stark contrast to what is occurring with migrants arriving in Europe, our Government has the time to thoroughly screen refugees before they are admitted. Our extensive and deliberative vetting process takes, on average, between 18 and 24 months.

An individual seeking refugee status in the United States cannot step foot in the country until the Department of Homeland Security has made a determination of admissibility, having applied our Federal prioritization criteria and subjected the applicant to extensive biometric and biographic checks, multiple in-person interviews, and medical screenings.

While concern about the risks associated with unknown persons in refugee populations is understandable, particularly in the wake of last week's heinous attacks in Paris, we must not lose sight of the fact that three-quarters of the refugee population are women and children, and the U.S. Government will be highly selective about which applicants it approves.

Providing safe harbor to individuals who no longer have a home because of war and violence is the humane—and American—thing to do.

Furthermore, in our fervor to protect the country from threats, we must not turn a blind eye to the fact that there are people who would seek to do Americans harm and strike at our way of life who were born and raised here. Lone offenders have been reached not only by ISIL, but by al-Qaeda and domestic groups and have been inspired to commit domestic terrorism right here on U.S. soil.

Furthermore, the downing of a Russian airliner on October 31 by ISIL brings into focus that the aviation sector remains a terrorist target and the importance of bolstering our screening procedures at last-point-of-departure airports.

Finally, as we consider foreign terrorist threats to the homeland, we must not ignore the risks associated with the Visa Waiver Program. In fact, the committee's bipartisan task force report acknowledged that while the administration has improved the security of VWP, "continuous enhancements must be made to keep pace with changing terrorist tactics and to detect violent extremists before they board U.S.-bound planes."

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank the Ranking Member. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you Mr. Chairman, Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Thompson. Thank you all. I am glad that our committees have come together to take a look at what I agree is a major element of the threat posed by ISIS.

I hope by putting all of our heads together and by hearing from our witnesses we can find some answers to some critical questions. How do we stop the flow of foreign fighters into Syria? How do we make sure these fighters aren't coming back or sneaking into the United States with designs to harm innocent Americans?

Since this hearing was announced of course the complexion of this debate has changed a great deal. We are all shaken by the attacks in Paris. It is deeply troubling that ISIS was able to orchestrate such a complicated attack, and that both home-grown terrorists from Europe and possibly individuals posing as refugees were able to carry out such brutality.

A tragedy like this invariably spurs us to action. During my question time I hope we can get into some specifics. How do we improve our detection methods to get past the encryption ISIS is

using to communicate? How do we counter their use of social media to spread propaganda and recruit fighters from the West?

What support do communities here at home and overseas need to thwart ISIS recruitment? Are countries doing what they can to stop the flow of their citizens to Syria and Iran, and block those trying to come back? How do we empower law enforcement to grapple with this problem while respecting civil liberties?

I look forward to a good conversation about what we do now because it is up to us whether we will stand with our allies and partners and effectively confront an enemy, or allow fear and panic to make us forget who we are and what we stand for as a Nation. I would like to say a bit about that because I am unsettled by what I have heard from some people in Congress this week.

I read a poll the other day. The question was “What is your attitude toward allowing political refugees to come into the U.S.?”—67.4 agreed with the response. “With conditions as they are we should try to keep them out.” More than two-thirds, try to keep them out.

That poll was conducted in December 1938. The question in its entirety was “What is your attitude toward allowing German, Austrian, and other political refugees to come into the U.S.?” European Jews—more than two-thirds of Americans thought we should just close the gates. Just 4 months before Kristallnacht.

So less than a year later that attitude sealed the fate of the men, women, and children on-board the ocean liner *St. Louis*. Nearly 1,000 refugees, most of them German Jews, boarded the ship with the hope of finding safety across the Atlantic.

After being turned away in Cuba, those on-board the *St. Louis* turned their sights toward the United States. They came so close to Miami they could see the lights. Their cables to the White House and State Department begging for safe haven went unanswered.

The *St. Louis* steamed back to Europe. Six hundred twenty passengers ended up back on the continent. Two hundred fifty-four of them died in the holocaust. On-board the *St. Louis* they would pass close enough to Miami to see the city’s lights.

Syrians fleeing their homes because life in Syria for the last 4 years has meant not knowing when Assad will drop the next barrel bombs or release poison gas. It has meant watching community after community fall under the merciless and medieval rule of ISIS.

Often with just the clothes on their backs men, women, and children are struggling to escape. Not because they agree with terrorists, but because terrorists have destroyed their lives and staying behind could very well ensure their deaths.

Let’s remember these people are the victims of ISIS. They are fleeing from ISIS. They are not ISIS. So will we now slam the door in their faces?

The process the United States uses to screen refugees is the most rigorous of any—investigation of any individual trying to enter this country. Biometric screening to match their fingerprints and vital statistics against any known troublemakers, interviews with the Homeland Security Department, background checks by the State Department, the Defense Department, and the FBI, and medical screening and orientation program. We all know there are other

measures in place that we can't discuss in this open setting. It can take years.

Do we need to ensure we are following these procedures to the letter? Absolutely. Do we need to enhance procedures? Absolutely. Can we abandon our values as a Nation out of fear? Absolutely not.

My grandparents, all 4 of them, were Jewish immigrants from Ukraine. Like millions of others a century ago, they arrived in New York before World War I in New York Harbor and saw our country's front doorstep, the most enduring symbol of freedom the world has ever known, "A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, [with] her name, Mother of Exiles," the Statue of Liberty.

The words of Emma Lazarus on the Statue of Liberty, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free." The huddled masses we are talking about, Syrians, Yazidi who are desperate.

When I hear suggestions that maybe we should only take Christians, or that all these orphans would be such a burden, or that State or another State wants nothing to do with these refugees whatsoever, I am reminded of the St. Louis and what happened to her passengers. I think of what we could have done differently. I hope the decades and now our successors don't look back to the year 2015 with the same regrets.

So let me say in conclusion, we can do a smart thing and the right thing at the same time. We can stop the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS and safeguard against attacks here at home without succumbing to panic and xenophobia. Let's choose the path forward that protects the United States and that defeats our enemies without abandoning our values and repeating history's mistakes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Engel follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER ELIOT L. ENGEL

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Thompson, thank you all. I'm glad our committees have come together to take a look at, what I agree, is a major element of the threat posed by ISIS. And I hope by putting all our heads together, and by hearing from our witnesses, we can find some answers to some critical questions. How do we stop the flow of foreign fighters into Syria? How do we make sure these fighters aren't coming back or sneaking into the United States with designs to harm innocent Americans?

Since this hearing was announced, of course, the complexion of this debate has changed a great deal. We are all shaken by the attacks in Paris. It's deeply troubling that ISIS was able to orchestrate such a complicated attack, and that both home-grown terrorists from Europe and, possibly, individuals posing as refugees were able to carry out such brutality.

A tragedy like this invariably spurs us to action. And during my question time, I hope we can get into some specifics: How do we improve our detection methods to get past the encryption ISIS is using to communicate? How do we counter their use of social media to spread propaganda and recruit fighters from the West? What support do communities here at home and overseas need to thwart ISIS recruitment? Are countries doing what they can to stop the flow of their citizens to Syria and Iran and block those trying to come back? How do we empower law enforcement to grapple with this problem while respecting civil liberties?

I look forward to a good conversation about what we do now. Because it's up to us whether we will stand with our allies and partners and effectively confront an enemy . . . or allow fear and panic to make us forget who we are and what we

stand for as a Nation. I'd like to say a bit about that, because I'm unsettled by what I've heard from some leaders in Congress this week.

I read a poll the other day. The question was, "What's your attitude towards allowing political refugees to come into the United States?" Sixty-seven-point-four percent agreed with the response, "With conditions as they are, we should try to keep them out." More than two-thirds: Try to keep them out.

That poll was conducted in the summer of 1938, and the question in its entirety was: "What's your attitude towards allowing German, Austrian, and other political refugees to come into the United States?" European Jews. More than two-thirds of Americans thought we should close the gates. Just 4 months before *Kristallnacht*.

So less than a year later, that attitude sealed the fate of the men, women, and children on-board the ocean liner *St. Louis*. Nearly a thousand refugees, most of them German Jews, boarded the ship with the hope of finding safety across the Atlantic. After being turned away in Cuba, those on-board the *St. Louis* turned their sights toward the United States. Their cables to the White House and the State Department begging for safe haven went unanswered. The *St. Louis* steamed back to Europe.

Six-hundred twenty passengers ended up back on the continent. Two-hundred fifty-four of them died in the Holocaust. On-board the *St. Louis*, they had passed close enough to Miami to see the city's lights.

Syrians are fleeing their homes because life in Syria for the last 4 years has meant not knowing when Assad will drop the next barrel bombs or release poison gas . . . it has meant watching community after community fall under the merciless and medieval rule of ISIS. Often with just the clothes on their backs, men, women, and children are struggling to escape—not because they agree with terrorists, but because terrorists have destroyed their lives and staying behind could very well ensure their deaths.

Will we now slam the door in their faces?

The process the United States uses to screen refugees is the most rigorous investigation of any individual trying to enter this country. A biometric screening to match their fingerprints and vital statistics against any known troublemakers. Interviews with the Homeland Security Department. Background checks by the State Department, the Defense Department, and the FBI. A medical screening. An orientation program. And we all know there are other measures in place that we can't discuss in this open setting. It can take years.

Do we need to ensure we're following these procedures to the letter? Absolutely.

Can we abandon our values as a Nation out of fear? Absolutely not.

My grandparents, all four of them, were immigrants from Ukraine. Like millions of others a century ago, they arrived in New York Harbor and saw on our country's front doorstep the most enduring symbol of freedom the world has ever known:

*A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles.*

We all know the rest of the poem, and when we talk about the tired, the poor, the huddled masses, we're talking about the Syrians, the Yazidis, the Kurds who are desperate. And when I hear suggestions that maybe we should only take the Christians, or that all these orphans would be such a burden, or that this State or another State wants nothing to do with these refugees whatsoever, I'm reminded of the *St. Louis* and what happened to her passengers and I think of what this country could have done differently. I hope that decades from now, our successors don't look back to the year 2015 with the same regrets.

We can do the smart thing and the right thing at the same time. We can stop the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS and safeguard against attacks here at home without succumbing to panic and xenophobia. So let's leave aside the fear-mongering and the political posturing, and choose the path forward that protects the United States and that defeats our enemies without abandoning our values and repeating history's mistakes.

Chairman McCAUL. I thank the Ranking Member. Other Members are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Ms. Jackson Lee follows:]

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

I thank Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, Chairman Royce, and Ranking Member Engel thank you for holding this morning's joint hearing between the Committees on Homeland Security and Foreign Affairs on the implications of "A Global Battlefield: The Fight Against Islamist Extremism at Home and Abroad."

This week we mark another tragic attack on Paris—known the world over as the City of Light from those who seek to plunge the world into darkness. France whose motto is liberty, equality, and fraternity has laid a path of enlightenment through culture, art, music, and philosophy that the United States and its people have greatly admired.

I offer the people of Paris—especially the families of the victims of the attacks and the hundreds of wounded who are recovering my thoughts and prayers.

I welcome and thank today's witnesses:

- The Honorable Matthew G. Olsen, the co-founder and president of the Business Development and Strategy IronNet Cybersecurity; General;
- General Jack Keane (Retired U.S. Army), who is the chairman of the board for the Institute for the Study of War; and
- Mr. Peter Bergen, the vice president, and director of International Security and Fellows Programs with New America, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute.

As a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and a former Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee my commitment to peace and security is unwavering.

I am committed to a peaceful world where differences can be resolved among nations or individuals through honest open dialogue.

The world has worked for over 70 years to bring peace through the development and support of international institutions that establish protocols and regimes that had made the world a safer place.

Then the morning of September 11, 2001 came, and the world has not been the same.

The enemy came from an ungoverned area of Afghanistan; it used conventional commercial aircraft unconventionally by turning them into guided missiles.

The 9/11 Commission report provided the fullest possible account of the events surrounding 9/11 and identified lessons learned.

The report chronicled the activities of al-Qaeda which revealed the sophistication, patience, discipline, and deadliness of the organization to carry out the attacks of September 11.

From the Commission's work, we learned of the lack of imagination among our law enforcement and National intelligence community in understanding how dangerous al-Qaeda was to the security of the United States and the safety of our citizens.

We were well aware of the threat they posed from the attacks they carried out against Americans and American interests in the 1990s through the year 2001.

- On February 26, 1993, a truck bomb was detonated below the North Tower of the World Trade Center—killing 6 people. It was intended to cause both the North and South Towers to collapse and if it had been successful thousands would have died on that day.
- On August 7, 1998, 224 people were killed and more than 5,000 injured by bombs exploding almost simultaneously at the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- On October 12, 2000, 17 sailors aboard the USS Cole were killed by an al-Qaeda attack using a small boat packed with explosives.
- On September 11, 2001, 2,977, persons including 2,504 civilians, were killed when al-Qaeda operatives hijacked 3 planes and used them as guided missiles to attack both World Trade Towers and the Pentagon.

THE VICTIMS OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 ATTACK

At the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan, 2,753 people were killed when hijacked American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 were intentionally crashed in the North and South Towers.

Of those who perished during the initial attacks and the subsequent collapses of the towers, 343 were New York City firefighters, another 23 were New York Police Department officers and 37 others were officers at the Port Authority.

The victims ranged in age from 2 to 85 years.

At the Pentagon in Washington, 184 people were killed when hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the building.

Near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, 40 passengers and crew members aboard United Airlines Flight 93 died when the plane crashed into a field.

It is believed that the hijackers crashed the plane in that location, rather than its unknown target, after the passengers and crew attempted to retake control of the flight.

The act of those passengers to stop the hijackers likely saved the lives of thousands of their fellow Americans that day.

The heroic work done by the first responders who rushed into the burning Twin Towers and the Pentagon saved lives.

We will forever remember the first responders who lost their lives in the line of duty on September 11.

This Nation shall forever be grateful for their selfless sacrifice.

I visited the site of the World Trade Center Towers in the aftermath of the attacks and grieved over the deaths of so many of our men, women, and children.

I watched as thousands of first responders, construction workers, and volunteers worked to recover the remains of the victims, and removed the tons of debris, while placing their own lives and health at risk.

The men and women who worked at “Ground Zero” were called by a sense of duty to help in our Nation’s greatest time of need since the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Under the leadership of President Obama, Osama Bin Laden was found and killed and the prosecution of al-Qaeda leaders has left the terrorist group without the capacity to launch major operations within the United States.

Al-Qaeda began in remote regions of Afghanistan with its own self-defined vision of Islam and began to impose their views of one of the world’s great religions on the people of Afghanistan.

It took September 11, 2001, for the world to fully understand the danger posed by al-Qaeda.

ISIS/ISIL, a new, and unfortunately, much improved version of al-Qaeda:

- sought out the Syrian conflict—where it could ferment more war and violence so that no governing order could be found;
- turned on any moderate or tolerant Muslim group engaged in conflict with Syrian government and murdered them; and
- conducted a “lightning war,” or blitzkrieg attack, into Iraq and formed the largest border disruption since World War II.

The ISIS/ISIL’s control stretches from the towns along the Syrian-Turkish border to Raqqa, in northern Syria, across the obliterated Iraqi border into Mosul, Tikrit, and Falluja, through farming towns south of Baghdad—involving one-third of the territory of both Iraq and Syria are involved or impacted by this act of aggression.

The things that keep civilized nations in check are not the worry of ISIS/ISIL leaders—they have no concern for anyone or anything.

Nations care about the well-being of their people—they worry about how an action may impact its people.

Nations work to relieve the suffering of their people—they seek peaceful means of addressing conflicts, but if necessary will defend themselves, their people, and their National interest.

ISIS/ISIL is no al-Qaeda—it is much more dangerous because of its global ambition to lure the United States into a ground war to solidify its ambition to create a caliphate.

A caliphate is a form of Islamic government led by a caliph.

A caliph is the successor to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad (Muhammad ibn Abdullah), and the leader of the entire Muslim community.

The goal is not just war with the United States, but to take hostage one of the world’s great religions and use it to justify a murderous, blasphemous existence.

In the past 3 months alone, ISIS has claimed responsibility for crimes, atrocities, and terroristic attacks, and deaths in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Beirut, and Paris.

Daesh-ISIL, also known as ISIS, and other terrorist networks that have pledged allegiance to ISIS today pose the gravest extremist threat faced by our generation and those of our children.

Since September 11, 2001, it has been a priority of this Nation to prevent terrorists or those who would do Americans harm from boarding flights whether they are domestic or international.

Just as the terrorist threat has evolved—so has the United States in its means, methods, and approaches to addressing this ever-evolving threat.

The tools at the ready for ISIS include automatic weapons, suicide bombers, and social media to recruit and influence those who could become violent extremists.

The reality is that we can no longer think of just the threats abroad, but the ones we may create for ourselves, as we grapple with managing fear and anxiety of our citizens.

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) both domestic and international in nature is a priority that the Nation and policy makers must face.

To succeed in the fight against violent extremism defined by the actions of ISIS/ISIL and Boko Haram we must use every asset available to stop the spread of the violence they perpetrate as well as their ability to create safe havens in areas where Government authority is not enforced or consistent.

The Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on the subject of people buying stolen artifacts and art from the region controlled by ISIS/ISIL.

Anyone who purchased stolen antiquities or anything of value from the region of the world controlled by ISIS/ISIL could very easily have contributed money for the purchase of weapons, air flights for foreign fighters, or bomb-making materials.

I commend the Foreign Affairs Committee for their focus on this aspect of the ISIS/ISIL threat.

Part of our strategy to achieve global stability, especially in light of what has transpired in the past few days alone, is to destabilize ISIS so that it lacks the financial ability to recruit and expand its caliphate aspirations.

In my estimation that is ISIS/ISIL's greatest vulnerability—they need cash to function.

MEANS EMPLOYED BY ISIS TO ACHIEVE FINANCING

- One of the strategies employed by ISIS involve global terrorist fundraising sources which may involve state sponsors such as in the case of Iran funding certain terrorist groups according to State Department reports.
- According to the Treasury Department's first-ever-released National Terrorist Financing Risk Assessment, we learn that countries like Kuwait and Qatar may foster environments which make it easy for terrorist organizations like ISIS to receive some of its support from private donors.
- In addition to its illicit activities such as drug trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and antiquities smuggling, ISIS is also able to sustain its activities on self-generated profits through legitimate and non-profit organizations who are not aware that their resources or funds are being utilized to promote terrorism.

The battle against violent extremism is constantly changing but their changes should not result in our Nation becoming less human or clear-minded.

We are not ISIS/ISIL nor can our Nation allow any comparisons to develop in the minds of our allies or enemies.

ISIS/ISIL's message needs words and deeds to further pollute the truth about them by creating a false narrative about the United States and its people.

After the terrible carnage inflicted upon unarmed people of Paris they would like to change the front-page stories around the world from the terrible things that they did in Paris to ones about anti-Muslim sentiments in the United States.

I respect the concerns of Governors regarding Syrian refugees, but the statesman thing to have done would have been to call a meeting with the President, the Secretary of State, and the Chairs and Ranking Members of key Senate and House Committees.

ISIS/ISIL is vain—it does not like bad press.

We cannot give them any good days where they can hide their true nature with lies about the true nature of our Nation and its generous people.

The United States as the greatest democracy in the free world must and always lead.

It is not in our National security or economic interest to sit by while ISIS-DAESH or ISIL wreaks havoc in our world.

As a Nation of immigrants, providing for the least among us is an American value which makes us a leader in the world as well as promotes our credibility in the world in other matters related to foreign policy and our dealings with our international allies.

Indeed, as a world leader, our country carries the burden of leading the international community in addressing the dire humanitarian crisis we face across our world from Syria to Nigeria and the world over, just as we did during World War II by playing an instrumental role in the formation of the United Nations, on which we now sit as one of the 5 permanent members of Security Council.

Remember that ISIS/ISIL covets a power vacuum—the United States cannot step aside or away from the global stage.

We must refrain from knee-jerk anti-refugee rhetoric and policies even as we grapple with the recent attacks in Beirut, Paris, Baghdad, and Sana'a.

If anything, the recent attacks compel us not to stoop to the level of the evil perpetrators of violence but rather to prepare ourselves to redouble our efforts to address the refugee crisis the world faces by making good on our promises to provide refuge to Syrians seeking peace and security from the war-torn society they have fled.

Putting up walls and fences and closing borders to prevent members of the human race from sanctuary do not provide any short- or long-term solutions to the challenges we face as it relates to solving the threat of ISIS or the challenge of the refugee crisis in Syria.

The circumstance for refugees that may enter the United States is not the conditions people entered Europe from the conflict area.

They came by foot and could cross narrow bodies of water to be on European soil.

The United States' entire refugee process has been completely revised based on lessons learned from September 11, 2001 and the unique threats posed by terrorism.

The process can take up to 2 years. The United States can hand-pick who it will allow to enter. The policy of the administration is that only the most vulnerable are under consideration—women with minor-age children, persons with dire medical conditions and those who have been victims of violence.

Yes, there are challenges—we do not have access to records on persons who are coming from Syria. This is why the policy regarding refugees entering the country takes almost 2 years and is so selective.

We should also be aware of burden sharing.

As the world's sole superpower we must do what other nations are doing—accept Syrian refugees.

The United States has agreed to accept 10,000 Syrians through 2016, which to some may seem to be a great number of refugees to accept.

However, when compared to other nations, our contributions toward relieving the suffering caused by ISIS/ISIL the number is small, for example:

- To date the United States has accepted 1,500 Syrian refugees since the start of the conflict in 2011 and will receive another 10,000 by 2016.
- Turkey has accepted over 1.9 million Syrians accounting for almost half of the Syrian refugees.
- Lebanon has received 1.1 million refugees which marks a 25% increase in the country's 4.4 million population.
- Jordan has provided shelter to 629,000 refugees from Syria, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan, but Syrians constitute the majority of Jordan's refugee population.
- Iraq has received 249,000 Syrians even though like Syria, Iraq has been torn by attacks perpetrated by ISIS.
- Egypt has provided refuge to 132,000 Syrians, with no refugees living in camps in Egypt and Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris, one of the region's wealthiest men, offering to buy an island for refugees and his name for the proposed island home: Hope.
- Germany has accepted 98,700 Syrian refugees as the European country that faces the largest share of Syrian requests for asylum in Europe.
- Sweden has provided refuge for 64,700 Syrians.
- France has accepted 6,700 refugees and as of September 2015, has committed to hosting 24,000 refugees over the next 2 years.
- The United Kingdom has accepted 7,000 Syrian refugees and has committed to take up another 20,000 Syrian refugees over the next 5 years.
- Denmark and Hungary have received 29,000 Syrians combined.
- Serbia has received 49,500 asylum requests from Syrian refugees.
- Italy, where many migrants have made the perilous Mediterranean crossing from North Africa also receives refugees.
- Greece, which lies on a popular transit route from Turkey north through the Balkans to Northern Europe, has seen more than 250,000 people arrive on its shores this year.

Today's witnesses tell many of us what we already know—that we are in a new era of geopolitical conflict.

It is no longer a matter of governments fielding armies or combatants—but the emergence of what is best described as a new form of geo-military transnational gang activity.

The affiliations of violent extremist individuals and groups are loose, with membership remaining fluid—one individual or small group may identify with al-Qaeda today, and switch its identification to ISIL or al-Shabaab or Boko Haram depending on which group is perceived to be the strongest.

These groups require chaos to function and they attack institutions and people regardless of their religious or ethnic traditions to destabilize regions.

They act in the name of Islam but institute intra- and inter-Muslim faith conflicts against individuals and mosques to kill thousands.

It is ironic and sad that the single greatest casualty group of ISIS/ISIL are Muslims—especially women, children, disabled, and the elderly.

Violent extremism is not new—those who struggle to hold onto an idyllic past or rigid view of their faith that does not tolerate non-conformism has plagued societies throughout history.

The only tools that have succeed in overcoming violent extremism is the commitment of those most affected by their violence to stand against them.

We must remember that after the battles are fought and won that the underlying causes for so many willing souls to commit themselves to kill and die for ISIS/ISIL and Boko Haram must be addressed.

Where there is poverty, corruption, a sense of not having value or social worth, violence and systemic disparity in living conditions and insurmountable forces to resist upward mobility by poor communities lays fertile ground for recruiting, training, and turning young minds toward violence.

Some would argue that these problems are not ours to solve.

The counter argument is that the cost of not solving these underlying problems makes the ability to win a lasting end to violent extremism nearly impossible.

We cannot kill ideas with bombs—we must change hearts and minds.

I am a firm supporter of getting to the source of problems that come from the complexity of our interconnected world.

Part of the struggle for peace we have today is a direct consequence of invading Iraq without provocation or reason.

Paraphrasing Secretary of State Colin Powell's advice to President George W. Bush: "if we break it—we will own it."

He was warning President Bush about the folly of entering into a war of choice with Iraq and the complexities of that region of the world that could spiral out of control.

It is time that we recognize how right Secretary Powell was then and how his words are playing out every day.

Added to the challenge of violent extremists is their technological savvy in the use of the tools of social media to reach far beyond the battlefield to influence young people to join their cause.

Our work as Members of our respective committees should focus on ensuring that the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State have the resources needed to meet the challenges presented by violent extremism.

I thank today's witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. We are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us here today. Our first witness is General Jack Keane, who is a retired four-star general of the United States Army and current chairman of the board at the Institute for the Study of War. Previously he served as vice chief of staff of the United States Army. Thank you, sir, for being here.

General KEANE. Mr. Chairman—

Chairman MCCAUL. Our second witness—

General KEANE. Oh, I am sorry.

Chairman MCCAUL. I will get to you in a minute.

Second witness is the Honorable Matthew Olsen who currently serves as president of Business Development at IronNet Cybersecurity. Previously he served as a director of the National Counterterrorism Center.

Our third witness is Mr. Peter Bergen who is the current director of the National Security Studies Program at the New America Foundation. Mr. Bergen also serves as the national security analyst for CNN, and fellow at Fordham University Center on National Security. Thank you, sir, for being here as well.

The witnesses' full statements will appear in the record. The Chair now recognizes General Keane for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE (RET. U.S. ARMY),
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
WAR**

General KEANE. Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, Ranking Members Thompson and Engel, distinguished Members of this joint committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am honored to be here with Matt Olsen and Peter Bergen, both who I have known for years and have great respect for.

Listen, please refer to the map that is provided at your seat. It looks like this, provided by the Institute for the Study of War, which I will reference in my remarks. I will refine my remarks to ISIS in the interest of time.

ISIS is the most successful terrorist organization in modern history. It is driven by a religious-based ideology with significant geopolitical objectives to establish an extensive caliphate that touches the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe by dominating all Muslim lands, and an apocalyptic event in Europe that carves out an ISIS enclave.

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

The second thrust is to use its headquarters in Syria to expand what it terms the near abroad—on your map, see the areas with the black stars or crosses?—by establishing affiliate organizations they term wilayats, which is a formal relationship in 9 countries and regions.

The third major thrust is to influence the far abroad, on your map areas in yellow, which are Muslim lands and countries that are supporting the coalition against ISIS by inspiring and motivating radicals, by averaging thousands of social media posts per day and by returning fighters from Syria who are trained and motivated to attack their own citizens at home. ISIS attempts to divide and polarize these societies by weakening the people's resolve to support their governments' efforts against ISIS and to fragment and polarize the non-Muslim and Muslim populations.

What ISIS has accomplished in the last few weeks is unprecedented and quite stunning. While conducting a conventional war in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has staged terrorist attacks on a global scale against the people from the countries who are fighting ISIS. The result is almost 900 casualties in 12 days, both killed and wounded who are Russian, Lebanese, and mostly French in Paris. Can you imagine the impact if the Nazis were conducting terrorist activities in major American cities while the United States was fighting the Nazis in Europe?

So what do we do about ISIS? Clearly, ISIS is not contained and is far from defeated. The United States and our allied partners need to wake up. ISIS is at war with us and civilization, but in my judgment, America is not truly at war with ISIS, not the President, nor the Congress and certainly not the American people. We need to throw out the policy of, "strategic patience," which is an excuse for a lack of an aggressive coherent strategy, recognize that drag-

ging out the war provides ISIS with a degree of invincibility, a sense of destiny and purpose shrouded in the aura of success.

The security of the American people at home is directly related to ISIS's success and their ability to motivate and inspire their followers to kill fellow Americans. One, step up U.S. military activities in Iraq and Syria. Once and for all send the required advisers, trainers, air controllers that are truly needed to dramatically increase combat effectiveness. Recognize the criticality of Sunni opposition forces to depose ISIS who is largely occupying Sunni lands.

Also be realistic about the Kurds who are proven fighters but are interested only in their territory and not reclaiming lost Sunni territory. Mission the special operations forces not just to target leaders or conduct hostage rescue but to conduct large-scale in and out raids to target ISIS critical nodes and functions. Dramatically increase UAVs, mine clearance vehicles, Apache helicopters, and a host of other much-needed equipment.

The troops required is about a minimum of 10,000. Identify combat brigades separate from the number I just gave you for potential deployment but held in reserve and only committed if all else fails. Unleash a devastating air campaign without the imposed restrictions of the last 15 months which has been disproportionate to all recent air campaigns in the extreme concern for civilian casualties.

Establish safe zones in northwest Syria along the Turkish border and in southwest Syria along the Jordanian border for refugees. Protect on the ground with an international force, protect from the air using coalition air power and with Jordanian and Turkish missile defense on their side of the border.

Step up politically in Syria. Recognize that ISIS will never be defeated until the civil war ends. Only when there is a genuine ceasefire can the Sunni Arabs turn their attention on ISIS. Move to marginalize Russia in Syria and then encourage a face-saving exit.

In Iraq, ISIS with the exception of some Kurdish land that it surrounded, controls largely Sunni land. Obviously, to re-take and hold this territory will require a significant Sunni force commitment. Currently, Prime Minister Abadi has not been successful in creating political unity, particularly with the Sunnis. Dispatch retired Ambassador Crocker, America's preeminent Middle East diplomat, to Baghdad as the President of the United States' personal envoy to move the government of Iraq toward political unification.

While I believe we should not overreact and certainly not all get overly defensive, I will leave those comments for my statement—my written testimony provided for the record and discuss it in Q&A.

In conclusion, ISIS is fundamentally evil, brutal, barbaric, killing every day, systematically enslaving and raping women, destroying many of the monuments to civilization. It is indisputable that ISIS is succeeding in executing a global strategy from their caliphate in the Islamic State.

As much—as part of that strategy, they are planning to kill Americans, they have repeatedly said so and they have proven they do what they say.

Having the best security defensive system in America is not sufficient. We must have as good an offense to stop and defeat ISIS. We do not, we are not even close. I can say with certainty that the

current U.S.-driven coalition strategy with its modest improvements will fail. I believe the Congress should provide the President a bipartisan sense of the Congress that we are failing to protect the American people and that much more must be done with urgency and resolve to defeat ISIS. The Congress should also pass the AUMF.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET)

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, Ranking Members Thompson and Engel, distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. Am honored to be here with such a distinguished panel. Please refer to the map provided by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) which I will reference in my remarks.

ISIS is part of the multi-generational struggle against radical Islam which will likely dominate the first half of the 21st Century similar to the fight against communism, which dominated the second half of the 20th Century. Fourteen years after 9/11 the United States has no comprehensive strategy or a global alliance to defeat radical Islam. ISIS is the most successful terrorist organization in modern history. It is driven by a religious-based ideology with significant geopolitical objectives to establish an extensive caliphate that touches the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe, by dominating all Muslim lands and an apocalyptic event in Europe that carves out an ISIS enclave.

