

# CURRENT TERRORIST THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES

---

---

## HEARING

BEFORE THE

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

OF THE

## UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2015

Printed for the use of the Select Committee on Intelligence



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

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

24-733 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2017

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office  
Internet: [bookstore.gpo.gov](http://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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

[Established by S. Res. 400, 94th Cong., 2d Sess.]

RICHARD BURR, North Carolina, *Chairman*  
DIANNE FEINSTEIN, California, *Vice Chairman*

JAMES E. RISCH, Idaho	RON WYDEN, Oregon
DANIEL COATS, Indiana	BARBARA A. MIKULSKI, Maryland
MARCO RUBIO, Florida	MARK R. WARNER, Virginia
SUSAN COLLINS, Maine	MARTIN HEINRICH, New Mexico
ROY BLUNT, Missouri	ANGUS KING, Maine
JAMES LANKFORD, Oklahoma	MAZIE K. HIRONO, Hawaii
TOM COTTON, Arkansas	

MITCH McCONNELL, Kentucky, *Ex Officio*  
HARRY REID, Nevada, *Ex Officio*  
JOHN McCain, Arizona, *Ex Officio*  
JACK REED, Rhode Island, *Ex Officio*

---

CHRIS JOYNER, *Staff Director*  
DAVID GRANNIS, *Minority Staff Director*  
DESIREE THOMPSON SAYLE, *Chief Clerk*

# CONTENTS

**FEBRUARY 12, 2015**

## OPENING STATEMENTS

Burr, Hon. Richard, Chairman, a U.S. Senator from North Carolina .....	1
Feinstein, Hon. Dianne, Vice Chairman, a U.S. Senator from California .....	2

## WITNESS

Hon. Nicholas Rasmussen, Director, National Counterterrorism Center .....	4
Prepared statement .....	9

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Summary of the Reengagement of Detainees Formerly Held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba .....	37
--	----



## **CURRENT TERRORIST THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES**

---

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2015**

U.S. SENATE,  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32 p.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Richard Burr (Chairman of the Committee) presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Burr, Feinstein, Risch, Coats, Rubio, Collins, Blunt, Lankford, Cotton, Wyden, Warner, and King.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BURR, CHAIRMAN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH CAROLINA**

Chairman BURR. Good afternoon. We're going to get the hearing started. I want to welcome Director Nick Rasmussen from the National Counterterrorism Center. Nick, we've invited you here today in an open session. I think there were some of the news outlets, Vice Chair, that said this would never happen with me being Chairman, that everything would be closed, and I just want to point out we are having an open session.

This is to provide the Senate and the American people with an update on the current threat from terrorism. The Committee remains concerned about the expanding, evolving nature of this threat and the challenges facing the intelligence community and the evolving nature of the threat.

This is the first of what I hope will be a number of open hearings that should give the intelligence community an opportunity to better inform the public of its current efforts and challenges. As Mr. Rasmussen and I have talked about: Here's what we do; here's sort of how we do it; as much as we can tell; but more importantly, here's why the American people should understand why this is important to them. It's about their defense.

Given the nature of the material we're here discussing and the fact that this is an open hearing, I want to remind everyone to use extreme caution to protect intelligence sources and methods. While this is an excellent venue to engage Nick Rasmussen, I reserve the right to immediately suspend any questions or comments that may be sensitive in nature or whose response could disclose classified information.

The Congress is currently debating several matters that impact our counterterrorism efforts, including an AUMF on the conflict in Iraq and Syria. As we take up these issues, I want to make sure

that our members and the public understand the serious and credible threat that many of these groups present to the security of the United States and to our allies.

In addition to addressing the threat itself, I hope you'll discuss the impact that media leaks, encryption, and other collection challenges are having on your ability to detect and to thwart terrorist attacks.

Nick, I'm afraid that your job is getting harder at a time when we can least afford it. I've spent more than ten years as a member of the House and Senate Intelligence Committee, as has the Vice Chairman, and have watched closely the threat environment as it's evolved since the attacks of 9-11.

The threats we face today are much greater than those we faced since 2001. Al-Qaeda in 2001 was estimated to have less than a thousand members. The group was relatively geographically contained, and plots against our interests were infrequent by today's standards. Today we face groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which is often described as a terrorist army, with memberships estimated to be in the tens of thousands.

We face terrorist safe havens spanning North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia and are confronted by a host of different plots almost daily. We have evacuated our embassies in Libya and Yemen due to threats against our personnel, and terrorist groups are becoming more creative, threatening our citizens and allies with non-metallic IED's and massive truck bombs; in addition, their mastery in the use of the Internet and social media to disseminate propaganda, to recruit fighters that often already have access to western countries, like we have seen in Europe, Canada, and even in New York.

One of the biggest lessons we've learned from the September 11th attacks was that we cannot give terrorists a sanctuary from which to plan attacks against us. Arguably, ISIL now has control of the largest territory ever held by a terrorist group. This safe haven provides ISIL and other extremists with the time and space they need to train fighters and to plan operations. It also has provided them with the access to weapons and a network that can be used to support external operations.

We knew about the threat we faced from al-Qaeda prior to 9-11, but we failed to act. I just hope we don't make the same mistake again.

Nick, I once again thank you. I welcome you here, and I now turn it over to the distinguished Vice Chairman.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DIANNE FEINSTEIN, VICE  
CHAIRMAN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA**

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman.

Director Rasmussen, welcome. Let me say that I've been reading a number of your intelligence products, and particularly on threats yesterday. I think your agency is doing a very good job. I think you're outwardly bound and just the way we think it ought to be. So I want to thank you for that good work.

Today provides us an opportunity for the Committee, as the Chairman has said, to discuss in unclassified terms the terrorist threats to the United States and to the rest of the world. This is

really particularly important, that the American public understand these threats, because they provide the necessary context for a number of policy decisions that the United States Government is facing and that we have to help make. These threats affect whether we authorize the use of force against ISIL, the need for our continued military deployments to counter terrorism efforts, and the need to reauthorize intelligence tools necessary to keep our country safe.

I believe that the terrorist threat facing the United States is as diverse and serious as at any time in our history. I have never seen more serious threats. These come from both inside our country and outside. More so than any other terrorist organizations we've seen in the past, ISIL is seeking to radicalize followers around the world and inspire attacks in our homeland.

They are extraordinarily visible. If you look at AQAP, just as much a danger to us, but much more invisible. The uniforms of ISIL, their equipment, their taking over the city, the children that have been beheaded, the Christians who have been sacrificed, the Iraqi Army that's been—700 frog-walked and then shot down in cold blood, all of this has been on television. So Americans have come to know the threat that ISIL is.

The guidance from ISIL to potential terrorists is clear. It wants westerners to come to Syria and to Iraq to fight. ISIL instructs them how to carry out attacks at home, and that's what we're up against. There are more than 100 Americans who have either traveled to Syria or attempted to travel there. There are 20,000 foreign fighters who have traveled to Syria and who will return home. At least 3,400 of them are from Western Europe, and that includes visa waiver countries, where they are a plane ticket away from the United States.

What we don't know is how many people are inside the United States following ISIL on the news and on social media and who are becoming inspired to carry out their own attacks.

Separately, al-Qaeda remains focused on conducting attacks against our homeland. While AQ in the ungoverned areas of Pakistan may be as weak as it has been in many years, al-Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula, or AQAP, still poses a clear threat. The group is enjoying a safe haven in Yemen with the Houthi overrun of the government there.

Remember, AQAP was behind the attacks against Charlie Hebdo. The group has already attempted to send non-metallic and essentially undetectable bombs into our country on four occasions, beginning with the Christmas Day 2009 Abdulmutallab "Underwear Bomber." They do have a bomb that can go through a magnetometer. And AQ has published step by step directions for building that bomb in the latest "Inspire" magazine.

Our efforts to confront AQAP are significantly diminished with the removal of President Hadi of Yemen. The Houthis may have no love for AQAP, but over time the Yemeni government had become a strong counterterrorism partner that we no longer have. Closing our embassy in Sanaa was the right choice, but the instability in Yemen presents AQAP with new freedom to roam and kill.

Elsewhere, there is a power vacuum in Libya, maybe even civil war. In much of northwest Africa groups are using that territory for a safe haven. I could go on and on.

But let me just conclude with one remark that I hope Director Rasmussen will address. On June 1, three provisions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which we call "FISA," will expire. They are the business records authority, the roving wiretap, and the lone wolf. If these authorities expire, the intelligence community will lose key tools to identify terrorist groups and to protect the homeland. This includes NSA's phone metadata program as well as the authority for domestic FBI investigations, but also other important authorities.

So I look forward to your testimony, Director Rasmussen, and again I thank you for the excellent work that you are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Vice Chairman.

Let me say for the purposes of members, it's my intent once the testimony has been received that we will go to five-minute questions based upon the order of attendance. Hopefully, that has been shared with everybody.

We will at this time turn to the Director for as much time as your testimony might take, Nick.

**STATEMENT OF HON. NICHOLAS RASMUSSEN, DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER**

Director RASMUSSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice Chairman, and members of the Committee. I have submitted for the record a much longer statement that has gone around the world and discussed in some depth the threat picture as we see it.

Thank you first for inviting me today to discuss the terrorist threat the United States is facing worldwide and also to discuss NCTC's particular efforts to counter that threat. As both the Chairman and Vice Chairman have noted, today's threat environment is increasingly diverse and dynamic, as is the wide array of terrorist actors that is driving this environment. Those actors are located across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and they can increasingly reach into the West, even into the United States.

The emergence of Iraq and Syria as extremist battlefields and ISIL's related expansion in reach has brought about changes in that terrorism landscape. The emergence of new groups in the wake of the Arab uprisings since 2011 has also altered the threat picture, as most of those groups are focused more on achieving local gains in their regions.

We're also experiencing a new level of specialization and fragmentation within that larger terrorism landscape. We believe we might be entering into an era in which the centralized leadership of terrorist groups matters less than it did previously. We may be entering a time in which group affiliation and identity is more fluid and extremist narratives are more focused on a wider range of alleged grievances and enemies. As Paris showed us, this may also be a time in which personal connections among individual terrorists may be more relevant to their plotting than their individual group affiliation or identity.

Now, even in this dynamic and increasingly complex threat environment, I still believe it is possible to differentiate to some degree the threat we are facing in the U.S. and in the West from the threat we are seeing in the regions where many of our terrorist ad-



versaries are located. As we look at that global terrorism picture, we are trying to be careful not to paint that picture with a single broad brush, and I'll try to explain.

In the United States and in the West—and by “the West” I traditionally mean Western Europe—the threat of catastrophic attack has been significantly reduced as we and our partners have been able to apply consistent counterterrorism pressure to some of the most dangerous groups that we face. Now, clearly sustaining that counterterrorism pressure and the key elements of that counterterrorism pressure in those key places around the world is an essential condition to preventing the reemergence of some of the more complex threats that would aim to have catastrophic impacts on our homeland.

But in this current environment, our assessment is that we face a much greater, more frequent recurring threat from lone offenders and probably loose networks of individuals. Measured in terms of frequency and numbers, it is attacks from those sources that are increasingly the most noteworthy feature of the terrorism landscape.

Since May of last year, 10 of the 11 attacks we've seen in the West were in fact conducted by these individual extremists, two here in the United States and the nine others occurring in Europe, Canada, and Australia. Now, the majority of these attacks, these 11 attacks, look more like what we would expect from random acts of violence rather than the effort at large-scale destruction that we saw in terrorist plotting immediately after 9–11.

In going forward, we believe that both individuals and smaller networks will try to mount similar attacks, to try to capitalize on and build momentum from the media coverage that these kinds of attacks generate.

Now, it's also important to note that what I would call these smaller-scale or lower-level attacks still can cause amazingly tragic human suffering. They can clearly generate fear among local populations, and they clearly have profound political effects on the societies in which these attacks come. And I'm in no way seeking to minimize the impact that such attacks can occur.

Furthermore, our increasing focus on these smaller-scale, more-frequent, lower-level attacks in the West should not in any way suggest that we're no longer concerned with the ability of established terrorist groups and even some individuals to target western aviation, which would certainly constitute a large-scale and potentially catastrophic attack. Mitigating that threat to aviation remains at the very top of our priority list in terms of disruption efforts.

