RADICALIZATION: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RISE OF TERRORISM

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RADICALIZATION: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RISE OF TERRORISM

Wednesday, October 28, 2015

House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on National Security,
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ron DeSantis [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives DeSantis, Duncan, Hice, Hurd, Lynch, Lieu and Kelly.

Mr. DeSANTIS. The Subcommittee on National Security will come to order. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

Today, the civilized world faces an unprecedented level of violence fueled by Islamic extremism. Recent reports indicate that over 30,000 people from over 100 different countries have traveled to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq to wage jihad since 2011. This group includes over 4,500 westerners and over 250 Americans who have attempted or actually joined Islamic supremacist groups. Both Al Qaeda's global network and ISIS, among several other terrorist networks around the world, promote an ideology grounded in Islamic extremism and conquest.

As the Congressional Research Service has found, these terrorists use Islamist and ideological and/or religious justification for the belief in the establishment of a global caliphate, a jurisdiction governed by a Muslim civil and religious leader known as a caliph via violent means. As the ideology of militant Islam spreads, the threat to the U.S. and our allies, such as Israel, persists. Terrorist networks like Al Qaeda affiliates and ISIS, as well as extremists, clerics, and others, seek to spread this ideology in order to recruit, engage sympathizers, and criticize the West. Indeed, this propaganda is playing a role in promoting terrorist attacks in the U.S. where many homegrown cases of jihadi terrorism involve the use of social media.

Several sources indicate that there are 90,000 pro-ISIS tweets on a daily basis. While others suggest that there may be as many as 200,000 such tweets. Accounts belonging to other foreign terrorist organizations, such as Jabhat al-Nusra, Al Qaeda's branch in Syria, have a total of over 200,000 followers and are thriving. Official Twitter accounts belonging to Jabhat al-Nusra operate much like those belonging to ISIS, tweeting similar extremist content. ISIS' use of platforms like Twitter is highly effective. YouTube vid-

eos depicting violent acts against Westerners are used to incite others to take up arms and wage jihad.

While foreign fighters travel overseas for training and to make other terrorist connections, it's becoming apparent that Islamic recruits in the United States and other parts of the world who are unable to travel to these battlegrounds do not necessarily need to do so in order to receive training and inspiration. They can engage real time with jihadists on Twitter, watch ISIS's murderous propaganda on YouTube, view jihadi selfies on Instagram, or read religious justifications for the killing of civilians on Just Paste It. The question and answer Web site, ask.fm, has also become a popular platform for jihadists.

Unfortunately, ISIS's use of social media is believed to be resonating with vulnerable populations, particularly Muslim converts and susceptible alienated youth. However, radicalization of Americans cannot be narrowed to any single social or demographic profile. Instead, the Americans who are being radicalized to support and fight for Islamic extremists come from all walks of life. Those Americans who travel overseas to support terrorist groups can also incite others back home and abroad by their actions to conduct attacks and can themselves return back to the U.S. with training to complete terrorist attacks.

The bottom line is that these foreign fighters have been trained in combat, have strong ties to terrorist groups, and recruit others to join the fight. The U.S. Government has the ability under the law to revoke passports on several grounds, including reasons of national security. The administration has not indicated they plan to utilize immigration controls as other countries have in order to stop foreign fighters. Nor is the danger posed to the United States by foreign fighters limited to those terrorists and adherents to terrorists groups who are U.S. citizens. In order to enter the United States, citizens of most countries must obtain visas issued at overseas embassies and consulates by the State Department.

In 2014, the State Department issued almost 10 million visas to foreigners seeking temporary entry into America and nearly 500,000 immigrant visas for permanent residence. This process plays a crucial role in detecting individuals with terrorist ties and stopping them from entering the United States. Despite these safeguards, many of the subjects would have been convinced on terrorist charges in the United States since 9/11 are aliens who travel to America on visas, including student visas, tourist visas, and green cards. This danger is compounded by the large number of foreign fighters from visa-waiver countries who do not even need a visa to enter our country.

Federal and State governments as well as communities have begun to take action to mitigate the threat of terrorist propaganda on social media. However, they have experienced multiple challenges in combatting this threat. The unprecedented speed with which people are being radicalized by violent Islamic supremacists is difficult to keep up with and is straining the ability of government to monitor and intercept suspects. Jihadists using increasingly secure Web sites and applications, and communicating in code with Americans and westerners in the United States present even further challenges for law enforcement in tracking, identi-

fying, and apprehending those who seek to engage in terrorist attacks.