ISIS has 3 major thrusts:

The first is to defend Syria and Iraq. While ISIS has lost some territory, it views operations in Syria and Iraq as largely successful, because it still controls large swaths of territory, is recruiting at the same rate, maintaining tactical and operational initiative, and is able to logistically sustain its forces.

The second thrust is to use its headquarters in Syria to expand in the “near abroad” (on your map see areas with black crosses) by establishing affiliate organizations (wilayats), which is a formal relationship in 9 countries and regions: Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Nigeria, North Caucasus, and Algeria. ISIS provides guidance and resources to these affiliates. The affiliates are attempting to control a swath of territory inside these countries and regions while undermining the local government. As we know, Wilayat Sinai is suspected of downing a Russian aircraft.

The third major thrust is to influence the “far abroad,” (on your map see areas in yellow) which are Muslim lands and countries that are supporting the coalition against ISIS (United States, Europe, and Australia) by inspiring and motivating radicals, by averaging thousands of social media posts per day, and by returning fighters from Syria who are trained and motivated to attack their own citizens at home. Obviously the recent attacks in France and Lebanon are examples. ISIS attempts to divide and polarize these societies by weakening the people’s resolve to support their government’s efforts against ISIS and to fragment and polarize the non-Muslim and Muslim populations.



What ISIS has accomplished in the last few weeks is unprecedented. While conducting a conventional war in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has staged terrorist attacks on a global scale against the people from the countries who are fighting ISIS. The result is almost 900 casualties in 12 days, both killed and wounded, who are Russian, Lebanese, and mostly French in Paris. Can you imagine the impact if the Nazis were conducting terrorist activities in major American cities while the United States was fighting the Nazis in Europe ?

WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT ISIS

Clearly ISIS is not contained and is far from defeated. The United States and our allied partners need to wake up. ISIS is at war with us and civilization, but America is not truly at war with ISIS—not the President, nor the Congress and certainly not the American people. Throw out the policy of “strategic patience” which is an excuse for a lack of an aggressive, coherent strategy. Recognize that dragging out the war provides ISIS with a degree of invincibility, a sense of destiny, shrouded in the aura of success. The security of the American people at home is directly related to ISIS’s success and their ability to motivate and inspire their followers to kill fellow Americans.

1. Step up U.S. military activities in Iraq and Syria

- Once and for all send the required advisors, trainers, air controllers that are truly needed to dramatically increase IA, Sunni tribal force and Kurdish Peshmerga combat effectiveness. The output should be at least 3 times greater.
- Recognize the criticality of Sunni opposition forces to depose ISIS who is largely occupying Sunni lands. Also be realistic about the Kurds who are proven fighters but are interested only in their territory and not reclaiming lost Sunni territory.
- Mission SOF not just to target leaders or conduct hostage rescue but to conduct large-scale in/out raids to target ISIS critical nodes and functions.
- Dramatically increase UAVs, mine clearance vehicles, and Apache helicopters.
- Troops required is a minimum of 10K.
- Identify combat brigades for potential deployment but held in reserve and only committed if all else fails.
- Unleash a devastating air campaign without the imposed restrictions of the last 15 months which has been disproportionate to all previous air campaigns in the extreme concern for civilian casualties. The result: Multiple general officer lay-

ers clearing fires, targets lost, enemy taking advantage of the rules of engagement (ROE).

- Establish Safe Zones in NW Syria along the Turkish border and in SW Syria along the Jordanian border for refugees. Protect on the ground with an international force. Protect from the air using coalition air power and with Jordanian and Turkish missile defense on their side of the border.

2. Step up Politically

SYRIA

- Recognize that ISIS will never be defeated till the Syrian civil war ends.
- The objective is not simply a cease-fire but elimination of Assad and the Alawite regime. United States should not give in to Russian/Iranian demands to keep an Alawite regime. Move to a transition regime representing major power players and then a general election.
- Only when there is a genuine cease-fire can the Sunni Arabs turn their attention on ISIS.
- Move to marginalize Russia in Syria and then encourage a face savings exit.

IRAQ

- ISIS with the exception of some Kurdish land that it surrendered, controls largely Sunni land. Obviously to retake and hold this territory will require a significant Sunni force commitment.
- Currently PM Abadi has not been successful in creating political unity in Iraq among Sunni, Kurds, and Shia.
- Moving PM Abadi toward political unity is key to the survival of Iraq and the defeat of ISIS. The status quo is not working.
- Dispatch retired Ambassador Crocker, America's preeminent ME diplomat to Baghdad as the POTUS' personal envoy to move the GOI toward political unification.

3. Don't over-react or get defensive

- ISIS is seeking fragmentation and polarization of European Muslim and non-Muslim communities. They want a crackdown and further isolation of Muslim communities to move Europe toward their idea of an "apocalyptic war" resulting in expansion of their caliphate to a Muslim enclave in Europe. These drums are already beating in European countries as resentment grows to the Muslim migration and the huge refugee challenges. Reactionary, revisionist voices are getting louder and gaining influence.
- Now is not the time to commit U.S. combat brigades to Iraq or Syria. But if necessary, at some future date, it should be a part of a regional Arab and NATO coalition.
- We need to avoid over-policing at home or curtailing American liberties. We need good counter intelligence from Government agencies, police departments, and a sense of public awareness about security.
- As to taking in Middle East refugees the Congress should ask the administration to prepare a Refugee Crisis Plan for Congressional approval by their oversight committees. As you know the Congress and the Executive branch set the ceiling for refugees, currently at 70K in 2015, with 69K already in the United States, with a White House request for an additional 10K Middle East refugees. While we stand up for America's values and what makes the United States a great Nation, the Congress should be reasonably convinced that the American people are protected by the Refugee Crisis Plan.

In conclusion, ISIS is fundamentally evil; brutal, barbaric killing every day while systematically enslaving and raping women. It is indisputable that ISIS is succeeding in executing a global strategy from their caliphate in the Islamic State. As part of that strategy, they are planning to kill Americans. They have repeatedly said so and they have proven, they do what they say. Having the best security defensive system in America is not sufficient, we must have as good an offense to stop and defeat ISIS. We do not. We are not even close. I can say with certainty that the current U.S.-driven coalition strategy with its modest improvements will fail. I believe the Congress should provide the President a bipartisan "sense of the Congress", that we are failing to protect the American people, and that much more must be done with urgency and resolve to defeat ISIS. The Congress should also pass the AUMF or the Authorization for the Use of Military Force.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you, General. The Chair recognizes Mr. Olsen.

**STATEMENT OF MATTHEW G. OLSEN, CO-FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY,
IRONNET CYBERSECURITY**

Mr. OLSEN. Thank you Chairman McCaul and Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Thompson, Ranking Member Engel, Members of these two key committees, I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning with my distinguished panelists General Keane and Peter Bergen to discuss the threats we face from terrorism and the steps we need to take to confront those threats.

Of course, we meet this morning only a few days after the horrific attacks in Paris that took the lives of 129 people and shocked the city of Paris and the rest of the world. So today, our discussion of terrorism must begin, as you did Mr. Chairman, with our expression of condolences for the victims and our declaration of solidarity with the people of France.

The attacks in Paris serve both as a sobering reminder of the severity of the threats we face from terrorist groups of global reach and as a call for action in the on-going struggle against terrorism and violent extremism.

Indeed, the attacks last Friday give this hearing added urgency as you convene to examine the threat to the United States and the steps we need to take to counter terrorist groups both here at home and abroad. So I will focus my very brief remarks on the terrorist landscape today, beginning with the Paris attacks.

As that investigation continues to unfold, it now appears clear the attacks were a deliberate and planned effort conducted by the terrorist group that calls itself the Islamic State, or ISIS. ISIS has publicly claimed responsibility for these attacks, and the suspect coordinator of these attacks Abdelhamid Abaaoud, is reportedly a member of ISIS.

The Paris attacks reflect an alarming trend. Over the past year, we have seen ISIS increase the complexity, the severity and the pace of its external attacks. The Paris attacks were not simply inspired by ISIS, but rather, they appear to have been ISIS planned and directed. They were conducted as part of a coordinated effort to maximize casualties by striking some of the most vulnerable targets in the West—nightclubs, cafes, sporting arenas.

The Paris attacks also demonstrate ISIS's expanding reach beyond its safe haven in Syria and Iraq. Indeed, we have seen ISIS-inspired or direct attacks in Libya, Tunisia, recently in Beirut and apparently with the downing of the Russian airliner in the Sinai. So far this year, there have been 41 ISIS or ISIS-inspired attacks against Western targets. That is already more than double the number of such attacks last year according to reports. As the CIA director warned this week, ISIS likely has other planned attacks.

The number of European and Westerners who have gone to Syria to fight in this conflict is helping to drive this trend. Estimates vary, but the reports suggest that the number of foreign fighters exceed 30,000, and this includes as many as 4,000 or more Europeans, including many French, British, and German nationals, and the number of Americans who have traveled to Syria or tried to now exceeds 250.

Also disturbingly, ISIS has developed an unprecedented ability to communicate with its followers world-wide. The group attracts re-

cruits through a sophisticated media propaganda effort, the group uses multiple websites, Twitter feeds, YouTube channels, on-line chatrooms, and it uses these platforms to radicalize and mobilize potential operatives in the United States and elsewhere. In short, ISIS's proven intentions and its increasing capability, as the Paris attacks reflect so starkly, warrant ranking the group as our most urgent terrorist threat.

At the same time, I have to say that al-Qaeda and its affiliates continue to pose a significant threat to the United States and our interests around the world. Indeed, al-Qaeda is vying with ISIS to be the leader of a global jihadist movement. There is no doubt that U.S. counterterrorism pressure has led to the steady elimination of the group's senior leaders and limited the group's ability to operate, train, and recruit operatives, but at the same time, the core leadership of al-Qaeda continues to wield substantial influence over affiliated and allied groups such as the Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

On three occasions over the past several years, AQAP sought to bring down an airliner bound for the United States, and there is reason to believe it still harbors this intent and substantial capability to carry out such a plot. Looking closer to home, here in United States, there has been an uptick over the past year in the number of moderate to small-scale plots.

Lone actors, insular groups often self-directed or inspired by groups like ISIS pose the most serious threat to carry out attacks here, and home-grown violent extremists will likely continue gravitating towards simpler plots that do not require advanced skills, outside training, or communication with others.

Highlighting this challenge, the FBI director said earlier this year that the FBI has home-grown violent extremist cases in every State, totaling more than 900, and most of these cases reportedly are connected to ISIS.

Finally, three broad trends that I want to identify make it much more difficult for our counterterrorism professionals to prevent attacks here in the United States.

First, it is increasingly difficult for the intelligence community to collect specific intelligence on terrorist intentions and the status of developing plots. The illegal disclosure of our intelligence collection methods and techniques give terrorists a road map on how to evade our intelligence, and they are taking advantage of this.

Second, there has been a proliferation of rapidly-evolving plots that emerge simply from an individual being urged to take action and then quickly moving to attack. ISIS has adopted this approach and the compressed time frame for these plots to develop limits the opportunity for our intelligence and law enforcement professionals to disrupt attacks.

Then, third, the instability—looking more broadly—the instability and unrest in large parts of the Middle East and North Africa have led to a lack of security border patrol and effective governance. In the last few years, 4 states, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen, have effectively collapsed.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the rise of ISIS and the overall threat landscape present enormous challenges to our counterterrorism law enforcement and military professionals and to policy-

makers across the Government. Our strategy to defeat ISIS and other terrorist groups must use all the tools of American power. It must include military action where necessary to eliminate leaders, deny these groups territory, remove eminent threats to our citizens.

The strategy must seek to broaden and strengthen the international coalition and includes our European allies and partners in the region who are on the front lines of this fight. We must redouble our efforts to collect intelligence necessary to obtain advance warning of developing plots, and to ensure that our law enforcement officers have the tools to disrupt these plots. The strategy must counter the underlying message and ideology of ISIS.

The enduring lesson of 9/11 is that American leadership is indispensable to this fight.

I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Olsen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATTHEW G. OLSEN

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Thank you Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Thompson, Ranking Member Engel, and Members of these two key committees. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before your committees to discuss the threat we face from terrorism and the steps we must take to confront these threats.

We meet this morning only a few days after the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris that took the lives of 129 people and shocked the city of Paris and the world. Today, our discussion of terrorism must begin with our expression of condolences for the victims and a declaration of solidarity with the French people.

The attacks in Paris serve both as a sobering reminder of the severity of the threats we face from terrorist groups of global reach and as a call for action in the on-going struggle against terrorism and violent extremism. Indeed, the attacks last Friday give this hearing added urgency, as you convene to examine the threat to the United States and the steps we should take to counter terrorist groups both at home and abroad.

I will focus my brief remarks on the terrorist landscape today. Beginning with the Paris attacks, as the investigation continues to unfold, it now appears clear that these attacks were a deliberate, planned effort conducted by the terrorist group that calls itself the Islamic State, also known as ISIS. ISIS has publicly claimed responsibility for these attacks. And the suspected coordinator of these attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who police in Paris may have targeted in a raid last night, is reportedly a member of ISIS.

The Paris attacks reflect an alarming trend. Over the past year, we have seen ISIS increase the complexity, severity, and pace of its external attacks. The Paris attacks were not simply inspired by ISIS, but rather it appears they were ISIS-planned and directed. And they were conducted as part of a coordinated effort to maximize casualties by striking some of the most vulnerable targets in the West: Nightclubs, cafes, and sporting arenas.

The Paris attacks also demonstrate ISIS's expanding reach beyond its safe haven in Syria and Iraq. Indeed, we have seen ISIS-inspired or directed attacks in Libya and Tunisia, recently in Beirut, and apparently with the downing of the Russian airliner in the Sinai Peninsula. And so far this year, there have been 41 ISIS or ISIS-inspired attacks against Western targets, already more than double the number of such attacks last year, according to reports. As the CIA director warned this week, ISIS likely has other attacks planned.

The number of Europeans and other Westerners who have gone to Syria to fight in this conflict is helping to drive this trend. Estimates vary, but reports suggest that the number of foreign fighters exceeds 30,000 and this includes as many as 4,000 or more Europeans, including many French, British, and German nationals. The number of Americans who have travelled to Syria, or have tried to, exceeds 250.

ISIS also has developed an unprecedented ability to communicate with its followers world-wide. The group attracts recruits through a sophisticated media and propaganda effort. ISIS has multiple websites, active Twitter feeds, YouTube channels, and on-line chat rooms, and it uses these platforms to radicalize and mobilize potential operatives in the United States and elsewhere.

In short, ISIS's proven intentions and increasing capability, as the Paris attacks reflect so starkly, warrant ranking the group as our most urgent terrorist threat.

At the same time, al-Qaeda and its affiliates continue to pose a significant threat to the United States and our interests around the world. Indeed, al-Qaeda is vying with ISIS to be the ideological leader of the global jihadist movement.

There is no doubt that U.S. counterterrorism pressure has led to the steady elimination of the group's senior leaders and limited the group's ability to operate, train, and recruit operatives. At the same time, the core leadership of al-Qaeda continues to wield substantial influence over affiliated and allied groups, such as Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. On three occasions over the past several years, AQAP has sought to bring down an airliner bound for the United States. And there is reason to believe it still harbors this intent and substantial capability to carry out such a plot.

Here in the United States, there has been an uptick over the past year in the number of moderate- to small-scale plots. Lone actors or insular groups—often self-directed or inspired by overseas groups, like ISIS—pose the most serious threat to carry out attacks here. And home-grown violent extremists will likely continue gravitating to simpler plots that do not require advanced skills, outside training, or communication with others. The on-line environment serves a critical role in radicalizing and mobilizing home-grown extremists towards violence.

Highlighting the challenge this presents, the FBI director said earlier this year that the FBI has home-grown violent extremist cases in every State, totaling about 900. Most of these cases reportedly are connected to ISIS.

Finally, three broad trends make it much more difficult for our counterterrorism professionals to prevent terrorist attacks here. First, it is increasingly difficult for the intelligence community to collect specific intelligence on terrorist intentions and the status of developing plots. The illegal disclosure of our intelligence collection methods and techniques gave terrorists a roadmap on how to evade our surveillance.

Second, there has been a proliferation of rapidly-evolving plots that emerge simply from an individual being urged to take action, and then quickly moving to attack. ISIS has adopted this approach, using social media and encrypted means of communicating to inspire others to carry out attacks. The compressed time frame for these plots to develop limits the opportunity for our intelligence and law enforcement professionals to disrupt potential attacks.

Third, instability and unrest in large parts of the Middle East and North Africa have led to a lack of security, border control, and effective governance. In the last few years, 4 states—Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen—have effectively collapsed. ISIS and other terrorist groups exploit these conditions to expand their reach and establish safe havens. Dozens of jihadist groups in as many as 18 countries have now pledged allegiance or support to ISIS.

In conclusion, the rise of ISIS and the overall threat landscape present enormous challenges to our counterterrorism, law enforcement, and military professionals, and to policy makers across our Government.

Our strategy to defeat ISIS and other terrorist groups must use all the tools of American power. It must include military action where necessary to eliminate leaders, deny these groups territory, and to remove imminent threats to our citizens. The strategy must seek to broaden and strengthen the international coalition that includes our European allies and partners in the region, who often are on the front lines of this fight.

We must also redouble our efforts to collect the intelligence necessary to obtain advance warning of developing plots and to ensure that our law enforcement officers have the tools to disrupt these plots. This strategy must counter the underlying message and ideology of ISIS. And the enduring lesson we have learned since 9/11 is that American leadership is indispensable to this fight.

I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman McCaul. Thank you, Mr. Olsen.

Chair now recognizes Mr. Bergen for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF PETER BERGEN, VICE PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND FELLOWS PROGRAMS, NEW
AMERICA**

Mr. BERGEN. Thank you, Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Thompson and Ranking Member Engel, and also all the distinguished Members here today and also it is a great honor to be here with General Keane and Director Olsen.

I work at a foundation called New America. This week we released a report of 474 named individuals, Western foreign fighters, from reliable press accounts and also from court records. In order to bring some light to the question who exactly is—who are these Western recruits signing up for ISIS and we found the following interesting findings.

For a start, the demographic profile of the militants drawn to the Syrian war is very different from previous jihads. Most notably, 1 in 7 of the militants is female. We just found out last night that one of the people that was killed in the raid on Saint-Denis in Paris was a female who blew herself up.

They are also very young; the average age is 24. For the females it is even younger, it is 21. They are very active on-line, unsurprising given their age. In United States we found that 9 out of 10 were active on-line, by which I mean not just sending e-mails but posting regularly on jihadi websites active on social media.

Many have familial ties to jihadism. We found one-third of the Western fighters have a family member in some way involved in the jihad. We—this is in Paris—we found two brothers who were involved in the plot; one of whom is still being sought by police. We have seen people getting married in Syria.

Part of the attraction for people going to Syria is that they in their own minds may find a perfect marriage partner. ISIS presents itself as creating the perfect society and you can come and marry the man or woman of your dreams.

The American profile of these militants is very similar to the Western foreign fighter, in general. They are young, 1 in 6 are women, their average age is 25.

A lot of these Western foreign fighters are dying in Syria. Syria is obviously a very dangerous conflict. Half the males in our data set are dead; 6 percent of the females, even though they are not fighting on the front lines. The war is very dangerous.

The threat to the United States from returning foreign fighters is low. We have only seen so far one returnee who was plotting some kind of act of violence in the United States. The threat really in the United States is much more from people inspired by ISIS and we have seen in Texas and other cases where there were serious plots.

Of course, the threat to the United States comes as the Ranking Member indicated from countries with a Visa Waiver Program. Making sure that that program works as successfully as possible, of course, is vital.

The threat from returning fighters to Europe is much greater than it is in the United States. In fact, Paris speaks for itself. Few of the Western fighters who have traveled to Syria and Iraq are in government custody. One one-sixth of—in our data set are in government custody.

The most popular route to Syria is through Turkey. We have—in the cases of militants, very few militants are going by any other route other than Turkey. We could find only one case of a fighter went via Lebanon.

The majority are joining ISIS. Director Olsen mentioned al-Qaeda, the Nusra front. We found only one-tenth of the foreign

fighters are joining Nusra and only 6 percent are joining other jihadi groups.

So in the brief time I have left, what can be done? I think, you know, reading this—the House report from 2015 which is obviously very thorough, I think the key recommendation is the fact that we simply don't know who these foreign fighters are. Creating a global database of exactly who the foreign fighters are is absolutely key. If we don't know who they are, how can we prevent them coming into this country or anywhere else?

Interpol has a list of about 4,500 fighters, as Director Olsen pointed out, but 30,000 foreign fighters so we only know very small percentage of the people who have gone.

We should also enlist defectors to tell the real story about ISIS. There is nothing more effective than a former member of ISIS explaining that ISIS is not creating utopia here in Earth but instead hell on Earth. Amplify voices such as the Syrian opposition group, Raqqa is Being Silently Slaughtered which is by far the most effective of the opposition groups in terms of the information coming out of Raqqa.

Support the works of clerics such as Imam Mohamed Magid of Northern Virginia, who has personally dissuaded at least 5 American citizens not to go to join ISIS. Nothing is more credible than a serious cleric explaining that ISIS is not an Islamic group.

Keep up pressure on social media companies such as Twitter and ISIS to bring down material which is, after all, against their own terms of use. Earlier this year, Twitter quietly took down 2,000 accounts used by ISIS supporters, and we should continue to make sure these social media companies keep doing that.

As General Keane indicated, you know, ISIS's main selling point is this victorious, and so if we can damage that claim significantly, and he has outlined a number of ideas about how to do that, the caliphate shrinks as a physical entity, it will also shrink as an entity that is appealing to people around the Muslim world.

By the way, just one quick other thought. The Turks have actually done quite a good job on foreign fighters. Having been very lackadaisical initially, if you look at ISIS's own propaganda and since early 2015, the Turks are saying do not—be aware that Turkish intelligence agents are not your friends and don't go across the border as you used to in the past. This is a whole new ballgame.

So we are basically—encourage the Turks to continue doing the work that they are doing, help them with, you know, their border patrol people need more assets, I think that is the most important thing that can be done in terms of the Western foreign fighter flow to ISIS.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bergen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PETER BERGEN

NOVEMBER 18, 2015

This testimony is divided into six sections:

- the first, who the Westerners being recruited by ISIS are;
- the second, how they are being recruited;
- the third, the threat to the United States by ISIS's American recruits;
- the fourth, the threat to the United States by ISIS's non-American recruits;
- the fifth, how ISIS is expanding its reach;

- the sixth, how to defeat ISIS: 12 action items.¹

On Friday November 13, France had its 9/11. At least 129 people were killed at multiple locations in Paris, including a concert hall, a soccer stadium and a popular restaurant, the kinds of venues that ordinary Parisians flock to on a Friday night. At, or near, these venues the attackers deployed a mix of terrorist tactics, including suicide attackers, an assault using more than one gunman willing to fight to the death, hostage-taking, and bombings.

In the years after 9/11, we have seen various forms of this terrible news story play out: The multiple bombs on trains in Madrid that killed 191 in 2004, the 4 suicide bombings in London that killed 52 commuters in 2005, and the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, India, by 10 gunmen who killed 166. The attackers in Paris seemed to have learned lessons from all these attacks. (By the way, this is also the case of U.S. school shootings in which the perpetrators study the tactics of those who have gone before them.)

French President Francois Hollande blames ISIS, for the attack, and the terror group has claimed responsibility. According to French prosecutors, one of the attackers who has been identified is a French national known to police, and a Syrian passport was found on one of the bodies of the other attackers. CNN reports that this militant was posing as a Syrian refugee. It is still early in the investigation, but already the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* report that French nationals who have been identified as among the perpetrators of the Paris attacks had traveled to Syria, while Reuters reports that the leader of the attacks is a Belgian citizen who also spent time in Syria.

Until now, French citizen Mehdi Nemmouche was the only case of a Western fighter in Syria accused of returning to conduct a deadly terror attack—the May 24, 2014, shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels, Belgium, that left 4 people dead. Nemmouche had served time in a French prison, and he had an assault rifle when he was arrested in France. A French journalist held by ISIS reportedly has identified Nemmouche as one of the group's alleged torturers. Nemmouche has been extradited to Belgium, where he awaits trial.

Returning militants from Syria are a worrying potential source of terror attacks. And two major factors place Europe at far greater risk of “returnee” violence from veterans of the Syrian conflict than is the case in the United States: The much larger number of European militants who have gone to fight in Syria and the existence of more developed jihadist networks in Europe.

France has supplied more fighters to the Syrian conflict than any other Western country. In September, Prime Minister Manuel Valls told Parliament that 1,800 French citizens have been involved in jihadist networks world-wide—almost all of whom were drawn to the Syrian war. Nine months earlier, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve estimated that 185 militants had returned to France from Syria. Of those who had returned, he said 82 were in jail and 36 were under other forms of judicial control.

German security services report that 720 Germans have left for Syria, and they estimate that 100 have been killed there, while another 180 have returned to Germany. Last year, the Belgian Foreign Ministry released figures that up to 350 Belgians had left to fight in Syria. More than 700 British citizens have left for Syria, with about half estimated to have returned to the United Kingdom, according to British officials. In January, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop placed the number of Australians fighting abroad at 180, with 20 having died in Syria.

1. So who exactly are the estimated 4,500 Westerners who have been drawn to join ISIS and other militant groups in Syria? To provide some answers to that question, New America collected information about 466 individuals from 25 Western countries who have been reported by credible news sources as having left their home countries to join ISIS or other Sunni jihadist groups in Syria or Iraq. The Western fighters drawn to Syria and Iraq represent a new demographic profile, quite different than that of other Western militants who fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s or Bosnia in the 1990s.

First, women are represented in unprecedented numbers. One in 7 of the militants in New America's data set are women. Women were rarely, if at all, represented in previous jihadist conflicts. While Western women are not going to fight in the war in Syria, they are playing supporting roles, often marrying front-line fighters and sometimes working as a kind of police officer enforcing ISIS's draconian laws. They are women like Sally Jones, 44, from the United Kingdom, who took her 10-year-old son to Syria in 2013, and Emilie Konig, 31, one of the first women to leave for Syria, who left France and her 2 children behind in 2012 to join her husband

¹Thanks to Courtney Schuster and David Sterman of New America for their help in preparing this testimony.

there. The U.S. State Department says both women have encouraged terrorist attacks in their native countries, and it officially designated both of them terrorists in September.

Second, the recruits are young. The average age of Western volunteers drawn to the Syrian jihad is 24. For female recruits, the average age is 21. Almost a fifth are teenagers, more than a third of whom are female. New America has documented an astonishing 80 cases of Western teenagers who have traveled to the war in Syria. More than a third of these teenagers are girls. Hans-Georg Maassen, the head of Germany's domestic security agency, said, for instance, in March that 9 female German teens had left for Syria. That same month, ISIS released a video of a French boy shooting a Palestinian hostage in the forehead.

Third, many have familial ties to jihadism. More than a quarter of Western fighters have a familial connection to jihad, whether through relatives who are also fighting in Syria and Iraq, through marriage or through some link to other jihads or terrorist attacks. For instance the father of British ISIS recruit Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary is Adel Abdel Bary, who was convicted in New York for his role in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. Of those with a familial link, one-third are through marriage, many of them marriages between female recruits and male fighters conducted after they arrive in Syria. Three-fifths of Western fighters with familial ties to jihad have a relative who has also left for Syria. For example, the Deghayes family in the United Kingdom had 3 sons, ages 16 to 20, fighting in Syria together.

Fourth, the Americans drawn to the Syrian jihad—250 who have tried or have succeeded in getting to Syria—share the same profile as the Western fighters overall: Women are well-represented, and the volunteers are young, and many have family ties to jihad. One in 6 of the Americans drawn to the Syrian conflict are women. The average age of the American militants is 25, with a fifth still in their teens. Almost a fifth of the American militants have a familial connection to jihad. The American recruits are, perhaps unsurprisingly, particularly active on-line: Around 9 out of 10 American militants are active in on-line jihadist circles.

Fifth, for Western militants, the wars engulfing Syria and Iraq have often proved deadly. Almost half of the male fighters and 6% of the female recruits have been killed in Syria or Iraq.

Sixth, few of the Western fighters who have traveled to Syria and Iraq are in government custody. Only one-fifth of Western fighters in New America's data set are in custody, and more than two-fifths of individuals are still at large. (As indicated above, around half the Western militants were killed in the conflicts in Syria or Iraq.)

Seventh, the most popular route to Syria is through Turkey. Almost half of the Western foreign fighters made their way to Syria or Iraq via Turkey. Only one of the militants is documented as attempting to use an alternative route via Lebanon. For the rest of the Western militants, it's not clear from the public record how they arrived in Syria.

Eighth, where an affiliation can be determined, the majority of the Western fighters have joined ISIS: Three-fifths have joined ISIS, while only a tenth have joined al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, known as al-Nusra Front, and one-seventh have joined other smaller militant groups.

2. *How these Westerners are recruited: Propaganda and motivations.* Who is inspiring these militants to give up their often-comfortable lives in the West for the rigors of the war zone in Syria? Based on court records and press reports, New America has identified several Western militants acting as on-line recruiters. Among them are a number of Americans. For instance, Abdi Nur, a 20-year-old from Minnesota, allegedly took on the role of on-line recruiter after leaving for Syria in the summer of 2014. A complaint filed in November that charged 6 Minnesota men with trying to go to join ISIS accuses Nur of acting as an on-line recruiter and providing encouragement and advice to the men via Kik and other social media platforms from Syria. Another is Hoda Muthana, a 20-year-old American woman from Alabama, was identified by *BuzzFeed* as the individual behind the Twitter account Umm Jihad, which encouraged militants to leave for Syria.

ISIS has disseminated 2 on-line guidebooks to encourage its Western recruits. In 2015, ISIS published its how-to guides *Hijrah* and "How to Survive in the West." *Hijrah* provided potential fighters with detailed packing lists—advice on how to get to Turkey and dupe customs officials into issuing visas for the country; Twitter accounts of fighters living in Syria who can facilitate their travel; and even suggestions for recruits to assess their personality strengths and weaknesses before leaving home to prepare themselves better for jihad.

"How to Survive in the West" is a guide on how to "be a secret agent" in a Western country, giving readers tips on the making of Molotov cocktails, bombs and cell

phone detonators; hiding weapons in secret compartments of vehicles, in the same fashion as gangs; and how to identify and evade police surveillance, even suggesting that readers watch the Jason Bourne film series for tips on employing evasion tactics.

What motivates many of these Western fighters to travel to a dangerous war zone with which most have no prior connection? A review of both ISIS propaganda and reporting on the individual cases in New America's data set suggests the answer is a mishmash of motivations that ISIS has picked up on as part of its recruiting strategy, including opposition to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, religious invocations of the spiritual benefit of participating in jihad, the belief that religious duty requires living under ISIS's so-called caliphate, anger and alienation from Western society, and for some the "cool" factor of participating in a war.

Here are the rationales for joining ISIS that are provided by a couple of ISIS's alleged American recruits: Abdi Nur, the 20-year-old Minnesotan, tweeted: "Jihad Is The Greatest Honor For Man So Come On And Join Dawla Ya Iqwa (you brothers of the Islamic State)." Nur later explained to his sister: "If I didn't care I wouldn't have left but I want jannah (paradise) for all of us." Authorities say Chicago teen Hamzah Khan left a letter for his parents before attempting to travel to Syria in 2014, explaining that "there is an obligation to 'migrate' to the 'Islamic State.'" He was charged with material support of ISIS and has pleaded not guilty.