It also remains true that we still face moderate and small-scale threats from groups that are more structured and cohesive, like traditionally al-Qaeda was and some of the traditional al-Qaeda affiliates and allies. And although the number of groups posing that truly transnational threat is somewhat smaller and our efforts to place pressure on them have met with some success, it's important to remember that these groups are persistent and they're patient with their desires and their plans to strike the homeland.

Now, in contrast to the threat we face here at home and in western capitals, our allies and partners in Africa, Asia, and the Middle

East are facing in some ways a much different threat. As you know, some of the most ambitious and active terrorist groups are located in countries that are continuing to work through the effects of the Arab uprisings in recent years, places like Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Other terrorist groups are very active in countries undergoing insurgencies, places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and again Yemen. In all of these countries, terrorist groups are trying to displace weak governments or to make significant territorial gains.

In other countries, terrorists are contributing to population displacements that are affecting millions of people on a huge scale. This is happening in places like Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, and Afghanistan. Some of these terrorist groups are also responsible for stoking sectarian tension and contributing to the proliferation of Sunni on Shia violence.

Now, amidst all of this insecurity, violence, and political instability around the world, terrorists are carrying out ever more violent attacks much more frequently in these countries and often on a much greater scale than what we've seen recently conducted here in the West. In the last year alone, we've assessed that there have been hundreds of attacks in these countries that have, unfortunately, caused thousands of deaths. Just last month, as the world focused its attention on Paris and the attacks there, at the same time, as this Committee well knows, attacks on local populations by Boko Haram in Nigeria, AQAP in Yemen, were taking place on a significantly larger scale.

Now, despite the fact that I've tried in some small way to differentiate between the threat environment in the West and the threat environment we see in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, there is one phenomenon which draws those two separate threat pictures tightly together. That phenomenon is the continued flow of foreign fighters to Syria, and particularly those fighters who come from western countries. While the majority of the roughly 20,000 foreign fighters have in fact come from the Middle East and from North Africa, more than 3,400 have, we assess, come from western countries.

Now, at NCTC we're working to advance a broad effort across our Center to track foreign fighters, working very closely with the rest of the intelligence community and with our partners around the world. NCTC compiles information on known and suspected terrorists who travel to Syria, and we house that data in our Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment, known as "TIDE." That effort has created a valuable forum for identifying, tracking, and sharing information on known or suspected terrorists with key stakeholders, and that includes the law enforcement community, the counterterrorism community, the screening, and the watch-listing communities.

Also, this TIDE effort has also directly helped to resolve inconclusive identity information, enhance TIDE records with more information, and, most importantly, upgrade watch list status for several hundred known or suspected terrorists.

NCTC officers are also working to fully identify foreign fighters who potentially have access or connections to individuals in the homeland so that they, too, can be watch listed.

Now, to do all this my officers are using NCTC's unique access to a wide range of IC and law enforcement information, wider than anywhere else in the IC. This access includes our own data holdings as well as our embedded officers from ten other intelligence organizations.

Now, to prevent individuals from traveling to Syria in the first place, my officers are also working to diminish the appeal of terrorism. In partnership with the Department of Justice, with Department of Homeland Security, and with the FBI, we have helped develop tools to counter violent terrorism and raise awareness among our law enforcement and community leaders across the country. We have tried to tailor these tools to address foreign fighter recruitment, particularly in this updated ISIL context, and we have received a significant amount of positive feedback from the communities with whom we have worked. There's definitely a demand signal for more of this across the country.

Now, despite these concerted efforts, the nature of today's threat is, as we discussed at the beginning and was evident in both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman's statements, the nature of today's threat is challenging significantly our ability to identify and disrupt terrorist plots. This is coming at a time when we are, unfortunately, losing capability.

Today the terrorist-related communications of our terrorist adversaries are increasingly intermingled with communications that are not relevant to our terrorism work, but they are not separate and easily identified streams of information. Signals intelligence is increasingly important in denied areas around the world where we face challenges with getting information from human sources. It's difficult for us to operate in places like Syria and Libya and increasingly now in Yemen, and terrorist groups are watchful for the possibility that they could be infiltrated by human sources.

Due to the Snowden leaks and other disclosures, terrorists also have a greater understanding of how we seek to conduct surveillance, including our methods, our tactics, and the scope and scale of our efforts. They have altered the ways in which they communicate, and this has led to a decrease in collection. We have specific examples, which I believe we have shared with the Committee and the Committee staff in classified session, specific examples of terrorists who have adopted greater security measures, such as using various new types of encryption, terrorists who have dropped or changed email addresses, and terrorists who have simply stopped communicating in ways they had before, in part because they understand how we collect.

Leaks have also driven a wedge between the government and providers and technology companies. Some companies that were formerly recognizing that protecting the Nation was a valuable and important public service now feel compelled to question or oppose our efforts.

Now, these challenges that I just described in the collection environment—and they go to the question you raised, Mr. Chairman—all of this places a huge, huge premium on information-sharing among governments who all face this challenge. This information-sharing gives us the best chance to identify potential lone actors

and loose networks of the sort that are carrying out the most frequent attacks.

Now, while the sheer number of foreign fighters that I talked about earlier threatens to overwhelm the law enforcement and intelligence capabilities of some of our key partners around the world, the problem has actually spurred information-sharing to a level that we have rarely seen, if ever, and that's a positive development. So I would argue that this is one tiny bit of good news embedded within a threat picture and a foreign fighter problem that is of increasing concern, as I hope I have made clear.

I'll stop there now for now, Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice Chairman, and I look forward to your questions and the rest of the Committee. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Director Rasmussen follows:]

**Hearing before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence  
“Current Terrorist Threat to the United States”  
February 12, 2015**

**Nicholas J. Rasmussen  
Director  
National Counterterrorism Center**

Thank you Chairman Burr, Vice Chairman Feinstein, and members of the Committee. I appreciate this opportunity to be here today to discuss the worldwide terrorist threat and our efforts to counter it.

My statement reflects the collective work and insights of the National Counterterrorism Center’s dedicated men and women. Although I am new to my position as their Director, I feel privileged and honored to lead them. I want to express my appreciation to the Committee for its unflagging support of these hardworking officers.

Hearings like this are an opportunity to continue this constructive dialogue with the public and its elected representatives on the terrorist threat we face as a nation today.

**Strategic Assessment: The Global Terrorist Landscape in 2015**

Today’s terrorist threat environment is dynamic and dangerous, as are the wide array of terrorist actors driving it. They are located across a wide swath of Africa, Asia and the Middle East with the ability to reach into the West, and even the United States.

Events during the past several years—and especially the past nine months—have demonstrated a new level of specialization and fragmentation within the larger terrorism landscape. New groups have emerged in the wake of the Arab uprisings in 2011. Most are located in the Middle East and North Africa and are primarily focused on achieving local gains. We have witnessed the rise of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) with its ambitious vision, quick territorial expansion, extreme violence and brutality, and innovative use of social media. All this is happening, even as we assess the leadership cadre of core al-Qa’ida – the group that planned and executed the 9/11 attacks – is at its weakest point since before 2001.

We might be moving into a new era in which centralized leadership of a terrorist organization matters less, group identity is more fluid, and violent extremist narratives focus on a wider range of alleged grievances and enemies.

The quantitative and qualitative scale of threat we are facing in the U.S. and the West is different from the threat in the countries and regions where many of these terrorist groups are located. In the U.S. and West, we have reduced the threat of catastrophic attack similar to what we experienced on September 11, 2001 due to consistent counterterrorism (CT) pressure that we, and our partners, have been able to bring to bear against some of the most dangerous and violent

terrorist groups. Continuing key elements of that pressure will be essential to preventing the return of the higher-scale threats.

Recent actions by al-Qa'ida adherents overseas underscore our continued concern regarding the potential of high-impact attacks, including the ability of terrorist groups and individual violent extremists to target Western aviation. As you know, last summer the United States and United Kingdom implemented enhanced security measures at airports with direct flights to the United States, which included new rules aimed at screening personal electronic devices. Undeterred by regular improvements and enhancements to security measures, terrorist groups continue to see commercial aviation as a desirable symbolic target, and these aspirations are not limited to al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Despite the persistent concerns over aviation security, we also still face a range of moderate and small scale threats from a small, but persistent number of transnationally-oriented groups, including al-Qa'ida and some of its affiliates and allies. These groups remain intent on striking the United States and are content to patiently develop their access and operational plans over multiple years. I will go into greater detail on the threats we see from specific terrorist actors later in my statement.

We face a much greater recurring threat from lone offenders and possibly loose networks of individuals. Of the eleven attacks in the West since last May, ten were conducted by individual violent extremists. Two occurred in the U.S.—one in September, and another in October. The majority of these lone offender attacks more closely resemble the size, scale, and sophistication of random acts of violence than they do the destructiveness of the organized and well-developed plots that we witnessed in the years after September 11, 2001. These attacks have happened more frequently, yet thankfully resulted in relatively few casualties. We expect that individuals and small networks will try to maintain and build upon this momentum and capitalize on the media coverage that these attacks generate.

In contrast, our allies and partners in Africa, Asia and the Middle East face a much different threat outlook than we are facing in the West.

We assess countries in these areas—as well as many other nations worldwide—face a higher level of threat, which is manifesting in a different form than the West has experienced recently. In all of these regions, terrorists are trying to displace local governance or make territorial gains. They are conducting violent attacks on a much more frequent basis and at a larger scale than in the West. In the past year alone, we assess that there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of attacks in these regions, resulting in thousands of deaths. Terrorists active in these regions are contributing to population displacements that affect millions. Some are also responsible for stoking sectarian tensions and contributing to the proliferation of Sunni-Shia violence, particularly within Muslim-majority countries.

Many of the most ambitious terrorist groups are located in countries continuing to work through the effects of the Arab uprisings, including Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Others are active in countries undergoing insurgencies, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, and most of the countries previously mentioned.

Despite distinct threat environments, the broader international community shares concern about the greater than 20,000 foreign fighters from more than 90 countries who have traveled to Syria since the conflict began. The rate of travelers into Syria exceeds the rate of travelers who went into Afghanistan/Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, or Somalia at any point in the last ten years.

While the majority of foreign fighters have emanated from the Middle East and North Africa, more than 3,400 westerners have traveled to join the fight against the Assad regime. Within that pool of westerners, more than 150 U.S. persons from a variety of backgrounds and locations in the United States have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria. A handful of these U.S. persons have died in Syria.

The foreign fighter threat is multi-faceted and will likely affect the U.S. and West for years in ways that are distinct from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. We all share the concern that fighters will attempt to return to their home countries or regions, and look to participate in or support terrorism and the radicalization to violence. We have witnessed this phenomenon in the lone offender attack against the Jewish Museum of Belgium, which killed four. We have also seen it manifested in an ISIL-claimed attack against the Corinthia Hotel in Libya, which killed nine, including an American. However, our partners abroad will face the added burden of those who opt to remain in Iraq and Syria and become citizens of ISIL's self-declared caliphate, or seek out other battlefields or violent extremist experiences using the personal connections and networks they gained during their time in conflict.

I will continue my remarks by delving into further detail on the terrorist threats to the homeland and then outline the threat to U.S. interests overseas. I will then focus the remainder of my remarks on outlining some of NCTC's efforts to address this complicated threat picture.

#### **Threat to the Homeland**

The up-tick in moderate-to-small scale attacks in the West since last summer by individual extremists reinforces our assessment that the most likely and immediate threat to the Homeland will come from Homegrown Violent Extremists (HVEs) or individuals with loose affiliation to terrorist groups overseas. ISIL's rise during the past year and its adept exploitation of the media attention generated by the group's actions has created unprecedented opportunities for the group to reach potential recruits or influence those inspired by the group's message. Lone actors or insular groups who act autonomously pose the most serious HVE threat, and we assess HVEs will likely continue gravitating to simpler plots that do not require advanced skills, outside training, or communication with others.

We are closely monitoring for signs of homegrown violent extremists in the United States plotting attacks here. The success of small arms attacks in France, Canada and the hatchet attack against police officers in New York City underscores the threat from emboldened HVEs and, how the rapid succession of these attacks may motivate some to attempt to replicate these tactics with little-to-no warning. We are concerned by the growing trend by extremists in the West toward carrying out simple opportunity-driven attacks, as those further diminish our insight into terrorist operational planning and readiness.