In order to combat this trend, we must ensure that law enforcement has the necessary tools to do its job. Efforts to counter and deter unconventional information warfare must be joined with other government agencies' efforts to deal with the problem of terror on social media.

I thank our witnesses for their testimony today and look forward to examining issues related to the use of social media by terrorists, the extent that people are being radicalized, and what can be done to combat this growing problem.

I now recognize the ranking member of the Subcommittee on National Security, Mr. Lynch, for his opening statement.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you for holding this hearing to examine the use of social media by the Islamic State and would like to thank today's witnesses for helping the committee with its work.

As noted by Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, in their recent book, ISIS, the State of Terror, the Islamic State, also known as ISIL, has been prolific in its ability to exploit a variety of social media platforms. According to the authors, jihadists have been making slick propaganda for decades. But for a long time, these productions catered to an exclusive audience of potential recruits, never making the evening news or creeping into the collective consciousness of the West. However, in stark contrast, ISIL and its online supporters, continue to use Twitter, Facebook, WhatsAp, and other social networking services to broadcast their terrorist messages to a global audience in real time and significantly extend their recruitment, mobilization, and financing efforts beyond the battlefields in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

Last week, the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, again a J.M. Berger report, issued the existence or noticed the existence of over 40,000 accounts actively supporting the Islamic State on Twitter, with an estimated 2,000 accounts tweeting in English. A majority of these users form the core of the ISIL's aggressive online recruitment strategy. This strategy is designed to introduce recruitment targets to the Islamic State ideology, to groom and lavish attention on potential recruits through subsequent communication in private online channels, and directly call them to jihad. Ranging from lone-wolf style attacks at home, to migration to the Islamic State. The Islamic State even has a name for its most enthusiastic online users, mujtahidun, or the industrious ones. Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger note that these online supporters are far more active than their counterparts in Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria or Al Shabaab in Somalia in using social media tactics to expand their reach.

The impact of ISIL's extensive social media presence has already been witnessed in the unprecedented flood of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria. A few months ago, I had the opportunity to travel with several House and Senate Members in a congressional delegation to the Syrian-Turkish border, an area north of Aleppo. We were briefed on the lack of meaningful progress in our train and equip program of so-called moderate rebels. We also met with representatives of about a half dozen rebel groups. And the only com-

mon characteristic between these groups was, one, they all saw Bashar al-Assad and his regime as the primary enemy. And, second, the all use WhatsAp as their platform for communication.

As reported in September of 2015 by the Bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Combatting Terrorism and Foreign Travel, nearly 30,000 foreign fighters have traveled to Iraq and Syria in 2011 to join the Islamic State, including an estimated 250 individuals from the United States who have sought to fight on the side of the extremists in ISIL conflict zones. There is also more direct evidence of the effect of Islamic State's online strategy here at home. According to the West Point report, at least 60 individuals have been arrested in the United States in 2015 for criminal acts in support of the Islamic State. Social media has played a role in the recruitment or radicalization in almost every single case.

As ranking member for the Financial Services Committee's Task Force to Investigate Terrorism Financing, I am well aware that ISIL and other terrorist groups are also using social media platforms and applications to coordinate funding for terrorist activity. Last year, David Cohen, who was then the undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence at Treasury, remarked that constraining the flow of funds to terrorist groups is, "particularly challenging in an area when social media allows anyone with an Internet connection to set himself up as an international terrorist financier." In particular, we have seen that private funding networks are relying on social media to solicit so-called charitable donations and inconspicuously connect donors with recipients on the battlefield. In response to the exploitation of social media by ISIL and other terrorist groups, Twitter and other service providers have slowly, and I must say grudgingly in some cases, begun to take some action to suspend terrorism-linked users accounts. This is often called a whack-a-mole approach to countering terrorism messaging, as suspended users can simply create new accounts. Jessica Stern and other analysts have noted that to a certain extent this strategy can prove effective in disrupting for a while and eventually downgrading terrorist social networks.

In addition, in 2011, the U.S. has established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications at the State Department, which for the past couple years has focused on countering ISIL's propaganda. However, as noted by one of today's witnesses, Ambassador Fernandez, the Center's budget over 3 years totaled the cost of a single Reaper drone, $15 million, and has remained the same since 2012. The team of operators and editors working in Arabic and English has not exceeded 15 people at any one time. The Center has also been operating amidst congressional budget constraints and hiring freezes that result at Federal agencies when Congress continues to enact short-term funding resolutions instead of traditional appropriations bills. We may have some progress in that regard as pending.