3. *Threat to the United States by ISIS's American recruits.* Four years into the Syrian civil war, little evidence has emerged to support the notion that returning fighters from Syria pose a great threat to the United States. In the United States, there has only been one case of a fighter returning from Syria and allegedly plotting an attack. Abdirahman Sheik Mohamud, 22, of Columbus, Ohio, left for Syria in April 2014 and fought there before returning home around 2 months later. The government alleges that a cleric in Syria told Mohamud that he should return to the United States to conduct an act of terrorism and that he discussed some kind of plan (with an informant) to kill American soldiers at a military base in Texas. He has pleaded not guilty to a charge of providing material support to a terrorist group.

Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations in March, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said that about 40 individuals had returned from Syria. "We have since found they went for humanitarian purposes or some other reason that don't relate to plotting," he said.

We identified 23 Americans who actually reached Syria, 46 individuals who attempted or plotted to travel to Syria but were unsuccessful in doing so, and 14 who provided support to others fighting or seeking to fight in Syria.

Instead of being a launch pad for attacks at home, Syria turned out to be a graveyard for the few Americans who made it to the war zone. Of the 23 individuals who reached Syria, 9 died there. For instance, Floridian Moner Abu Salha died conducting a suicide bombing in northern Syria last year, and Douglas McAuthor McCain was killed fighting for ISIS. Nine of the Americans who reached Syria remain at large, while 5 American fighters who returned to the United States from Syria were taken into custody.

Rather than being an easy target for ISIS recruits, the United States benefits from a series of layered defenses that make returning and plotting a sophisticated attack undetected quite difficult. It takes more than a plane ticket for a returning fighter to conduct a sophisticated attack: They also have to gather arms, conduct surveillance, and carry out the attack undetected. This is difficult as Muslim communities have often reported suspicious activity and law enforcement has instituted an aggressive effort using informants and other investigative tools to prevent such an occurrence. According to New America's data, Muslim communities and family members have provided tips in 28 percent of the 330 jihadist terrorism-related cases since 9/11, and in about 8 percent of cases, other individuals have reported suspicious activity. Almost half of the 330 individuals accused of jihadist terrorism-related crimes since 9/11 have been monitored by an informant.² Even in the case of Moner Abu Salha, which is certainly not a success story given his return undetected to the United States after training with the al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, when he started to try to recruit Americans to go to Syria, a tip put him on the government's radar.³

In assessing the threat posed by returning American fighters, it is worth putting the current Syrian conflict into historical perspective. The historical comparison most people are aware of is the Afghan war against the Soviets and the ensuing

²"Homegrown Extremism 2001–2015." *New America*. <http://securitydata.newamerica.net/extremists/analysis>.

³Sterman, David. "The Traveling Terrorism Fallacy." *Weekly Wonk*. 9/4/2014. <http://weeklywonk.newamerica.net/articles/traveling-terrorism-fallacy/>.

civil war, which helped launch Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda. Though an important cautionary tale, much has changed since then that makes it a weak comparison for how "blowback" from Syria might affect the United States.⁴ For example, on 9/11, there were 16 people on the U.S. "No-Fly" list. Today, there are more than 48,000 people. In 2001, there were 32 Joint Terrorism Task Force "fusion centers," where multiple law enforcement agencies work together to chase down leads and build terrorism cases. Now there are 104 centers.⁵ A decade ago, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, National Counterterrorism Center, Transportation Security Administration, Northern Command, and Cyber Command didn't exist. In 2014, all of these new post-9/11 institutions make it much harder for terrorists to operate in the United States. The U.S. intelligence budget also grew dramatically after 9/11, with Congress giving the Government substantial resources with which to improve its counterterrorism capabilities. In 2013, the United States allocated \$72 billion to intelligence collection and other covert activities.⁶ Before 9/11, the budget was around one-third of that figure: \$26 billion.

Perhaps of most relevance to the issue of returning fighters is that prior to 9/11, the U.S. law enforcement community demonstrated little interest in investigating or prosecuting individuals who traveled abroad to fight in an overseas jihad. Today, the U.S. Government considers such persons to be a serious concern and tracks their activities.

A post-9/11 American fighter flow to jihadist groups abroad that sparked fears but turned out not to be a real threat to the United States was al-Shabaab's recruitment of American fighters to wage war in Somalia. According to a review by New America, no American fighter who fought in the conflict in Somalia returned to plot an attack in the United States. Instead, about one-third of the individuals known to have traveled to fight in Somalia died there, either as suicide bombers or on the battlefield, while others were taken into custody upon their return.⁷

There are, however, worrisome cases of returning militants to the United States since 9/11 that attempted serious attacks. The United States' experience with Americans fighting or training in Afghanistan and Pakistan provides an illustration of what a more serious returnee threat might look like. Najibullah Zazi, Adis Medunjanin, and Zarein Ahmedzay, who all grew up in New York City, traveled to Pakistan, where they ended up receiving training from al-Qaeda, and were sent back to the United States where they were part of a serious plot to bomb the New York City subway in the fall of 2009. On May 1, 2010, Connecticut-based Faisal Shahzad, who was trained in bomb-making techniques in Pakistan by the Pakistani Taliban, left a car bomb undetected in New York City's Times Square that failed to properly explode.

Acts of violence by Americans inspired by, but with no direct connection to the terrorist groups in Syria, pose a more immediate challenge than attacks by returning fighters from Syria. As FBI Director James Comey noted in September 2014 while referring to the December 2013 arrest of Terry Loewen, who was accused of plotting an attack on Wichita Airport in Kansas after being radicalized on-line: "We have made it so hard for people to get into this country, bad guys, but they can enter as a photon and radicalize somebody in Wichita, Kansas." At the time, Comey also noted that ISIS lacked the capability for a sophisticated attack in the United States.⁸

On May 3, 2015, the United States saw its first actual attack inspired by ISIS along the lines of similar ISIS-inspired attacks in Ottawa, Copenhagen, and Paris. Two men were killed by police after opening fire at a contest to draw cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in Garland, Texas, organized by the American Freedom Defense Initiative. The event featured right-wing Dutch politician Geert Wilders, who had been named on an al-Qaeda hit list. One of shooters, Elton Simpson, had previously been convicted of making a false statement to the FBI regarding plans to travel to Somalia. Before conducting the attack Simpson tweeted his allegiance to

⁴The section below is drawn from Peter Bergen et al. "2014 Jihadist Terrorism and Other Conventional Threats," *Bipartisan Policy Center*, September 2014.

⁵Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Protecting America from Terrorist Attack: Our Joint Terrorism Task Forces." Federal Bureau of Investigation. Accessed August 5, 2013. http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism_jtfs.

⁶Intelligence Resource Program. "Intelligence Budget Data." *Federation of American Scientists*. Accessed August 25, 2014. <http://fas.org/irp/budget/>.

⁷Bergen, Peter and David Sterman. "ISIS Threat to U.S. Mostly Hype." *CNN*. 9/5/2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/05/opinion/bergen-sterman-isis-threat-hype/>.

⁸Kendall, Brent and Jay Solomon. "FBI Cites Online Terror Recruiting, Training, Damps Subway-Plot Claim." *Wall Street Journal*. 9/25/2014. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-director-cites-online-terror-recruiting-training-damps-subway-plot-claim-1411688762>.

ISIS.⁹ Simpson, a 30-year-old resident of Phoenix, Arizona, who was born in Illinois and converted to Islam during his youth, was joined in the attack by his roommate Nadir Soofi, a 34-year-old who was born in Garland.

The shooting in Texas is not a lone case. While the United States has seen only one possible case of a domestic attack plot by a returned fighter from Syria, it has seen a number of alleged Syria-related plots to conduct violence that were inspired by the propaganda put out by ISIS. For instance, in March, the United States unsealed charges against Hasan Edmonds, a 22-year-old member of the National Guard, and his cousin Jonas Edmonds, alleging that Hasan Edmonds had sought to travel to fight with ISIS and that they had plotted to have Jonas Edmonds conduct an attack against a military facility. The plot was monitored by an undercover officer.¹⁰ They have pleaded not guilty. In April, the United States charged John T. Booker and Alexander Blair with an alleged plot to bomb Fort Riley, in Kansas, in support of ISIS.¹¹ The two men were monitored by an informant. They have pleaded not guilty. The same month, the United States charged two New York City women, Noelle Velentzas and Asia Siddiqui, in relation to a domestic attack plot in support of ISIS. The two women were monitored by an undercover officer. According to the complaint, Siddiqui had regular contact with members of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. When FBI agents arrested Velentzas and Siddiqui in Queens, they seized propane tanks, soldering tools, a pressure cooker, fertilizer, and bomb-making instructions.¹²

4. *Threats to the United States by non-American ISIS recruits.* Many fighters from countries other than the United States have traveled to fight in Syria and could pose a potential threat to the United States. So far we have not seen a case of a foreign fighter from another country traveling to the United States to conduct an attack. However, the large number of foreign fighters traveling to fight in Syria from other countries magnifies the potential threat of an infiltration attack, especially given the high numbers of foreign fighters from countries that enjoy the Visa Waiver Program with the United States, such as Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Tracking the many foreign fighters from Western countries who have gone to Syria and who have returned to the West poses a greater challenge, given their larger numbers, than tracking the handful of returning American fighters. With the large numbers of Europeans traveling to fight in Syria, nations such as France and Germany are reporting significant strain on their ability to monitor returnees effectively. In December, Germany's federal prosecutor general, Harald Range, said of the number of terrorism cases being prosecuted in his country, "We are at the limits of our capacity," adding that new cases kept emerging. "What worries me is the speed with which people are radicalizing, or being radicalized. We are facing a phenomenon which needs a broad strategy of prevention."

Each French individual placed under surveillance requires 25 agents to maintain round-the-clock monitoring, and the strain on resources produced by ever-increasing numbers of militants who need to be monitored was in part behind the failure to maintain surveillance of the Kouachi brothers, who conducted the attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris earlier this year. It would take many thousands of agents to monitor each of the more than a 1,000 Frenchmen reportedly involved in the Syrian war, and France simply doesn't have that kind of manpower. The fact that a French prosecutor says that one of the Paris attackers on November 13 was a French national who was known to police is an indicator of how difficult tracking all of these militants has proven to be.

5. *ISIS expands its reach.* ISIS controls territory in Syria and Iraq that by some estimates is the size of the United Kingdom, and it lords over millions of people in

⁹ Ahmed, Saeed, Ed Lavendera, and Joe Sutton. "Garland, Texas, shooting suspect linked himself to ISIS in tweets" *CNN*. 5/4/2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/04/us/garland-mohammed-drawing-contest-shooting/>.

¹⁰ "US Army National Guard Soldier and his Cousin Arrested for Conspiring to Support Terrorism (ISIL)." *Department of Justice*. 3/26/15. <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/us-army-national-guard-soldier-and-his-cousin-arrested-conspiring-support-terrorism-isil>.

¹¹ "Second Topeka Man Charged in Connection with Car Bomb Plot." *U.S. Attorney's Office*. 4/10/15. <http://www.fbi.gov/kansascity/press-releases/2015/second-topeka-man-charged-in-connection-with-car-bomb-plot>; Criminal Complaint, *United States v. Blair*, No. 15-mj-5040-KGS (D. Kansas, Apr. 10, 2015).

¹² "Two Queens Residents Charged with Conspiracy to Use a Weapon of Mass Destruction." *U.S. Attorney's Office*. 4/2/15. <http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2015/two-queens-residents-charged-with-conspiracy-to-use-a-weapon-of-mass-destruction>; Letter to Judge Pohorelsky at 2, *United States v. Velentzas*, No. 1:15-mj-00303-VVP (E.D.N.Y., Apr. 1, 2015); Complaint and Affidavit in Support of Arrest Warrant at 3, *United States v. Velentzas*, No. 1:15-mj-00303-VVP (E.D.N.Y., Apr. 1, 2015).

both countries. The group has also secured pledges of allegiance from 2 dozen militant organizations from around the Muslim world, including in the Sinai and Egypt's neighbor Libya, while around 10 other groups have declared some form of solidarity with ISIS. The key to ISIS's success is not the group's military strength—ISIS in Syria and Iraq may number only about 20,000 to 30,000 fighters—but the weaknesses of the regimes where the group is doing well.

Think of the Sunni militant group ISIS as a pathogen that preys on weak hosts in the Muslim world. In fact, there something of a law: The weaker a Muslim state the stronger will be the presence of ISIS or like-minded groups.

In 2014 ISIS seized huge swaths of Iraq, exploiting the fact that the country had been in a civil war for more than a decade and the Iraqi government had pursued a policy of excluding Sunnis from power. ISIS is one of the most powerful players in Syria because the country has been embroiled in a civil war since 2011 and the regime of Bashar al-Assad has imposed a reign of terror on its Sunni population, including the use of chemical weapons and wide-spread torture. For the moment, ISIS and the countries allied against it, including the United States, have come to something of a stalemate in Iraq and Syria.

ISIS also has a significant foothold in Libya because the country is embroiled in a civil war, which was instigated by the U.S.-led overthrow of Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi 4 years ago. (This move may turn out to be the most significant foreign policy blunder of the Obama administration, as there was no serious American plan for what would follow Gadhafi—the same negligence that had characterized George W. Bush's overthrow of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.) ISIS is growing in Egypt because a military dictator who seized power in a coup leads the country, and he has brutally quashed all forms of dissent, including criminalizing the Muslim Brotherhood, which has many millions of members in Egypt and had formed the previous government. It's fertile soil for ISIS, which had done particularly well in the Sinai, leading an insurgency there that has killed hundreds.

When ISIS first gained significant ground in Iraq and Syria in 2014, it focused almost entirely on its actions there and encouraged its overseas followers to join the jihad. Writing in the third issue of *Dabiq*, its English-language on-line magazine, an ISIS writer asserted, "This life of jihad is not possible until you pack and move to the Khilafah," meaning to leave your home and travel to ISIS's areas of control in Iraq and Syria.

In the past weeks, ISIS has shifted its strategy, attacking on a large scale outside of Iraq and Syria. The group claimed responsibility for the downing of the Russian Metrojet carrying 224 passengers and crew on October 31 in the Sinai in Egypt. Although the investigation of the crash has not been completed, there is little reason to discount this claim. On November 12 ISIS suicide bombers killed 43 in a Shia-dominated area of Beirut, the worst bombing since the Lebanese civil war ended in 1990. The very next day the team of ISIS militants attacked at multiple locations in Paris.

At the same time, the U.S.-led coalition has scored two important tactical victories against ISIS. The first is the reported assassination of "Jihadi John," the notorious British terrorist who starred in many of ISIS's beheading videos. U.S. officials now say they are "reasonably certain" that he was killed in a drone strike. An investigation by the *Washington Post* found that he was Mohammed Emwazi, Kuwait-born and London-raised. Jihadi John's death would mean justice for the man who presided over ISIS's most notorious kidnappings and murders, which included 4 Americans, 2 British citizens, and 2 Japanese hostages. It would also show that more than a year after the murder of American journalist James Foley—the first of Jihadi John's Western victims to appear in an ISIS video—U.S. intelligence is finally developing quite reliable intelligence inside Raqqa, ISIS's de facto capital in Syria, where Jihadi John was targeted in the American drone strike. However, there is no evidence suggesting that Jihadi John was an important spiritual leader of the group, as ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is, nor is there any evidence that he played any kind of important military role for ISIS. Therefore, while Jihadi John's death would surely be a psychological victory in the war against ISIS, it is nothing more than that.

The second tactical victory against ISIS will likely have far greater significance: It is the seizure last week of the town of Sinjar in Iraq by Kurdish forces. Sinjar sits along the road that connects Raqqa with ISIS's de facto capital in Iraq, the city of Mosul. The seizure of Sinjar will help put pressure on ISIS in both Mosul and Raqqa, as ISIS forces in these cities can no longer easily reinforce each other.

Neither of these tactical victories are, however, strategic victories such as would be the capture of Raqqa or of Mosul or of the other significant Iraqi city held by ISIS, Ramadi. President Obama told ABC News last week that ISIS is "contained" and has not gained ground in Iraq or Syria, and there has also been progress in

stemming the flow of foreign recruits trying to join the group. The President acknowledged that the coalition hasn't been able to "completely decapitate" ISIS's leadership.

Does this mean that the coalition against ISIS is locked in a stalemate with the terrorist army, or has the momentum of the military campaign started to shift against ISIS? In September, Gen. Martin Dempsey, the outgoing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the war against ISIS was "tactically stalemated." Indeed, during this past year ISIS has retreated from the town of Kobani on the Syrian-Turkish border and it also lost the Iraqi city of Tikrit. Despite these losses, ISIS during the same time period captured the city of Ramadi in western Iraq as well as the town of Palmyra in Syria.

As the President noted, the stream of "foreign fighters" from around the Muslim world, which has consistently replenished ISIS's ranks, has been somewhat reduced. An estimated 30,000 foreign fighter volunteers have joined ISIS, averaging about 1,000 a month. Turkey, which had long been criticized by Western countries for allowing foreign fighters to move through its territory on their way to Syria, has started to clamp down on that traffic into Syria. Those efforts by the Turks are paying off, according to ISIS itself. In early 2015, ISIS posted advice in one of its English-language on-line publications to would-be foreign fighters, saying, "It is important to know that the Turkish intelligence agencies are in no way friends of the Islamic State [ISIS]." Also, some 40 countries have also introduced new laws to prevent the recruitment of fighters to ISIS or have launched criminal investigations of militants who have joined the group. These developments are surely having some effect on ISIS's ability to recruit foreign fighters to its ranks.

Although it has not enjoyed any of the kind of success that ISIS has, al-Qaeda is also benefiting from the crisis of governance that has gripped much of the Middle East since the Arab Spring in 2011. The civil war in Yemen precipitated by the Arab Spring has boosted al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which is expanding its operations in southern Yemen. Al-Qaeda is also enjoying something of a comeback in the place from which it launched the 9/11 strikes: Southern Afghanistan. Earlier this month U.S. and Afghan forces in Kandahar province destroyed "probably the largest" al-Qaeda training camp discovered during the 14-year Afghan War, according to Gen. John Campbell, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan.

6. *How to Defeat ISIS: Twelve Action Items*

1. Enlist defectors from ISIS to tell their stories publicly. Nothing is more powerful than hearing from former members of the group that ISIS is not creating an Islamist utopia in the areas it controls, but a hell on earth. The flow of "foreign fighters" to ISIS from around the Muslim world is estimated to be about 1,000 a month. Reducing that flow is a key to reducing ISIS manpower.
2. Amplify voices such as that of the ISIS opposition group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, which routinely posts photos on-line of bread lines in Raqqa, the de facto capital of ISIS in northern Syria, and writes about electricity shortages in the city. This will help to undercut ISIS propaganda that it is a truly functioning state.
3. Amplify the work of former jihadists like the Canadian Mubin Shaikh, who intervenes directly with young people on-line who he sees are being recruited virtually by ISIS.
4. Support the work of clerics such as Imam Mohamed Magid of Northern Virginia, who has personally convinced a number of American Muslims seduced by ISIS that what the group is doing is against Islam.
5. Keep up pressure on social media companies such as Twitter to enforce their own Terms of Use to take down any ISIS material that encourages violence. Earlier this year, Twitter quietly took down 2,000 accounts used by ISIS supporters, but the group continues to use Twitter and other social media platforms to propagate its message.
6. Keep up the military campaign against ISIS. The less the ISIS "caliphate" exists as a physical entity, the less the group can claim it is the "Islamic State" that it purports to be. That should involve more U.S. Special Forces on the ground embedded with Iraqi and other coalition forces and more U.S. forward air controllers calling in close air support strikes for those forces.
7. Applaud the work that the Turks have already done to tamp down the foreign fighter flow through their country to ISIS in neighboring Syria, and get them to do more.
8. Provide "off ramps" to young ISIS recruits with no history of violence, so that instead of serving long prison terms for attempting to join ISIS—as they presently do in the United States—they would instead serve long periods of supervised probation. This will help families that presently face a hard choice: If they

suspect a young family member is radicalizing and they go to the FBI, that person can end up in prison for up to 15 years on charges of attempting to support ISIS; but if they don't go to the authorities and their child ends up traveling to Syria, he or she may well end up being killed there. Providing off-ramps would offer families a way out of this almost impossible choice.

9. Educate Muslim-American parents about the seductive messages that ISIS is propagating on-line.

10. Relentlessly hammer home the message that ISIS positions itself as the defender of Muslims, but its victims are overwhelmingly fellow Muslims.

11. Build a database of all the foreign fighters who have gone to Syria to fight for ISIS and Nusra. This is one of the recommendations of the House Homeland Security Committee's September 2015 report on foreign fighters in Syria and it is a very good one. How can you prevent an attack by returning foreign fighters if you are not cognizant of their names and links to ISIS? Right now INTERPOL has a list of some 5,000 foreign fighters, but that is simply dwarfed by the estimated 30,000 foreign fighters who have gone to fight in Syria.

12. Stay in Afghanistan beyond 2016. One only has to look at the debacle that has unfolded in Iraq after the withdrawal of U.S. troops at the end of 2011 to have a preview of what could take place in an Afghanistan without some kind of residual American presence. Without American forces in the country, there is a strong possibility Afghanistan could host a reinvigorated Taliban allied to a reinvigorated al-Qaeda—not to mention ISIS, which is also gaining a foothold in the region. This U.S. military presence in Afghanistan doesn't have to be large, nor does it need to play a combat role, but U.S. troops should remain in Afghanistan to advise the Afghan army and provide intelligence support past 2016.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, Mr. Bergen.

Chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes for questions.

This was a foreign fighter event, the Paris attacks. ISIS now has demonstrated great capability beyond the caliphate. Before they were focused on the caliphate itself, now we have seen three external operations in just a matter of weeks. To me, it is very disturbing.

The mastermind of the Paris attacks, Mr. Abaaoud, recently bragged about traveling to and from the conflict zone without getting caught. Recently he is quoted in *Dabiq* magazine, which is the ISIS publication, basically saying, "I was able to leave and come despite being chased after—by so many intelligence agencies. My name and picture are all over the news, yet I was able to stay in their homeland, plan operations against them, and leave safely when doing so became necessary."

ISIS is blatantly seeking to exploit security gaps into the West. They are also looking at refugee routes as a pathway for the jihadists. In fact, ISIS in their own words stated that they will exploit the refugee process to infiltrate the West. Indeed, one of the Paris attackers, if not two, we now have found were exploiting the refugee process to get into Paris to perpetrate the devastating attacks.

FBI Director Comey recently testified before my committee, basically saying that we can query our databases until the cows come home, but nothing will show up because we have no record of them.

Yesterday, I introduced a bill that will put the brakes on this Syrian refugee program until the FBI director, the DNI, and Secretary of Homeland Security can demonstrate to us that these individuals can be properly vetted and that they do not pose a threat to this country.

My question, first Mr. Olsen, we are a compassionate Nation but we also need to protect the lives of Americans. Do you agree that before any Syrian refugees are brought into this country that Con-

gress and the American people must be assured that, first, they can be properly vetted, and, second, do not pose a National security risk to the United States?

Mr. OLSEN. Mr. Chairman, certainly, that proposition is accurate and true and I agree with it. In other words, the vetting process that is in place for any individual coming here through the refugee program needs to be as stringent as possible and all possible assurances need to be in place that the person doesn't pose a threat.

I think the longer answer to your question, Mr. Chairman, is that any process is going to bear some—is going to include some risk. So it is impossible to eliminate all risk for every single person coming into this country; that is a fact of any process like this. But the process that is in place for these refugees is quite extensive and as you pointed out earlier during the opening statements, involves multiple layers.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, you know, in the briefings we have had, we have—if you don't have information on the individuals it is very—and you don't know who they are it is difficult to vet them. I think we would like better assurances.

General Keane, do you have any thoughts on that?

General KEANE. I don't know how the United States of America can possibly say no to people who are pouring out of that country, given the horror of what has taken place and given our contribution to that horror, frankly. When we had significant opportunities to create some huge momentum against the Assad regime and for 4-plus years, he has been marauding over that population, killing 250,000, creating 11 million displaced. Some of those, obviously, have the opportunity to come here.

I am absolutely convinced that you are doing the right thing by pausing and making certain that the Congress takes a look at the Executive branch's plans and make certain that there is some—it is reasonable what we are doing in terms of the vetting process.

We have had 3 million people come here since the 1970s. We have had a million come here since 9/11, all seeking political asylum. This is who we are. We can manage this thing. Listen, some of the voices that are out there about this, are playing right into ISIS's hands.

When we talk about, let's only take Christians. I mean, that is a horrific statement. That is playing right into—this is what ISIS wants. ISIS wants fragmentation between Muslims and non-Muslims. We have—that is an irresponsible statement to make. We are a country with Muslims in it.

Why wouldn't we welcome Muslims and others from around the world like we have always done who are being persecuted? We didn't care about their religion or their nationality. What we cared about is they were humans running from suffering and death. There was a home for people like that in America.

Come on. This is America. I mean, we can do this right. We are smart enough to figure out how to bring thousands of people into this country and make sure they are not going to hurt us. Anyway.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, yes. We will continue to have this refugee crisis until the root problem is resolved. That is the conflict in Syria. What are your thoughts, General, on the Article V invocation potential with France, whether—what the role of NATO could

be with respect to Syria? Now with Russia, in the region, further complicating the issue, how do you see the path forward?

General KEANE. You asked that of me, Chairman?

Chairman MCCAUL. Yes, sir.

General KEANE. Okay. I think the NATO issue is largely France's decision. I don't think we should have an advocacy for it except to support if they make the case for it.

I mean, clearly, what we have looked at terrorism in the past and particularly in NATO countries in Europe, it has grown out of their own countries by their own citizens largely.

What makes this different is that there is the Islamic State which is motivating, inspiring, and in this particular case as Dr. Olsen said, may in fact, have been directing it. That does change it I believe, in terms of Article V. They certainly have the right to invoke it.

I don't expect much from the Europeans to be quite frank about this. I mean I think the Europeans have lost national will. Even the fight for themselves, much less for somebody else. I think the French will stand up and do what they need to do.

Just our British friends for example. Just think about this. The Islamic State has declared itself and it is—the border between Syria and Iraq does not exist anymore and the Brits are attacking in Iraq but not attacking in Syria. I mean, what an absurdity that is. Not going after the enemy that has declared itself the Islamic State.

I am not hopeful that NATO will do much of anything here, frankly.

Chairman MCCAUL. Right. Quick question I have and a short answer. The administration seems to be taking its eye off the ball in Syria. Now we are in a mess right now. To what extent do you think the Iran negotiations had any influence on our inability to deal with Assad and the Syrian situation?

General KEANE. I think they have everything to do with perpetuating the civil war in Syria. I think it has always been the elephant in the room. One of the many of the moderate rebels came here in 2011. That is when they began, when the war began.

They were seeking assistance and the administration was saying no. They have met, probably some of you. I mean, they even met with me. That is how desperate they were.

Then in 2012, remember this. Clinton, Panetta, Petraeus, and Dempsey recommended to the administration, that we need to arm the Syrian moderate rebels robustly and train them. The President said no. That is a competent security team making that recommendation in my judgment.

In 2013 as a result of crossing the chemical line, the chemical red line, we did not take the action which we—if we had taken it, we would have shut down Assad's airpower. What do we get for that?

Syria still has chemical production capabilities. Syria still has chemical weapons. There is literally nothing on the scale that they did have, but we said, they would never get rid of all of that. I believe those decisions were largely driven by the Iranian nuclear deal that we did not want to disrupt it.

It is still driving our policy in the Middle East. It is that decision that has lost the—our allies' confidence in the region in us. To this

day, they are not convinced. Even right now, as we are speaking, they are not convinced that the United States of America is serious about going after ISIS. That is out of their mouths.

That is what they believe. That we are not serious. What they have seen is the intensity of the U.S. effort for 3 years has been about trying to establish a strategic alliance with Iran. The vehicle to do that is a nuclear disarmament, a nuclear weapons deal.

The price that has caused us is pretty significant.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, General.

Chair recognizes Chairman Royce.

Chairman ROYCE. But, General, I think there is another casualty in terms of that deference that the administration is given. Not just to Iran, but to the Shia-led government in Baghdad that is so heavily influenced by Iran.

One of the great conundrums here has been our failure to arm our allies and whether that is the Sunni tribal leaders who meet with us and ask for that support from us. Or whether it is the Kurdish leaders, who had an opportunity, on 650-mile front, 30 percent of their battalions are female as you know, fighting against ISIS.

We have had their foreign minister here 3 times to request some modicum of ammunition and weaponry that would allow them in this face-off against ISIS, to have the advantage. Whether it's artillery, long-range mortars, and high-tech weapons.

You have got women out there on the line in these Peshmerga units. You have got young Yazidis, without weapons, young men. We had a Yazidi girl testify before our committee that she was taken in combat. All the men were killed. They didn't have weapons. She said, why can't you arm some of the Kurds, some of the Yazidi men?

She said she herself was taken captive and sold to an American who was recruited. He sold her 4 years ago to ISIS. He thought ISIS was invincible. He was watching ISIS on the internet. He was converted to ISIS's philosophy. He came there and now he subjects her as a Yazidi because he tells her, you are an apostate. It is my responsibility under my code to have you submit to me.

So this is the life they are living in, in a situation where, as I said before, you went 12 full months while ISIS was on the march without the United States using that airpower. Now as the pilots come back to talk to us, they say, three-quarters of our ordinance.

We can't drop. We can't get clearance, even when we have a clear target in front of us. I did not understand this strategy this all. Because this is what has allowed ISIS the advantage and the ability to recruit. So I wanted to ask you about that subject. Arming the Sunni tribesmen, giving the Kurds the ability, on the ground, they have 180,000 Peshmerga forces. They are good fighters.

General KEANE. Yes. Well, I obviously have strong feelings about all of that. It was in my statement. But, I mean, here is what was so fundamentally flawed in the strategy. I think the President's decision and his National security team, to work through local, indigenous forces in Iraq and what is in Syria, as the main ground force to go after ISIS and take their caliphate in Iraq and Syria away from them, is sound.

That is a sound strategy. Most of us do not want U.S. combat brigades taking on that role.

Chairman ROYCE. Then why not arm them and why not give them the effective air support?

General KEANE. That is what I am trying to answer. So, if you believe that is the strategy and you are trying to avoid the very thing that you don't want to do and that is eventually have to commit U.S. combat brigades. That is what you don't want to do.

But yet you know you have got to defeat ISIS for the sake of the American people and our interest, then why are we not all-in on supporting that weak hand that—we know they have a weak hand. We have got to strengthen that hand. Whatever it takes to strengthen that hand should have been the policy.

In other words, all the equipment it takes and the best equipment that we can have to support them. All the weapons and ammunitions they need. Not 300 trainers, thousands of trainers to get the output you want. So we get not a few hundred trained, but tens of thousands trained is what we need as an effective ground force to deal with these guys.

Certainly the whole bureaucratic nonsense of taking care of the Kurds and buying into this business of, well, you are going to have to pass it all through the Baghdad government. Just muscle the Baghdad government to get out of the way. That is what we should have done.

The Iranians muscle them everyday and we certainly should have done that. Now, I have talked to two Kurdish officials recently. One, KDP and one PUK, all within the last 10 days, and there has been some improvement in this area. But believe me, it is still not where it should be.

That is your point. The other thing is on the airpower. This has been an absurdity from the beginning. The President personally made a statement that has driven airpower from the inception. When we agreed that we were going to do airpower and the military said, this is how it would work, he said, no, I do not want any civilian casualties in the responses.