These attacks coupled with those in France, Australia, and similar to the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings highlight the danger posed by lone actors and insular groups not directly tied or loosely tied to terrorist organizations, as well as the difficulty of identifying these types of plots before they take place because they often exhibit few behaviors that law enforcement and intelligence officers traditionally used to detect a readiness to commit violence. The perceived success of previous lone offender attacks combined with al-Qa'ida's, AQAP's, and ISIL's incendiary propaganda promoting individual acts of terrorism has raised the profile of this tactic.

HVEs make use of a diverse online environment that is dynamic, evolving, and self-sustaining. This online environment is likely to play a critical role in the foreseeable future in radicalizing and mobilizing HVEs towards violence. Despite the removal of important terrorist leaders during the last several years, the online environment continues to reinforce a violent extremist identity, supplies grievances, and provides HVEs the means to connect with terrorist groups overseas.

This boundless virtual environment, combined with terrorists' sophisticated use of social media, makes it increasingly difficult to protect our youth from sometimes horrifically brutal propaganda. ISIL's online media presence has become sophisticated at disseminating timely, high-quality media content across multiple platforms. The group's English-language propaganda is drawing westerners to Syria. These violent extremists are making contact with terrorist groups and gaining battlefield experience, which could pose a threat to the Homeland if they are able to return undetected.

#### **The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)**

ISIL is a terrorist organization that has exploited the conflict in Syria and sectarian tensions in Iraq to entrench itself in both countries. The group's strength and expansionist agenda poses an ongoing threat to our regional allies and to U.S. facilities and personnel in both the Middle East and the West. In November, ISIL publicly announced its expansion into Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, and last month the group publicly confirmed the announcement of an affiliate in South Asia. The allegiance of violent extremists in these countries provides ISIL greater operational reach and helps legitimize its self-appointed position as the leader of all Muslims. The growth of ISIL's support in Libya most likely provides the group with an additional safe haven where it can collaborate with other North African terrorists aligned with ISIL and to possibly plot attacks.

Then-Iraq-based ISIL exploited the conflict and chaos in Syria to expand its operations across the border. The group, with al-Qa'ida's approval, established the al-Nusra Front as a cover for its Syria-based activities, but in April 2013, publicly declared its presence in Syria under the ISIL name. ISIL accelerated its efforts to overthrow the Iraqi government, seizing control of Fallujah last January. The group marched from its safe haven in Syria and across the border into northern Iraq, killing thousands of Iraqi Muslims on its way to seizing Mosul this June.

Along the way, ISIL has aggressively recruited new adherents. Some joined ISIL to escape Assad's brutal treatment and oppression of his own people. Others joined out of



frustration, feeling marginalized by their own governments. But many joined out of intimidation and fear, forced to choose either obedience to ISIL or a violent, oftentimes public death.

Our latest assessment on ISIL's strength places the group's manpower between 20,000 and 31,500 members. Sunni groups that ISIL is fighting with in Iraq also augment the group's strength in that battlefield. ISIL's control over the Iraq-Syria border enables the group to easily move members between Iraq and Syria, which can rapidly change the number of fighters in either country. ISIL is also drawing some recruits from the more than 20,000 foreign fighters who have traveled to Syria.

ISIL's momentum on the battlefield in Iraq and Syria has slowed in recent months in the face of coalition airstrikes and ground offensives by Iraqi Security Forces, Peshmerga, and Shia militia forces. Coalition airstrikes have also killed several important ISIL military commanders. Nonetheless, ISIL maintains a deep bench of leaders and continues to launch local offensives to capture terrain while shoring up defenses in its strongholds. The large swaths of eastern Syria and western Iraq that ISIL controls provides the group established sanctuaries from which they plan, train, and plot terrorist acts with little interference. Its battlefield successes also have given ISIL an extensive war chest derived from black-market oil sales, smuggling, robberies, extortion, and ransom payments for hostages.

ISIL has used its territorial gains, access to foreign fighters, and sophisticated media operations to challenge al-Qa'ida for primacy within the global terrorist movement. While the leadership of al-Qa'ida's recognized affiliates have reaffirmed their allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri and criticized ISIL's declaration of a caliphate, ISIL's ascendance has caused rifts within some al-Qa'ida-aligned groups, which we continue to monitor.

ISIL's safe haven in Syria and Iraq and the group's access to resources pose a direct threat to U.S. personnel and facilities in the region. This includes our embassy in Baghdad and our consulate in Erbil, as well as the U.S. military advisors deployed in Iraq. ISIL also continues to hold foreign hostages, after its brutal execution of Americans James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and Peter Kassig.

ISIL's threat extends beyond the region, to the West. There have been at least 18 ISIL-linked attacks against western interests in the past year, resulting in 24 deaths and 11 injuries. In January, ISIL's affiliates in Libya probably carried out a vehicle-borne improved explosive device (VBIED) and small-arms attack on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli. Last September, ISIL's spokesman and external operations chief called on ISIL sympathizers worldwide to attack Westerners and their property, a call to action that the group has repeated in its English-language propaganda. The attacks in Ottawa and Quebec this past October, for which ISIL publicly claimed responsibility, and most recently the attacks against a police officer and kosher grocery in Paris by a French violent extremist who claimed the attacks for ISIL, clearly demonstrate the threat posed by ISIL-inspired extremists and returning foreign fighters.

We remain mindful of the possibility that an ISIL-sympathizer could conduct a limited, self-directed attack here at home with no warning. We also remain concerned that ISIL may place a greater priority on more organized attacks on the West, as opposed to propaganda driven

lone offender attacks. The group's ambitions have grown in parallel with its capabilities; it sees itself in competition with core al-Qa'ida and could develop its own anti-Western plotting capability and draw from some of the thousands of foreign fighters in theater.

#### **Al-Qa'ida Core and Pakistan/Afghanistan-based Groups**

Turning now to core al-Qa'ida and Afghanistan/Pakistan-based groups, we anticipate that, despite core al-Qa'ida's diminished leadership cadre, remaining members will continue to pose a threat to western interests in South Asia and would attempt to strike the Homeland should an opportunity arise. Pakistan and Afghanistan-based al-Qa'ida adherents still aspire to conduct attacks against the West, even if the group's diminished leadership could not replicate the impact and casualties of a 9/11-style attack.

Despite ISIL's challenge, al-Zawahiri remains the recognized leader of the global terrorist movement among al-Qa'ida affiliates and allies, and the groups continue to defer to his guidance on critical issues. Since the start of the Arab unrest in North Africa and the Middle East, Zawahiri and other members of the group's leadership have directed their focus there, encouraging cadre and associates to support and take advantage of the unrest.

We have long forecast a degradation of the security environment in Afghanistan and, with the end of our combat mission there, we are entering a period where we begin to measure the impact of this decline. Al-Qa'ida's primary presence in Afghanistan currently consists of small numbers in the country's remote northeast, and our chief concern is that a power vacuum could emerge which in turn might offer the group space to reconstitute there and pose a continued threat to the Homeland.

***South Asia-Based Militants.*** Pakistani and Afghan militant groups—including Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its splinter elements, Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LT), and the Haqqani Network—continue to pose a direct threat to U.S. interests and our allies in the region, where these groups probably will remain focused. We continue to watch for indicators that any of these groups, networks, or individuals are actively pursuing or have decided to incorporate operations outside of South Asia as a strategy to achieve their objectives.

TTP remains a significant threat in Pakistan despite the ongoing Pakistan military operations in North Waziristan and Khyber, and leadership changes last year that probably contributed to the most internal fracturing since the group's formation. In August, TTP commander Abdul Wali left the group to form Jama'at ul-Ahrar (JuA), and, in October, the TTP spokesman and five regional amirs announced their decision to leave the group and pledge allegiance to ISIL. JuA subsequently claimed responsibility for the November attack at the Wagah Border Crossing that killed at least 50 people, and TTP conducted the 16 December attack on a school for military officers' children in Peshawar that killed approximately 150 people, mostly children. TTP warned the attack was just a "trailer," suggesting additional attacks might be planned and underscoring the threat the group still poses within Pakistan, especially against soft targets.

LT remains focused on its regional goals in South Asia. The group opposes improving relations between India and Pakistan, and its leaders consistently speak out against India and the United States, accusing both countries of trying to destabilize Pakistan. LT has attacked western interests in South Asia in pursuit of its regional objectives, as demonstrated by the targeting of hotels frequented by westerners during the Mumbai attacks in 2008. LT leaders almost certainly recognize that an attack on the U.S. would result in intense international backlash against Pakistan and endanger the group's safe haven there. However, LT also provides training to Pakistani and Western militants, some of whom could plot terrorist attacks in the West without direction from LT leadership. In December, LT's operations chief Zaki-ur Rehman Lakhvi, incarcerated in Pakistan since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, was granted bail, a move immediately opposed by the government of Pakistan. LT remains a threat to U.S. interests in South Asia regardless of Lakhvi's status.

In Afghanistan, we have turned the corner from a combat mission to one where we train, advise, and assist our Afghan partners to combat threats to their stability. Chief among these threats is the Taliban and the Haqqani Network, which, despite suffering some setbacks from Pakistani military incursions into Waziristan, remain capable of carrying out high-profile attacks against remaining U.S., NATO, Afghan government, and other allied nation targets. As evidence of this threat, and in contrast to the usual relative lull in violence during the winter months, the Taliban, Haqqanis, and their militant allies carried out multiple of attacks in Kabul and other major population centers at the end of 2014.

#### **Al-Qa'ida Affiliates and Allies**

**AQAP.** Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) remains committed to conducting attacks in the West and desires to target western interests in Yemen while operating in areas of Yemen with minimal government presence. January's attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine office in Paris was AQAP's first successful lethal operation in the West. Although the degree of command and control of the operation is still under investigation, both the attackers and AQAP attributed the attack to the group. AQAP's three attempted attacks against the United States to date—the airliner plot of December 2009, an attempted attack against U.S.-bound cargo planes in October 2010, and an airliner plot in May 2012—demonstrate the group's continued pursuit of high-profile attacks against the United States. In a propaganda video released in December, a senior leader threatened American citizens all over the world, highlighting AQAP's persistent interest in targeting the U.S.

AQAP also presents a high threat to U.S. personnel and facilities in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, especially during a time of political instability and growing sectarian violence. As you know, the United States has suspended embassy operations in Yemen and temporarily relocated staff out of Sana'a. We continue to track closely the status of AQAP plotting against our facilities and personnel in Yemen that would suggest a repeat of a 2013 credible threat which prompted the Department of State to close U.S. embassies in the Middle East and North Africa. We are concerned AQAP could take advantage of the political chaos in the capital to carry out attacks against our personnel or other Western targets in Sanaa. The group may also plan additional attacks against Huthis to further destabilize the situation in Sanaa. AQAP has also intensified its attacks against the Huthis, as evidenced by their October large-scale VBIED attack

in Sanaa which resulted in more than 50 deaths, all while continuing to target the Yemeni government. In addition, last July AQAP launched its first successful attack in Saudi Arabia since 2009, underscoring the group's continued focus on operations in the Kingdom. Separately, the failed rescue attempt of American journalist Luke Somers is likely to embolden the group with continued attempts to kidnap westerners in Yemen, in particular Americans.

Finally, AQAP continues its efforts to radicalize and mobilize to violence individuals outside Yemen through the publication of its English-language magazine *Inspire*. In December, the group released the 13<sup>th</sup> edition with instructions for crafting a concealable non-metallic explosive device, similar to the explosive AQAP used when it attempted to blow up an airliner bound for Detroit in December 2009, and called for individuals to attack Western airliners. Previous editions have encouraged "lone offender" attacks in the West, naming specific targets in the United States, United Kingdom, and France and provided instructions on how to construct a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.

***Al-Shabaab.*** We continue to monitor al-Shabaab and its foreign fighter cadre as it continues to threaten U.S. interests in East Africa. We assess it is a potential threat to the Homeland, as some al-Shabaab leaders in the past publicly called for transnational attacks, but its interest appears to still be primarily focused on operations in East Africa. The group has attracted dozens of U.S. persons—mostly ethnic Somalis—who have traveled to Somalia since 2006.