Mr. Chairman, it's clear that we must do more to counter the social media threat posed by the Islamic State and other terrorist groups. I look forward to discussing what additional steps we can take to strengthen our counterterrorism strategy in this regard, as well as support corresponding international, private sector, law enforcement, and community efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. I'll hold the record open for 5 legislative days for any members who would like to submit a written statement.

Mr. DESANTIS. We'll now recognize our panel of witnesses. I'm pleased to welcome Ambassador Mark Wallace, chief executive office of the Counter Extremism Project, Mr. Walter Purdy, president of the Terrorism Research Center, Mr. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, vice-president of the Middle East Media Research Institute. Welcome to you all.

Pursuant to committee rules, all witnesses will be sworn in before they testify. So if you could please stand and raise your right hands.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you're about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

Thank you. Please be seated. All witnesses answered in the affirmative.

In order to allow time for discussion, please limit your testimony to 5 minutes. Your entire written statement will be made part of the record. Ambassador Wallace, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MARK D. WALLACE

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. It's obviously my great pleasure and honor to appear with my distinguished colleagues on this panel.

The hijacking and weaponization of social media platforms by extremist groups to radicalize, recruit and plan violent attacks against innocent people around the world is a cancer that continues to grow largely unabated. Today, there are at least 43,000 active pro-ISIS Twitter accounts endlessly amplifying and repeating ISIS's messages of hate and terror. The more than 30,000 people who have joined ISIS from around the world is a testament to the power of social media.

On September 11 of this year, CEP, the Counter Extremism Project, released profiles of 66 Americans who have joined or allegedly attempted to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, as well as other Americans accused of planning attacks on U.S. soil, providing financial assistance to extremist entities, or propagandizing on their behalf. These individuals have very different backgrounds and experiences. But the one characteristic that they seem to share is active participation on social media. In addition, we will soon release profiles on 54 of the most prolific social media propagandists. Through #CEPDigitalDistruption, we have identified and reported hundreds of extremists to Twitter. And in June, we expanded our campaign to include monitoring of Twitter accounts in French, Italian, German, and Turkish.

We respect and honor our American constitutional traditions of free speech. Our standard for reporting an account is incitement of violence or direct threats. To be clear, we are concerned about various social media platforms. Our focus is on Twitter because it's effectively the gateway drug where individuals, usually young people, are first exposed to propaganda and radical content. It's, of course, an enormously successful platform, Twitter, ubiquitous. In many ways, that success has spurred its misuse by online jihadis. We wrote three letters to Twitter. But the response we have gotten is dismissive to the point of dereliction. Twitter's attitude can be best summarized in a quote provided to Mother Jones magazine by a Twitter official. They said "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." I want to repeat that. "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Of course, this statement is insipid and unserious, particularly in the context of Al Qaeda, ISIS, and many other extremist groups.

Sally Jones epitomizes Twitter's failure to act effectively. Jones, known on Twitter as Um Hassan Al-Bretani, is a British ISIS operative. In September, Jones issued a kill list of 100 U.S. servicemen. She was named an SDN global terrorist and placed on the United Nations' Security Council's sanctions list. And, yet, in October, Jones urged violence on Twitter against Navy Seal Veteran Robert O'Neil and Dillard Johnson, a former Army sergeant. If Twitter can beef up its policies as it relates to bullying and harassment of women, why does it show such dismissiveness when it comes to those promoting and glorifying terror.

We stand ready to work with Congress, the administration, and any company, including Twitter, in finding the right mix of remedies that effectively attacks this growing problem, while protecting our values and liberties. We believe there are clear and immediate changes that all social media companies could make. First, one of the problems we have encountered is that many social media companies place accounts that have been reported into a rolling queue. We believe that by giving CEP as well as others like the State Department trusted reporting status and opening a direct line of communication, we can more easily and swiftly identify and remove the most notorious extremists online.

Second, our campaign relies in part on our stakeholder audience also reporting accounts. But the reporting process on Twitter and other social media sites is long and cumbersome. Twitter recently started its streamlined reporting process for women to report harassment or stalking which is great. But reporting of violent extremists still falls into a catchall category.