But, there are always some civilian casualties. We have the best capability in the world to protect from civilian casualties. Better than any nation in the world and we have the results to prove it. He said, no, you don't understand. I want no civilian casualties, zero. So that has driven our so-called rules of engagement to a degree that we have never had in any previous air campaign from Desert Storm to the present.

That is why you made reference to 75 percent of the ordinance coming back was a CENTCOM revelation which I think surprised all of us to that degree, that that ordinance is not being used. Now, we have a new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Smart, and he has got some spine. I think we are going to get some better results here. Because he is pushing.

He is pushing for a more realistic air campaign and let's free up some of these restrictions. Believe me, the French are in there, not using the restrictions we have imposed on our pilots. The Russians, of course, whose value system is off the table, they don't care at all about civilians.

So if there is an ISIS or a rebel target in the middle village, they will take the village down. That was their entire methodology in Afghanistan, and that is what they did in Chechnya, and so I am convinced that is what they are doing here.

But we can do this, Mr. Chairman. We know how to do this. We can have a very effective devastating air campaign that will get us results. It will not win the war. But it can certainly keep ISIS in its holes, take away their tactical initiative, take away their defense and put them on the offense.

Put so much pressure on them that they are not sending out—they are not hitting 20,000 media sites per day with 15 to 20 new pictures per day. Why? Because they are worried about being bombed.

Chairman ROYCE. General, if I could just respond to your one observation about the Kurds finally getting some of the weaponry. I think that is because we got the amendment that I worked on in the NDAA act, so that the administration is feeling the pressure on that. But it is still obviously not being done to the extent that would turn the tide of battle.

Second I would just point out this point on the air campaign. To have gone 12 months without any ordinance being dropped on Fallujah, on Ramadi—now I am talking about open columns on the open desert in pickup trucks with black flags flying. The concern about not having collateral damage that we cannot hit those columns as they took 12 major cities across Syria and Iraq before we even begin after the fall of Mosul to do anything.

This does not send the message from the administration that they intend to do anything except contain this problem. That has to be reversed. ISIS has to be defeated.

General KEANE. Listen, I agree with you, Mr. Chairman. But that is a slight exaggeration, what you just said. I just want to make a statement here for a second.

Listen, months into this campaign we were not permitting convoys of ISIS with flags rolling down roads. We took those guys off the roads a long time before that. That was not happening.

The attack on Ramadi, they brought—they came into Ramadi largely in civilian vehicles, not even in convoy. They made—they came down the Euphrates River Valley outside—from Syria. Ramadi is in the Iraq version of the Euphrates River Valley, obviously. That is—they infiltrated is the military term we would use, to create the kind of combat power that they needed.

There are no convoys of ISIS running around the battlefield today.

Chairman ROYCE. Not today. But remember, until the Yazidis were on the mountainside and until they were attacked on that mountainside, that was the first effective use of airpower or commitment to use airpower that I saw in this entire endeavor, despite our efforts continuously to deploy it.

But my time is expired. But thank you very much, general.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Mr. Olsen, in response to the Chairman's question, you made a statement that it is virtually impossible to eliminate all the risk in a refugee program. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Mr. OLSEN. Sure. Absolutely.

I mean first of all I think the critical point here is that when it comes to the refugee program, the ones we have used in the past and certainly what we are applying with regard to Syrian refugees, there is really no program in the world as extensive as what the United States does in terms of looking at the background information, the intelligence, the biographic information.

It includes interviews of each potential refugee. It includes biometric—gathering biometric information. The process itself takes 18 to 24 months all told. Then finally a decision will be made at that time before anyone is let in.

In terms of the populations that are being considered, remember that it is the most vulnerable populations in Syria. It is the women, children, families. From what I have seen in terms of the individuals let in so far, it is only a very, very small percentage, a small fraction that are middle-aged—I mean military-aged men.

I would fully endorse the remarks of General Keane in terms of who we are as a people and that we can do this in terms of managing this problem. But to answer your question directly, no process can eliminate 100 percent every bit of risk associated with—

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, that is what I am trying to get to. So if I said that we would require the FBI director and the director of national intelligence to certify to Congress that each individual refugee to be admitted is not a threat to security of the United States, what would your response to that be?

Mr. OLSEN. Well, I think that any process needs to include—it needs to be reasonable. In other words, there needs to be some way of looking at any individual as policymakers and understand that the process can—must be reasonable in order to work. So it can't be unequivocal or absolute, it seems to me, to be an effective process.

Mr. THOMPSON. General, you raised a point that I had actually made note of. You said that if we stop the opportunity of refugees from coming to this country that that would potentially play into the hands of ISIL. Can you talk a little bit about that?

General KEANE. Yes. ISIS in all their writings, I mean this has grown in to be a fairly sophisticated organization.

It is actually amazing, just to give you one second on this. Baghdadi had a relatively small terrorist organization. He was trying to rebuild what we had defeated, the al-Qaeda in 2008 in Iraq.

Because of the Syrian civil war stalemate, he made the most significant strategic decision of his movement. That was to take his Iraqi-based, relatively small terrorist organization and go to northeast Syria. Because of the stalemated civil war, and build a terrorist army and be able to recruit and train.

In accomplishment of that, build up supplies, et cetera. Have the time and introspection, not hiding in the shadows in Iraq trying to avoid government troops and police. Operating openly in a vast swath of territory and building a degree of sophistication. Publishing articles and eventually something like an annual report that we have seen, it is about that thick, in color with pictures and the rest of it.

What he advocates is for them to be successful they must fragment and polarize Muslim and non-Muslims. It is a key objective

for their success to grow the movement and also isolate Muslims in the world from non-Muslims. They believe that will leverage them so they can actually grow an enclave in Europe, as an example, out of that struggle that is taking place.

So yes, if we make—if we had a policy here now that would shut down obviously Muslims who are running from the horror of what is taking place in Syria and shut them down because they are Muslims or because they may actually be a threat there, that plays right, right into his hands. They will use that.

They are already—I guarantee you that they have picked up on some of the statements that have been made in this town in the last few days. Those things are running all over their social media nets because it is exactly what they want, the polarization and fragmentation between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Bergen, do you agree with the general's analysis of that?

Mr. BERGEN. Yes.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Mr. Engel.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, I have long advocated years ago helping the Free Syria Army when that proposal was put forward. I supported it. I put in a bill 3 years ago to do it. I think the fact that we didn't do it was a major mistake. So I do agree with your analysis.

But I wanted to ask you, you know reports have shown that ISIS wants to try to lure the United States into a ground war, into a war that they can fight. After our experience in Iraq I am not sure that we are ready for—to get bogged down into another ground war. It seems that every time we intervene things seem to wind up worse than they were before.

I never thought we would long for the good old days of Saddam Hussein, and he was certainly a bad player. But you look at what is happening now, you wonder if this is any better. I would think it is not. You can say this thing about intervention in Libya and the places as well.

So how can we be sure that we just don't get sucked in again and bogged down in another ground war like Iraq, which I don't think the American people really want or are ready for?

General KEANE. Well, I totally agree with you. I think most people do, that I am aware of. Those who are even critical of the administration, there are some, but most analysts are not calling for, you know, significant ground combat units to go back into Syria and to go back into Iraq.

Yes, you are right, that would be a plus in terms of what ISIS would make out of that. They would probably move the remnants of their organization, you know, to Libya or someplace else.

But yes, the reality is, is that I think if we are all-in in supporting the indigenous forces, and if we put the effort into the political situation with the same intensity and degree that we did in getting the nuclear deal for 3 years. I mean that was all-in political effort. If we make that kind of effort because the political situation in Syria and the political situation in Iraq actually drive the solutions that we need, not the military solution, not the military situation.

Military situation is critical. But so is the political situation. We need to have that level of intensity and that level of effort to get the kind of political stability we need for the Sunnis to be able to step up in this fight.

The second thing is, as I suggested in my testimony, our efforts to support these local indigenous forces has been, in my judgment, very inadequate. To avoid those ground combat brigades ever having been used, that is the answer. At least we have to try what that result gets.

Then if we ever had to put combat brigades in there—as I said in my statement, I didn’t ignore it—we would only do that in conjunction with an Arab—and if NATO is involved—coalition, and we would not be the—I don’t think we should be the majority of the force if that took place. It just certainly would be largely an Arab-Sunni force to be able to take back these Sunni lands, not the United States combat forces.

They would probably like us to be there if it came to that situation with them. If there was no other alternative, this was the only way we could do it, then I would agree to doing that as a recommendation. But that is the thing that we truly want to avoid for all the reasons that you suggested. We want to avoid that. These other options are still available to us to help us avoid that reality.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. I want to get back to the question about refugees, and I would like to make a statement, and then ask anyone to comment on it. I think it is important to point out that Syrian refugees are fleeing precisely the type of senseless violence that occurred in Paris.

Slamming the door in the face of victims of terrorism I think would be a betrayal of our values. I believe that we are deeply committed to safeguarding the American public, just as we are committed to providing refuge to some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

I don’t believe that these goals are mutually exclusive, or that either has to be pursued at the expense of the other. I would like anyone who cares to comment on it, please do so.

Mr. BERGEN. I couldn’t agree with you more, sir. We looked at every jihadi terrorism case in the United States since 9/11, of which there are 330. In only two cases is it clear that refugees were involved, and they were Iraqi refugees who slipped through a process, which is nothing like the process that has been described by Director Olsen and Ranking Member Thompson, which is much, much more rigorous. Of course, we can’t say we are going to just eliminate all risk, because we don’t live in that kind of world.

On the other hand, you know, imagine the argument when the great wave of Italian immigration came to this country, which there were millions of people, that we would take no Italians because there was a tiny, tiny chance that one of them was a member of the Mafia. This country would be substantially different. So I endorse everything you have had to say. I think your analogy about the *St. Louis* is right on point.

Mr. ENGEL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. King.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to say, though, on the refugee issue, I am saying as somebody who, in

1993, visited Muslim refugee camps in the Balkans. I strongly supported the admission of Muslim refugees to this country at the time. This was not something we as a committee went looking for. We had the professionals in the field tell us the concern that they had, that they did not fear that the vetting was being done sufficiently.

That, I think, is the issue the Chairman is raising, which I have raised, is that this was not something we went looking for. We were told by high-ranking people that they believe that the vetting process was not sufficient. Even though, for instance, it is more rigorous, as regard to Iraq, it is more rigorous in method.

But there are far more materials to work with, as far as the refugees coming from Iraq. It has virtually no database or materials given with Syria. I think in the last 2 years of vetting, there has been a total of 2,000 refugees have been vetted. But the President calling for that number to be increased to 10,000 in a compressed period of time, if it took that long to vet 2,000, how can we get 10,000 or more done in a brief period of time?

That is the concern we have. No one wants to shut the door on anyone. I understand the gentleman from New York, his concerns specifically with the United States at *St. Louis*, what happened, which was the stain on America's image and legacy. But having said that, I think there are real issues here.

How they are raised is significant, but I will say that this is certainly from my perspective, is not in any anti-Muslim or any anti-refugee issue, which the question of the extent of the vetting, and the fact that it appears that there is a rush to judgment by the administration to step up and advance the vetting process. Again, it was people—even just over comments of Director Comey, for instance, I think are significant enough.

But what I would like to do—again, unless somebody wants to comment on it—I would just like to ask General Keane—let me thank all of you for your service. It is great to see Matt Olsen back. He was director of NCTC, it was an absolute privilege. I was Chairman of the committee at the time, and being able to work with you, cooperation was absolutely tremendous. I want to thank you for that. Peter Bergen, we always read and listen to what you have to say. General Keane, I just wish you were running the whole operation.

But in any event, the day after the French became involved—this was Saturday, Sunday, when they carried out the first bombing mission—they took out a command-and-control center and a training camp. Why, after 15 months of U.S. bombing, were those two sites still available for the French to take out on Day 1?

General KEANE. Yes, that is a fascinating comment. I can only speculate. I haven't seen, you know, the targets themselves. But I would speculate that, don't think of the training camp being out someplace in the open desert, or don't think of the headquarters being a major facility with antennas that are on it. Those things are long gone.

While I am critical of an air campaign, we cannot compare this air campaign to what we did with Saddam Hussein, who was a nation state, with all the infrastructure that supports a nation state,

or what we did against Milosevic in the late 1990s, because that was also a nation state with all that infrastructure.

Islamic State, while they claim to be a nation state, they do not have the physical infrastructure of a nation state. So what they have done, and what makes targeting more challenging, but still doable, is every major node and critical function that they have, to include the training function, is all done in and around people, because they know, based on our rules of engagement, that we will not engage.

While I have not seen the target, I would speculate that both of those functions, the critical command-and-control node, as well as the so-called training camp, quote/unquote, was in and around a fabric of civilian population. I know for a fact that the headquarters of this organization is decentralized, and is living in and among civilian populations.

Mr. KING. Okay. Accepting those facts, you mentioned before that CENTCOM reported that 75 percent of the planes return with their ordinance. If you could set the policy, what percentage would be coming back with ordinance?

General KEANE. Well, I think it would be a small percentage in my mind. You know, this is an area that gets so much scrutiny in terms of battle damage assessments. We have got very good people that do this, got years of experience at it.

Just so everyone can understand, I mean, we have routinely taken out a target that may be in a facility someplace, and we don't want the windows to shatter across the street because of what is taking place in that function. We actually have the ability to do that.

So we are excellent at this. But this frustration that we have, we also—not only the concern about civilian casualties has driven us to unrealistic targeting, is that we lose targets because the process of getting approval is so layered. You know, usually, the commanders who have control of the targeting—they have total release authority, and they delegate that down to the guys actually fighting the mission.

Now, we have to request approval. So we have got a target on a road that is moving. We have got to request approval, and it goes up a couple of layers to shoot at it. If the guy who is driving this vehicle, or a couple of vehicles, recognizes that there is a fighter or a drone in the area, he is just going to drive next to a building someplace, and we are not going to shoot him. It is that simple.

So we lose targets all the time because of the bureaucratic process to grant approval for those targets. This is all the stuff that is buried in a level of detail that appears somewhat bureaucratic, and it is to a certain degree. But it also produces the results that we are talking about, why 75 percent return with their ordinance, and not striking the targets.

I know that General Dunford is pressing hard on this, and I think there is probably going to be some changes, at least I hope so.

Mr. KING. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Terrorists create fear. They seek a wild reaction. It is time for us to take a deep breath and evaluate all the threats, not just based on the last 24 hours, but looking at the last decade. ISIS is not the most dangerous threat, nor the most evil. I would argue that the Iran-led Shiite alliance is at least as evil, and is more dangerous.

That alliance of Iran, Assad, Hezbollah, and the Houthi, they have killed far more Americans than ISIS, whether it be the Beirut bombing of our Marines decades ago, or the IEDs that were used against us in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran and Syria have both had nuclear programs. Iran and Syria, that is to say Assad, have killed tens of thousands—well, hundreds of thousands of innocent people, while ISIS has killed tens of thousands.

But ISIS has bad taste, and Assad has good taste. ISIS will glorify in the deaths of 50 people. Assad will barrel-bomb and kill 1,000 people, and then have a good taste to deny it. It is said that the enemy of your enemy is your friend. As Netanyahu mentioned when he spoke to us in the Middle East, “The enemy of your enemy may be your enemy.”

Part of our effort against ISIS and in the world is to show compassion, demonstrate that compassion to our friends in Europe and the Middle East. Ninety-nine percent of that compassion at least is helping refugees who are in the Middle East, where there are millions of people. We have been the most generous country.

The solution to this problem is not to depopulate Syria of all but its 15 percent Alawite minority. The solution is to allow Syrians to live in a reasonable and peaceful country. While maybe one-tenth of 1 percent of the displaced will come here as refugees—and that is the big controversy—it is the rest of Syria that we need to focus on.

Many of us in the Committee on Foreign Affairs have tried to help those Syrian moderates. For years the administration wouldn’t do it. Then they failed at it.

One element of that failure is that they insisted that those they arm, swear that they wouldn’t wage war against Assad. What reasonable Syrian wouldn’t wage war against Assad? If I was a Syrian, I would be waging war against Assad. So this vetting process has gone crazy and has failed.

Of course we focus on the refugees. We may take a few hundred a month. Let’s look at the risks and compare it to the other risks that we do take. Refugees, yes, have Syrian passports. Let’s look at other passports.

On 9/11 over 3,000 Americans were killed by people with Saudi passports. Governors around this country are recruiting Saudi businessmen to come visit and invest in their States. Since 9/11 the biggest terrorist attack in the United States was committed by Nadal Malik Hasan who killed 13 Americans. He was born in the United States and a major in the United States Army.

In Paris most of those committing these crimes held European passports. They can come to the United States with a Visa Waiver Program. Those same Governors have tourist office in Europe showing them pictures of iconic sites in America they may want to come and visit.

So we have 320 million Americans here who could be radicalized. We have got 13 million European visitors who come here with no vetting. We have a million Middle East, Greater Middle East visitors who come here with modest vetting. Then we have a few hundred people who come here after a 2-year vetting process. Which should we be most concerned about?

General Keane, you pointed out we are not serious about this war. We are not. In World War II we bombed military targets. As you point out, we couldn't have a zero civilian casualty strategy. We bombed oilfields. We are not doing that to ISIS because we want to recover those oilfields in good shape. That is absurd.

Certainly the Iraqi government is not serious. It is paying salaries to people in Mosul. I don't think General De Gaulle was dropping money on occupied France to pay salaries of unemployed French teachers and civil servants.

Of course when \$500 million to \$800 million of Iraqi currency was seized, they didn't print new currency because that would have inconvenienced corrupt politicians in Baghdad. The Iraqi government was installed by the United States. That doesn't mean it is not part of the problem. It is a tool of Iran and an oppressor of Sunnis that recruits for ISIS—that thereby recruits for ISIS.

The Europeans aren't serious. The Danes have a policy that when fighters return they have a welcome and watch program. Obviously certainly because two NATO countries have been attacked, United States and France in different decades, Denmark and others ought to have a policy that if you fight for ISIS or you fight for al-Qaeda, that is a criminal offense.

Finally, we do not study our enemy well, or our adversary and our potential friends well. We have a State Department with experts in every kind of law except Islamic law. We take a few courses at Princeton. We need people who would qualify as doctorates at Al-Azhar in Cairo. Until we have that kind of expertise, we will not understand what drives ISIS.

I think I have expired—used up too much of my time. I will yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair now recognizes Mr. Rohrabacher. I am sorry. I stand corrected, Mr. Smith of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Thank you—

Chairman MCCAUL. Then Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony and for your leadership all three of our distinguished witnesses.

During the conflict in Kosovo I traveled to Stankovic refugee camp in Macedonia, and then was at McGuire Air Force Base to welcome some of the 4,400 people brought there from the United States as refugees.

One of those refugees airlifted to McGuire was Agron Abdullahu, who was apprehended and sent to jail in 2008 for supplying guns and ammunitions to the Fort Dix Five, a group of terrorists who were also sent to prison for plotting to kill American soldiers at the Fort Dix military installation. This after being rescued, housed, fed, and welcomed as a refugee into my home State of New Jersey. Then he worked with these other radical Islamists.

The 9/11 report, last year's report so ably and expertly run by Tom Kean and Lee Hamilton, noted, and I read it. "Today's Rising Terror Threat and the Danger to the United States" points out that the United States remains unappreciative of emerging threats, and talks about how those threats have proliferated.

Today in the *U.K. Express*, Aaron Brown writes a Syrian operative claims that more than 4,000 covert ISIS terrorists have already been smuggled into Western nations already, he says, hidden among the refugees. He also points out that this is the beginning, not the middle, not the end, the beginning of a larger plot to carry out attacks.

First question, more than 4,000 covert ISIS terrorists embedded with refugees. Is that a credible number? Is it more? Less? What are your thoughts on that?

Second, on October 20 I chaired a hearing on the crisis—I chair the Helsinki Commission—a very good hearing. We heard from experts, including the high commissioners, regional representative for the UNHCR who said the spike of Syrian refugees coming to Europe this year is mainly due to three factors, the long-term trends and then the trigger.

One of the long-term trends is loss of hope that there will ever be an end to the war. Second, the fact that so many refugee resources have dwindled to next to nothing.

But the trigger, he said, was the lack of humanitarian aid provided by the international community. And pointed out that the World Food Program had experienced a 30 percent cut, and the people then said they would give up. They have abandoned us. We are going into flight. Of course most of those are young men, predominantly young men that have left.

In your opinion, is the trigger, was the trigger, does it continue to be the lack of humanitarian response? Has that been rectified? What do you think ought to be done to ensure that those resources are available?

I yield back.

Mr. OLSEN. Congressman, on the second question and on the trigger, I mean certainly the scarcity of humanitarian aid must be one of the contributing factors. Consider the numbers that we are talking about. Nine million displaced persons in Syria, 4 million refugees leaving that country. So the numbers are staggering. The scale of the humanitarian crisis is staggering.

On your first question, the number that you cited of 4,000 potentially embedded, I don't really have a sense of whether that is a credible number or not. What I would say is that as a general proposition, as much as we are focusing on the refugee issue, to me from my vantage point having served at the National Counterterrorism Center, the more important question is the foreign fighter one, especially when it comes to the United States.

Again, we are talking about refugees that would come to the United States being an 18-month to 2-year proposition. When right now we know there are in excess of 4,000 Europeans—Westerners who travel to Syria and who are in—have Western passports, have the ability to travel within Europe, have a capability to travel to the United States.

The real risk is the foreign fighter population that Mr. Bergen talked about. I think that is where intelligence resources, law enforcement resources need to be placed because there is a greater degree given the nature of that population. Look, they went to Syria to fight, most of them with ISIS. That is where the greater risk is.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I would add you know on the vetting issue, I am not sure how a database can be created for people that are coming from places, villages, towns throughout Syria that we have no way of checking their arguments, their statements. We know consular affairs people all over the world they have honed that skill to a remarkable degree of expertise. But it is still—we are talking about people that if—may be very well adept at lying, deceiving, and making their way here.

The 4,000 number ought to put an exclamation point about the pause to make sure that if we are going to accept these individuals it is done in a way that is absolutely—you never can say absolute, but to the greatest extent practicable, ensuring that these people are not allowed into this country.

I say that, Mr. Chairman, as an unabashed believer in refugee programs. I have written 2 laws to facilitate refugee protection, including my law created the T visa for trafficking victims. I do believe strongly, as do Members of my side of the aisle and both sides of the aisle, in refugee protection. The Lautenberg amendment was a great effort to ensure that Southeast Asians, Vietnamese in particular.

Soviet jury was the first issue I worked on going back to the year 1981 when I first got elected. So my point is the pause is prudent. I do hope that we can get it right because again, our first priority is to protect Americans.

Yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Mr. Meeks.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First let me just say as a Member of Congress my greatest concern is for the safety of Americans at home and abroad. The recent attacks in Paris have tragically highlighted the need for all free nations to not just be wary of attackers from outside our borders, but of course we need to be wary of attackers within our borders, those home-grown.

Somehow in some of this debate it seems as though individuals because of the failure of intelligence in France by the French, by the way. But that is then put on as it is a failure in intelligence by the President of the United States. Thus far, knock on wood, the President of the United States has protected the people of the United States of America because we have not had that kind of an attack here.

I am thankful to the French now for joining the fight that we have already been in for a long period of time. I wish they were doing that earlier. I am thankful and hope that the rest of our allies join in with us so that we can coordinate collectively to make sure that we fight our common enemy, ISIL.

So it is not just the United States. I think the job of the President of the United States as far as leading this concern is to try to get those who are our allies to contribute their part to this also.

One of the things that we know that shock and awe and getting something done and ending a war in 2 to 3 days as we thought we could do in Iraq does not work. So there is no short-term anything that we can do.

Now, I have been pleased to be quite honest with you because I think—the wisdom of the witnesses that we have had before us and—I have learned a lot just listening to you this morning. So I want to thank our witnesses for your testimony.

Now, one of the areas that I wanted to just to explore before I get into dealing with some of the refugees though is it seems to me as we get involved in this conflict, and this is why it is complicated because you do have to deal with—first thing, I think everybody admits that you cannot resolve this just by the military alone. Is that correct? Military is not just going to resolve this.

So if we are going to get past the military, then we have also got to figure out how we do deal with Turkey and Turkey, of course, has a problem with what—the Kurds who are also involved in this and that is difficult. Russia who is so involved with Syria so in some kind of way they are not irrelevant. We have got to keep—and we have got to figure out how to deal with them.

Iran since they are all part of that also if we are going to deal with the Syria crisis because we still have to deal with the Sunni-Shia issue also if we are going to really try to resolve the problem in Syria.

The Gulf States, they are surely involved in this also, and they have to play a role. The European Union, they have to play a role, and we have got to get them all lined up with all of their various different interests in this area if we are going to resolve the conflict in Syria so that we could make sure that we wipe out the issue of ISIL, none of which can happen overnight. Which is why the President said I don't have time to deal with some of this other stuff because I have got to focus on these difficult issues of trying to figure how to pull this thing together.

So I ask General Keane, with all of these outside—and, you know, an honest—America leading and we can't lead by—you know, we don't have anybody following so you have got to get the individuals to come and work with you, what roles and how do you see the Turks playing in this and the Russians playing in this and the Syrians playing in this and the Gulf States playing in this, as well as our E.U. partners who are all in the area and all where there is this immediate threat of ISIL?

Then in the time that I have on this—on other, the other issue is dealing with, you know—we talk about what I would like to focus us, when you are talking about vetting because I understand that if we don't have and we can't vet someone they are not allowed here. But I think it is more important that the European Union need to make sure that they have a vetting process that works and they talk to one another.

You know, we have got a situation here where—in the brothers in Belgium, the Belgians talked to them and didn't give the information to the French. So there was a miscommunication not with our communication and vetting, with theirs. So if you are talking about how we can help them do theirs, they not—we can talk about

it and so, you know, that is something that we should be talking about.

So I would like to get your opinion on that in the time that I have left.

General KEANE. Well, you know, when you look at the problems we are facing with ISIS and Syria and Iraq, and particularly in Syria, I mean, there can be very thoughtful arguments made on both sides of what to do with this thing. When you look at the whole spectrum of it, I mean, it makes your head hurt, frankly. It is very, very complicated situation. All that said, there are things that we can do and we have got to work on pieces of the problem with a sense of where the strategic outcome should be.

By that I mean the issue really in Syria is the civil war which must be stopped so we can deal with ISIS. All the Sunnis that we need to deal with ISIS are fighting the civil war. That is why the Pentagon's program was so flawed in trying to get Sunnis to fight only for ISIS.

The CIA program, arming and training the Syrian moderates which the President can't talk about because it is Classified, is a very successful program. I can say because reported in an open press, that the TOW missile systems that they have or have actually been decisive in stopping the counter offensive that the Iranians, the Syrians are using, supported by the Russians.

Just as an editorial comment for everybody here, despite Russian airpower, despite Russian fighters, 34 fighters, 16 helicopters, Russian artillery, Russian rocket artillery, Syrian regime on the ground, 2,000 to 3,000 Iranians actually in the fight and planning on leading the fight, that offensive has stalled. The reason they came to Syria is because they believe the regime was in a precarious situation.

So what has to take place here is this civil war has got to stop and the leaders in the region have been telling us this for a long time, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, they are all the players. They know that they cannot go after ISIS as long as that civil war is taking place.

That is how we pull Turkey—they are going to be all-in if we get this civil war to stop. They have been telling us that for 3-plus years. That is our frustration in I think the—going back to the point we have made before that was brought up by a question that our preoccupation with the nuclear deal actually prevented us from bringing the help—bringing the civil war in Syria to a conclusion. That is behind us now.

But the fact is, that is still the issue. So, yes, that is crucial to what we are doing here. Russia, I mean, we are about to make a strategic mistake and Putin is a master at this. Think of this, the only reason why this civil war has been able to go on for 4 years is because of Iranian support for it and the Russians' support for it. In the very beginning, many people in this town were predicting that the Assad regime was going to fall. Remember that? It was saying just a matter of weeks or months. What stopped that from happening? Two things.

One, we didn't help the moderates with the weapons that they wanted so they can continue the momentum, but even more critical than that was that the Iranians were all-in with their IRGC, Revo-

lutionary Guard Force of Quds force, Qassem Soleimani on the ground brought his generals in there; one of them got killed, put thousands of fighters in there, put Iraqi Shia militia in there, 3,000 to 5,000, 5,000 Hezbollah. They were all-in on that. That perpetuated the war. It continued the war.

The Russians all-in perpetuating that war. So this killing that we are talking about, this horror that has been inflicted of 250,000 dead and 11 million people displaced, and refugees running around the world trying to find some escape, no longer waiting in refugee camps because of a sense of hopelessness that they have.

The Russians have all that blood on their hands. They contributed to perpetuating this regime. We are about to get trapped by Putin. He is a smart guy. He is a thug and he is a killer but he is savvy. He is about to trap us. He is trapping us because of the offer of helping with ISIS; yet, he is responsible for this civil war.

I told you why ISIS is in Syria. They are in Syria because of the strategic opportunity that the stalemated civil war gave them to move from a small terrorist organization to this modern evil thing that we are dealing with is a terrorist army.

Putin made a direct contribution to that. Now, cleverly, he is trying to say to us, well, look it, I will help you with your ISIS problem. What he wants to do is have the pressure taken off of him so that the Alawite regime stays in power; that is his goal. If it takes—if I can help you with ISIS and you get off my back about that, that is the direction he is moving. We are about to get trapped by it.

You know, we should—it is a moral absurdity to work with Putin over ISIS given that he and the Iranians provided a denominator for this war to be extended into its fifth year, and we should not do it and we should not fall prey to that trap.

So those are some of the things that have to be considered in this complicated situation.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chair recognizes Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

General, while I have deep respect for you and we have known each other for—over the years and paid attention to your testimony here on various issues, I couldn't disagree with you more and the number of things—points that you have made today.

But first, let me just note, if ISIL is not being hit by the administration—I was in Erbil a week ago and I talked to people on the front lines and there are truckloads of military supplies on the freeway and are not being hit by the United States military, by our drones or by military aircraft. I don't know where you get your information but I can tell you that information came straight from people on the front lines.

Also, we didn't—we haven't been helping—this administration also hasn't even been helping our friends. We haven't been directly supplying to Kurds. We have been hearing over and over again for the last year we have got to help the Kurds and this administration has been dragging its feet just like it dragged its feet try—even to get any type of help to General al-Sisi who saved his country from being taken over by the Muslim Brotherhood, and then we—our—this administration was angry with him for that and ac-

tually make Egypt vulnerable to being taken over by the radical Islamic forces that now threaten the entire region.

So I don't believe that, no, we are not doing militarily what needs to be done. But where do we go in terms of what the issue is today? American citizens, first of all, we say—we ought to handle—there is a problem at home, there are some American citizens who have been engaged in terrorist activity joining these—that is the No. 1 issue that we have heard about today.

Let us declare that any American citizen who joins any Islamic terrorist organization that when that person is arrested—of course, we—they should be arrested immediately when we find that out—that person should be tried for treason for joining that organization. Treason is when you join a company that is out to kill Americans. We need to try—put—arrest and try any American who joins a terrorist organization as a traitor and, thus, he should be found guilty or not guilty, but if found guilty, he should be executed as a traitor.

In terms of people that we want to bring into our country in terms of refugee camps, here again, General, I totally disagree with what you have to say. The bottom line is our policy should be based on what will make America the most secure from any type of terrorist attack. Our fellow Americans' lives are the No. 1 priority, not whether it is going to be sensitive or not to whether the—how the Islamic people or radicals or whoever they are in other parts of the world are going to think about the United States.