Al-Shabaab is mainly focused on undermining the Somali Federal Government and combating African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and regional military forces operating in Somalia, as demonstrated by its Christmas Day attack on security forces at the Mogadishu International Airport. Al-Shabaab's mid-September 2013 attack on the Westgate mall in Kenya demonstrated that the group continues to plot against regional and Western targets across East Africa as part of its campaign to remove foreign forces aiding the Somali Government.

***AQIM and regional allies.*** Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its allies remain focused on local and regional attack plotting, including targeting Western interests. The groups have shown minimal interest in targeting the U.S. Homeland.

In Mali, the French-led military intervention has pushed AQIM and its allies from the cities that they once controlled, but the groups maintain safe haven in the less populated areas of northern Mali from which they are able to plan and launch attacks against French and allied forces in the region. Elsewhere, AQIM is taking advantage of permissive operating environments across much of North Africa to broaden its reach. We are concerned that AQIM may be collaborating with local violent extremists, including Ansar al-Sharia groups in Libya and Tunisia.

In 2013, two highly capable AQIM offshoots, Mokhtar Belmokhtar's al-Mulathamun battalion and Tawhid Wal Jihad in West Africa, merged to form the new violent extremist group—al-Murabitun—which will almost certainly seek to conduct additional high profile attacks against Western interests across the region. Belmokhtar—the group's external operations commander—played a leading role in attacks against Western interests in Northwest Africa in

2013, with the January 2013 attack on an oil facility in In-Amenas, Algeria and double suicide bombings in Niger in May of that year. Last year, Belmokhtar reportedly spent time in Libya to escape counterterrorism pressure in Mali, and probably to collaborate with Ansar al-Sharia (AAS) groups and other violent extremist elements in the country to advance his operational goals.

***Al Nusrah Front.*** Although it has struggled to counter ISIL's gains in Syria, al-Nusrah Front is one of the most capable groups within the Syrian opposition and has mounted suicide, explosive, and firearms attacks against regime and security targets across the country; it has also sought to provide limited public services and governance to the local population in areas under its control. Several Westerners have joined al-Nusrah Front, a few of whom have perished in suicide operations, including at least one American, raising concerns capable individuals with extremist contacts and battlefield experience could return to their home countries to commit violence. In April 2013, Al-Nusrah Front's leader, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, pledged allegiance to al-Qa'ida leader al-Zawahiri, publicly affirming the group's ties to core al-Qa'ida. Al-Zawahiri named the group al-Qaida's recognized affiliate in the region later in 2013, ordering ISIL to return to Iraq. Following airstrikes in late-September, al-Jawlani also publicly called for retaliatory measures against those responsible.

***Khorasan Group.*** The Khorasan Group refers to a network of al-Nusrah Front and al-Qa'ida core extremists who share a history of training operatives, facilitating fighters and money, and planning attacks against U.S. and Western targets. The group—composed of fighters with experience in conflicts in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and North Africa—is taking advantage of the Syrian conflict to advance attacks against Western interests. The group is actively recruiting Westerners to serve as external operatives to blend into their home countries.

As of September, intelligence indicated that operatives from the group were nearing the execution phase for an attack in Europe or the Homeland, which prompted U.S. military airstrikes to protect our interests. The IC is continuing to monitor the group for reactions to these strikes to inform our assessments of their effectiveness.

***Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent.*** In September, al-Qa'ida announced the establishment of its newest affiliate, al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). We assess the creation of AQIS is not a reaction to al-Qa'ida's split with ISIL, though the timing of the announcement may be used to bolster al-Qa'ida's standing in the global terrorist movement. AQIS, which is led by Sheikh Asim Umer, has stated objectives that include violence against the U.S., establishing Islamic law in South Asia, ending occupation of Muslim lands, and defending Afghanistan under Mullah Omar's leadership. AQIS claimed responsibility for the thwarted hijacking in Karachi of a Pakistani Navy ship in September, asserting that the plot's objective was to hijack two Pakistani ships to attack U.S. and Indian naval vessels and reiterated that the U.S. was its primary target.

***Boko Haram.*** Boko Haram waged unprecedented violence in northeast Nigeria last year and is expanding its reach into other parts of Nigeria and neighboring states to implement its violent interpretation of *sharia* law and suppress the Nigerian Government and regional CT

pressure. Since late 2012, Boko Haram and its splinter faction Ansaru have claimed responsibility for five kidnappings of Westerners, raising their international profile and highlighting the threat they pose to Western and regional interests. Boko Haram has kidnapped scores of additional Nigerians in northeast Nigeria since the kidnapping of 276 school girls from Chibok, Nigeria in April 2014. The group this year has captured all of the Nigerian military outposts in northeast Borno State, giving it control of a 380 mile continuous stretch of international borders, which Chad is currently trying to retake from it, and for the past two weeks has conducted multiple attacks on the Borno State Capital of Maiduguri, the group's birthplace which it intends to make the capital of its Islamic state. The group's violent attacks have led to over one million internally displaced persons and hundreds of thousands of refugees in neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

#### **Threat from Iran and Shia Groups**

In 2014, Iran, largely through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) Commander Qassem Soleimani, and Hizballah managed an increasingly expansive and effective military campaign against ISIL in Iraq, primarily through its support and use of sectarian political and military proxies to support the Iran-aligned, Shia-dominated government in Baghdad. At the same time, Iran and Hizballah remain committed to defending the Assad regime, including sending billions of dollars in military and economic aid, training pro-regime and Shia militants, and deploying their own personnel into the country. Iran and Hizballah view the Assad regime as a key partner in an "axis of resistance" against Israel and the West and are prepared to take major risks to preserve the regime as well as their critical transshipment routes.

Beyond their role in Syria and Iraq, Iran and Lebanese Hizballah remain committed to conducting terrorist activities worldwide and we are concerned their activities could either endanger or target U.S. and other Western interests. Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism, and works through the IRGC-QF and Ministry of Intelligence and Security to support groups that target U.S. and Israeli interests globally. Hizballah has engaged in an aggressive terrorist campaign in recent years and continues attack planning abroad. In April 2014, two Hizballah operatives were arrested in Thailand and one admitted that they were there to carry out a bomb attack against Israeli tourists, underscoring the threat to civilian centers.

#### **NCTC's Counterterrorism Efforts**

As I discussed earlier, the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the broader international community have increasingly expressed concerns about the greater than 20,000 foreign fighters who could potentially return to their home countries to participate in or support terrorist attacks.

NCTC is undertaking a broad Center-wide effort to track foreign fighters traveling to Syria, working closely with our Intelligence Community partners. We work to resolve the identities of potential fighters to uncover possible derogatory information in NCTC holdings. Additionally, the U.S. Government continues to work closely with foreign partners to combat threats emanating from Syria.

As part of this effort, NCTC aggregates information on known or suspected terrorists traveling to Syria in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE). This effort has created a valuable forum for identifying, tracking, and sharing information with law enforcement, counterterrorism, screening, and watchlisting communities on known or suspected terrorists.

Our metrics-based tracking and assessment of these terrorist identities has directly helped to resolve inconclusive identities, enhance TIDE records, and upgrade watchlist statuses on several hundred known or suspected terrorists.

TIDE is much more than a screening database – it is an analytic database. It feeds the unclassified screening database so that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of State and other agencies have timely and accurate information about known and suspected terrorists. As disparate pieces of information about known or suspected terrorists (KSTs) are received, trained analysts create new records, most often as the result of a nomination by a partner agency. The records are updated—or “enhanced”—regularly as new, related information is included and dated or as unnecessary information is removed. In all cases, there are several layers of review before a nomination is accepted into the system. In the case of U.S. persons, there are at least four layers of review, including a legal review, to ensure the derogatory information is sufficient and meets appropriate standards.

To better manage and update the identities of individuals who have travelled overseas to engage in violence in Syria and Iraq, we have created a special threat case in TIDE. This is a special feature in the TIDE system which allows us to focus efforts on smaller groups of individuals. A threat case links all known actors, and their personal information, involved in a particular threat stream or case and makes that information available to the intelligence, screening, and law enforcement communities.

NCTC’s management of this unique consolidation of terrorist identities has created a valuable forum for identifying and sharing information about Syrian foreign fighters—including ISIL—with community partners. It has better integrated the community’s efforts to identify, enhance, and expedite the nomination of Syrian foreign fighter records to the Terrorist Screening Database for placement in U.S. Government screening systems.

NCTC’s Pursuit Group, whose mission is to identify non-obvious terrorism connections and develop leads for other agencies to investigate, is working to fully identify foreign fighters entering Syria who have potential access or connections to the Homeland, so they can be watchlisted. This analysis leverages NCTC’s unique access to a wider range of IC and law enforcement information than any other agency, both within NCTC’s counterterrorism data holdings as well as natively through embedded officers from ten other agencies.

#### **Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)**

The growing number of individuals going abroad as foreign terrorist fighters to Iraq and Syria only emphasizes the importance of prevention. Any hope of enduring security against

terrorism or defeating organizations like ISIL rests in our ability to diminish the appeal of terrorism and dissuade individuals from joining them in the first place.

To this end, we continue to refine and expand the preventive side of counterterrorism. We have seen a steady proliferation of more proactive and engaged community awareness efforts across the United States, with the goal of giving communities the information and the tools they need to see radicalization in their midst and do something about it before it manifests itself in violence. NCTC, in direct collaboration with DHS, has led the creation of CVE tools to build community resilience across the country.

Working and closely coordinating with the Department of Justice (DOJ), DHS, and with the FBI, NCTC is engaged in this work all across the country, and I will point to just one example.

You will recall the case last year in which three teenage girls allegedly attempted to travel from Denver to Syria by way of Frankfurt, Germany, where their travel was disrupted. In the aftermath of that incident, we, in concert with DOJ, DHS, and FBI, sent our officers on multiple occasions to meet with the greater Denver community and to raise awareness among community and law enforcement audiences about the terrorist recruitment threat. The briefing, developed in partnership with DHS, is now tailored to address the specific issue of foreign fighter recruitment in Syria and Iraq; and we have received a strong demand signal for more such outreach.

This is not a law enforcement-oriented effort that might be perceived as intimidating. Rather, it is an effort to share information about how members of our communities are being targeted and recruited to join terrorists overseas. Seen in that light, we have had a remarkably positive reaction from the communities with whom we have engaged.

We continue to expand our CVE tools. With our DHS colleagues, we have created and regularly deliver the Community Resilience Exercise, a table top exercise that brings together local law enforcement with community leadership to run through a hypothetical case study based scenario featuring a possible violent extremist or foreign fighter.

## **Conclusion**

Confronting these threats and working with resolve to prevent another terrorist attack remains counterterrorism community's overriding mission. This year NCTC enters its second decade in service to the nation, and while the Center has matured tremendously over that period, we are focused on positioning ourselves to be better prepared to address the terrorist threat in decade to come.

Chairman Burr, Vice Chairman Feinstein, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I want to assure you that our attention is concentrated on the security crises in Iraq and Syria—and rightly so. But we continue to detect, disrupt, and defeat threats from across the threat spectrum.

Thank you all very much, and I look forward to answering your questions.



Chairman BURR. Director, thank you very much.

I'll restate: We'll go to five-minute questions based upon the order of attendance, and that's Burr, Feinstein, Wyden, Warner, Cotton, Coats, Collins, Blunt, Lankford, and Risch.

Mr. Director, I'm going to go right to the issue that the Vice Chair raised with you, and that's the three FISA provisions that are set to expire the 1st of June, and specifically: If they were to—if we allowed those to expire, what would be the impact on the NCTC's ability to discover and thwart terrorist attacks here at home?

Director RASMUSSEN. As I know the President and the DNI have stated, Director of National Intelligence have stated, it is essential that we retain these important capabilities. The ability to have insight into what our adversaries are doing, the connections they may have both internationally and potentially into the homeland, is an essential part of the business of identifying individual terrorists and then building out the picture of the networks in which terrorists operate.

So fundamentally, reauthorization is something that we are counting on in the intelligence community as an important part of our work.

Chairman BURR. Director, earlier this week the Administration announced the creation of a Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center, or they referred to it as CTIIC, within the ODNI. The national center will reportedly be modeled after NCTC and the National Counterproliferation Center, which have struggled under the ODNI management. I'm hesitant to authorize the creation of a new center until some of these lingering management challenges can be resolved, not least of which is NCTC's inability to fully hire.

Can you assure the Committee that NCTC will be able to fill the majority of your open vacancies by the end of the year?