Yes, Christians right now, for example, are being targeted throughout the Middle East, the targets of genocide. For us not to prioritize, would put us in the same spot that Mr. Eliot Engel was talking about, in pushing away Jews, because it might upset the Germans or somebody else if we left Jews in at a time when they were being targeted by Adolf Hitler.

Well, your policy is well-known. Let's not prioritize these Christians because it might upset some Muslims some place, is very equivalent of pushing those Jews right into those death camps that Eliot Engel just talked about.

If we are going to be serious here, let's No. 1, if Christians are these people who are the most targeted in that region and everybody I know says that. They are targeted for genocide. They should have the priority when we are trying to give safe haven to people. I don't care if that touches on somebody's sensitivities overseas.

No. 2, we have to be concerned about the safety of the people of the United States. If we are going to bring in people here, at least these Christians wouldn't be potential terrorists in joining up groups that want to commit genocide against them.

Finally, let's just say that when we do bring in these—if we bring in people, we have to be absolutely certain that nobody is going to be committing acts of violence against the people of the United States.

I think by prioritizing and saying, "We are going to put a hold on this for awhile"—and as far as I am concerned, your attitude earlier on, General, was frivolous about this—"We are going to put a hold on it for awhile," we are going to find out what we have to do to ensure that these people coming into our country don't com-

mit the type of acts against Americans the way these terrorists did against the French just a week ago.

That is No. 1. If it means prioritizing and making sure that we do differentiate and say the Christians who are now the most vulnerable are going to be the ones who have priority for safe haven here, let's go for it.

So I am sorry general. I respect you and I know you are a patriot. I just disagree with you very strongly on these points.

General KEANE. Do I get a chance to respond?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I hope so. Yes, sir.

General KEANE. Well, we have this conversation every time you and I talk here in full view of the American people. We always start out by, "I respect you, but—" and then we get it.

[Laughter.]

So this is a pattern of behavior between the two of us. That is okay.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right.

General KEANE. But listen, I am not defending the administration here. I am trying to present an alternative strategy that would be helpful.

But I am saying that when it comes to the Kurds, things have been improved. Talking to them myself. Are they satisfactory? No, is what I said.

I am saying that the convoys—those long convoys with flags waving in the air that we saw on all of our television screens at the beginning of the conflict, a lot of that has gone away.

Has something possibly slipped through because of some mission that they—that did detect it or whatever? Sure. But as a pattern of behavior, that has improved. I am saying the air campaign is unsatisfactory. I have strong feelings about it.

With the refugees. I don't think anyone of us is disagreeing with the Chairman's proposal at the outset, which was, let's bring the Executive branch in. Let's take a look at their plan and make certain that this plan is reasonable and will protect the American people.

I think we are all in agreement on that. You are reacting to my emotion, and this is good, over the fact that we shouldn't be saying the only people we are going to take in are Christians.

I mean, there are Christians here who are coming to America and I suggest they are—certainly, they are welcome. They are Muslims here, which will make up the majority of it because that is what the population pool is. Certainly, they should be welcome as well.

I mean, when we really get down to it, you know, this process that is taking place that Matt laid out, is obviously colored by the fact that we know for a fact there could be terrorists in that group. So it is not like a normal asylum issue that is coming to the United States where we welcome, on average, as you know, that Congress sets the ceiling with the President, is about 70,000 a year.

So is this influx of refugees different from all those others? Yes. I think we are all saying that. Yes it is. If it actually got down to it, I think we know women and children and families probably are less likely to be terrorists if they are undocumented.

If you have got an undocumented 22-year-old standing in front of you and you don't have—you don't know who he is or where he is from, why would you let him in? Just because he wants to come in? I would assume the process would say, that he is at risk. We are not going to accept that risk.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. But nobody is saying to hold all the Muslims back.

Mrs. MILLER [presiding]. Time has expired.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Nobody is saying that.

If the Christians deserve priority, if they are the ones who are most vulnerable and under genocidal threat and to give them priority, to say we shouldn't do that—those women and children, if they are—if they happen to be Christians who we know are targeted, then we can't give—take that into consideration? That is being, frankly, heartless towards Christians in order to curry favor with Muslims, and that is wrong.

Mrs. MILLER. Okay. I thank the gentleman.

We are going to move to the next, the gentleman—the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for your testimony here today. You have raised some incredibly important points about how we start to develop a better strategy for confronting ISIL going forward.

Clearly it is a significant National security threat and challenge and we have got our work cut out for us to turn this situation around because right now I don't assess we are winning this war against ISIL and we have got to develop a much more effective strategy than what we have right now. My fear is it is going to get worse before it gets better.

General Keane, in your testimony, you referenced that one of ISIL's major thrusts is the far abroad, enclosed. However, until very recently, ISIL seemed content to focus on inspiring attacks rather than directing them.

So, for the panel, why the change? Is this the result of the maturing of ISIL? The end of the beginning as Mr. Bergen had described it? Or is it a response to external pressures like ISIL's stalled efforts at expansion in the whole knot?

General KEANE. All of this they have written about from the beginning in terms of their intent in the far abroad to fragment and polarize the population there by acts of terror. Act of violence. They certainly—they actually welcome an over-reaction by police forces. That will certainly aggravate and alienate the Muslim population even more.

As you know, in some of these countries, Muslims lived in enclaves and they are not assimilated into society the way they are in the United States in America just based on meritocracy.

This has always been part of the plan. ISIS is still a young organization. I mean, Baghdadi moved into Syria in 2012. He spent most of that year consolidating the territory that he had and recruiting and training an organization.

Then in 2014, he devoted a large part of his effort to the invasion into Iraq. He had 2 years to build that force and did that very successfully. And he has consolidated that territory in Iraq and also in Syria, largely on the Sunni lands. He surrendered the territory

that the Kurds owned. Mainly because the Kurds had the where with all to take it back from him and he is not making any moves to retake that territory.

Because the territory that he does have in both of those countries gives him the base that he needs to grow the organization and these affiliates that he has. In some of these countries, he is providing direct resources, he is providing training assistance in those countries, something he couldn't do give the invasion in Iraq and the other activities that it was—surrounding, building his organization.

So I think it—yes, it has to do as you suggested, with the maturing of the organization. It is—I think it should be revealing to all of us, despite the fact that we may have taken a town in Iraq like a Tikrit or like Baiji or Sinjar or we took a town in Syria like Kobani.

It is not that strategically important to ISIS for them to be able to do what? To expand into that orange area and to be very disruptive in that yellow area which is where we are now with this organization. So they are defending in Iraq and Syria. I believe, successfully, although they have surrendered territory.

But now, they are making an expansion of ISIS and it is growing. That is done because they are comfortable. They are comfortable with this caliphate and—that they have and they are comfortable with the base of their operations in Syria to be able to project that kind of power.

So we have ISIS right in the face of us, is growing as a global organization. It has a global strategy and we are seeing the execution of it. They have a lot more plans than what we are seeing.

I think also, the comment about the French intelligence. I just wanted to—the challenge is that, you know, Peter and Matt bring out here, is real. We saw that with the French. Think of this. I mean, they knew there was an attack coming. They have had three attacks this year. Charlie Hebdo, the train attack, and now this one.

They were ready. They weren't in a defense crouch. They were in an offensive crouch. They were looking for everything. They have intelligence reach that many of our intelligence agencies do not have in terms of trampling on civil liberties a bit. They have a more aggressive policy in doing that.

So, even with that, even with knowing something else was coming, ISIS was able to man what we call in the military operational security. They were able to plan that operation, put the logistics in place to support it, do the reconnaissance necessary to put that operation together.

Not a large organization to be sure, but build a cell that has the capability to do that and execute the operation.

I mean, they did fail. Their two primary targets were, No. 1, the concert, No. 2, the stadium. They wanted to get in the stadium with three bombers, and the security system did not let that happen, so they blew themselves up outside. Thank God that didn't happen. That was the only failure I think they had.

But that—it just shows you how difficult this is when there is not a lot of communication from al-Qaeda central to a decentralized organization, like we have had in the past. I don't believe we are

going to find, when the French unravels all of this, that there was a lot of communication with ISIS central in Raqqa and this network cell. They were able to maintain that kind of operational security.

I don't think—when we unravel it, probably the French did about as well as they could under the circumstances. They were all-in watching for this thing, and still could not detect it. We should learn something from that. I am sure Director Comey is taking notes on all of it. He obviously has a lot of concerns about it.

Mr. LANGEVIN. That operational security is very troubling. I hope as we peel back the onion in doing the investigation, that we are going to find out how we missed this, or they missed that, and how we can learn from that going forward.

I am troubled, of course, by the technological challenges of going dark, that Director Comey has spoken about, with encryption technology. We have clearly got to get that right balancing privacy and civil liberties. But when you have probable cause with a court order, how do we gain access to those indications so we can better protect ourselves going forward? I know my time is expired.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank the gentleman.

First of all—and the Chair will now recognize herself, my turn in the queue here.

But first of all, just to comment about the truck convoys, particularly those that are coming out of Eastern Syria, taking the crude oil out, talking about the money for the terrorists, just on Sunday, there was an attack, a very effective attack on some of those truck convoys.

I would just point out, because the Air Force has been misguided, in my opinion, on trying to retire the A-10 aircraft—attack aircraft. There have been a number of us that have been pushing back very hard on that. We have been successful so far. I would just point out that the aircraft is being utilized very effectively in theater, are A-10s that are taking those truck convoys out.

I also would like to make a comment. I don't know that I have a question, but—I do have a question, but not on this issue, in regards to the refugees. Because I have sat here this morning, I have listened to a lot of comments about American compassion, and how we need to be more compassionate, and we can't possibly put a pause on this program.

I would just remind, talking about American compassion, the story of two brothers that came to this country, refugees. They came with their families to escape their homeland, the ravages of their homeland. Cute little boys, just darling little boys. They couldn't have possibly been a threat to the United States. They couldn't be anybody that would, you know, would look at radicalization, or what have you. They were here, they were reaping the awards at the American taxpayer dollars. They were here as we were supporting them.

They were here due to the compassion, taking advantage of the compassion of the American people. How did they repay us for those dollars and that support and that compassion? They placed two pressure-cooker bombs at the end of the Boston Marathon, and blew up innocents there, including an 8-year-old boy who was

blown to bits. So I would just mention that, talking about American compassion.

I also think, regarding the refugees, as we look, I was very interested to hear about the average age of the fighters, foreign fighters, et cetera. But really, as I sort-of look at the media, looking at all of these refugees who are leaving Syria—and believe me, I have compassion—but for the young people that are leaving their homeland, literally, isn't America enabling what should be there, an age group, a demographic that should be in Syria, hopefully in a safe area, a safe zone, paid for by compassionate countries, including the Saudis and the Gulf states, et cetera, to leave them there?

That is the demographic that should be in that country to help protect their own homeland. Instead of that, we are helping to get them to leave that. So I think that we certainly should have a pause on the refugee program. I also will just make one other note on that.

Back in January, myself, Chairman McCaul, and Peter King, sent a letter to Susan Rice, in which we said—I will just read one—we said, “The resettlement of a high number—such a high number of Syrian refugees raises serious National security concerns.” We said, “We are concerned about the possibility of groups like ISIS and ISIL exploiting the refugee resettlement process to mask the deployment of operatives into the West.”

Then we got a response in February from the administration basically patting us on the head saying, “Don't worry about that. We have got it covered. We have a very extensive rigorous system,” they said, “multilayered, biometric, and biographic screening,” which is obviously impossible. I don't know how you are going to have biographic and biometric screening available to do. Without objection, I will place those 2 letters into the record.

[The information follows:]

LETTER SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

January 28, 2015.

The Honorable SUSAN RICE,

Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, The White House.

DEAR DR. RICE: It is our understanding that the State Department plans to accelerate its efforts to admit Syrian refugees into the United States. In December, Assistant Secretary of State Anne Richard stated that she expected admissions from Syria “to surge in 2015 and beyond,” and we have since received reports that the Department is planning to accept tens of thousands of Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.

The resettlement of such a high number of Syrian refugees raises serious National security concerns. The United States has a proud history of welcoming refugees from all over the world; however, the Syrian conflict is a special case. Syria is currently home to the largest convergence of Islamist terrorists in world history, surpassing even the Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s. The country has become a safe haven for tens of thousands of extremist fighters, including more than 20,000 foreign fighters who have flocked to the region. Many of these militant fanatics are committed to attacking the United States and its allies and have declared their intent to do so.

Screening these refugees is not a task to be taken lightly. As we saw with previous Iraqi refugees—some of whom were initially admitted to the United States and subsequently found to have ties to al-Qaeda—the lack of a thorough security screening process can result in individuals with terrorist ties exploiting the refugee program to resettle in the U.S. homeland. Such failures in the initial vetting process ultimately become a substantial burden to our law enforcement agencies, which are then responsible for ensuring admitted individuals do not pose a threat to our country.

We are concerned about the possibility of groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) exploiting the refugee resettlement process to mask the deployment of operatives into the West. Already we have seen signs that extremists may be working to take advantage of refugee routes into Europe and elsewhere, and we must assiduously avoid exposing ourselves to the same vulnerabilities. The continued civil war and destabilization in Syria undeniably make it more difficult to acquire the information needed to conduct reliable threat assessments on specific refugees, which is why extra caution is necessary.

The United States has historically taken a leading role in refugee resettlement and humanitarian protections. But we cannot allow the refugee process to become a backdoor for jihadists. Accordingly, our Committee wants to make sure the Administration is weighing the Syrian resettlement question with the utmost concern for the safety of the American people and the long-term security of the U.S. Homeland. Please provide the Committee with a detailed description of the number of Syrian refugees the United States expects to resettle, the timeline for resettlement over the next two years, and an overview of how the interagency will enhance security measures within the vetting process. We further request that you direct the relevant interagency parties involved with this issue, including those copied on this letter, to brief the Committee and its Members at their earliest availability.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL,
Chairman.

PETER T. KING,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence.

CANDICE S. MILLER,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security.

LETTER SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

February 24, 2015.

The Honorable MICHAEL T. MCCAUL,
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives, United States Department of State, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter of January 28 to National Security Advisor Susan Rice regarding the Administration's program to admit Syrian refugees to the United States. We have been asked to reply on her behalf.

First, we appreciate your recognition of our nation's proud history of welcoming refugees from all over the world. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has historically enjoyed broad bipartisan Congressional support and your leadership will be vital to continuing this record.

For decades, U.S. communities have welcomed refugees fleeing the world's most dangerous and desperate situations. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has provided a new start to more than three million vulnerable refugees in the period since 1975, unlocking human potential that might otherwise have been squandered. President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry are determined to ensure that this life-saving and life-changing program meets the highest security standards, including in the admission of Syrian refugees.

Reports of the intended admission of tens of thousands of Syrian refugees by the end of 2016 are incorrect. The United States anticipates admitting 1,000–2,000 Syrian refugees for permanent resettlement in Fiscal Year 2015 and a somewhat higher number, though still in the low thousands, in Fiscal Year 2016. Throughout, our emphasis will be on the most vulnerable—particularly female-headed households, children, survivors of torture, and those with severe medical conditions.

In light of the nearly four million Syrian refugees currently hosted in neighboring countries, these figures represent a very modest but still important contribution to the global effort to address this crisis. The refugee population we focus on often has special needs, which can heighten the burden on host countries. U.S. leadership has also been instrumental in securing commitments from 25 other states to consider resettling Syrian refugees.

As Administration officials have testified before yours and other Congressional committees, the security screening of refugee applicants for U.S. admissions is an utmost priority. Every refugee under consideration for U.S. admission undergoes rigorous, multi-layered biometric and biographic screening involving multiple intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, Department of Homeland Security

and Department of Defense, to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country. Indeed, applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program are currently subject to more security checks than any other category of traveler to the United States.@

The Administration has taken a number of steps in recent years to further intensify refugee screening, significantly informed by the long-standing program for Iraqi refugees, as discussed in your letter. Our Syrian screening effort has greatly benefited from the lessons of the Iraqi admissions experience and, mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrians will undergo additional screenings, the details of which we are happy to share in a classified setting.

Since 2009, the Administration has provided numerous refugee security screening briefings and we stand ready to provide additional briefings at your convenience.

Thank you for your leadership on this matter, which is both vital to the security of the homeland as well as instrumental to our nation's continued humanitarian leadership.

Sincerely,

JULIA FRIFIELD,
Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs.

Mrs. MILLER. My question to the witnesses is regarding the Visa Waiver Program, of which I have a bill, and I am hopeful that we are going to take that up as soon as we can. I actually chair the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security. We have had numerous hearings about the Visa Waiver Program, and whether or not, with the 38 countries that are currently participating, and if they are not to our comfort zone and our degree of confidence, really giving us, through the information protocols, the information, the traveler information that we think we need, then we can think about who these countries are.

We set it up in 1986 because we wanted to expedite tourism. Well, this is not 1986. As you think really about the outer ring of border security now, and the kinds of things we should be doing, whether that is preclearance, or certainly with Visa Waiver, 38 countries—France, Germany, Belgium, et cetera—I mean, that in my mind is even a bigger concern, way bigger concern, than the refugees, really, because you see that you have a huge—a much higher proportion of foreign fighters that are coming back into these countries in Europe before they come into America.

So I just would like to ask the witnesses what they think about our current Visa Waiver Program, and what we need to secure America.

Mr. OLSEN. So absolutely, this is an area for Congressional oversight. How does this program work? Is the information being shared under the program as it was intended to be? I agree with you wholeheartedly, as I said earlier.

The issue, from the perspective, I think, of U.S. National security and homeland security, should be more focused on the foreign fighter population than on the refugee. The foreign fighter population, they have already demonstrated a commitment, right, to go to Syria and fight, 4,000-plus from Western Europe, or at least from the West. Many of those from these Visa Waiver countries.

Now, I think it is important to find out, as you know, the Visa Waiver Program is not a free pass. There is an information vetting that takes place. The question is, are the protocols, as you point out, followed? Is that information being shared between the United States and these countries? So it is a potential vulnerability, and I think an appropriate area for the oversight of your committee.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you. Anyone else before we—

General KEANE. I agree with Matt. I mean, times have changed. We need to review. It makes sense for the Congress to dig into it.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am a member, a co-chair of the French Caucus, and I want to use this opportunity to again underscore the heartbreak all of us have with their losses. It is just made us more resolute, these committees, to move forward, and also say that the spirit of Boston strong—is Paris strong right here in this Congress.

I am also Members of both of these, I am a Member of both of these committees, and have seen that the work we do, the bipartisan work that we do in both committees, has been constructed in the past, and will be constructed in the future. I saw in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombing that the work this committee did resulted in changes that have made our country more secure.

Along those lines, a small group of us did go to look at the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and their travel just a few months ago. We went to France, we met with the officials there who are indeed very well-skilled and aggressive. But we met with Belgian officials, we met with NATO officials, we met with people from Berlin, and we met with officials from the Istanbul airport, as well as going to Iraq.

We released the report today along those lines that I think is very important. But I am going to focus on one area of that report, because of the time limits of this hearing. You know, we are looking at so many issues that are daunting, seemingly overwhelming in this fight against terrorism and ISIS.

But there is one area that I think that we can move on immediately, and have immediate safeguards, not just globally, but here in the United States as well, and that is the issue that is highlighted in the report, the series of issues. I will just name a few of them. But one of them clearly is the delay in dealing with the issue of air safety and air travel. Passenger name records, this has been languishing in the European Union now for a couple of years.

What we do routinely to cross-reference lists of passengers against potential terrorists, they are not doing in a comprehensive way at all in Europe, where there is such an open portal. The report even states its most alarming failure of European states is to screen their own citizens against terrorist watch lists.

Another area is their lack of information sharing that we saw that really is another weakness, not just globally, but back here at home. It was termed as ad hoc, intermittent, incomplete. It detailed a weak and patchwork system that exists, dealing with Interpol, sharing that information that is so vital.

Then dealing with their border issues, which is another issue that came about, has been highlighted in the tragedy of Paris, is the lack of external border security in Europe, and how they are not dealing with that. It reveals border guards reportedly screen only 30 percent of E.U. passports for fraud when citizens go in and go out of the Schengen zone.

So looking at these issues, and looking at the lack of security there, and things that can be corrected, things we do here in the

United States and other countries, I want you to talk, if you could, about the risk that these gaps really present, not only to Europe, not only globally, but here in the United States as well, if you could.

Mr. OLSEN. Well, I really couldn't agree more. I haven't had a chance to review the committee's report, but those issues that you identified—the air safety, information sharing, external border control—these are issues that we have dealt with in the United States, certainly since 9/11. Huge investment in all these areas. Coming from the National Counterterrorism Center, our jobs largely revolved around pulling data together. Sharing that information. Enabling the watchlisting to take place with regard to transportation safety and airline safety.

We have worked closely, I know over the last several years, with our European partners to try to instill the importance of adopting some of these best practices. I think there is still lagging behind as you suggest. I also would suggest that this does create a vulnerability. Not just obviously in Europe but also here in the United States because of the ease of travel between Europe and the United States. So it is something that we need to redouble our efforts on in working with our European allies.

Mr. KEATING. Yes, Mr. Bergen.

Mr. BERGEN. Another kind is, what happened to Sharm el-Sheikh? I mean, clearly it was an airport worker who got the bomb on the plane and there are 200 airports around the world where there are U.S.-bound flights. You know, the people working these airports are not being screened appropriately. I will give you one concrete example.

A British Airways employee was in touch with Anwar al-Awlaki, the leader of al-Qaeda in Yemen, in 2011 was planning to get a bomb on an American plane. Luckily he was arrested. But you can assume that there are other cases out there, airport employees in some of these 200 airports who have some animus against the United States or could be bribed or in some way induced to put a bomb on a plane.

So Sharm el-Sheikh demonstrates a huge gap that needs to be closed.

Mr. KEATING. General.

General KEANE. It is really beyond my expertise Mr. Congressman. I am not dodging the question. I just—all I have been giving you is opinion.

Mr. KEATING. Yes. I think honestly, I will close with what you are saying. I don't think you need a great deal of expertise on these series of issues. It is common sense. These delays and lack of moving forward presents great risks here at home as well. If we are going to work as a coalition we have to work together.

There are, to be fair, there are European countries, like France, that are sharing information, dealing with this. But we are only strong as our weakest link. I yield back.

Mrs. MILLER. Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Marino.

Mr. MARINO. Thank you. Mr. Olsen. In 2011, Chairman King held a series of hearings on the radicalization of Muslim Americans. The committee released several findings, including, "There is

a need to confront the Islamist ideology driving radicalization. There is not enough Muslim-American community cooperation with law enforcement. The terrorist threat to military is on the rise. Political correctness continues to stifle the military's ability to counter the threat."

What steps, if any, has the administration taken in regards to these findings and in your opinion, are these issues still evident today in the radicalization of Americans?

Mr. OLSEN. The challenge that we face with ISIS now, in terms of its propaganda and its really unprecedented use of social media platforms to mobilize, recruit, radicalize young people in the United States. It highlights the challenge that you identify in your question. How does the United States—what has the United States been able to do to help counter that message in order to really—

Mr. MARINO. But has the administration?

Mr. OLSEN. Absolutely. So, over the last several years, and we were part of this effort at the National Counterterrorism Center, working closely with the FBI, working with the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, taking a number of steps to counter this message.

But, one of the key parts of it is to work closely with neighborhoods and communities to make sure that they have the information to inform their own families about the way—about the dangers of on-line radicalization.

Train police officers to identify the signs of radicalization so when they see an individual who may be moving in that direction, these local police departments. Remember, out of—in the United States the vast majority of our people on the front line are not the FBI agents but the local police departments and firefighters are going to be the first to see someone going down as fast as—putting money into training these individuals.

But the problem, more to your question, is one that is ultimately is going to require neighborhoods, communities to solve, right? We are talking about working with Muslim communities, not making them part of the problem. So that has to be a big part of the solution.

Mr. MARINO. I agree with you on all that but is the administration doing that?

Mr. OLSEN. Yes.

Mr. MARINO. Is it doing it to an efficient level?

Mr. OLSEN. I think it—I think part of the—I think it is—I think it could do more and I think part of the problem is resources.

Mr. MARINO. All right. General, I am going to skip right to the "but" part, okay? Let's cut to the chase here. The President does not want to be responsible for civilian deaths. He has had opportunities to arm Iraqis and Syrian men but chose not to.

He constantly says ISIS is contained. Now, unless I am not grasping something here, the President has turned his back on this disaster. Do you truly believe that one person, i.e. the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, can influence the President to change his position and reverse his policies when his inept foreign policy advisers have controlled the President since Day 1?

General KEANE. I honestly don't know. Obviously we have been frustrated with this policy and dealing with ISIS from the outset.

I am absolutely convinced that the decision was made to provide the minimum amount of resources. I think that the President and the team around him was making a bet that this thing would not really get worse. They never used the word contain. They used the word degrade and then destroy and they changed that to defeat which is a better military term than destroy.

I think they were just hoping that their minimal policies of involvement here would keep a lid on this thing.

Mr. MARINO. Okay.

General KEANE. But it hasn't and that is the reality of it. Now, your question is: Given what has taken place, will the President make substantive change to get a decisive result? I doubt it, to be frank.

Mr. MARINO. I do too. I am going to get to my next question here on state really. I agree with Chairman McCaul on stopping the refugees from coming into the country at this point. But nevertheless and I agree with the Chairwoman wholeheartedly. If that comes to be, why would we not stop men, physically healthy men, from 18 years of age to 50, to say, you go back. You defend your country. Now, we have to make some changes as far as what we supply them with before we have Americans do it. Can you give me a response?

Anyone on that? Do you have an opinion about that?

General KEANE. Well, I do believe that, at least when it pertains to Syria, when I saw a lot of the—who was part of the migration. I am assuming a certain percentage of that is Syrian. You know, all the films that we have all seen. I think the expats who were trying to determine what that pool is. I think Syrians represent about a 30 percent of it. There are a lot of young people there.

I do know for a fact because we tracked the Syrian military. The Syrian military used to be about 220,000. Now, it is about a 100,000. They have a high desertion rate. They have low morale. Their equipment isn't very good. So, some of those young people are—don't want to join the Syrian military and they are leaving because they want a better way of life.

I would rather have them join the Syrian opposition for us to deal with that. Going back to the basic question, we have said this before. I mean, if we have a documented youngster in front of us and he is part of this pool that we are looking at and we have no evidence that would assure us that he is not involved somehow, then I don't know why we would take him.

I mean, I will leave that up to the experts that are dealing with it. But on the surface of it, just using some common sense, I think that is the kind of common sense we have to have in working through this thing.

Mr. MARINO. Yes, but times have changed at this point. We just cannot have our doors open under these circumstances. I would rather protect Americans before anybody else. With that, I yield back.

Thank you Chairman.

Mrs. MILLER. Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Cicilline.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you Madam Chair and thank the Chairman and the Ranking Members for calling this very timely hearing. I thank the witnesses for their very useful testimony.

I want to begin with—you know, I think, I appreciate the witnesses and in particular your attention to our refugee policy and how it reflects our values and frankly what a change in that policy would mean in terms of ISIS's ability to recruit and to continue to engage in terror around the world.

So I want to first ask whether or not any of the witnesses think there are improvements or adjustments that should be made to the existing, sort-of new policy that you mentioned Mr. Olsen.

Are there things that we should do in addition to this very comprehensive vetting, multi-agency, multi-layered process that you think are worth considering at this point?

Mr. OLSEN. You know, I don't know of anything off-hand to be perfectly frank. I—you know, I think—I assume that the professionals that are responsible for this program are doing everything that they think is prudent.

The one issue and this has been highlighted before and it actually cuts against the program, which is the lack of intelligence in some case, about these individuals. That is an issue. As you look at somebody, if you don't have good intelligence coming out of Syria, it is going to be harder to make some of these judgments.

So, the one thing I would say in response to your question is, if we—the more we can do to collect intelligence, the better our vetting process is going to be.

Mr. CICILLINE. Anyone else?

Mr. BERGEN. Yes. I mean, an observation here. We have taken 2,200 refugees. I have seen reports that 2 percent of them were military aged males, so that is 44 people. Given the far how desperate these people are, could you imagine a situation where you gave people who did come in some form of probationary release and some sort of supervised level of supervision that most refugees don't have.

I mean, I think people are desperate to come here and they would basically agree to that if that was something that was seen as desirable. But the point is that very few military-aged males are being lead in under this program.

By the way, when there has been a deadly jihadist terrorist attack in the United States, it is by an American citizen or resident. The Soni brothers came to this country as refugees 14 years before they did the attack and they were—one was an American citizen and one was an American resident. So we should keep that in perspective.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

General KEANE. I don't have anything to add to that.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, general. In part of the briefing materials that we received from the committee, it reveals that there are 40 Americans that have returned home to the United States after traveling to Syria and engaging with or pledging allegiance to jihadist groups. But that only 5 had been arrested.

I am curious to hear. If you could give us some assessments to why that is. Is simply engaging with a jihadist group. Shouldn't that, if it is not already, be a crime? If it is sufficient to DOJ, the

additional authority. Does Congress need to take some action? Why is that those individuals that have gone to Syria returned after engaging or pledging allegiance to jihadist groups are not?

Mr. BERGEN. That is a slight misunderstanding, sir. The 40 that have returned, as Director Clapper said in March publicly, that many of them had gone for humanitarian purposes. Anybody that has been determined to be associated with a jihadi group, and that includes groups other than ISIS, has been arrested.

Mr. CICILLINE. All of them?

Mr. BERGEN. Except in one exception. There was one—there was a Floridian, a guy called Mohammad Abu-Salha. He worked for al-Qaeda. He came here. He lived in this country. He went back to Syria and conducted a suicide attack.

There is one other person associated with ISIS who had some plot potentially to attack a military base in Texas. He has also been arrested.

So the 40 number is people who came back, most of whom were just there for humanitarian purposes.

Mr. CICILLINE. I think people would be very interested to hear, as we learn that these individuals in France were at least identified, or some of them were known or identified to authorities there, but either were lost or were not tracked. Can you in this sort of a setting provide some assurance as to what individuals who come back from Syria that are of interest to the U.S. Government are either tracked or closely monitored in the way that maybe did not occur in France?

Mr. OLSEN. My understanding is that the FBI, and I have seen this first-hand, devotes an enormous amount of resources to tracking an individual they can identify who has traveled, tracking them through surveillance, through electronic surveillance, through other means.

What I think has—and the French are quite good at counterterrorism. The difference really is numbers. The European services are essentially overwhelmed by the numbers. They don't have the level of resources placed into their counterterrorism efforts as we do in the United States.

But the number of foreign fighters returning when you think of is just a different scale. It is a different order of magnitude. Four thousand plus versus 200 or so here who have left. So that just creates a very different situation.

Mr. CICILLINE. General, I just have a couple of seconds left. If you could just expand a little bit upon the argument you made about our refusal—our change in policy with respect to refugees fleeing the violence in the Syrian civil war, how that might actually advance the cause of ISIS and provide them with an opportunity to recruit and to use that on social media. Could you explain a little bit of that?

General KEANE. Yes. You mean the—I mean if we just summarily rejected them?

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes.

General KEANE. Yes. Certainly.

What that does is provides them—it falls right into their sweet spot in terms of the argument that they are making that Muslims are being alienated, that they have just grievances against the host

countries that they are living in. These are the people that they are seeking to bring to the movement, to radicalize them, to provide them with some inspiration to, as mostly second-generation youngsters, to do something about their life, to have a sense of purpose, to address the grievances in a radicalized, violent way.

These things will happen without—whether we say yes or no to this policy change or not. But all it would do, in my mind, because it is America and everything we say and do gets known pretty quickly around the world, that they would just—they would exploit it. They would say see, even America, they have this problem you know with Muslims.

I am pretty confident that that is not what we are going to do. The people in this room that I think are on the right path you know to let's take a look and make sure, given we have a change in the circumstance, that we do believe that people may in fact be infiltrating the refugees. Let's put together a program that is prudent and reasonable to safeguard the American people. I think we can do that.

Mrs. MILLER. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank the Chair and I yield back.

Mrs. MILLER. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Salmon.

Mr. SALMON. Thank you.

Mr. Olsen, in your opinion, why is Saudi Arabia not taking any of these refugees?

Mr. OLSEN. I don't have a view on that. I don't know—

Mr. SALMON. Anybody?

Mr. OLSEN. I don't know that they are or not—

Mr. SALMON. I think it is just quite odd, given the fact that they have so much vested interest in the outcome of this conflict that they are refusing to take any refugees. Does anybody have an opinion on that?

General KEANE. Yes. I agree with you. I mean just in asking the question you are troubled by it. I think all of us are troubled by it.

Here is one of the things that has happened. I mean the 4 million refugees that currently exist in the region, they are in Lebanon. They are in Turkey and they are in Jordan. Those countries are all burdened by this.

Mr. SALMON. Agree.

General KEANE. One of the things we can do is leverage Saudi Arabia and other countries to at a minimum to help increase the support, the financial support for that.

What has happened and I think you can appreciate this. I mean, many here have been to refugee camps and you understand the challenge of living in a refugee camp. When it gets to be 4-plus years and you don't see an end to the conflict that is in your country, there is this sense of hopelessness.

I think once it was established that there really was an alternative life someplace else, not a temporary one, a complete life reversal. They realized that when some exfiltrated into Europe then those floodgates opened.

We have lost a lot of our influence with our Sunni allies in the region over this nuclear deal. We have two issues. No. 1, what that

did. No. 2, in terms of losing leverage with them. Second, they don't believe that we are prosecuting this war properly.

Mr. SALMON. Right.

General KEANE. That is the second reason.

Let me give you another example of how far this has gone. There are four countries that are buying arms from Russia now. I talked to 2 of the officials in those 4 countries.

This is Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, and Egypt. In Egypt the Russians actually have training assistants working against ISIS helping them do it, a role that we have traditionally had for now for 30 years.

So I asked the officials, why are you buying Russian equipment? Do you have some fascination about Russian equipment? I sort-of knew what the answer was, but I wanted him to tell me.

He said no, we normally buy American. We normally buy selected European equipment. We are buying Russian equipment not because we want the equipment, but because we want the relationship.

Mr. SALMON. You know I agree—

General KEANE. So that is what has happened to us. This, the influence we had in that region among those Sunni states was considerable. They do not find us reliable.

They actually do not trust us, and that is a difficult word to say. But that is a word that they use. We don't have the leverage to do some of the things that we want them to do humanitarian-wise.

Mr. SALMON. I agree that I think a lot of it is because we bungled this thing from the get-go in the region with ISIS. I have 3 questions, general. I am going to address them all to you and I am going to get them out there.

First of all, by not going all-in, as you have suggested—and by the way, I agree exactly with you that the Congress needs to weigh in a lot more on this issue and that we should address an AUMF. I agree with you on both counts.

By not going all-in to win, are we making the 50 troops that are committed to the region more vulnerable? That is my first question.

The second one, are you convinced that the administration is utilizing senior military leaders' best advice on this strategy?

Then finally, are we losing a valuable asset by bombing ISIS individuals and targets instead of capturing ISIS leadership in order to gain intelligence?

Those are my 3 questions.

General KEANE. Yes. In terms of our soft guys you are talking about in Syria, no, I think they will be fine. Not to—not a risk associated with that.

I don't know what is happening and why we made this announcement. These guys have been there doing this kind of work for some time. Maybe we just want to take credit for something that in the past had been Classified, but obviously it is no longer.

They have had some impact on the Syrian Kurds and on the small group of Sunni Arabs that are in that area. They were instrumental in helping to take back that territory.

If I had a map here, if you look at the border from the Euphrates River Valley where it enters from Turkey into Syria all the way to

the Iraq border, that border is now cleaned of ISIS. That is obviously Kurdish territory.

Our people that were there helped to facilitate that and the planning in how to do that, and also facilitated the use of air power. That air power is much more effective.

They are very good at taking care of themselves and I am confident they will be okay. What we need is a lot more. Obviously that number is a very small number, regardless of what the mission is.

In terms of capturing, this is something we did routinely in Iraq and Afghanistan. You know the night that bin Laden went down in Pakistan I think we had 8 to 9 hits that night in Pakistan, which were usually routine, to go in and first and foremost always in Afghanistan, and we do the same thing in Iraq, is to try to capture.

If we couldn't capture then because there was a threat you know to the people that were conducting the attack, then they had to kill. But in most of those operations we got so good at it that on 85 percent of those operations in the last couple of years of it no shots were ever fired because we were able to achieve so much surprise.

What that does for us, it was an explosion of intelligence value because you are talking about leaders. They have huge value. What they have on them, but more importantly what we can get from their head when we start talking to them. It was incredibly valuable to us.

Largely we are not doing that here. I think it is the—I think they have some of the—we got to take the gloves off of it. I think they are shackled because of the increased risk of the operation, et cetera.

But that is a very important part of what our—what we should be dealing with. High-value targets, is the term that we use to describe that. We should get back to capturing more than we kill.

The problem we have here, and I think you know it, is the administration has held back our Special Operation Forces from doing operations where they are on the ground routinely doing these kind of missions. So to capture somebody you got to be in the building to capture them.

If you know there are bad guys in a building then you can use a drone to kill them. That is what we are doing. Or if they are in a car, we are hitting them with a drone. That has become the preferable way to deal with a high-value target in Syria or Iraq. That was not the preferable way we dealt with it in Afghanistan or Iraq when we were there the first time. The way we dealt with it is to try to capture them. That should change.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Bera.

Mr. BERA. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. As with everyone on this committee, and throughout the country, our thoughts and prayers go to the victims of these heinous attacks in Paris. But it is that reminder that we are in this long conflict and war against terror. This is—make no underestimation—this is a long haul fighting against these terrorists who want to hurt us and want to kill us.

My question is going to be directed to Mr. Bergen. You know, this is much more than just a traditional ground war, ground operation. This is counterintelligence, counterterrorism. We can, and have been, successful killing ISIS fighters in Syria. I believe the number is we have killed over 10,000 fighters.

But the problem is we are losing the recruitment war. We are losing the propaganda war. It is my belief—and I brought this up in committee previously—that they are using the tools of the internet, social media, et cetera, to recruit foreigners to continue to replace these individuals. If we don't win that battle on the front, we can kill them in Syria, but if they can continue to replace these fighters, that is a bigger threat. Because once they are there, if they are U.S. citizens, if they are European citizens, it is a very time-consuming, difficult task to prevent them from coming back.

Mr. Bergen, what would your recommendations be, your assessment on that propaganda war, on whether we are doing enough on the front end to prevent these recruits, so we don't have to fight them on the back end?

Mr. BERGEN. I agree with that assessment, because estimates of 10,000 fighters being killed, and the estimates of 1,000 foreign fighters coming in every month, I mean, sort of a stalemate in terms of recruitment.

You know, I think one thing that is useful is social pressure on social media companies. So every social media company—a lot of these immature companies, recently born, they tend to have—they don't want the Government telling them what to do, kind of an ideological frame.

We have seen the Facebook was quite effective in enforcing its own terms of use. The terms of use of these companies are—you can't put material on your site that solicits for acts of violence. So all they have to do is enforce their own terms of use. We saw Twitter was initially reluctant, and now is beginning to do that.

So, you know, it is not just the government by fiat saying you have got to do that, it is also just sort of social pressure. That will be pretty effective, because if the violent and Jihadi content doesn't exist, then it is not going to incite people to be recruited. So I think there is something to be said. Hearings like this, does it make this kind of clear that this is something that these companies should be doing?

Then there—then it becomes a harder issue with this question. ISIS is telling people to use TOR, which is the darknet. It is instructing people to use Android phones, which are the most secure phones. It is instructing the U.K.—WhatsApp and these other encrypted anonymized applications.

How do you deal with that? I just don't know. It is such an observation, but it is happening. Once we have identified the problem, then we can start having a conversation about what to do with it. But even if the United States Government said all these companies should basically allow a back door, that doesn't—there is an application called Telegram which is based in Germany. ISIS is using that very heavily.

So even if we do say to all tech companies, "You have to put a back door in," that doesn't prevent other companies around the world from just going ahead and doing their own thing.

Mr. BERA. Well, Mr. Bergen, you have identified some of the challenges that we have. So we know what we are facing, we know the challenges, and we know places where we are losing, and they are winning on this recruitment war. We have to double down. There is an urgency of now, because we can fight them over there, and we should fight them over there, and kill them over there, and keep them over there in Syria.

But they are also using these tools of communication to recruit individuals who want to harm us right here. If we are not using everything with our means to prevent that, we are going to be attacked, and that is a problem. That is a concern I have with the administration, that we are not doing enough on that front.

General Keane, you would agree with the assessment that this is a long-term engagement. This is a long-term battle against terror that is not a traditional ground campaign. Anyone who thinks this is a traditional ground war, where we are going to send 50,000 troops in, is mistaken.

General KEANE. I agree with this. I mean, I think we are involved in a multigenerational struggle with radical Islam. I think it dominates—it will dominate the first half of this century, much like communist ideology dominated the latter part of the 20th Century.

You know, what is sad, in my judgment, is that—and frustrating—you know, we are 14 years from 9/11, and we have never had a comprehensive strategy to deal with the entire rubric of what radical Islam is. It is far too long after 9/11 to still, through two Presidents, a Republican and Democratic one, that we have not formed the kind of political and military alliances that we did to deal with communist ideology. We should have regional global alliances to deal with this.

In terms of the long-term nature of radical Islam, its ideology, et cetera, this is not something we can do from America. This is the people who are dealing with this directly have to be a part of all of that. ISIS, however, and what it represents in Syria and Iraq, that is a problem we can handle much more in the near term.

There will be another ISIS to be sure if we don't do the big issue. But that is something that we can deal with, and should deal with, and move with a sense of urgency, and a sense of resolve and commitment to do that. Don't get trapped into the fact that—and I believe this is an error the President has made—that, well, this is going to take multi-years to solve.

The fact of the matter, think of it this way: ISIS is—what differentiates ISIS from any other terrorist organization we have dealt with, is that they own territory. From that territory, they are able to do all these other things that we are concerned about. But the fact that they own territory is also their greatest vulnerability. Owning territory for ISIS is no different than Germans owning territory, the Japanese, the Koreans. You can physically take it away from them.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you. The Chair will advise, before I recognize the next Member, we are going to be voting in about 10 minutes, and we still have several people to ask questions here, so if we could stay to the 5-minute rule as closely as we can. The Chair would recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Barletta.

Mr. BARLETTA. Thank you, Madam Chair. The 9/11 Commission report, which I talk about often, usually carry it with me to Homeland Security meetings, that report, and those recommendations, the Congress, they made it very clear. By the way, Congress passed those recommendations, and the President signed them. I think we have ignored a lot of those recommendations that were in there.

But it made it very clear that terrorists want two things; they want to enter the United States, and they want to be able to remain there until they carry out their mission. They are not going to hesitate to take advantage of any distinct weaknesses that we have in our immigration system to get here, which is why I have always called for a full implementation of the biometric entry and exit, which was a recommendation in that report, so that we know not only who came into the country, but we know whether or not they have left or not.

This committee and Homeland, we have heard from National security experts who have testified that we have no ability to screen individuals in Syria. We have no credible partners. There is no system in place to gather credible evidence.

We also have to look into fixing our Visa Waiver Program. There are 38 countries that are members of the Visa Waiver Program. Citizens of those 38 countries can visit for up to 90 days. They don't have to obtain a visa. They don't have to undergo an in-person interview. Again, remembering that terrorists want to enter, and then they want to be able to stay.

Couple this with the visa overstay situation. I see that we have a real problem. Nearly 50 percent of people who are in the country illegally, they can cross a border illegally. They come on a visa and disappear. We can't find them.

The Islamic State has promised to attack us. They said American blood is the best blood, and that they will taste it soon. I believe them. So given that we don't know who they are, we can't screen them properly, we know that one of the Paris attackers came in as a refugee, so we believe, and that the President is insisting on admitting 10,000 more Syrian refugees, I would like each of you to answer, how can we be assured and assure the American people that there won't be ISIS fighters hidden among the refugees coming into this country? How do we separate salt from sugar?

I understand the refugee program is a great program to bring people here. But how do we separate the salt from the sugar? How do we reassure the American people, without a screening process in place in Syria? General Keane.

General KEANE. Well, I think Director Olsen gave us the best explanation of that entire process. You may not have been here for that, but he took us through what that is; an 18-month process of screening, which gives you, I think, reasonable assurances that someone is not here for the wrong reason, but doesn't give you perfect assurances. That, I think, is likely impossible.

Mr. BARLETTA. Excuse me. But isn't it different in Syria than it is in other—where are the records? Assad is not going to share any information with us. So the screening process in Syria, I wasn't here for that, so maybe you can enlighten me. Would the process be the same in Syria as it is somewhere else, when we don't have

a credible system in place? We don't have a partner in place to share information. Where would we be getting the records from?

Mr. OLSEN. Yes. Well, the process is the same. In fact, the process has been augmented since—over the last several years. We have learned a lot from the process of vetting Iraqi refugees. So the process now does include all the database checks from the intelligence community, the FBI, the Department of Defense. It includes interviews, actual in-person interviews. It includes the collection of biometric—

Mr. BARLETTA. Nobody is going to admit in an interview that they are associated with ISIS. So that is not—

Mr. OLSEN. Some of the—you know, from what I have seen, some of the best trained State Department and Homeland Security professionals are involved exactly in this program. So they are trained to really make a discerning judgment about somebody based on the answers they give. As General Keane said, certainly, somebody who has got no background, no records, no documentation—

Mr. BARLETTA. If they committed a crime there in Syria, where would those—where would we get the records from?

Mr. OLSEN. So there is—one—I mean obviously you do raise a point about the challenge of underlying information. So there isn't as much information, for example, about someone seeking refugee status out of Syria than from any other country.

Mr. BARLETTA. So it is much too risky. It is much more—there is much more risk because we have had 4 National security experts, two from the FBI, tell us that we don't have a system in place there. It is very difficult to get information, records, and to really know who these people are.

So my question goes back to how do you separate the salt from the sugar? I don't doubt that many of the people that we are going to let in are going to be good people. But I am worried about the salt part.

Mr. OLSEN. Yes. Well, the way you do that is through a very rigorous process, the process that I laid out—

Mr. BARLETTA. But if the process is flawed, how do we assure the American people that they don't have to worry?

Mr. OLSEN. You know, I think as General Keane said, and as I said earlier, there is no process that is going to be 100% guaranteed. So there is always going to be some degree of risk. What you want to do is adopt a process that mitigates that risk to the extent that it is practicable.

Again, it is an area, obviously with appropriate oversight—

Mr. BARLETTA. I think until we fix that process there I think the American people right now aren't comfortable. They are not comfortable with hearing well, we are pretty good, but we don't have all the information.

We are asking them to trust us that we are not going to see here in America what they saw in Paris. Quite honestly, I don't feel good myself. Thank you.

Mrs. MILLER. I thank the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Boyle.

Mr. BOYLE. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have 3 questions. I think that it would make most sense to direct these to Peter Bergen since

some of it is drawn from his testimony, or having read his written statement.

First is I find it ironic that not just here at this hearing, but in the mass media, for instance Friday, so much focus has been on the 2,200 refugees that were coming from Syria when actually it seems to me that the much more acute problem is the problem of home-grown terrorism in Europe. These are in the overwhelming majority.

While we don't have all the evidence, the overwhelming majority of those who perpetrated the attacks in Paris were European passport holders, primarily French and Belgian. This is not the first time.

This is it seems to me, an acute problem that I don't know what the answer is when you are talking about citizens who have the full rights of citizenship of Euro countries. Yet because of either ancestry or familial ties, feel the compulsion to go down the direction they have had.

So I would just ask Mr. Bergen what your recommendations are on how we deal with this problem. Then I will transition more to how it affects the United States in a moment.

Mr. BERGEN. I think your assessment of the problem is correct. I mean you only have to think back to Richard Reid, the so-called shoe bomber, who was a British citizen, who tried to blow up an American plane flying between Paris and Miami a few months after 9/11.

So you know I mean I am not an expert on the Visa Waiver Program. I know that DHS has tightened up the requirements for people who are in the Visa Waiver Program, and there is a lot more porting of information. But clearly that is a potential problem.

But on the other hand, you don't—you know we benefit, we, the United States, benefit tremendously from having tourists from around the West coming here and business people coming here and being able to travel easily ourselves to these countries without ourselves encountering a very elaborate visa kind of process.

Mr. BOYLE. Your answer reflects the same sort of tension and challenge that I find within myself in trying to deal with this enormous problem.

The second is, and it is related to this. We have also focused, and I say we, not just Congress, but as a society we have focused a great deal on the challenge of those who have left America, become radicalized, gone to Syria to fight and might come back to our shores. Again, I find that the much more challenging issue.

I think the FBI Director Comey even has talked about this. I think the much more, again, acute problem is those who are loosely affiliated with jihadi groups who become self-radicalized here in the United States and then go about and act.

I read—to quote specifically from your testimony, “acts of violence by Americans inspired by both no direct connection to the terrorist groups in Syria pose a more immediate challenge than attacks by returning fighters from Syria.” So I was wondering if you could expand upon that.

Mr. BERGEN. I am not going to abjure my own testimony. But you know I mean—you know it is useful to look at the Somali-Americans who went to Somalia. They are mostly from Minnesota.

There was a great concern they would come back and they would do something in the United States, and none of them did. The reason for that is half of them got killed over there because a very dangerous war, and some of them committed suicide and suicide attacks.

So I think your—we should—the focus in fact is—I mean we saw in Garland, Texas people who were inspired by ISIS who had some direct communication over Twitter with ISIS fighters. We have seen you know a number of these cases. There were some—they also have a natural ceiling because they tend to be lone wolves. Lone wolves have—you know it is not a huge network as we saw in Paris.

Mr. BOYLE. Right.

Mr. BERGEN. You know, there is a certain kind of ceiling to what they can do. But it is a real concern.

Mr. BOYLE. Then finally having—while being one of the younger Members of Congress, I am old enough that have very vivid memories from being here and working in the private sector during 9/11, and also being here the following year when we had the D.C. sniper.

While 9/11 had the, obviously the psychological impact and is still remembered vividly today, in terms of changing the behavior of ordinary Americans' lives, actually the D.C. sniper, just two individuals with a truck and a shotgun, ended up affecting the normal lives of suburban residents of this area to a much greater extent than 9/11 did. So my primary worry continues to be these soft targets that are essentially low-tech, low-imagination, but much more difficult to protect.

With that, I will yield back.

Mrs. MILLER. We thank the gentleman for his question. The witnesses can answer for the record. In the interest of time, since the vote has been called, the Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Loudermilk.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Thank you, Madam Chair.

General, I appreciate the map here. It is very informative. From the map it doesn't appear like we have ISIS contained very much.

Quickly—a couple of quick questions. I will stay within our time period. What type of planning, logistics, communications, C3I would it have taken to plan and execute the Paris attack for ISIS?

It appears to me it is much more than just a lone-wolf attack that we usually see from like a CVE radicalization locally. I mean how much logistics and planning and training did that attack, in your opinion, take?

General KEANE. Yes. Well, certainly it begins with somebody who is in charge. Then target selection based on reconnaissance. How much time is it that they—do they want to incur, certainly. There is obviously also some training involved. People have to know how to use the weapons that they have.

Most significantly I think what was—what we saw there for the first time was the introduction of suicide vests. I mean I think the French police will determine you know how that was done, who made those bombs that turned that into a suicide vest, which is a skill set all of its own.

So obviously there is a lot of planning that took place in here and coordination. They tried to do these attacks you know near simultaneous. That is a level of detail also to do something like that.

It is, as I mentioned before, very significant that they were able to maintain operational superior OPSEC, as we call it. Particularly when they—you knew the French police and intelligence services were expecting something at the two previous attacks.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. So there was an element of command and control, training, logistic—

General KEANE. All of that. All of the elements of actually a much larger campaign are there in a very small way, but all in a very critical way to be able to do that.

All of these people, I mean they obviously have lives that they are trying to live as well. I would assume some of them had jobs or whatever. They had you know connections to others. The operational security that they are maintaining and doing is a very big thing, the biggest thing they are ever going to do in their life, which is going to be the end of their life.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. So you—really—

General KEANE. Yet they didn't—if they shared it with somebody, they also were part of the operational security. So they had a certain amount of discipline about themselves to be able to do this.

You know a Major Hasan is one thing at, you know at Fort Hood. And—

Mr. LOUDERMILK. More of a lone wolf, radicalized local—

General KEANE. This is a—

Mr. LOUDERMILK [continuing]. On himself.

General KEANE. This is a cell—

Mr. LOUDERMILK [continuing]. Right.

General KEANE [continuing]. That worked together as a team that I am sure some members had various functions that they had to perform, and put together you know a complex operation which is what this was.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. It took operatives in country that were skilled, trained—

General KEANE. I don't know where they got their training. We will leave that to the French intelligence services. I am sure they will get all of this at some point. It will be revealed to us in terms—because they have captured some people.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Right.

General KEANE. I think we will understand a lot more about it than we know today. But the basic elements had to be there for this operation to be successful.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. But the question I want to get to is because of the resources it took, the command-and-control element, the training, the coordination, and everything.

You go back to the onset of World War II, we saw an expansion by Japan until Jimmy Doolittle went in and he bombed Tokyo, which caused the Japanese to be concerned about their own territory. They were retracted. They weren't able to link up with the Nazis.

Would we see the same thing happen if we were causing ISIS to be busy defending its own territory, would we see a retraction to

where they have to realign their resources to take care of their own back home?

General KEANE. Well, I mean the logic of that is compelling. I would say yes, that is true.

I mean to do that I think our strategy gave—has bought time for ISIS. I think that is why that map is revealing in terms of that has always been there, now they are executing it. Despite the fact that we said we were going—we intended to defeat them.

The other thing is, and it is an important point to understand, the United States and the powers of the world are standing up against this organization and saying we are going to defeat it. They are standing right there in the face of all of that and defying it and are successfully executing their global strategy out of defiance in the face of that.

What that gets in terms of additional recruiting is significant because of this sense of invincibility they are portraying to the world, and the sense of destiny that they have about themselves. That the people who already are having identity problems and grievance issues and a sense of isolation and wanting to do something purposeful and meaningful in their life, albeit as misguided as they are, are attracted to something like this.

They can communicate with it on a regular basis. They can understand what it is thinking, what it is trying to accomplish almost daily.

Every single day they put out 15 to 20 graphic photos that are very well done. This is daily. Plus all the narrative that goes with what they are trying to do. If you are plugged into ISIS or have some interest in it, you can—you get a daily pollution of what it is about.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Thank you, Madam Chair. Yield back.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you.

Because a vote has been called, and it is my understanding it is only 1 vote, we are going to take a brief recess. Chairman McCaul will be returning, as well as the witnesses, probably in about 20–30 minutes at the outside.

So it is my understanding, as I say, a vote has been called on the House floor. Without objection, the committee stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

[Recess.]

Mr. KATKO [presiding]. The committees will now come to order and we will now hear from Mr. Deutch, from Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you Mr. Chairman and thanks to our witnesses for being here and committing such a good part of the day to this important work. I am—I haven't been here for the whole hearing, but I want to walk through some concerns I have based on what I have heard today.

The vile attacks that struck Paris cause us—the immediate reaction to these terror attacks is fear. It is appropriate and it makes sense. When my constituents call the office and their immediate reaction is, to want to know what the Government is doing to keep us safe, they are right to feel that way.

When they know that there are—that one of the people involved, one of the attackers, one of the terrorists looks like he may have

been a Syrian refugee, I understand that their initial thought is that we—is that that same thing could happen here.

I understand why there would be a need to want to reevaluate the program and we should. But we have to be thoughtful about this. So much of what has gone on in this debate is not up to what Congress should be doing.

The fact is, when we are trying to look at a program, a refugee program that—I know some of this we have gone through already, where the U.N. High Commission for Refugees refers people to the United States. If it is in the United States, then they are vetted by the Counterterrorism Center and the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center and State and Defense and Homeland Security and fingerprints and biometrics and all the rest.

It is a very extensive process, but people are right if they are concerned, that they want to be sure that it is perfect. So, yes, I think it is appropriate for us to pause. But, here is what we should remember. Here is what seemingly missing from this whole debate.

The fact is, we have heard it takes 18 to 24 months. So, what is it that we should be looking at? The United States has admitted 1,800 Syrian refugees. The administration says that half of those are children. A quarter are adults over 60. Two percent are single males of combat age.

So, instead of trying to score political points and filing bills that would shut down our country to refugees, which is inconsistent with the values of the nation that we live in and we have heard that from both sides. Instead of moving forward and engaging in a big political debate about legislation and how to do this.

Let's acknowledge that there is a system in place. Let's acknowledge that it is exhausted. Let's also acknowledge that it deserves to be reviewed. So, let's start by taking the 2 percent of the single males of combat age and look at every one of those cases and let us have the benefit of the input from all the people who have done the screening to determine whether it has been done correctly instead of saying—that some of the things that have been said that are so inconsistent with who we are.

Look, the fact is, it doesn't matter for the Syrians in Syria who are fleeing their country because they are either the victims of—or they fear being the victims of barrel bombs or chlorine gas from Assad or they fear being raped or murdered by ISIS.

In either case, they are refugees and we have always opened our country to people who are fleeing. So let's figure out how to do this in a rational way.

Let's acknowledge that people are afraid but then let's not make this a political point. Let's figure out how to do something that is actually consistent with who we are as Americans. All we keep hearing is, there is no database, there is no database.

That is true. There is not going to be a database in Syria. So does that mean that we stop taking refugees forever if they come from—if they are fleeing Syria? Cause that is what—that seems to be the only solution that I have heard from so many of my friends on the other side.

One of my colleagues said that these are people—excuse me—that the interviews are fine, except these are people who are adept

at lying and deceiving. Well you know what? Let's start again by looking at single males that we are worried about.

But let's acknowledge that a 5-year-old kid and his mother who are fleeing, perhaps having lost their father, that we are not going to go into that thinking, "Well, unless there is a database that can show that this innocent child isn't somehow involved with terrorism, they can't come into our country." That is absurd.

Let's figure out what we can do together, and let's stop making this the huge political battle that has been developing since Paris. We owe more than that, I think, to the American people.

I would just ask our witnesses if—since we have already heard—I think all three of you have talked about what happens when fear wins. There was a quote in my local newspaper. When we allow ourselves to be frightened to the point of wanting to seal our borders, rejecting compassion, turning away vulnerable children whose homes have been destroyed, then the terrorists are succeeding because we are letting them.

So what steps should we be taking now to both acknowledge that people are afraid, understandably, but that the answer is not to shut down our borders. Finally, when we talk about focusing on Syrian refugees, let's remember that if we really want to shut down our borders, the only way to do that, if we are going to go after the same people who committed these attacks in Paris, then that means closed—stopping flights from Brussels, and Paris, and London, and other places where foreign nationals have gone off to Syria and returned. Of course, we are not going to do that.

Is there—and I am almost out of time, but can someone speak to the problem that Congress seems to have, where this has become this huge partisan fight, when it is really about keeping us safe, and being true to our values, both of which we are able to do simultaneously?

General KEANE. Well, I will take a stab. I mean, I clearly think obviously, most of us believe we are facing a crisis dealing with ISIS. I have always found dealing with any kind of crisis, that you need people around you that have good judgment, tempered, they are measured, but they also have a sense of trying to get the best results in a crisis.

When you are dealing with something like this, there is such a tendency to overreact to it. A huge overreaction would be start sending combat brigades into Syria or Iraq. That is a significant overreaction, but some people will reach for that, because they are confident that will truly make a difference. So you try to find something that is going to make a difference.

Then ISIS actually wants an overreaction. That is another thing. They want it in Europe, and they will take it any place they can get it; particularly, anything that will fragment the Muslim and non-Muslim population, and polarize it.

Then the other thing is you have a tendency to get defensive. We close in. We don't want to over-police and trample people's civil liberties. We don't want to all of a sudden start shutting down our borders in ways that don't make any sense for America. We certainly want to continue a refugee program that makes sense to us for decades. But given the circumstances here, I think the Congress

appears, in my judgment, to be taking prudent measures to look at that, and to put in place a process to sort of make some sense.

At the end of the day, I think you have got it about right. I mean, we have got a 19-, 22-year-old youngster standing in front of us in that process, and we have no evidence one way or the other to support anybody's conclusion. It is likely that youngster probably doesn't get in. That is the reality of it.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you. Ms. McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for your endurance today as we are addressing this really important topic. I was in the military for 26 years, flew the A-10, and been on all ends of the targeting process. Let me just say, and that includes from my own airplane, commanding a squadron, but also in leadership positions in the initial air war in Afghanistan, and then Iraq in 2003.

I have been very critical, General Keane, as you, of the anemic air campaign we have been doing, and the rules of engagement, and tying our pilots' hands, where we are not allowing them to hit a target because there may be one civilian casualty, when we are clearly in compliance with the law of armed conflict. Then we go back with our bombs, and then we allow ISIS to reign terror on tens of thousands of civilians. That doesn't make any sense.

We are just now starting to hit the fuel trucks, with A-10s, by the way, the airplane that the administration was trying to mothball. But we are dropping leaflets first, because we are concerned the truck drivers might get hurt. But a million dollars a day are coming to fund their terrorist activities on civilian people. This has just turned all logic on its head.

So I have been very critical, like you. We need to step up the air campaign. We have got to unleash American airpower, and we have got to kick their—we have got to destroy and defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria. That was just my first comment.

I have been serving on the task force that Chairman McCaul designated. Mr. Katko was our Chair. We worked over 6 months. We identified 32 findings, 50 recommendations across the board. This is a very complex issue. The risks are very high, and much of your testimony identified them.

They are very broad. We have got the risk of people that would be flowing from Visa Waiver countries, 4,500 or so potentially coming easily into America to potentially be a threat. We have got the threat of the home-grown extremists. We have got investigations of 50 States because of the very sophisticated social media campaign.

We have got the potential for individuals to come through illegally with fraudulent documents, you know, that are ISIS operatives, or potentially over our border. We also have potential for them to infiltrate the refugee program. These are just a few of the ways that they could reach out and really attack on American soil.

So given those broad categories, could we just hear from all of your perspectives, which do you think is the most urgent and high-risk threat to us in the homeland of all those categories right now, starting with General Keane?

General KEANE. I don't think it is the infiltration of the refugee program. I clearly believe it is ISIS motivating and inspiring people

in our country to take action against our country. I think the evidence of what has happened in the past already supports that.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great, thanks. Mr. Olsen.

Mr. OLSEN. I agree with General Keane. In fact, if there is one risk of the focus on the refugee program, is it takes the eye off the more significant risk, which is inspired attacks here, which we have seen, and the possibility of more significant attacks, like what we saw in Paris, occurring here, because potentially an operative is able to get here and—but these attacks, as coordinated and synchronized, and to a degree, complex as Paris was, it is not that hard, particularly when you—conduct—particularly when you consider the vulnerability of the targets—

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Bergen, any additions?

Mr. BERGEN. I concur. I think the insider threat, I mean, if you want to kill a lot of people, the best way to do that is put a bomb on a plane. So that is a vulnerability factor.