Director RASMUSSEN. I believe I can, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to report that since, I would say, over the last five, six months we have taken significant strides forward in addressing just that concern and problem, not only improving our ability to hire analysts and officers from outside of government, outside the intelligence community, to bring new blood into our center, but also increasing the level and the inflow of detailees, officers detailed from other intelligence community entities, into NCTC, which, as you well know, Mr. Chairman, that's part of the lifeblood of NCTC, having that contribution of officers from FBI and from CIA, from NSA, from the Defense Department, DIA, every member of the community.

We're making I think tremendous progress. If we had had this discussion a year ago, I would have given you a much more cautious and hedged response because I wasn't necessarily confident that we could get to where we needed to be. But just in the last few months, I've had tremendously productive engagements with FBI, with CIA, to get our numbers with FBI and CIA to the levels we need them to be. So I'm pretty confident I can give you the assurance that you're looking for, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Nick, in many ways the threat from terrorism is growing, it's not declining. The number of threat streams you are facing is shocking, and your ability to collect intelligence on those threats is waning. As the principal adviser to the President on

counterterrorism, are you concerned about the trend and the impact it's having on our security?

Director RASMUSSEN. In my statement I certainly talked about the wider array, the more diverse array of threats and terrorist actors that we're seeing around the globe. Clearly, that puts increasing pressure on our capacity to respond and to react in all of those different places, to develop effective strategies in all of those places.

As we've talked about in closed session as well, it's not always possible for the United States to transform the environment in some of these areas where the terrorism threat is growing. So we have to develop an approach that allows us to mitigate and disrupt the terrorist threat networks that are most particularly aiming at U.S. interests, while also looking to see if there are ways in which we can over time develop stronger partnerships with countries in particular regions, so that we don't own the burden ourselves of doing that mitigating and disrupting.

But unfortunately, while you are doing that long-term work to establish a more sustainable counterterrorism framework with our partners, you have to deal with, as you said, Mr. Chairman, every day a constant inflow of new terrorism-related threats. So you're trying to keep up with every one of those most recent threats at the same time you're trying to build a more sustainable CT partnership, network of CT partnerships around the world.

So doing that long-term work while we're also managing the day to day is increasingly a challenge, I will admit.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Mr. Director.

Vice Chairman.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rasmussen, I think last year when we had our worldwide threat hearing—this is a little different than that—the Khorasan Group was sort of put out there as a group that could really be effective in launching an attack against the United States. As I'm reading your written remarks, particularly on page 8, you talk about two highly capable AQIM offshoots, Belmokhtar's al-Mulathamun Battalion and Tawhid wal-Jihad in West Africa, merging to form the violent extremist group al-Murabitun, which is one that we really haven't heard of before.

How big is this? That's the first part of the question. Secondly, how do you rank the groups and their threats toward the homeland? Which one should we be the most wary of?

Director RASMUSSEN. Let me try to bite that off in a couple different chunks, Madam Vice Chair. We did point in our statement this year to the emergence of this group in North Africa, which is an offshoot of a group we've long known and which you've long known about, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. But one of the offshoots of that group that grew out of a leadership dispute and internal fights about direction is a group that we know as the al-Murabitun Battalion, which includes known individuals with links to al-Qaeda, but again, as I've said, they have engaged in a little bit of internal feuding that has put them into separate organizations, at least from the way we look at it.

We look at that grouping as a pretty significant threat to our interests in and across North Africa. As far as an ability to project a threat potentially to the homeland, I would describe that as more

potential than actual at this point. But they certainly have taken note of what has happened in Western Europe, and I would over time be concerned about the ability of groups like this in North Africa having the ability to project into Europe.

Of course, I consider attacks that could happen in Europe potentially as attacks that could involve significant U.S. interests. We have significant diplomatic, business, and other presences in most Western European capitals. So I don't take for granted that Americans would not be a part of any attack that took place in Europe.

To your question on the Khorasan Group, as we've talked about before, that is a group, a loose network of individuals affiliated, long a sense of affiliation with core al-Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan, and we've long worried about their ability to potentially not only engage and impact the fighting in Syria, which they're engaged in doing, but also, while they're engaged in that activity, also looking for opportunities to engage in external operations against U.S. interests, western interests, into Europe and ultimately even the homeland.

There's not much more I can say about that in this session, as you well know. But this is among the very, very highest counterterrorism priorities for the intelligence community, is to try to understand this network with more granularity, with more specificity, and to develop disruption options to go after it.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. Is AQAP still number one in terms of—I'm talking about the homeland now.

Director RASMUSSEN. I guess I try to avoid number one, number two, number three, because as soon as you say that someone who isn't watching the picture as closely as you are and as we are says: Well, your number three must not be getting the right attention. And they'd be right to think that, but I think they'd also be missing something.

As I said in my statement, even though what we're seeing more frequently in the West are these low-level attacks conducted by individuals who aren't networked necessarily, we still are absolutely fixated and focused on AQAP's efforts to develop an aviation attack against the United States, for all of the reasons that were mentioned in both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman's statements: the attempt to propagate the recipe for putting explosives on an airplane; the continued effort, even amidst all the fighting in Yemen for AQAP, to mount an external operation. That is all still very much at the top of our counterterrorism priority list from an analytical perspective, from a collection perspective, and from a disruption perspective.

So when something like ISIL seizes—or rises to the forefront of concern, we don't have the luxury of downgrading our effort, our level of effort against some other threat stream or set of terrorism actors that we already had at the top of our list.

I hope that responds.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Senator Wyden.

Senator WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director, it's great to see you again. I think you've done a good job of laying out counterterror challenges. In my years on the Com-

mittee, we've seen the threats move from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan to insurgents in Iraq to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. So these are very real threats, very real threats.

The question then becomes, how do we focus on ways to deal with these threats, rather than in effect use approaches that waste time and resources? We've got to focus on approaches that work.

The bulk collection, the bulk phone records collection that has been widely debated, has been described by the President's review group—and I'll just quote here—as “information that could readily have been obtained in a timely manner using conventional Section 215 orders.” So these are all public documents, public reports. Mike Morell, for example, a veteran of the CIA, supported this document.

My question to you is, first: If Congress passes the legislation ending bulk collection, would intelligence agencies still be able to collect the information you and they need to protect our country against terrorist operations?

Director RASMUSSEN. I look at this in terms of, as the President said last year, making sure that we're in a position to preserve the capability that that bulk collection gave us. That's why I support, as did the Director of National Intelligence, the legislation that would transition the program to one that would preserve that capability without requiring the Federal Government to hold the records in the way that it had previously.

Senator WYDEN. So you're proposing that we end the bulk collection program, but in effect the phone companies can still keep their recordkeeping practices, right?

Director RASMUSSEN. I'm comfortable that that capability would—that step would preserve our capability if that became—

Senator WYDEN. Very good. One other question. Mr. Director, my understanding is—and it would be very helpful here—that there are some questions about whether the Office of the Director of National Intelligence has provided you at the National Counterterrorism Center with a copy of the full classified version of the Committee's report on the use of torture. Have they provided you that report?

Director RASMUSSEN. A select number of my officers had access, I'm certain, to the executive summary. I'd have to get back to you—

Senator WYDEN. Have you seen it?

Director RASMUSSEN. I've seen portions of it, Senator.

Senator WYDEN. Have you asked for a copy of the report?

Director RASMUSSEN. I have not personally asked for a copy of it, no. I asked that I be allowed access to it in order that we perform the role that we did perform at the tail end of last year when we were asked to participate in the effort to develop threat assessments.

Senator WYDEN. Well, there are some additional details in the classified version that I think are relevant. So I hope that you will ask for a copy and review it. But I look forward to working with you. I think it is helpful to have on record that if the Congress passes the legislation ending bulk collection you and the other intelligence agencies can go forward doing the important work to deal with the threats to this country. They are very real. I'm interested

in working with you on the matter of the report as well. I hope that you will ask for a copy of the report and review it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director RASMUSSEN. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman BURR. Senator Warner.

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Rasmussen, nice to see you again. Thank you for your great service.

I do think I want to make a brief comment on Senator Wyden's comment. We'll have a spirited debate, I think, on that FISA issue. I do think there are challenges, as we've discussed before, both privacy and security-related, around holding data at the telcos, and that'll be the subject of, I know, ongoing conversations.

I want to raise—ISIL—AQAP has been the focus of most of your testimony, but I'd like to raise one other area I think in your testimony you've touched on, but I'd love to hear before the group. When we think back to last year in April, when we were all at that moment astonished by the actions of Boko Haram in Nigeria, seizing 300 girls from a school, 200 of which I believe are still missing, and subsequent actions of the United States in sending troops and advisers to that region.

We've seen since that time about a million and a half people displaced, north of 3,000 killed in 2014, and a coalition arise. I think just recently Niger joined with Nigeria, Benin, Chad, and Cameroon for an 8,700-person force.

Could you give us an assessment whether these countries have the capability, whether the tide is swaying? Obviously, Nigeria has postponed their elections. The first question would be: Can they take on this threat of Boko Haram? It's remarkable that, with the atrocities they commit, they're still pushed off the front page because of the extraordinary atrocities of ISIL and others. And what type of potential threat that poses beyond that immediate region?

Director RASMUSSEN. Thank you, Senator. I think you're on to something with the question, by raising the question of regional partners. There's no question but that Nigeria faces significant, serious challenges to mounting on its own a response against Boko Haram. Even in the most stable political environment, they would face those challenges. As the Committee well knows, right now Nigeria is in the midst of a potential political transition that will test even further their ability to mount a coherent response among their political, intelligence, and military communities.

So one solution to that is to try to get regional partners, as you described, more involved: Niger, Cameroon, other partners. They are increasingly stepping up to that challenge with their admittedly limited resources, but their shared sense of threat.

I think we will be in a position to try to enable these partners, to try to develop a regional approach against Boko Haram, and doing what we can, principally through advising and assisting and in providing intelligence where it's appropriate. I think that can increase their effectiveness.

I think it remains to be seen—it certainly isn't the case yet that the tide has been turned against Boko Haram, and it remains to be seen if the regional partners can in concert turn that tide. I would not want to get out ahead of that in terms of predicting any-

thing. This is a part of the world where we do not have the largest resource footprint, so we do what we can. But we may have to re-evaluate Boko Haram's trajectory over time if we see that the regional partners are overmatched.

Senator WARNER. Do you see any evidence of—there has been some reported evidence of Boko Haram's reaching out to other groups in terms of network. Could you comment on that?

Director RASMUSSEN. Exactly. The increased intercommunication between Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the northern part, northwestern part of Africa, and even with ISIL, all of that just adds to the picture of an interconnected terrorist network with the ability to share resources, personnel, expertise, and tradecraft in a way that serves as a multiplier for their own capabilities, and that's a disturbing trend.

Senator WARNER. Mr. Chairman, I think this is an area that we need to keep our eye on as well. Obviously, there's huge challenges. Thank you.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Senator Warner.

Senator Coats.

Senator COATS. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

In response to the questions that Senator Wyden raised, you indicated that you and the Director of National Intelligence have assessed that ending the bulk collection program and transferring it to communication companies would not impede in any way doing the necessary tracking and usage of that to reach the information that you want. But since that hasn't been done and since we haven't really laid out a procedure, the procedures how we're going to do that, and we don't know exactly how it's going to be collected, and so forth and so on with a much shorter period of time of holding that information, how can you be so certain that this is not going to degrade in any way your ability to access that information?

Director RASMUSSEN. I guess I would say I can't say anything with complete certainty, Senator. But looking at the provisions as we understood them, we believe the legislation would have maintained the essential capability that we were requiring that we maintain.

Senator COATS. Well, the legislation calls for a shortened period of time for holding that information. We've seen in Paris and some other instances where we need to go deeper than that in order to determine the connections and the network that we need to assess.

Director RASMUSSEN. I certainly agree. But—

Senator COATS. Well then, how can you say with assurance that ending that bulk collection is going to not leave you short-handed in terms of what you need to assess?

Director RASMUSSEN. I can't predict in the future exactly how, what information requirements we would have.

Senator COATS. Well then, how can you come to a conclusion? Don't you leave a little, well, we're not sure, Senator, exactly how this is going to work, so we can't guarantee that it'll give us the same access as we have under the bulk collection program?

Director RASMUSSEN. Again, I look at this in terms of capability, and my understanding of the legislation is it would have provided us with that essential capability. I'm a little bit burdened here be-

cause as NCTC Director, I follow in the footsteps of two previous NCTC Directors, Mike Leiter and Matt Olsen, who were distinguished national security lawyers, who lived this architecture in ways that I haven't. So I'm less in a direct position to speak on exactly how these programs work in the same way that my predecessors were.

Senator COATS. That's why I raised the question in my mind about your answer to Senator Wyden, who I think took that as a definitive yes, the DNI thinks this is fine and NCTC Director thinks it's fine, and therefore why in the world would we ever question it? As you know, there's a difference of opinion in the intelligence community among the different agencies as to whether or not this is the right thing to do.

Director RASMUSSEN. I understand that, and that's why I'm relying on my experts, who have assured me that preservation of this capability gives us what we need. As with anything, it certainly involved giving and taking, give and take on particular provisions. I'd be happy to talk about it further with you in closed session or I can come to you with—

Senator COATS. I understand, and I think we should do that, Mr. Chairman, because I think there's still some major questions that need to be resolved here.

In the remaining time that I have, do you—through your agency or somewhere in the IC community, what is the appeal to the thousands of westerners that fall prey to the appeal of engaging in this depravity, which they obviously are all aware of and are so attracted to this? I'm trying to get to the source, get my head around the fact that, how could someone who has perfect capability, seeing exactly what they're walking into, think that's the thing to do?

Now, if you're of the same ideology perhaps from certain countries in the Middle East, but coming from Western Europe and coming from America, more civilized and cultured societies—"civilized" might not be the right words, but I think you know what I mean—are you looking at that? Is there a way for us to counter with social media saying, this is what you're getting into, which is a pretty tough situation?

Director RASMUSSEN. That's a terrific question, Senator. ISIL's propaganda runs the gamut. You're absolutely right to point to some of these horrific videos involving executions of hostages or opposing fighters on the battlefield. That clearly sends a signal and that attracts its own element.

But ISIL's propaganda also includes a fair number of messaging examples in which they paint a very bucolic, fulfilling life in the caliphate, that they project to individuals who may be disenfranchised, disadvantaged, dissatisfied in their home environments. So that—so the range of factors that grab people who end up going to a place like Syria right now ranges from the ideological, which you pointed to, but also to the psychological, catering to some sense of wanting to belong to something, no matter how depraved that thing that they would be belonging to is. Then for others there is just the sheer sense of adventure and a chance to throw your hat in with the winning side, is a part of the calculation.

We've tried to disaggregate all of these different factors in the messaging that we're seeing, so that we can try to develop some counter-messaging strategies to go at it. The President is convening this CVE summit next week, drawing in all of our European partners, many of our Middle Eastern partners, to try to get a better handle on this, to try to—unfortunately, as we all know, the government is probably not the best platform to try to communicate with the set of actors who are potentially vulnerable to this kind of propaganda and this kind of recruitment. That's something we deal with all the time.

We try to find ways to stimulate this kind of counter-narrative, this kind of counter-messaging, without having a USG hand, a U.S. Government hand, in it. People who are attracted to this don't go to the government for their guidance on what to do, not the U.S. Government and certainly not their governments in the Middle East. So statements from senior religious figures in Middle East capitals are useful, but it's pop culture that is going to get—in many cases the voices of pop culture or voices more relevant to these experiences of these young people is going to have a far more profound impact on them than anything we say.

Senator COATS. Yes, I think so, too. We need to take the same advantage of social media that they've taken. And I agree, it shouldn't be government-directed. It ought to be coming from other areas of the culture reaching out to these people and letting them know exactly what they're getting into, which is not the promise that's being made during the recruitment.

Thank you.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Senator Coats.

Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director, I want to follow up on the issue of the telecommunications companies holding the data in two different ways. First of all, there are hundreds of telcoms in this country and, by contrast, very few people—the number of people who had access to the database in this country, as has come out in recent months, was strictly limited, and they were well trained.

If more people have access to the database, isn't that likely to raise additional privacy problems and questions?

Director RASMUSSEN. I'd have to understand exactly how that architecture is going to look. I'd ask if I could take that for the record, Senator.

Senator COLLINS. A related question: Would you be troubled if there is no requirement for the telecommunications companies to retain the data for a certain length of time?

Director RASMUSSEN. It's obviously in the interest of the intelligence community to try to maintain the capability to access that data for as long a period of time as we can. In terms of specific provisions to compel, I can't speak to that. I can only speak to the interest we have in maintaining that capability, which of course is to have that access.

Senator COLLINS. Let me turn to the issue of home-grown terrorism and countering violent extremists. You said in your testimony today, and I completely agree, that we face a much greater recurring threat from lone wolves and loose networks of individ-



uals, and you talked about the number of attacks since last May, but ten of them were from violent Islamic extremists.

As you may have seen, former Defense Intelligence Agency Director Michael Flynn recently commented that he could not identify which agency or individual in the U.S. Government is in charge of the fight against radical Islamic extremists. Obviously, DHS, the FBI, DOD to some extent, the Department of State, NCTC are all important players. Who's in charge?

Director RASMUSSEN. I would argue, Senator, that, as with most elements of our counterterrorism effort, we're approaching it on a whole of government effort, without a single agency with lead or overall responsibility. In the effort against home-grown violent extremists here in the United States, we have a very tight-knit community focused particularly among Homeland Security, the Justice Department, FBI, and NCTC. Along with the deputy directors of those organizations, I meet, Matt Olsen before we met, every other month at that director or deputy director level to synchronize and coordinate all of our activities aimed at dealing with the home-grown violent extremist phenomenon, working to make sure that we coordinate and partner with each other, so that when we go to a community—and I used Denver in my testimony as an example of a community we had gone to in the wake of the arrests there last year of the three young Somali-American women who were disrupted on their way to Syria—we go arm in arm, lockstep with each other, all four of us together, working hand in hand with the special agent in charge of the local FBI office, the U.S. attorney in that capital, and all of the Homeland Security elements in that city, so that we are speaking with one voice as a Federal Government.

Now, when we get there we're dealing with the widest possible array of community leaders and community organizations, because most of this home-grown violent extremism, effort to counter home-grown violent extremism effort, is going to be carried out by those communities. Our role in many cases is to empower and provide information.

One of the things we did in that experience in Denver was provide a community awareness briefing that explains exactly what Senator Coats was talking about: the appeal of this narrative, the kinds of things that their kids might be seeing on the Internet if they weren't supervised or if their parents were not involved with or engaged with what their children were doing.

So I'm very comfortable that we are working well and harmoniously together. Could I make the case for one single agency being given a lead role? I don't think I could right now. If we had somebody—if we had a bunch of discord and disharmony, I might make that case, Senator. Could we do better? I'm not going to sign up to the idea that we couldn't do more and do better, and we're trying, and we're looking to resource this more robustly. But I don't think the problem we face is a result of not having a lead Federal agency.

Senator COLLINS. I guess from my perspective the problem is if no one's in charge it's very difficult for us to assess the effectiveness of a program, to budget appropriately, to hold people accountable, to assess whether what we're doing is making a difference.

When we did the Fort Hood investigation in 2010, one of our major recommendations from the Homeland Security Committee was that there needed to be a strategy, but there needed to be a lead agency or person in charge.

It's not that these efforts aren't worthwhile, but we can't budget for them, we can't assess them, if there isn't a person who can come and report to us. My concern is that the National Security Council appears intent on trying to exercise the role of policy implementer rather than just policymaker.

Director RASMUSSEN. Thank you, Senator. We are all trying to operate the four agencies I mentioned under the rubric of the President's home-grown CVE strategy for here in the homeland. We are, though, looking at ways, in keeping with your suggestion, to try to come up with funding mechanisms that cross departmental lines so that we can do exactly what you describe, give some sense of the jointness, the joint work that is going on, without relying solely on department budgets and Department stovepipes.

I'll certainly make sure we get more information to you on that.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Chairman BURR. Senator Blunt.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Rasmussen, let's talk about Yemen a little bit. I understand our embassy there is closed, most of the people we had there, certainly from the State Department, at the embassy are all out of the country; cars left with keys in them at the airport or whatever it took to get out of there.

It's just been a few months ago that Yemen was supposedly a great example of how our efforts were working, how the plan was working. How do you think that changed so quickly and what, looking back, do you think that you and others might have seen to give more warning than we got of that?

Director RASMUSSEN. The situation in Yemen for some period has been stable—unstable politically, and for a long period of time the Yemeni government faced this problem of a Houthi conflict emanating out of the northwestern part of Yemen. But that was not a new phenomenon and for many years the influence of the Houthi community there was largely contained to that northwestern part, corner of Yemen, along-stride the Saudi border.

That changed rather dramatically when the Houthis moved out of that historical location they held and moved towards Sanaa. Much as we saw in dealing with the ISIL phenomenon, the one thing that's very difficult to assess from an intelligence perspective is the ability of a military organization to actively confront another insurgency. Director Clapper I know has talked about the challenge the intelligence community faced in predicting whether the Iraqi security forces would have melted away the way they did in the face of ISIL's advances last summer.

I would say on somewhat of a smaller scale something like that happened in Yemen, with President Hadi, who already faced a complicated political environment in managing his military and managing his security organizations, as the Houthi advances toward Sanaa took place, it simply became the case that they were unopposed in many cases. That's something that we've got to try to find a better way as an intelligence community to understand,

the willingness of fighters to fight, because when you match up orders of battle and read about the resources available to the various sides, you would look at that and say there's no way that might happen, but obviously it did.

And it's left us in a position now where, on relatively short notice, just over the past few months the security situation deteriorated far more rapidly than we expected and, particularly because we could not assure the safety and security of our officers there, the decision was made to leave.

Senator BLUNT. I don't want to get into any kind of ongoing discussion with you about the specifics of how I'd see these things now. But we've got an example in ISIL or ISIS where they're the JV one day and they're virtually a nation-state 90 days later, or Yemen, which is a great example of our successful foreign policy and six months later it appears to be a total disaster.

But I think you're now—is it fair to say that the intelligence community has to begin to reevaluate how we—what you answered, reevaluate how those insurgencies may match up against the ability to face them?

Director RASMUSSEN. I think that's fair, Senator.

Senator BLUNT. Another question I have. I noticed in the information the President sent up yesterday for the Congress to look at the focus was against ISIL or associated persons or forces. How would you define the second part of that? Is that another terrorist group who actually is somehow fighting? What does that mean? Is that al-Nusrah? Is that some of these al-Qaeda groups that don't appear to be that much in line with ISIL? How would you define "associated persons or forces" if you were me?

Director RASMUSSEN. I guess I look at it and take it pretty much at face value, Senator, in concluding that that language likely allowed for the possibility that other networks, maybe not even formal groupings but other networks, might align themselves with ISIL. As we know, right now ISIL–ISIS is in conflict with core al-Qaeda and with al-Nusrah Front, the designated al-Qaeda affiliate operating in Syria.

Senator BLUNT. So core al-Qaeda or al-Nusrah would not be included in that definition, because they're actually not associated with ISIL? I mean, that's my belief, and I think that's what you just said.

Director RASMUSSEN. I'd have to check, but I guess what I'm saying is when I looked at the words "associated forces" I was thinking ahead to maybe the development of new alliances, new alignments, that we can't necessarily foresee today. I wasn't trying to suggest that anybody was today in or out of that particular definition, inside or outside that particular definition.

Senator BLUNT. I don't want to take more time than I should here, but today—we have to base this looking at this on what we do foresee today, and I think what you've said are there are significant terror groups that are clearly not associated with ISIL. Would that be right?

Director RASMUSSEN. There are certainly terrorist groups that have not affiliated or associated at this point with ISIL. ISIL has reached out and developed affiliated relationships or endorsement-like relationships with groups outside of Iraq and Syria, including

in North Africa, including in Algeria, and including in I believe Yemen as well.

Senator BLUNT. I'm out of time. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Senator Lankford.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you.

I need to ask you, on page 10 of your written report you use the statement here "Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism," and then a couple of notes on that. I'd like to get some additional details on that. When you talk about Iran being the foremost state sponsor of terrorism, how far does that extend? How many countries are they engaged in or terrorist groups are they engaged in sponsoring?