Ms. MCSALLY. I agree. Thanks for, you know, concurring with that. I think we as a body need to be addressing all of these threats. You know, we are addressing maybe one of them this week. But this is—we have got to address all of these threats, because countering that violent extremism, and making sure we are closing other gaps and loopholes is very important, in addition to our military campaign.

My next question is, if we do step up our air campaign in Iraq and Syria, if we do actually squeeze ISIS in the territory that they own, as we look at their near area of influence in the rest of the region, what areas do you think—I mean, I think Sinai and potentially Libya would become their next destination of choice for expanding their operations and training individuals. That is my perspective. But I really want to hear from all of you where you think the next threat may be.

General KEANE. In my view, it would clearly be Libya. They have three different organizations, all ISIS-affiliated organizations in Libya. There is also not really an effective host country security situation in Libya. I mean, while at Sinai obviously had tremendous impact in being able to blow up a Russian airliner, there is an effective security force in Egypt that is pushing against that, that capability.

In Libya, there is nobody pushing against ISIS's capability. So I think that is really fertile ground. They have put people on the ground there to assist them because of that potential.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great, thanks. Mr. Olsen, I assume you concur?

Mr. OLSEN. I agree. You can really map the growth of ISIS to those areas where there is a lack of governance. The four countries which are essentially failed states—Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya—are places where we have seen ISIS make—and other groups—

Ms. MCSALLY. Great, thanks. My time is over, but I do want to say, Mr. Bergen, I look forward to talking to you off-line about the recruitment of girls and women. I appreciate the statistics in your report related to this unprecedented phenomena. We have young girls and women that are somehow—think they are going to go find the men of their dreams, and instead, they are subjected to seventh-century sharia, Allah, sexual slavery, gang rape, and every-

thing that goes with that. It is very much something I want to continue to figure out how we can try and stop here. So I appreciate your comments on that, and we will talk more off-line. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Ms. McSally. We are all shocked to hear you mention A-10 in your questioning here today. The Chair now will hear from Ms. Torres.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the panel for your patience today. I know it has been a long morning, and lack of food, and a little bit of stress. I very much appreciate you sharing your knowledge with all of us.

I would like to get your input, General Keane. As you know, the United States has joined the French in bombing ISIS in Syria. In your opinion, is an air campaign like this an effective strategy for dealing with the threats that we have?

General KEANE. Air campaign clearly has a role to play. Normally what an air campaign to do, if it is effective and you are able to have good targeting, you begin to contain an adversary. You begin to take DIF. We call it in the military, "freedom of movement." You begin to take away their tactical and operational initiative. But you can't defeat them with that.

Mrs. TORRES. Do you think U.S. ground forces are necessary in order to—

General KEANE. I don't think U.S. ground combat brigades are necessary at this point. There may be at some future point, and I hope it doesn't come to that. But I do think we need U.S. training and advisors, air controllers on the ground, and I do believe there is an absolute role, a critical role for special operation forces on a limited basis to conduct some large-scale raids where they have good intelligence.

This would be combat, but it would be very limited combat. It would be in and out, lasting maybe a few hours at the most, maybe a day.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, general. Time is—I do have one more question. I would like for you to comment. Recent incident in Afghanistan in October, where U.S. forces unfortunately hit a hospital that was run by Doctors Without Borders.

Is that collateral damage? Is that something that could be avoided? Just your opinion, sir, on that.

General KEANE. Well, we have got to wait for the investigation. But clearly it is a significant mistake. We don't target hospitals. But obviously somebody targeted that building, whether they knew it was a hospital or not. There was some potential justification for it.

We don't know the answer to that. But that, in my judgment, was a significant mistake. We will get to the bottom of it. The American people will know about it. Certainly the organization itself deserves to get all the truth, as do the Afghan people.

We have made mistakes like this before in Afghanistan where we have hit the wrong target. We have always, and I have watched this closely, been very transparent in getting to the bottom of it and revealing exactly what we did right and what we did wrong in this case. And—

Mrs. TORRES. Is that lack of intelligence on the ground?

General KEANE. Say it again?

Mrs. TORRES. Is that due to a lack of intelligence on the ground?

General KEANE. No. It was a—it is more complicated than that. This is a very dynamic situation. They were in firefights for hours dealing with that. Radio transmissions are going back and forth, where are they, what are we going to do about it? People are making very quick, dynamic decisions on what to deal with it.

So it is not a case where people are sitting back trying to figure out what is the intelligence. These are people who are actually in a fight—

Mrs. TORRES. I apologize for interrupting you again—

General KEANE. That is okay.

Mrs. TORRES. I have a question for Mr. Olsen.

Secretary Johnson and other National security leaders are very concerned about the possibility of an attack by someone in the United States. I am more concerned about the copycat individual that is out there.

Our local law enforcement work very closely with our communities, and are truly the first responders and our first line of defense when it comes to protecting us from a domestic attack. How does the NCTC, which is the primary organization in the Federal Government for integrating and analyzing terrorism intelligence, work with our local law enforcement to make sure that they get the intelligence, Classified intelligence that they need to protect us?

Mr. OLSEN. Okay. So there are a number of ways in which the Federal Government, NCTC being a key component, but including the FBI and DHS work with local law enforcement. Much of those relationships are relationships that the FBI and DHS are on the front lines of working with police departments around the country.

But one way is fusion centers. Fusion centers that can handle Classified information that are in many cities around the country that have both Federal law enforcement also local law enforcement as part of those fusion centers.

There are products that are put out that are Classified that are designed specifically for local law enforcement. So they identify issues that local law enforcement particularly will confront. Then there are Unclassified products as well that NCTC puts out.

So there are number of ways. It is a continuing challenge to make sure that local law enforcement has the information tools to understand information that is typically coming from overseas and is often Classified. So it is a continuing challenge.

Mrs. TORRES. It is a continuing challenge, and is equally important for the people in the intelligence community to understand our diverse communities.

Thank you all very much. I am out of time. I will yield back my time.

Mr. KATKO. Chair recognizes Mr. Yoho.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I appreciate your persistence.

I have got two short narratives. One is to build on what Chairman Royce said about the procession or the convoy of the trucks that we saw on the news over and over again.

I just hope if we see that again the immediate picture after that. This is dependent on the media, is a scorched line there where they

are not moving with our vehicles. I think that would do well for the American people to see that.

The other thing is the talk about keeping Muslims out. This is not about keeping Muslims out. It is about keeping terrorists out.

You know being in a Constitutional free republic like we have, we respect religious freedom. That is something we always have to you know, remind the homeland, that if we believe in our Constitution, we believe in freedom of religion. We just want to make sure the people coming over here are who they say they are.

With that, have any of you seen any coordination yet of any of the groups like al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, ISIS, all ganging up together or coming together as a single force? Or do you anticipate that? Gen. Keane?

General KEANE. Clearly there is—certainly is potential for that.

What has happened certainly is this fundamental disagreement between al-Qaeda and ISIS. It centers around actually how they deal with people.

Jabhat al-Nusra, who is a Syrian-based al-Qaeda organization, is fighting in Syria actually, largely has the support of the people that in the area that they are fighting because of their reach-out programs to that. You know they are not brutalizing, terrorizing, intimidating the people as ISIS does. That was part of the reason for the breakup.

But listen, they are both radical Islamist organizations. We always have to be concerned and have a watchful eye about it. They do have common objectives. Certainly it is within anybody's reason that at certain times they could get together for near-term objectives.

Certainly ISIS is opposed to the Assad regime and is fighting it at times. So is Jabhat al-Nusra.

Mr. YOHO. Right.

General KEANE. They have a common objective there. But they are not fighting and coordinating their activities together.

Mr. YOHO. Well, I just see this as it escalates that they come together because they say you know what, we don't have anything to lose and we need to join forces.

Mr. Olsen, you were saying how that so many of the recruiting tools are over the internet. What can be done to shut down their social media in those areas? I mean if we know they are doing that, can we shut it down?

Can we pinpoint where it is coming from and just say I—if we shut this down I know they are going to go round and find somewhere else. But if we can keep pinpointing stuff like that, is that a possibility?

Mr. OLSEN. I think there are probably 2 things to consider. One is really going after the source of the information, so going after the communication centers that are in places like Syria, in Raqqa, for example, where the media is produced.

So, airstrikes, military action to take out those locations, take out the individuals who are responsible for the media. That is probably the most direct way.

The other mechanism Mr. Bergen talked about of going to the companies that are these platforms and asking them to enforce their terms of service.

Mr. YOHO. Do you need any assistance from us in that to where we can put more pressure on them?

Mr. OLSEN. I think that is largely a matter of just the outreach that needs to take place.

Now, I would say that what we have seen over the last couple years since the Snowden leaks is that we have seen less cooperation and less dialogue and collaboration between the Federal Government and our technology community. I suspect, from what I am hearing, that that inhibits some of that sort of interaction that would lead to a more effective response.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Thank you.

General Keane, you were talking about marginalizing Russia and Syria. Without going to war, how do we do that? Through diplomacy, or how would you marginalize them?

General KEANE. Well, the reality is first of all, don't get trapped by them in terms of the negotiations that they are making right now. No. 2, we should not be pushed around by them. I mean—

Mr. YOHO. I agree.

General KEANE [continuing]. Quite frankly Russia is sitting there with an inferior military by comparison to us that brought very selective capability with them, which is very good. They are getting a lot out of a little. But right from the beginning we should have told them look, we are going to fly wherever we want, when we want. You want to avoid confrontation, stay out of our way.

The first time they bombed Syrian moderates who our Central Intelligence Agency trained, and they are carrying our weapons—

Mr. YOHO. Right.

General KEANE [continuing]. We should have cratered that airfield with those—where those—

Mr. YOHO. I agree. I think it was a bad misstep on our end.

General KEANE. I mean this is—these are the kind of things, some of these are relics from the Cold War to be certain. Not cratering an airfield, but you know being muscular with the Russians certainly is.

I think we just take the wrong approach with them from the beginning. I believed for a long time that Mr. Putin is inside our President's head. I think he believes the President is fearful of escalation and confrontation. Most of the time will back away as a result of it.

Mr. YOHO. I am out of time. I appreciate your indulgence. Thank you.

Mr. KATKO. Chair recognizes Ms. Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. I thank the respective Chairs and Ranking Members for holding this hearing. I thank the witnesses for the important contribution that you have made.

I am reminded of a long ago phrase used by Franklin Delano Roosevelt that the only thing that we have to fear is fear itself. Without taking that in a strictly interpretive view for the 21st Century, recognizing and being empathetic to where we are today for many Americans and others around the world who are frightened by this phenomenon called Daesh, ISIL, or ISIS. I do think that we have the responsibility to act swiftly and forcibly without fear that garners recklessness in our determination.

So I would like to pose a series of questions. I would like to make this statement. All of the witnesses I have great respect for.

I think just as there were many of us who disagreed with the Iraq War and its value, there are those who disagree with President Obama's approach. But respectfully I would say that we are again dealing with a crisis and a phenomenon that has not been dealt with in decades before. Wars have been fought with nations.

So I think that the President has taken what he has been given and his view of protecting the American people, and has done it well. Can we now look into the future and build upon it? Yes we can. My forms of question will be along those lines.

Mr. BERGEN, let me thank you for your constant presence and information. I would simply ask with respect to the Daesh whether or not this rounded perspective, something that I am very concerned about, foreign fighters is part of stopping this. Having anyone from our country, 250 have already left, blocking that. Cut off access to the financing.

Disrupt and expose the messaging of ISIS. I didn't know I was ever going to applaud hackers, but I understand we have got a group that is out trying to expose them. I applaud them. Stabilize the vulnerable communities that have been liberated by ISIL.

What do you think about those elements complementing, taking the fight to ISIS?

Mr. BERGEN. I mean, those are all very good approaches because the military—I mean as we have discussed already, ISIS is one of the big messages we are victorious and impacting them militarily is very important. But if you don't impact the foreign fighter flow going into Syria, if you don't impact the radicalization of people inside the United States who never go to Syria, who are simply radicalized by ISIS propaganda, you are only addressing half the problem.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We can do that collaboratively. If France has called for a National effort to take the fight to them, we can also work with our allies on the foreign fighters, the finance, et cetera.

Let me ask General Keane, if you would, I think I heard that you offered a commentary on this question of refugees. Frankly, we have got 55 million—or 55, the number that was here that I just saw, we have a horrific global refugee crisis, 60 million people displaced across the globe.

What does this say about America if we begin to precipitously, without thought, block refugees, in particular, Syria, that mostly are women and children, and the vulnerable, does that give ISIS another message about the United States, and counters our own values of being strong, taking the fight to them, and maybe daring them to do as they are doing?

General KEANE. Well, yes. If that was the action we were taking, you know, we would be playing right into ISIS's hands. They want to polarize Muslims and non-Muslims, and take advantage of that, and increase people's sense of alienation. That is certainly what they are about.

But all of us—I don't want to speak for them—but we have said it multiple times here, that we do support the action that the Chairman is speaking of, and that is because of the uniqueness of what has taken place here, and the possible danger of infiltration

with these refugees that are coming to us, we are not saying they shouldn't come, we are saying we should make certain that we put in place a process that will ensure us as best we can that there is no legitimate infiltration there, knowing full well that the best process we put in place could never be perfect.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We also know that it takes 18 to 24 months before they come in under the present process, and it is certainly something we should review. Can I just ask you this question, can ISIS be destroyed?

General KEANE. Oh, yes, most definitely. Radical Islam, as a movement, is probably going to be generational, but we don't have a comprehensive strategy to deal with that, or an appropriate alliance, I think, to meet the challenge.

But in the near term, dealing with ISIS, yes, most definitely. The greatest vulnerability they have is the fact that they own territory. When you start taking that territory away from them, you start to break down these other things that they are doing, in terms of their affiliations, and also what they are doing in Europe, and their desire to come to the United States to undermine the governments that are supporting the effort against them, and also to polarize the populations.

You start to take all that capability and messaging away from them, by taking away the territory which, in a sense, is destroying them, militarily, we prefer the term "defeat." It is a better term than "destroy," because ISIS likely will never go away in the sense that they can—they started from a relatively small terrorist organization inside Iraq operating in the shadows. If we take their territory away from them, and break down their infrastructure, they would likely return to something like that, which is considerably more manageable, frankly.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We can do that with the collaboration of our European neighbors, who I think themselves have awakened to the heinousness of what ISIS is all about; France, for example, doing the air war that my colleague talked about intensely, obviously, because they have been penetrated on their own soil.

But I do believe you are saying that you take the fight to them, but you are not saying boots on the ground.

General KEANE. I am not saying we need to have conventional combat brigades on the ground. We could eventually need that, as well as Arab units to participate as well. But I don't see that in the near term. I think we have to be all-in to support the local indigenous forces in a way that we have not been all-in, frankly, and that is largely what my testimony was about.

Now is the time to be all-in supporting them. There is significant capability that we can provide them that we are not providing them now, that we believe will make a difference. We don't know for sure, but we believe it will make a difference. We never truly exercised that option to the degree that many of us felt it should have been.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, I would be—I thank you for the testimony. I would like to offer these items into the record at this time, and let me thank you for this hearing. The point that I want to make is I submit this testimony—these statements, rather—is that I really think that these should be on-going discussions.

We can't have on-going hearings, but I think our committees should continue to have on-going discussions, because I think we should be on alert, on point, and continue to find a solution for what seems to be a growing epidemic of terrorism attacking innocent civilians around the world, and it must be stopped.

Let me submit to the record resettling refugees and maintaining security are not mutually exclusive. This includes the statement about 60 million displaced persons, and then the statement from the Syrian-American Council, I am asking unanimous consent; and a statement from the Coalition of Syrian-American Humanitarian organization, and a statement from the RAND Corporation.* Ask unanimous consent, put these in the record.

Mr. KATKO. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE

RESETTLING REFUGEES AND MAINTAINING SECURITY ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

By Mark Hetfield, HIAS, November 12, 2015.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/259864-resettling-refugees-and-maintaining-security-are-not>

We are now confronting the most horrific global refugee crisis since the Second World War, with 60 million people displaced across the globe. In October alone, almost 219,000 people arrived in Europe in search of safety—roughly the same number for all of last year. Twenty percent of those displaced are Syrian, fleeing a conflict that has already taken more than 240,000 lives. Although the U.S. has provided \$4.5 billion in assistance since the crisis began, it has underutilized the Refugees Admissions Program as a tool to respond to the most vulnerable victims of the conflict.

This program was originally intended to serve as a rescue mechanism, to bring refugees out of danger to a place where they can live in freedom with dignity. Today, however, it generally takes over 18 months for a refugee to be resettled to the U.S. once he or she is accepted for processing. In particular, the length of the security clearance process has limited the United States' ability to use resettlement, a key humanitarian tool, to respond to this crisis effectively. Rather than showing leadership in resolving this crisis, the United States has essentially told Germany, Sweden, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan that the problem is theirs to solve.

Additionally, some policy makers in Washington have become fixated on protecting America by offering resettlement to even fewer refugees. Some assert that the clearance process for refugees, particularly Syrians, is inadequate and risks admitting terrorists. This belief lacks a fundamental understanding of the current system, which subjects every refugee applicant to extensive security checks, rechecks, and intensive interviewing by Homeland Security officers, often stranding very vulnerable refugees who pose no threat at all to the United States in the process.

It doesn't have to be this way. Over the years, the United States has admitted millions of refugees who came from countries with governments or powerful opposition groups that were ideologically opposed to the American way of life. As is the case with today's refugee crisis, the refugees considered for resettlement then were not terrorists—in fact, they were fleeing terror. Refugees fleeing Syria today are leaving Syria for the most part because they refused to fight for Assad or join ISIS.

In order to confirm this on a case-by-case basis, the United States has extensive security measures in place to distinguish between those fleeing violence and those seeking to commit it. Before refugees arrive in the United States, they must pass multiple security screenings. United Nations and U.S. government staff interview refugee applicants multiple times, in person. Refugee applicants are fingerprinted and photographed, and their biometric data and biographic details are processed through the systems of several U.S. government agencies.

If the refugee clears all safety checks, trained immigration officers from the Department of Homeland Security travel abroad to conduct detailed, in-person interviews. DHS also has the power of discretionary denial, which means that even if

*The RAND document has been retained in committee files and is available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT443.html>.

a case clears all security checks, the interviewing officer can deny the case based on the interview alone. Additionally, refugees must be medically cleared to travel so they do not pose a health risk to U.S. citizens.

I have been working in the refugee resettlement field for more than 20 years, and the process today is more intense than I have ever seen it. Refugees are subjected to far more scrutiny than any other population entering the U.S., such as the millions of tourists, business people and students who enter the country each year. As U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres recently noted, if someone wanted to do the U.S. harm, "the most stupid thing would be to apply for resettlement," because the verification process is so incredibly thorough.

Security is something the program has always taken seriously, and rightly so. What is too often lost in the rhetoric around refugees these days, however, is that safety isn't only a concern for those of us who already live here. Less than 1 percent of all refugees are ever resettled to third countries like the U.S. and Canada. The vast majority will spend their lives in the countries and camps to which they initially fled. Only the most vulnerable are even considered for a shot at permanent resettlement.

When refugees are referred to the U.S., it is because they are not safe where they are. Our government has designated these individuals as the most desperately in need of protection. It is a cruel irony that these same people are also the ones being falsely cited by some political leaders as the people we need to be protected from. If we abandon our proud tradition of welcoming refugees now, we are abandoning not only a legacy of moral leadership but real human beings who are seeking safety and protection.

The goal of our refugee resettlement program is to offer refuge to those seeking freedom from terror and tyranny. Security is an important part of the process, but so is compassion. We need both, in equal measure.

SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE

STATEMENT OF THE SYRIAN AMERICAN COUNCIL

MAY 21, 2015

Chairman King, Ranking Member Higgins, and Members of the Subcommittee: The Syrian American Council is the largest and oldest Syrian American community organization in the United States. Founded in 2005 in Burr Ridge, Illinois, SAC is a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, nonpartisan organization that incorporates all segments of the Syrian American community. Our activities include community organizing, youth empowerment, media outreach, advocacy, and support for prodemocracy activists in Syria. SAC has 23 local chapters Nation-wide.

SAC is honored to submit this statement for the record to the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. Significant communities of Syrian Americans exist in many areas of the United States, including New York, Texas, Iowa, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio. Their income levels are above the median for American citizens and many of them provide jobs and livelihoods for other Americans in their locale. Older community members have found in America a democratic haven from political persecution, while our youth have grown up here and consider American culture their own.

As a young Christian growing up in Damascus, I personally was blessed to have experienced the wonders and beauty of the holiday season in my beloved Syria. The memories of festivities throughout the Damascus old city, the carolers, the beautifully lit Christmas trees, the nativity mangers, and the churches filled with celebrants will stay with me forever. Each year, I take the time to describe my experience to friends and family in my home town of Orlando, Florida so they will understand the inherent tolerance and diversity of the Syrian people. That inherent tolerance and diversity is now under attack.

The Syrian American community shares your dismay at the rise of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and at the urgent home-grown terror threat that has resulted from this rise. We are also painfully aware that ISIS has exploited the crisis in Syria to turn our ancestral homeland into a locus for recruitment. ISIS has severely impeded our ability to get help to ordinary Syrians in need. At times, Syrian Americans have been forced into hasty exits from their humanitarian work inside Syria after finding out that ISIS had marked them for death.

We consider ISIS our enemies, and as such, we are keen to help Congress and the U.S. Government as they work to stop these extremists. SAC has already partnered with the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at the Department of

Homeland Security to organize community briefings for Syrian Americans. In addition, staff members of the SAC have briefed senior White House officials on ISIS activities inside Syria. We encourage a robust Congressional debate on how ISIS can be stopped both at home and abroad.

Along these lines, it is important to note that Syrian immigrants to the United States are in no way the leading demographic of foreign fighters joining ISIS. Out of over 150 U.S. nationals who have successfully joined or attempted to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq, we know of only 1 potential case involving a Syrian American (who is not charged with having joined ISIS). By contrast, many U.S.-born citizens have joined ISIS, including citizens with no ancestry from majority-Muslim countries. Clearly, barring vulnerable Syrian refugees from entering America will not address this vast majority of cases.

America is a Nation of immigrants and always has been. Each year, the United States admits some 70,000 refugees as new citizens, and the Syrian refugee crisis is far and away the worst refugee crisis in the world today. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres has referred to the Syrian refugee crisis as “the worst humanitarian disaster since the end of the Cold War.” Furthermore, the majority of Syrian refugees up for resettlement are not fighting-age males, but innocent women and children seeking to flee the vicious conflict. They live in horrible conditions, and every winter, multiple child refugees die for lack of heating and winter clothing. Many refugees even have family members or close friends and associates within the Syrian American community who are ready to care for them.

To bar Syrian refugees from resettlement in the United States now, when their need is so great and when there is no real evidence that they are a terror threat, would be to actively and explicitly discriminate against them—against us—simply for being Syrian. We as Syrian Americans encourage our Congress Members to support the fight against ISIS and defend our country against home-grown terrorism without contributing to the demonization of the entire Syrian community.

SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE

STATEMENT OF THE SYRIAN COMMUNITY NETWORK (CHICAGO, IL); SYRIAN AMERICAN MEDICAL SOCIETY; KARAM FOUNDATION; SYRIA RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT; SYRIAN EXPATRIATES ORGANIZATION; WATAN USA; RAHMA RELIEF FOUNDATION; HOPE FOR SYRIA

We write to you as a group of non-political Syrian American-led humanitarian organizations that provide multi-sector relief inside of Syria, to refugees and host countries in the region, and to Syrian refugees in the United States. Our efforts together help millions of Syrians, both those who remain in Syria and those displaced as refugees. Our programs cover the full range of humanitarian sectors, including community services, education, food and non-food items, health, protection, water/sanitation/hygiene, and women’s empowerment. In addition to emergency relief, our organizations have established development projects that promote sustainable living and lay the groundwork for voluntary refugee return, such as building schools, facilitating jobs and skills training, and helping to establish bakeries and flour mills. Together, we support over 100 health facilities and almost 1,000 medical staff inside of Syria who operate under the principle of medical neutrality and risk their lives to save others. Our organizations prioritize education, psychosocial support, and community healing. We’ve been fortunate to have leading Congressional officials visit our field programs to see their impact on Syrian refugees, and we’ve had the opportunity to advocate for humanitarian support for Syria and Syrian refugees at the highest levels of U.S. Government, from President Obama to Secretary Jeh Johnson to leaders of the House and Senate.

We further represent a constituency of Syrian Americans, humanitarian allies, and local volunteers throughout the United States, from Texas to New York. As the crisis has become increasingly protracted, our organizations have begun to work with local resettled Syrian refugees in the United States, coordinating with volunteers, refugee agencies, and civic and religious organizations to ensure that Syrian refugees are welcomed and assisted in their transition. Our built-in networks of Syrian American and partner communities have been invaluable in these transitions.

We are humbled to submit this statement to the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence on admitting Syrian refugees. As you know, the United Nations estimates that about 4 million people have fled Syria and 7.6 million others are internally displaced. Over 230,000 Syrians have been killed since 2011. As Mr. Antonio Guterres, the United Nations High Commissioner

for Refugees, said recently: “The Syrian war unleashed the worst humanitarian crisis of our time.”

The enormous flow of refugees has created a strain on host countries in the region, which are forced to deal with extreme economic pressures, overcrowded hospitals, shortages of basic public services, and growing resentment among host communities. The regional dynamics of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, which have taken on the majority of the refugee burden, have been altered over the last few years. The conflict in Syria has led to a regional crisis, and the sheer numbers of refugees and lack of support for host communities threaten the stability of these countries. However, as Anne Richard, the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the Department of State, said: “. . . These very real burdens must pale in comparison to the daily struggles of Syrians themselves. Imagine losing practically everything—your loved ones, your home, your profession, and your dignity.”

We commend the United States Government for taking a leadership role to stand for these vulnerable refugees and to offer them a glimpse of hope. Throughout history, the United States has always taken a leadership role in assisting vulnerable refugees. The United States has accepted the majority of all UNHCR referrals from around the world. In 2013, United States reached its goal of resettling nearly 70,000 refugees from nearly 70 countries. Now, the United States has put forth invaluable efforts to resettle vulnerable Syrian refugees.

We have worked closely with our partners at the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, coordinated by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security, along the way. We commend their meticulous and exemplary work. All Syrian refugee profiles being actively considered for resettlement are reviewed thoroughly by the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program with support and leadership from the White House and security vetting agencies. These Syrians go through extensive security background checks. The majority of Syrian refugees being considered for resettlement are among the most vulnerable populations of women and children seeking to flee the effects of conflict. With assistance from the International Organization for Migration, they are provided with medical exams and logistics for transportation before coming to the United States.

Once Syrian refugees arrive, our groups work alongside a network of resettlement agencies, non-profits, churches and mosques, civic organizations, and local volunteers to welcome them. These U.S. groups work in 180 communities across the country to ensure refugees have access to work, education, opportunities to improve their English, and what they and their families need to be comfortable and have a happy and healthy future.

The Syrian Community Network is a prime example of a volunteer-led organization working closely with resettled Syrian families to ease their transition, focusing particularly on the Chicago area. The Syrian Community Network works with 10 families that have been resettled through various agencies. One family in particular stands out as an upcoming success story. Resettled in Chicago in January of 2015, Mayada is a single mother with 6 children ranging between the ages of 4 and 19. Her 2 oldest children, Zeyd and Zeynab, hold steady jobs and help to pay rent, all while they attend ESL classes at the local community college. The 4 younger children—Wedad, Zakaria, Shahed, and Shaima—have been performing remarkably in school, exceeding expectations. They all dream of graduating college and becoming doctors, teachers, computer engineers, and so much more. The youngest daughter, Shaima, decided that she wants to be a photojournalist after a Chicago journalist interviewed her. Just recently, Wedad, who will be in ninth grade in the fall, was accepted into the “Girl Forward” summer program designed for bright adolescent refugee girls in the city of Chicago. Syrians are known to have an entrepreneurial spirit and, given the opportunity, Syrian refugees will become the next American success story.

We strongly urge the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence to support their counterparts at the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security as they work to further increase resettlement numbers for vulnerable Syrian refugees in 2015 and beyond. The families and individuals being considered for resettlement face dire protection challenges and often need specialized care. Among those being considered are victims of torture, women at risk, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ persons facing risk, women-headed households, and those facing acute security threats. To prohibit Syrian refugees from the option of U.S. resettlement because of the presence of ISIL and other extremist groups in Syria, and not based on thorough U.S.-led security checks and humanitarian needs assessments, discounts the commendable work of the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State and amounts to blatant discrimination based on na-

tionality. The Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence should work to further ensure sufficient staffing and capacity for security vetting agencies to increase their ability to conduct thorough and quick security checks.

Our organizations function as implementing partners for many of the major INGOs and UN agencies in Syria and coordinate with the U.S. agencies taking the lead refugee resettlement here at home. Our talented staff and volunteers have been the backbone of crisis relief for Syria and have a comprehensive understanding of the changing situation on the ground. From seeing the trends of displacement in Syria and the region first-hand, we think that it is essential for the United States to take a leading role in Syrian refugee resettlement for the protection of Syria's vulnerable refugees, for the stability and security of the region, and for the relevance of the United States as a humanitarian and global leader. We strongly encourage the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence to work with relevant U.S. departments and the administration to ensure that vulnerable Syrian refugees continue to have the hope of resettlement and a brighter future.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I yield back.

Mr. KATKO. The Chair recognizes Mr. Carter.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank all three of you for being here. You have been very kind to stay as long as you have, and your endurance is to be admired.

I am one who believes, as I think most of us do, that the No. 1 responsibility of our Federal Government is to protect our citizens. I want to ask each of you, at this point in the vetting process that we have, do you feel that that process is at a point, because of the deterioration between the communication in Syria and in America right now, that that vetting process is at a point where we can feel comfortable that refugees who are coming into this country are not coming in here to hurt us or to harm us? General.

General KEANE. Well, I don't know all the details of the vetting process. I am not trying to dodge the question. I rely on Director Olsen, who knows a lot more about it than I do, and I respect his judgment. I am comfortable with the agencies that are involved in this, and the spotlight it has, certainly the Congressional concern, the concern of Governors, the concern of American people. I think the attention on this will be considerable.

So I am pretty comfortable that no one is going to enter the country without getting huge scrutiny. Certainly, any young male that is coming into this country as a result of this process is likely coming with some pretty good documentation and references that he is who he says he is. So yes.

As we have said, all of us have said more than once, no system is perfect, and we can never guarantee that is not going to be the case, that there could possibly be some infiltration. Maybe the infiltration is actually a woman. But yes, overall, I am comfortable in the direction that we are—and I think the Congress is doing the right thing, asking the Executive branch, "Bring this thing up here, and let us take a close look at it. Make us comfortable."

Mr. CARTER. Absolutely. That is the point I want to make. You spoke just a little while ago about crisis management, and how we had to be prudent, and how we had to use caution, but to take action as well.

That is why I do believe that a pause at this time to make sure that our vetting process is the best that it can possibly be, especially after the fact that we know that one of the attackers in Paris got through as a refugee. We know that ISIL has said, made clear,

"We are going to try to do that. We are going to try to go through the refugee process and get into America, and infiltrate America."

I think it would be wrong of us, and I think we would be falling down on our duty if we did not at least look at this, and if we did not pause, and make sure that we had the best process in place that we could possibly have in place. Mr. Olsen, any comments on that?