Director RASMUSSEN. Iranian sponsorship and association with particularly Lebanese Hezbollah gives—provides a global reach to that organization. So I could not give you a direct answer as to how many countries, but I would certainly argue it is global. It extends to pretty much every single region of the world.

Senator LANKFORD. Can you give me some examples of places that we know there are clear lines, where Iran is engaged in terrorism and advancing that ideology or being a state sponsor?

Director RASMUSSEN. Certainly in portions of West Africa, portions of Southeast Asia, portions of Latin America. I could go into more detail in a classified setting.

Senator LANKFORD. It begs the question here as well, the foremost non-state sponsor. Are we able to identify individuals and groups of individuals as well that are—you identify Iran as the foremost state sponsor. A lot of these groups obviously have to get funding, support, coordination from somewhere. Are we able to identify some of those non-state sponsors?

Director RASMUSSEN. We certainly have a robust effort across the intelligence community to try to understand particularly where individuals play a role in the financing of terrorist organizations, and where we can identify through intelligence those individuals developing an approach, using every tool we have, whether it's designation by the Treasury Department, other law enforcement or intelligence action, any tool we have, to try to shut down that financing pipeline.

That is an area where it is a constant, constant struggle because these organizations are ubiquitous in their efforts to fundraise. I'd be happy to talk in closed session about the work the community is doing in that area.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you. Is there a sense for Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism? Is that on the decline? Is it consistent? Has it continued to increase? Have we noticed a significant change in Iran and their behavior in the last several years?

Director RASMUSSEN. I guess I would describe it as consistent and steady. The degree of concern we face has been consistent and steady over time. We're particularly mindful of their support for militant groups in places like Iraq, where that front line activity, where Shia militant groups that have connections to Iran could be potentially threatening to our personnel on the ground in Iraq.

Senator LANKFORD. Let me ask about one other country and location. Libya has fallen into total chaos, with no functioning government any more, and every time they form a government it collapses

within months, and borderline, as the Vice Chairman mentioned earlier, near-civil war at this point. Terrorist groups seem to enjoy a vacuum. What do we see as on the rise in Libya, and what's our status there as far as terrorist organizations and the spread of terrorism there?

Director RASMUSSEN. You're absolutely right, Senator. If I had to identify one of the greatest areas of emerging concern with respect to counterterrorism, it would be Libya. We were already facing the chaotic political environment there, in which the resident North African-based terrorist groups that we've talked about before—AQIM, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Al-Sharia—were already active and potentially threatening in Libya and with the potential ability to threaten U.S. interests across North Africa.

What's changed more recently and what's made the environment there even more different is that ISIS-ISIL has looked to also take advantage of the chaos in Libya and establish a foothold there as well. We are still looking to try to assess whether that capability will manifest itself in external operations outside the region of North Africa or if the intent is simply to give themselves the capability to attack western interests in places like Cairo or Algiers or Tunis or Morocco.

That by itself would be significant, a sufficient concern to warrant our attention. But we're obviously mindful of what they might try to do to expand into Europe as well and potentially threaten our interests there.

Senator LANKFORD. One final question. If Iran stopped supporting terrorism, what effect would that have on the region and on our terrorist operations?

Director RASMUSSEN. Well, if Iran got out of the business of providing state sponsorship to terrorist organizations, it would obviously lower our potential level of concern about the capabilities of some of the groups that we worry about. I don't necessarily know that it would look like an on-off switch, though. These are in some cases relationships and capabilities that have developed over decades and decades. So I don't know that that would all be unraveled and unspooled by just flipping a switch.

Senator LANKFORD. Obviously that's not a switch that we have access to, but there are lots of connections there.

Director RASMUSSEN. I understand. Thank you, Senator.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman BURR. Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Mr. Rasmussen, just to take on what Senator Lankford said, I want to go a little bit deeper into Libya. Isn't it a fact there has now been multiple open source reports in the media that Darnah in Libya has emerged as a central and important and growing hub for ISIS; is that not right?

Director RASMUSSEN. I think that's right, yes, sir.

Senator RUBIO. And in addition, they've now been linked to many of the groups now in Benghazi. In essence, there are now open source reports that ISIS is the predominant group in Benghazi.

Director RASMUSSEN. That's correct.

Senator RUBIO. And there has also been open source reporting that ISIS was behind a terrorist attack at a hotel in Tripoli that killed an American citizen.

Director RASMUSSEN. Yes, the Corinthia Hotel.

Senator RUBIO. And in addition, there was open source reporting this week that ISIS—an ISIS commander was killed in Afghanistan.

Director RASMUSSEN. Yes.

Senator RUBIO. So there is now an ISIS presence as well in Afghanistan, including open source reports of terrorist training camps being set up in portions of Afghanistan.

Director RASMUSSEN. That's correct. We've seen in recent months ISIS-ISIL has looked to expand its reach into a number of different places around the world, and you've highlighted two of the most recent examples in Afghanistan and Libya. I would also highlight, though, Algeria and Egypt as other places where that has happened.

Senator RUBIO. Well, let me just point out on the Libya front, Darnah is a port city, is it not, a port region, where they now have—which is a perfect—and there's no—there's no Assad bombing them there. There's no air strikes. My concern is that that's becoming one of their most important hubs, because it's completely uncontested. They have access to shipments and foreign fighters to take in.

I just think that's an area of growing emergence and I'm surprised there's not more discussion about it because of how serious a threat that poses, including to the Sinai. Would it not be a great spot from which to launch attacks into the Sinai or get ISIL groups involved in the Sinai Peninsula?

Director RASMUSSEN. That's exactly right. Again, the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, which is the Egyptian-based terrorist group that recently affiliated with ISIS, we worry about the threat they would pose to western interests in Egypt and the Sinai—tourists, American businesses, but also our troop presence.

Senator RUBIO. It would be a mistake in your opinion to simply focus on our fight against ISIS as simply being Syria and Iraq? This group is increasing its footprint and presence in multiple stages now, including Afghanistan, throughout North Africa, and in particular Libya.

Director RASMUSSEN. That's correct, they've certainly expanded their reach.

Senator RUBIO. I want to ask you about Guantanamo. Prior to President Obama's executive order to determine the disposition of Guantanamo detainees, 101 former detainees were confirmed to have reengaged in terror. Then in the latest report that we got in July 2014 it stated that from 2009 to July of 2014 88 detainees transferred out of Gitmo. Out of the 88 detainees transferred out of Gitmo, 6 of them had been confirmed to return to terror activity, and one additional one was suspected.

So by my calculation, that means 107 of the 620 total detainees transferred from Gitmo have reengaged in terror and another 77 are suspected of doing so, in addition to the 107.

So can you tell us, since July of 2014 when that report came out, how many more have returned in our estimation to terror?

Director RASMUSSEN. We are just on the cusp within the next couple of weeks of providing the next iterated version of that unclassified report, the one you received last July. So those numbers will be out very, very shortly.

Senator RUBIO. But as it stands now, one out of six of those that have been returned——

Director RASMUSSEN. What I wanted to say is, while we don't have that report finalized yet, what I expect is that the trend line—the proportions will be roughly in line with what we reported last July as well.

Senator RUBIO. As it stands right now before the report comes out, it looks like it's approximately close to one out of six individuals released from Guantanamo have reengaged in terrorism, maybe more.

Director RASMUSSEN. As a net figure, that's correct. But the population released since 2009, that number is a lower number.

Senator RUBIO. Okay. Lastly, on the question of Iran, I want to return back to kind of the threat that Senator Lankford was pursuing. We know that Iran uses its proxy relationship with Hezbollah, for example, and we also are aware now that the Shia militias that are in Iraq as we speak are heavily indebted and controlled by them as well. Do we have any evidence that you can discuss here of Iran trying to set up similar type groups in places like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan?

Director RASMUSSEN. I'd have to address that in a closed session, Senator.

Senator RUBIO. Okay. Thank you.

Director RASMUSSEN. We'd be happy to provide you that answer. I wouldn't wait for a closed session. We'll provide you that answer through the Committee staff.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Senator Rubio.

Nick, somebody stops you on the street. They know you're the Director of NCTC and they say: Mr. Director, what does NCTC do, and why should I care? What would your answer be?

Director RASMUSSEN. I would tell that person that NCTC strives every day to be a center of gravity for our Nation's counterterrorism efforts, not the center of gravity because to say that would be a disservice to all of our partners that do counterterrorism work as well, but a center of gravity that provides information, analysis, strategic planning in support of our national counterterrorism efforts.

So if they asked I'd say that they have a large number of officers who come to work every day to assess, analyze, and provide information aimed at defeating our terrorist adversaries. That's what I'd say.

Chairman BURR. And why should I care?

Director RASMUSSEN. You should care because, as we talked about in my opening statement and in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, the threat environment we face, we face right now, is the most multifaceted, diverse, dynamic threat environment we've ever faced and could manifest itself in communities all around this country. It's not simply a threat that manifests itself in far-flung places around the world.

The kinds of low-level, potentially small-scale attacks I talked about from ISIL-inspired or other terrorist group-inspired individuals are the kinds of attacks that could literally happen in any of our 50 states.

Chairman BURR. In part this hearing was because you said to me when we first met: You know, I believe America needs to know something about what we do, and the intelligence community can't be this black hole forever. I just want to thank you for what your organization does, for all the employees, because when you hear the intelligence community described it's not NCTC first, but everybody who's in the intelligence community is a customer of yours. They look to the analytic product that your folks produce. We look to the analytical product that you produce from the standpoint of being policymakers. They look at it more from a standpoint of actionable information.

I think you've got some of the most talented folks working for you that you possibly could, but I do want to reiterate something. If for some reason you feel that there are constraints that don't allow you to build out your workforce to the degree we have authorized and to the degree I think we both agree you need, I hope you will share that with the Vice Chairman and myself so that we can help to try to remediate that.

Director RASMUSSEN. I will certainly do that. Again, I'm enormously grateful to both you, Mr. Chairman, and the Vice Chairman for your sustained support of our workforce over time. I think one of the biggest contributions the Congress could make to that end would be to not put us in a position where we're dealing with a sequestration environment going into the future, because obviously that impacts all Federal agencies and their budgets and their ability to operate. But our organization in particular, where we were so reliant on detailed personnel from other organizations, that kind of a budget approach has a ripple effect because it reduces the ability of other organizations to do the hiring and developing of personnel that we need to fill our ranks. So it ends up having a double whammy effect on an organization like NCTC when there's an uncertain budget environment that affects our partners the way that does.

Chairman BURR. I thank you, Mr. Director.

I would turn to the Vice Chairman if she had any follow-up questions that she might want to ask.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. I would like to put a paper in the record if I might, since Senator Rubio mentioned the recidivism rates of former Gitmo detainees. And I'd like to put—the problem is really that, whether it's Bush or Obama, people learned more, the recidivism rates changed dramatically.

Pre-January of 2009, the recidivism rate was 101 of 532. That's 19 percent. Now, since the Obama Administration it's 6 out of 88. That's 6.2 percent. So you have to look at it in versions of time. I'd like to put this paper in the record if I may, Mr. Chairman—

Chairman BURR. Without objection.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN [continuing]. So everybody could see it. [The material referred to follows:]



**Summary of the Reengagement of Detainees Formerly Held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba**

The Director of National Intelligence submits this summary consistent with direction in the Fiscal Year 2012 Intelligence Authorization Act, Section 307, which states:

- (a) "The Director of National Intelligence, in consultation with the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, shall make publicly available an unclassified summary of,
- (1) intelligence relating to recidivism of detainees currently or formerly held at the Detention Facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, by the Department of Defense; and
  - (2) an assessment of the likelihood that such detainees will engage in terrorism or communicate with persons in terrorist organizations.
- (b) Updates – Not less frequently than once every 6 months, the Director of National Intelligence, in consultation with the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Secretary of Defense, shall update and make publicly available an unclassified summary consisting of the information required by subsection (a) and the number of individuals formerly detained at Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, who are confirmed or suspected of returning to terrorist activities after release or transfer from such Naval Station."