Mr. OLSEN. No, I am comfortable with the level of effort put behind this process, and the way it is set up. It is as good as it can be, practicably. Again, as we have said a number of times, obviously not perfect, but it also—you know, not allowing refugees in has its own risks, right. So there is always going to be a balancing here that needs to take place. So obviously, it is an area of more appropriate oversight by the committee.

Mr. CARTER. Right. Mr. Bergen.

Mr. BERGEN. I don't have anything to add to what has already been said. I think it is a very robust process.

Mr. CARTER. Well, again, we are a Nation of immigrants. We are a humanitarian Nation. We understand our position in the world, the leadership position. But at the same time, our No. 1 priority is to take care of our citizens, and we have to keep that in mind.

That is why I am supportive of what the Majority party in the House is trying to put forward right now, and that is to have a pause, and to make sure that we have the very best process in place that we can, for the vetting process in place that we can at this time.

So I thank all of you again for your service, and for being here today. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you. Chair recognizes Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the panel for being so patient with our schedule today. This is a very thought-provoking conversation. Let me just start by saying, General Keane, thank you for the words you shared earlier in this hearing, reminding us all about what it means to be an American, what that is we have, and the need to resist simple answers, especially the simple answer of bigotry.

It seems to me that if you want to help ISIS recruit, some of the statements that have been attributed to some candidates for the National office are the perfect advertisement for that recruitment; "Muslims, don't let any of them in," "We have got to close all the mosques," "This is a clash of cultures."

My God. Why not write copy ads for ISIS while you are at it? What a recruiting assist those inflammatory and incendiary words are. In my opinion, they do not represent the values of America.

You know, we had a sad and tragic episode in our history, and it was in response to something that happened in our country, Pearl Harbor. It is almost universally seen in retrospect as one of the most shameful episodes in American history, when our reaction to the sneak attack by the Japanese government on Pearl Harbor was to intern Japanese-Americans in camps, because they could not be trusted. They were a fifth column. The Supreme Court upheld it shamefully and regretfully, but only in retrospect.

We didn't live up to our values. We didn't live up to our own ideals as a country, even though the risk was real, it was demon-

strable. There were spotters in Hawaii. There probably were some fifth columnists. But the reaction was not something commensurate with the threat, and certainly not something consistent with our values.

It is easy right now to pander. It is easy right now to play to fears. You want to have a pause on refugees. People fleeing the very violence we are trying to stop.

Well, why stop there? Why not—let's have a pause on all immigration because who knows who might be in their numbers, much bigger than refugee numbers.

While we are at it, student visas, tourists. God only knows how many people could sneak in as tourists. Let's pause on all of that.

You could make a case for it. Wouldn't be very consistent with who we are as an open society. I am not sure it is a practical solution to a very real problem and a set of real concerns and fears.

We as elected officials, it seems to me, have a responsibility to calm fears. To call Americans to confidence and to the values Gen. Keane referred to earlier in this hearing. Not to exploit those fears. Not to build upon them. Not to demonize any group of human beings, however popular it might be at the moment to do so.

I wanted to say that, Mr. Chairman, because you know we all look for easy answers. All of us, I guess, are open to the temptation to exploit something at the moment. But it doesn't serve us well. That is not our finest moment. That is not, as Lincoln said, appealing to the better angels of our Nation.

Any of you are welcome to comment.

Mr. OLSEN. One comment I would add, and I think follows up on your remarks, as counterterrorism professionals you look for opportunities to align your limited resources on targeted ways of going after individuals, not sort of broadly precluding, for example, all refugees or the examples you gave.

One example, and I know the committee has previously considered this, is that there are fewer than 1,000 Americans on the No-Fly List that can't get on an airplane. There is no restriction now in law for those individuals to purchase guns.

The gun laws preclude people who are prior felons and other categories of people to not be able to buy guns. But somebody who is on the No-Fly List can be stopped from getting on an airplane, turn around and go buy a gun. Stopped from getting on an airplane because they are believed, known, or suspected to be a terrorist, and they can buy a gun.

So this is an area that it would be more targeted to consider looking at individuals who can be—who can do something about who are already on a watch list, already on the highest level of watch listing, that is the No-Fly List. So as you look at opportunities to take steps that would be more targeted and would be better at going after people we already know or suspect are terrorists, that would be one thing I would recommend.

Mr. BERGEN. I think that is a brilliant point.

General KEANE. I agree with the sentiments that are here. I mean I always said to myself you know after what happened to the French if I was running the meeting in the White House I would have said listen, I want us to look through the prism. This is 127 dead Americans and 300 wounded.

Then how do we approach this crisis and do what is necessary to fix our strategy in terms of what is working and what is not working? Also let's remind ourselves that we are not going to over-react and we are not going to hunker down in this country and get defensive.

I really think that is what leadership does. It helps to face coldly a crisis that needs action applied to it. At the same time, it takes people's fear away.

So we are right in the middle of this in trying to support our strategy. I think we are trying to be honest that there is really some significant shortfalls that need to be fixed. At the same time we have to stay true to our values in America and what this great country stands for.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well said, general. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL [presiding]. If I can just say to Mr. Connolly as well, this committee had a bipartisan task force report that I am very proud of. We worked on it in a bipartisan way. Mr. Katko chaired it.

We came up with 25 key recommendations and findings, including legislative recommendations that the Speaker's National Security Task Force I serve on, we intend, when we come back after Thanksgiving, to move that legislation forward that addresses security gaps both here and in Europe.

The idea that the Europeans, if you are an E.U. citizen will not screen you past a watch list to me really opens—Europe is wide open until they close that gap. I think we can all agree as Republicans and Democrats.

I think the European parliament agrees they just need to change that because 8 individuals were arrested at the Istanbul airport today that could have flown in if they were French national citizens.

So anyway, I appreciate the gentleman's remarks. Just want to let him know that there is still some bipartisanship left in this Congress.

With that, I recognize Mr. Ratcliffe.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. I appreciate all the witnesses being here.

Last night I had the opportunity to hold a telephone town hall with the people of the Fourth Congressional District of Texas, which I am privileged to represent. Now, I had over 8,000 people on the call at one point in time. Of that 8,000 I had more than 300 people submit questions in the queue that they wanted to ask me.

None of that was out of the ordinary. I have done a number of these town hall meetings before and the participation level and folks submitting questions is something that I am used to.

But what was not typical was the uniformity of the questions that I received last night and the lack of diversity with respect to those questions. Because for the first time out of those more than 300 questions, not a single person wanted to ask me a question about Obamacare or about \$18 trillion of debt or about Government overreach and the EPA or climate change.

I had 300 questions about ISIS and Syrian refugees, and only ISIS and Syrian refugees. There is no hyperbole in that statement

at all because trust me, I wanted to answer questions about Obamacare.

But I really think that that speaks to and highlights the depth and the gravity of the concern that Americans have about what we are facing right now. So many of the folks that I talked with really expressed a fear that maybe we were in some sort of a tipping point in American history, so many expressed that they felt a tremendous void in leadership from our President on this issue.

You know I had to agree with them because as you all know sitting here that my constituents know and you know that this was a President that mocked ISIS as the junior varsity that then told us they were on the run. Then told us or admitted that he had no strategy. Then told us right before the Paris attacks that they were contained, and now most recently is lecturing all of us that this is simply a setback and that a change in strategy here would be a mistake.

Bottom line is my constituents don't believe in the leadership that the President is providing. They don't trust him to provide it. In that void they are asking me and other Members of Congress to lead on this issue. So I want to talk about how we can do that.

I want to start with you, General Keane. In your remarks you talk about ISIS having three major thrusts: Defending Syria and Iraq. They want to use their headquarters in Syria to expand the near abroad. They want to use their influence in the far abroad.

So, I wanted to talk to you about how we can limit their success in those regards. I know one of the things that you have talked about today is to step up our military activities in Syria.

But if we have a President that won't act, I don't know—maybe I am missing—passing an AUMF, if a President won't use it, how is that going to help us? What can we do in the absence of a President that won't go along with the coalition in this regard?

General KEANE. Well, the President is the commander-in-chief and foreign policy is largely his lane. He doesn't need much legislative approval to do what he wants to do, and that is the trust that we have in the President of the United States. I think it has served us well you know since the development of the republic itself.

So I don't have any problems with the powers that the President has. I just happen to disagree with him on this, as do others.

I think we will probably see some more incremental change. Some modest improvement to what we already have been doing. We have been watching this for 15-odd months now, this incremental change that will take place. But I don't think that in and of itself is likely to be decisive because it is probably still going to be something far removed from being sufficient. I think that is the path that I believe we are on.

So I am not optimistic that given what happened in Paris and given its implications to the United States, and even given the denominator that I suggested, that we look at it through the prism this happened to us. What actions would we take as a result of it happening to us is the prism that I think we should use.

So I am not optimistic that we are going to get the kind of resources and commitment on the military side. Nor am I optimistic on the political side, which is every bit as important as the military

side here in terms of Sunni participation in Iraq and ending the civil war in Syria.

Being in bed with the Russians is not going to end the civil war because the Russians will insist, as will the Iranians on an Alawite regime staying in power. As long as there is an Alawite regime, regardless of Assad, put him aside, then you are going to have the rebels fighting.

They will continue to fight because they are not, after 250,000 dead and most of their communities and neighborhoods destroyed, going to take a deal like that and leave those butchers in power. So that permeates the civil war.

We need the kind of intensity on this—on both of these issues in Iraq politically and also in Syria that we had for the nuclear development deal. That kind of political and diplomatic intensity, that kind of commitment and resolve to getting an answer, to getting a solution here, and I frankly don't see that.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Thank you, General. My time is expired, but if the Chairman will indulge me, I would like to follow up on—from a military standpoint. Don't misunderstand me. I am not advocating that we commit U.S. combat brigades. I know that you are not either because that is what your testimony says. But you do say—but if necessary at some future date, it should be part of a regional Arab and NATO coalition.

I want to ask you, what would be the signs to you that we have reached that point?

General KEANE. Answer that now? Yes. Well, the sign that we have reached that point is we have not disrupted ISIS in terms of their global strategy. They are still executing that global strategy. People in different cities are being killed as a result of it, possibly God forbid an attack in the United States. That strategy is unfolding right before our eyes.

Then I think that the nations of the world would recognize that we are going to have to do something here because what we are doing is not satisfactory. But I actually believe, with no degree of certainty, but if we actually put the right resources, both military and politically, behind what is taking place in Iraq and Syria, there is a chance for this strategy to actually work without having to commit U.S. brigade combat organizations to do that on any sizable scale.

Most people who look at this problem are not suggesting that we should do any repeat of what we have done in Iraq, or even what we have done in Afghanistan. Even those who believe that now is the time to commit some form of combat brigades to it, are all advocating something modest. I am not in that position yet, but I could get there.

I just want to see us give the current strategy a chance to work, but with all the resources applied to it. We have never done that.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Thank you, general.

Director Olsen and Mr. Bergen, thank you both for being here as well. I wish I had time to ask you questions. I don't, but you have all been generous with your time today with all of us, and I appreciate that. I appreciate the Chairman's indulgence.

With that, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you very much. I have questions for you all. We will see how far I get with those. I probably won't get there.

General Keane, is this threat Islamic?

General KEANE. Yes. It is—radical Islam is centered in a religious-based ideology, where religion is central to their belief system.

Mr. PERRY. I would agree with you. Just some people can't seem to come to that conclusion. I have come to the same one as you have. I know this is kind of rhetorical, but are they at war with us?

General KEANE. Oh, absolutely.

Mr. PERRY. Absolutely.

Do you see this, since you say it is Islamic, and I agree that it is, is this only ISIS? I mean, while we have been sitting here, and I have been sitting here a while as you have, but I just wrote down "ISIS, al-Qaeda, Nusra, al-Shabaab, Haqqani, Abu Sayyef, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, AQAP, AQIM, Khorasan." I mean, we get rid of ISIS, we have got a whole list here is coming right after them, right?

General KEANE. No, I totally agree with that. That is why I have been frustrated for a long time, going back to President Bush's administration, that we focused on the sanctuary that was supporting al-Qaeda, but we should have focused also—that was the right thing to do. Don't make a mistake about that. But we also should have focused broadly on radical Islam as an ideology and as a movement, and how do we organize our efforts against that entire movement?

Because what you don't want to get into, and I think we are on the path of this, is as one of these radical Islamic groups grows up and it becomes a threat to us and we go after it, and then 3 or 4 years later we are dealing with another one. We have never had the collective strategy and alliances to deal with the much larger issue that we are dealing with.

Mr. PERRY. Do you think the—because many people say this—the United States created this phenomena, this issue?

General KEANE. No, that is absolute rubbish.

Mr. PERRY. Well, I agree with you. So, let me ask you this, because I have heard some things in the committee here. I have changed my questioning based on some of the testimony. I keep hearing: How do we keep us safe and be true to our values? Listen, we are a compassionate people. I am the product of legal immigration.

Then kind of keeping with that theme, you know, people act like we are trying to separate the Muslim and non-Muslim population, not understanding that we accept and agree that, look, there are probably a couple hundred million Shia Muslims that are considered apostates by these people, right? They are Muslims, right?

So—but isn't it reasonable to say that the world that we grew up in has changed; that when my grandparents immigrated to the United States, there was no radical Islam. I mean, to speak of, right? I mean, there was Wahhabism and Salafism and those type of things, but not in the context that we currently see it.

So, to act like everything has been the same since the United States has been here, and we just need to continue this policy or these policies without considering the changes, the geopolitical changes, the theological changes occurring in the world, is incredibly myopic, I think. Would you agree with that at all? Or do you—is that a part of the calculation? Shouldn't it be?

General KEANE. Well, I mean, I think, you know—to think what you are getting at is we have been dealing with radical Islam since they took the World Trade Center down in 1993.

Mr. PERRY. But this is recent history.

General KEANE. Now we have been dealing with it rather dramatically since—for 14 years since 9/11. We have been taking in refugees—what?—70,000-plus a year during all of that.

Mr. PERRY. Right.

General KEANE. Peter would tell us if any of those ever committed an act of violence, a terrorist act in the United States. I am not sure there has been any. He could tell us if there has. So, I think we have had in place decent processes. We have focused on this. I think we can do that. I think we can do both here.

I mean, stay true to our values as Americans and what we stand for in the world in terms of our generosity in helping other people. We are also—there is no country on earth that has ever sent its young people armed to put down evil in the world to the degree that America has done as well. That is the most significant generosity that America has expressed to the world in terms of stabilizing the world out there and putting down the thugs and the killers in the world.

Doing that at the expense of our youth and the expense of our sacrifice to do that.

Mr. PERRY. I don't question that, General Keane, at all. But, you know, I hear that one of my esteemed colleagues said that, you know, we need to trust the Government. They are saying that they are doing the best they can. They are doing all they can. This is a robust vetting process. We look at the metrics that only so many of these have come in at this age and this sex and whatever over the course of time.

But understand, you know, just like my colleague here, Mr. Ratcliffe said, the American people are—it is okay and it is understandable and you shouldn't be considered a bigot because you fear what you see happening.

With all due respect to the administration, as Mr. Ratcliffe pointed out, that called these folks the “J.V. team” and said they were on the run. Then admitted that he had no strategy and calls, you know, a hundred people dead in France a setback.

Oh, well, heaven forbid, and forgive the citizens of the United States for being concerned. Heaven forbid.

One last question, if you will indulge me, and I have got a thousand here. But we seem to hear from the administration that there is only one option here. Our option is to do our part to take as many of these refugees as we can within the confines of the law.

Why can't there be—and has there been consideration of an option of a safe zone that is administered by the United Nations with our participation, with the participation of Gulf country allies like

Saudi Arabia, who have been—I understand they don't trust us, nor have we given them any reason to recently.

But why can't that be an option instead of having all these people exfiltrate into Europe and the United States, to stay in that region of the world, and at the end of the day maybe it is less expensive for us in the cost of dollars and lives, and is that something that could be done?

General KEANE. Well, in my testimony, I do think we should have safe zones near the Jordanian and Turkish border that would hold some of the people that may not have the opportunity to leave the country or connected to family that is still in the country. We can protect them. I think we can do that with an international force on the ground, and also protect them in, you know, from the air as well.

So I think that is a course of action. But I think what you have to recognize is that millions of people have been in these refugee camps for years and the tremendous emotional and psychological pressure on any family unit that is experiencing something like that. I think people go to refugee camps in the hope that this is a very temporary situation, and eventually they will be able to go back home. That is what they want to do.

But after 4-plus years of war and rolling into the fifth year, and looking—when they look at it, they don't see any progress. They don't see any end in sight. So I think now what we have, just from a Syrian perspective, which only makes up 30 or 40 percent of these migrating refugees in Europe, there is just an absolute sense of hopelessness and desperation not to ever go back to Syria likely until years later.

In other words, they are running to a new life because they have been pushed to that act of desperation and they have come to the—

Mr. PERRY. I understand, general. I am sure they never—they plan on never going back once they—

General KEANE. You know, we would have to talk to them, but I mean, I think their actions are speaking louder than words. They are just literally leaving everything behind to hope to have a new life. That is what political asylum and refugees coming to this America has always been about. We have always been willing to take—not everyone, but a certain percentage of people who are running as a result of desperation.

We give them the opportunity to have that new life here.

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

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chair recognizes Mr. Zeldin.

Oh, I am sorry. Mr. Katko.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to follow up on some of the comments and interplay between Mr. Bergen and—all three of you, as a matter of fact—and Mr. Keating earlier. They were talking about some of the findings in our Foreign Fighter Task Force, which I chaired, and especially with respect to some of the findings about some of the security gaps in Europe.

I can tell you, when we went there, the Chairman went on a CODEL with myself and several others from the task force, Republicans and Democrats. We first went to Israel to get their perspec-

tive, and then went on the front lines in Baghdad. Then we went to Turkey, and then Western Europe—Berlin and then Brussels and France.

When we got to Western Europe, it was—it became patently obvious that the security gaps were quite significant compared to what we do in the United States. As a matter of fact, quietly on the side, the intelligence officials would acknowledge to us that those security gaps were significant and they were borderline leaving the door open for something to happen.

It happened in Paris. Quite frankly, it was to none of our surprises that event happened there, as tragic as it may be because of what we saw when we over there. So, you know, we are very concerned about that and the findings and the report, I encourage you to take a look at them because I think they mirror what happened in Paris.

The problem I have with that, is that it makes our homeland less safe. Particularly with respect to the Visa Waiver Program. If we don't know if someone is broken bad in Western Europe and then they get it, you know, and the Western Europeans don't know it, it is easy for some of those people to come to the United States. That is a great concern of mine.

So then overlay with that, my work on the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection, which I chair, and, the things we found out about domestic airlines and security of domestic airports. That greatest fear seems to be manifested in what happened at Sharm el-Sheikh.

When you have inside employees who look like they helped facilitate the bombing.

That is a great concern of mine—domestically, as well, and I wanted you to comment on that. I will not that in several incidents in the United States in the last couple of years, which highlight my concern—one being an individual carrying guns from Atlanta to La Guardia. Did it about approximately 10 times. Well over 100 guns. Loaded in a backpack, because an employee in Atlanta brought them into the security area and gave them to him.

Then you have drug trafficking case, and they were introducing a bill in Congress that showed—not only did they—were smuggling vast amounts of drugs through employee access point, but one of them offered to bring a bomb through.

So, the threat is real here, and it has certainly manifested itself overseas with respect to airline security. So, regarding airline security, all of you could comment on your concerns about the airline—situation overseas regarding employees, in particular. Whether it is really that much better here.

The Sharm el-Sheikh, I understand, is a situation—even Western Europe. Because the fact of the matter is, employees at airports around the world get far less screening than passengers that are coming there to visit the airport. So, if anyone wants to comment on that, please.

Mr. BERGEN. I think that vulnerability is—I mentioned earlier the British Airways employee who was trying to get a bomb on a plane who was in touch with the head of al-Qaeda and Yemen, the Anwar al-Awlaki in 2011. I will add to that, a Heathrow employee who was in touch with a self-described member of al-Qaeda who

was getting this guy information about the security environment at Heathrow.

So, I mean, this is not an abstract concern at all. We have seen these cases. I think that—we probably have a better situation in this country. I know DHS in June said that there were going to be more randomized screening of airport employees. Less access to secure areas for people who shouldn't be there.

I don't know if those are being implemented, but clearly, that is a start.

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Olsen.

Mr. OLSEN. Yes, I generally agree. It is a—and I appreciate the committee's work on identifying the vulnerabilities.

We saw these, in particular the one with information sharing when I was at NCTC, and how difficult it would be for—and we saw examples of this, even with Germany and Belgium, and France. I believe over a year ago.

Where, you know, the Germans had some information, and they didn't share it with the Belgians. Didn't share it with the French. As easy it is to move around Europe, sharing information about individuals who are suspected of traveling to Syria is absolutely critical.

Mr. KATKO. I just, to follow up on that. I heard, was earlier this week, perhaps, that France and the United States enhanced their information-sharing agreement and it was hailed as a significant event. To me, it is piecemeal, it is ad hoc, it is intermittent like was mentioned before. Until we get some sort of a comprehensive information sharing system, we are really not—we are really just flying blind. That is what makes me nervous.

That coupled with the fact—the ease of getting into the United States, and the lack of real security with respect to employees at airports, to me, is really a recipe for disaster.

Mr. Keane, do you have anything you want to add?

General KEANE. Well, the only thing I would add is that it is interesting that the terrorists have never given up on the use of an airplane as a weapon for them.

They have been absolutely persistent about that, and to break down whatever security barriers that we have. I think, what we have to recognize is that they are going to continue to do this, and we just have to make certain that we just have the best security barriers out there for—they are not giving up on it.

Mr. KATKO. Yes, and the fact that ISIS, now getting into the game, trying to take down airlines, and perhaps successfully, in the MetroJet incident, really is a game-changer. I think it should be viewed as such. Because it is not just one group trying to do it. It is definitely—ISIS.

The way they are radicalizing people over the internet and trying to get people to break bad without even coming over to Syria—that is a—compounds that concern for me.

You have a million people in United States flying—working at airports—close to a million people. You just need one guy or one woman to break bad, and you have got a real problem.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you. Chair recognizes Mr. Zeldin.

Mr. ZELDIN. I would like to thank Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce for putting together this hearing today. Obviously, very timely with what happened last week. But their leadership on this issue for a long time is very much appreciated by my constituents.

I would also like to thank all of our witnesses for being here as well. I know that you have been answering a lot of questions over the course of the last several hours, and a lot of our people back home are paying attention to what you have to say, and your time here is very valuable, so thank you.

I personally believe that the best humanitarian victory that we can provide is to defeat ISIS overseas. I would like to get your thoughts on the humanitarian victories that can be pursued, that maybe we are not pursuing now where the refugees currently are in the Middle East.

So if you can address that first. I know—there is a lot of focus here about, you know, what to do to be good citizens of the world and—in bringing these individuals to the United States. I would like to get more of your thoughts and ideas on what we could do to provide that assistance abroad, rather than here.

Mr. BERGEN. You know, there is a very good piece in foreign affairs this month by a couple of specialists in refugees—most, as we have already indicated, most of these refugees are in Jordan and in Turkey. You know, Jordan is—you know, doesn't have a particularly strong economy. So, I mean, your—if these people are just going to be condemned to the refugee camps that General Keane has described without a chance of working, that is really a big problem.

So, aid to the countries that are taking these refugees, to get these refugees to actually have a job, I think is quite important and probably wouldn't be a great deal of money. Particularly if you are trying to persuade them not to come as a flood into Europe and the West.

Mr. OLSEN. I was going to say exactly the same thing as Mr. Bergen. I mean the numbers are what is so difficult here—4 million-plus Syrian refugees have left the country.

The vast majority are in countries around the region—Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon. Countries that, particularly with respect to Jordan and Turkey, we need to be helping us in this fight. Countries that will potentially face destabilization because of the enormous numbers. So, we need to work with them directly in helping them with the refugee problem.

The 10,000 that the United States is talking about taking is really a very small and, thinking about this process process, a relatively manageable number compared to what is being faced in the region and also in Europe.

General KEANE. You know, some of this is really challenging because the conditions in the region at large. Beyond Syria and the brutality of the killing that has taken place there. But throughout the region, you know, to include Africa, I mean, there are serious issues there in the lack of much-needed political reform, social injustice, and lack of equal economic opportunity that, in fact, drive people to a sense of desperation.

They drive them—it drives them into the streets to demonstrate against a government that is denying them all of that and it—and

at some point it also drives them away from the region as well. And take—accept all the risk that it means to put your family, you know, on a raft and cross a major body of water. What an extraordinary act of desperation that this.

So you give a sense of the seriousness of those problems in the region. But the nations in the region also have to change here, because they are driving some of these conditions. So that is the one thing. That is a long-term strategy and unfortunately, we have lost our leverage with a number of these countries in the region because of this nuclear deal that we have been involved in for 3-plus years.

We don't have the political leverage we had in the past.

Yes, not only should some of these countries change the conditions that they need, and that is a longer-term thing, but it is critical to keep people at home providing economic opportunity and social justice. But it—given the crisis, given the humanitarian crisis that exists right now, there are a number of countries in the region, or even coming close to what they could do to help with this crisis. You know, to ease some of the burden that Jordan and Turkey and Lebanon feel who really are the repository of the ones that are coming out of Syria to reassure.

We are not leveraging that to the point where we are getting some real results out of it. After all, these countries do have finances that can help with it. If they didn't—even if we can't persuade them to build—accept the people in their own country. They do have finances that can help the situation, and that is not happening.

So, your instincts are right. There is a lot we can do in the region to be sure that are driving this, but also, what is happening in the region is related to radical Islam, as well. That is why you need a comprehensive strategy to deal with this. Because at that aspect of making basic and fundamental reform in terms of political reform, social justice, and economic opportunity, that is a long-term strategy that you need.

That is beyond the immediate crisis.

Mr. ZELDIN. Well, I thank you, general. Thank you to all the witnesses, again, for answering all the questions over the course of this hearing. I personally, as I stated earlier, believe that the No. 1 humanitarian victory that we can provide for those in that region is to do everything in our power, working with some newly-motivated countries across the world—specifically the French, the Germans, the British, the Russians, who are now motivated as well to defeat the threat. To annihilate the threat.

They are not contained. They are not the J.V. squad. Everything else as far as improving the conditions on the ground is impossible without us eliminating the threat.

Again, Chairman McCaul who is still here, who has been an active, vocal presence and leader, and I am so grateful he is Chair of the Committee on Homeland Security, and he is doing a lot to ensure that my constituents, as well, are being heard. As well as constituents in his district from coast to coast.

So thank you again, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, thank you, and I know your New York constituents, that means a lot for me to hear that from you. I

agree, until this crisis is resolved, we are going to continue to have a refugee crisis and problem. It would be nice if maybe some of the Sunni Arab nations or Gulf states could help finance some of this mess, would take in some of the refugees. But today, they are taking zero.

I know this will be heard hopefully across international boundaries, but they have the wherewithal. They are Sunni Arabs, after all, fleeing Assad and ISIS. Why aren't they taking them? Instead, they are fleeing to Europe and to the United States. A refugee means that they want to return to their homeland. They are not going to return once they go to Europe and the United States.

So I would implore those nations to maybe change their way of thinking and take these refugees and be responsible in that effort. I can think of no better place that has the wherewithal to house them, to take them, and to finance it. Then when the conflict, if we can ever get it resolved, they can return back to their homes.

I know the gentlelady from Texas wants to be recognized for a closing statement.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, part of my closing statement will be thanking General Keane, we have been together before on a number of issues; and Mr. Olsen, I almost thought Congressman Olsen was here, but a different Olsen that is here. Thank you so very much. Peter Bergen, thank you again all of you, your constant input into the process of what America is all about.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do want to thank you. I thank Mr. Royce. I thank Mr. Engel and Mr. Thompson. To reinforce the bipartisanship of this committee, meaning the Committee on Homeland Security, and certainly I have seen it with the courtesies extended to me on Foreign Affairs.

But let me add these points, concluding points to the record, if I might. First of all, I want every measure of security and every documentation necessary to protect the American people. We may have a difference of opinion dealing with refugees and the threat that they pose. I just put 2 or 3 numbers into the record for our reflection.

I think the Chairman noted it. Turkey has taken 1.9 million refugees; Lebanon, 1.4 million refugees. Obviously, they are in the neighborhood. Egypt has taken 132,000; Germany, 98,000; Sweden, 64,000; France, 66,700; Jordan, 629,000. Anybody that has been to the camps in Jordan recognizes the burden that they have had.

I want us to protect ourselves by smart legislation. I have introduced the No Fly For Foreign Terrorists. I believe that the documentation that we use should be vetted and screened to make sure that we keep those who go to the fight out of the United States. I think that is the intent behind what we do tomorrow, or what there is intended to do tomorrow.

My only concern is as we go forward, I believe we are going to find common ground. I want the American people to know that we are not operating out of fear. I take the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt very seriously: There is nothing to fear but fear itself. We must look them in the eye. Those who are evil, we must rid ourselves of the evilness. There are many groups.

I have been a strong opponent to Boko Haram and the heinousness as they spread across North Africa. But let's do it smart.

So let me finish on these points. No. 1, I have been, as Mr. Katko, the Chairperson of the airport—of the Transportation Security Committee. There is no greater danger, I believe, than our exposed airports. Let me qualify that by saying we have come a long way since 9/11.

But I do believe that one of the things that this committee will hopefully raise up—Mr. Katko has been a strong supporter of this—is every measure a person that comes on the airport as an employee or comes to the backside of the airport or the front side of the airport, is screened extensively, that we know every single person that is going on the ingress and egress of the airport.

I think that is crucial, and I think the Egyptian catastrophe with Russia, who has finally acknowledged that it was a bomb, would be the case.

Second and third, and I will be closing, intelligence. I think with restraint, there was obvious intelligence of what happened last Friday. We have got to share as it is possible our intelligence. I want to applaud our intelligence community. People must recognize the intelligence and act on it when it comes to their attention.

Finally, I want to say that as we speak about this issue, I take issue with the definition or the utilization of radical Islam. I think it is radical Jihad. I think there are persons who have abused the faith. Make it very clear, and I hope that our friends who are of the faith, as many of us would stand against any abuse or misuse of any faith that we are in, that would be used for violence, that we stand against it. But we do more harm, I think, if we characterize a religion.

So Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for the opportunity to be in this hearing, but more importantly let us understand what refugees are, fleeing for their life. Let us understand that we live with Muslims in this country, some who have died on the battlefield. Let me say that I think now we can collaboratively work with allies such as France, but many others, including the Arab states, must stand up to the multiple threats and take the fight to them as the United States works with them.

No President is perfect on their assessment of international terror, which is the new fight that we have, or National security. But we can be as perfect as we possibly can, using the skills and tools and the democratic values that have been so precious to this Nation.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me, and I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you. We thank the witnesses for your perseverance, your strength, getting through the hours of testimony. I just got word that Mr. Abaaoud is confirmed dead, so that is a good day in the war against the terrorists, and hopefully this will end in our lifetime.

Mr. Bergen, I must say you have been very patient sitting there, and I know that the other witnesses have been able to respond to a lot of questions. I want to give you the last word, to close out the hearing.

Mr. BERGEN. I would say that there has been a lot of consensus amongst the Members here, except perhaps Dana Rohrabacher who I think is often an outlier. There seems to be a lot of consensus that there is a robust system in place, but that there needs to be,

you know, it just needs maybe a little bit of a hard look just to make sure it is as robust as it can be.

You know, I am very privileged and honored to have been asked to be part of this.

Thank you.

Chairman McCAUL. Again, my thanks to all the witnesses. The record is open for 10 days if Members have additional questions.

Thank you so much for being here, all three of you.

Without objection, this hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:03 p.m., the committees were adjourned.]