**Section 307 (a) (1) Intelligence relating to recidivism of detainees currently or formerly held at the Detention Facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, by the Department of Defense.**

<b>Reengagement of Former Guantanamo Bay (GTMO) Detainees as of 15 July 2014</b>			
	Total	Pre-22 January 2009 <sup>a</sup>	Post-22 January 2009
<b>Detainees Transferred</b>	<b>620*</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Confirmed of Reengaging</b>	<b>107 of 620 (17.3%)</b>	<b>101 of 532 (19.0%)</b>	<b>6 of 88 (6.8%)**</b>
Dead – 23 of 107		22	1
In custody – 25 of 107		25	0
Not in custody – 59 of 107		54	5
<b>Suspected of Reengaging</b>	<b>77 of 620 (12.4%)</b>	<b>76 of 532 (14.3%)**</b>	<b>1 of 88 (1.1%)**</b>
Dead – 2 of 77		2	0
In custody – 14 of 77		14	0
Not in custody – 61 of 77		60	1

\*An additional nine detainees died while at GTMO, and one was transferred to New York for trial, was convicted, and is now imprisoned in Colorado.

\*\*One detainee in each of these categories was transferred pursuant to a court order.

<sup>a</sup> Executive Order 13492 was signed on January 22, 2009 to determine the disposition of the 240 detainees then remaining at the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

**Section 307 (a) (2) An assessment of the likelihood that such detainees will engage in terrorism.**

Based on trends identified during the past eleven years, we assess that some detainees currently at GTMO will seek to reengage in terrorist or insurgent activities after they are transferred. Transfers to countries with ongoing conflicts and internal instability as well as active recruitment by insurgent and terrorist organizations pose particular problems. While enforcement of transfer conditions may deter reengagement by many former detainees and delay reengagement by others, some detainees who are determined to reengage will do so regardless of any transfer conditions, albeit probably at a lower rate than if they were transferred without conditions.

**Section 307 (a) (2) An assessment of the likelihood that such detainees will communicate with persons in terrorist organizations.**

Former GTMO detainees routinely communicate with each other, families of other former detainees, and previous associates who are members of terrorist organizations. The reasons for communication span from the mundane (reminiscing about shared experiences) to the nefarious (planning terrorist operations). We assess that some GTMO detainees transferred in the future also will communicate with other former GTMO detainees and persons in terrorist organizations. We do not consider mere communication with individuals or organizations—including other former GTMO detainees—an indicator of reengagement. Rather, the motives, intentions, and purposes of each communication are taken into account when assessing whether the individual has reengaged.

**Definition of “Terrorist” or “Insurgent” Activities.** Activities such as the following indicate involvement in terrorist or insurgent activities: planning terrorist operations, conducting a terrorist or insurgent attack against Coalition or host-nation forces or civilians, conducting a suicide bombing, financing terrorist operations, recruiting others for terrorist operations, and arranging for movement of individuals involved in terrorist operations. It does not include mere communications with individuals or organizations—including other former GTMO detainees—on issues not related to terrorist operations, such as reminiscing about shared experiences at GTMO, communicating with past terrorist associates about non-nefarious activities, writing anti-US books or articles, or making anti-US propaganda statements.

**Definition of “Confirmed.”** A preponderance of information which identifies a specific former GTMO detainee as directly involved in terrorist or insurgent activities. For the purposes of this definition, engagement in anti-US statements or propaganda does not qualify as terrorist or insurgent activity.

**Definition of “Suspected.”** Plausible but unverified or single-source reporting indicating a specific former GTMO detainee is directly involved in terrorist or insurgent activities. For the purposes of this definition, engagement in anti-US statements or propaganda does not qualify as terrorist or insurgent activity.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. I have one other question to ask the Director. Director, days before the public release of our report on CIA detention and interrogation, we received an intelligence assessment predicting violence throughout the world and significant damage to sanctions relationships. NCTC participated in that assessment. Do you believe that assessment proved correct?

Director RASMUSSEN. I can speak particularly to the threat portion of that rather than the partnership aspect of that, because I would say that's the part NCTC would have the most direct purchase on. I can't say that I can disaggregate the level of terrorism and violence we've seen in the period since the report was issued, disaggregate that level from what we might have seen otherwise, because, as you know, the turmoil roiling that part—those parts of the world, not that part of the world but those parts of the world, the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, there's a number of factors that are going into creating the difficult threat environment we face.

So the assessment we made at the time as a community was that this would increase or add to the threat picture in those places. I don't know, looking backwards now, that we can say, aha, it did by X percent or it didn't by X percent.

We were also, I think, clear in saying that there's parts of the impact that we would not know until we had the benefit of time to see how it would play out in different locations around the world.

Vice Chairman FEINSTEIN. Oh, boy, do I disagree with you. But that's what makes this arena, I guess. The fact in my mind was the threat assessment was not correct.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Vice Chairman.

Senator Blunt.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Chairman.

Let me go back to where I was when I ran out of time earlier, Mr. Rasmussen, on just trying to in my mind figure out where the AUMF that's proposed and how it relates to these various terror groups. I think the further language on "associated persons or forces" it says means "individuals and organizations fighting for, on behalf of, or alongside ISIL or any closely related successor entity in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners."

List for me just a few of the terrorist groups that would not be associated in that way with ISIL? You mentioned two earlier. Are there others that immediately come to mind? I'm not asking you for an exhaustive list, by the way.

Director RASMUSSEN. I don't think Lebanese Hezbollah, for example, would qualify as an associated force. Terrorist groups we see operating in Latin America I don't believe would qualify under that definition of "associated force," or some of the al-Qaeda-affiliated groups operating in Southeast Asia, for example. Those are just some examples off the top of my head.

Senator BLUNT. So if we just take that definition, does that mean ISIL and its associated groups are the only people we've authorized the President to go and do whatever is necessary within the restrictions of that? Or does the 2001 AUMF give the President authority to go after other terrorist groups?

Director RASMUSSEN. I'd have to get you an answer on that, sir, because I'm just not confident that I know enough about the design of AUMF, of the new authorization of force——

Senator BLUNT. How about the old one? You surely, as the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, you surely know about the 2001——

Director RASMUSSEN. Right.

Senator BLUNT [continuing]. What authorization that gives us.

Director RASMUSSEN. That allowed us to carry out operations against al-Qaeda and associated forces. So I'm sorry; could you refresh me?

Senator BLUNT. No, that's the one. I think that's right, though I think it also said "or future terrorism against the United States." And that's the one that the President proposes we let stand and we eliminate the 2002 that's more Iraq-specific and then add this one to it, is I believe the proposal.

But what I guess I'm thinking is, what do we really add by adding this complicated definition of terrorists that associate with ISIL when—is ISIL covered under the 2001 AUMF?

Director RASMUSSEN. I would defer to my lawyer friends, but I believe not.

Senator BLUNT. You believe not. So how are we engaging with ISIL now in Syria?

Director RASMUSSEN. Let me provide you with an answer for the record, sir, because I want to be precise and correct in what I provide you.

As the Administration has stated, we believe that the 2001 AUMF provides legal authority to use military force against ISIL in both Iraq and Syria.

Senator BLUNT. All right. Do you have any follow-up on—do you understand the question——

Director RASMUSSEN. Yes.

Senator BLUNT [continuing]. I assume we might be able to pursue ISIL or ISIS in Iraq through the 2002. If the 2001 is—I guess my point, Mr. Chairman, if the 2001 is broad enough to cover ISIL now, I don't know what we add to it when we add another authorization and leave that one on the books. But I think we do lead to significant complication here of who's a closely related associate of ISIL when we begin to define this.

These groups—like core al-Qaeda is generally not anywhere what it was at one time, but various renamed or affiliated groups have sprung up everywhere from the Philippines to all over the world. I'm going to be very interested in how we define and why we would specifically begin to define individual groups, as opposed to—and how broad the 2001 authorization was, which is I guess the beginning of that question, Mr. Rasmussen.

So thank you. I look forward to your response on that.

Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Thank you, Senator Blunt. I think it gets even more confusing when in the same geographical battle space it would be the 2001 AUMF that provides us the ability to go after Khorasan, but next door in the same geographical area it would take a new AUMF to actually go after ISIL.

Senator King, we're glad you could join us.

Senator KING. Thank you. I appreciate that. We just completed a markup in the Armed Services Committee. Senator McCain acted with some dispatch.

Hopefully, I won't confuse this discussion further, but I think it's important to talk about this 2001 AUMF. Actually, the term "associated forces" doesn't appear anywhere in it. That's a gloss upon a gloss. The 2001 AUMF is very clear the President can use necessary and appropriate force against "those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11th or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism."

That has been used very, very broadly, and I think that's one of the concerns. I think the President has realized that to stretch it into attacking an organization that didn't even exist in 2001, operating in a country that was at least partially stable in 2001, is quite a stretch. I think that's why we've got the new authorization that's been brought forward to cover the ISIL situation.

So I think that's a matter for the Foreign Relations Committee. But the 2001 has been stretched very far, and I'm frankly one who's glad to see that the President has brought forward a new authorization.

Mr. Rasmussen, a couple of questions. Counterterrorism we always think of in terms of killing people, striking, intercepting communications, drones, all of that kind of thing. And yet we're now learning that what we—part of what we have to do is intervene before people get radicalized. And yet when you raise that the FBI says, well, we're not social workers; the county sheriffs say, we're not social workers.

If it isn't going to be law enforcement that does that kind of intervention, and through the social media, for example, who's going to do it? And do you see that as part of the counterterrorism mission?

Director RASMUSSEN. Certainly the effort to counter violent extremism and, especially, most particularly here in the homeland, is part of the counterterrorism mission. And I would argue that our law enforcement partners like FBI do embrace that mission, even if some individuals may have said exactly what you said, Senator King.

Earlier in the discussion we talked about some of the work that NCTC is doing along with FBI, Homeland Security, and the Justice Department to try to do exactly what you just described. From the Federal Government, the effort, though, is to enable and empower local communities to carry out this kind of intervention in their own communities, and to enable them to do that in a way that does not scream a law enforcement context, because, as you know, that can have a chilling effect on the kind of community engagement and community dialogue that would help you get at the underlying causes that lead to violent extremism.

So the role we've taken from the Federal Government has been a little bit more circumscribed, aimed at providing communities with the tools to do this kind of work, information so they understand how terrorists, and now particularly these days ISIL, is using social media to go after their children in their communities,

to let parents and teachers and schools and other authority figures understand what is coming at them and where intervention might be necessary to prevent a foreign fighter from developing.

What we're doing in this area is useful and important, but it is thus far not scalable or scaled on a size that I would say has the impact we want all across the country. At the President's Countering Violent Extremism Summit during part of next week, three pilots cities—Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Boston—will report to the group on their efforts in this area. Those are three tremendously important cities that the Federal Government has been working very closely with to try to do this kind of work.

But those are only three cities, and so the purpose of a pilot is to demonstrate whether this can be done on a scale that will have impact far beyond just those three cities.

Senator KING. I take it that you're concurring that this kind of effort has got to be part of the overall counterterror strategy?

Director RASMUSSEN. Absolutely. And in particular as part of the counter-ISIL strategy, we're trying to do this work both at home, but also abroad, because, as you well know, Senator, most of that foreign fighter population that we're potentially worried about emanates from countries other than the United States. So we need to help other countries be more effective at this.

I don't want to sound condescending. We need to also learn. I shouldn't say they need to do it the way we do. We need to learn from them. In many cases some of our European partners are doing tremendous work on a community engagement level to try to counter the work—counter the spread of violent extremism in their communities. I think that's going to be one of the other sidebars at next week's CVE summit, is to get some of the lessons learned out of our partners on that.

Senator KING. I understand the United Kingdom has developed a program for dealing with this problem in prisons, which is where a lot of radicalization takes place.

Director RASMUSSEN. That's certainly true. The Paris example kind of brought home just how dangerous a radicalizing environment prisons can be. I know our Department of Justice has engaged on that issue, along with the Bureau of Prisons, in an effort to make sure that we've got that identified and, where possible, under control here. But I'd have to get you more detail on that.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BURR. Senator King, thank you. Thank you for your willingness to spend an hour and a half with Senator McCain and still come to this hearing.

Senator KING. I'm a patriot, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman BURR. You'll be rewarded in heaven, I can assure you. [Laughter.]

Director, thank you so much for being here today, for sharing your insight with us, and please carry back to your employees how grateful we are for the great work that the employees at NCTC do.

Director RASMUSSEN. I will certainly do that, Senator. Thank you for having me.

Chairman BURR. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:02 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