Third, while every organization is different, we believe it's critical that America's most important tech companies show a united front when it comes to fighting violent extremism. This would include a clear public policy statement that extremist activities will not be tolerated.

Fourth, shine the bright spotlight of transparency in the most extremist, most egregious extremist accounts. This past year, one of the most influential social media jihadi, Shami Witness, was exposed and immediately shut down his accounts and stopped operating. We can collectively agree that the most egregious of cyber jihadis do not deserve anonymity or the right of free hate and in-

citement of terror speech through the use of Twitter or any other social media platform.

Fifth, companies should more proactively monitor content. It's one thing to take down, but they should more proactively monitor. While no social media company has been able to resolve the problem completely, companies like Google and Facebook are at least willing to have a conversation and take steps to address the issue.

I am convinced that there are strategies that we can bring to bear on those who attempt to hijack and weaponize social media platforms. The majority of social media companies are U.S. companies. But online misuse has global consequences. It's time that social media companies like Twitter take responsibility for the global implications of their platform and their lack of action.

I would respectfully ask that my full remarks be included in the record. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Ranking Member Lynch.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you, Ambassador Wallace.

[The statement of Mr. Wallace follows:]

[Written statements can be found at: *https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/radicalization-social-media-and-the rise-of-terrorism/*]

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Purdy, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF WALTER PURDY

Mr. PURDY. Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me today to testify on this important issue.

As I was driving down here this morning, I thought back to almost 14 years ago when I sat with an American young man from California, who actually was radicalized in California, traveled overseas to Pakistan, made his way into Afghanistan where he trained in a terrorist training camp. Today, individuals here in the United States don't have to undertake that journey that this individual from California did 14 years ago. Today, anybody with a smart phone or a computer can become radicalized online.

Radicalization today takes so many different forms. There is no single pathway for someone becoming radicalized. And, yet, we see groups like Al Qaeda, al Nusra, ISIS all using social media and Internet today to act as enablers, providing a medium for these individuals seeking that path of self-radicalization. We see many works like Milestones, The Call to Global Jihad by Abu Musab al Suri, Constants on the Path of Jihad by Anwar al-Awlaki. These constant themes keep coming up in ISIS, al Nusra, and other terrorist social media, seeking to help radicalize these individuals before they go overseas and travel. These works constantly come up. And individuals here in the United States that have gone to social media sites, like some that you have mentioned in your opening statements, have helped to manipulate and motivate these individuals to undertake activities that run the spectrum from raising money, providing material support, undertaking to fight jihad here in the United States, traveling overseas to enter countries, Turkey, Greece, and others on there way to fight in Iraq and Syria, to plotting operations here in the United States.

Many of these individuals that we see have started that process of radicalization by going online, using the Internet. Individuals like Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood shooter, exchanged dozens of emails with his spiritual mentor, Anwar al-Awlaki. American citizens, Awlaki and Adam Gadahn, both radicalized and recruited other individuals, sending people to various sites to help develop their radicalization. Virtual mentors today have communicated with potential recruits and others to deliver their messages to these individuals in blogs, Web sites, chatrooms, and forums.

The use of encrypted communication today, is a barrier in which law enforcement has to deal with to try to get to the bottom of this very challenging problem. Adam Gadahn, in a propaganda video years ago, stated, I advise every brother who wants to work for this religion not to undertake any action before taking advantage of the wide range of resources available today on the Internet. Whether a group like Al Qaeda, Al Nusra, or ISIS, they all constantly point those individuals, seeking to wage jihad, here in the United States or abroad to the Internet. The United States faces various challenges from homegrown violent extremists who have been radicalized to launch attacks here in the United States.

We have seen a growing list of Americans who have traveled to fight jihad and support terrorists groups like ISIS overseas. Former director of the FBI, speaking about Americans who had gone overseas to fight, stated, it raises the question of whether these young men will one day come home. And, if so, what type of things will they undertake here.

Today, any American uses social media to gain any sort of information and an understanding of all kinds of things that are placed on the Internet. But these individuals are using this particular platform so that they can gain access to jihadi fighters in theater and also to help recruit and radicalize potential American fighters. The number of American fighters that have taken selfies, created digital propaganda of themselves, fuse this particular effort that we see.

Since the Syrian conflict escalated, we have seen over 300 Americans attempt to or travel to or fight in Syria. Individuals like Nicole Mansfield, convert to Islam from Flynt, Michigan. Individuals from Virginia, Massachusetts, Florida have all gone and fought overseas. An American from Florida, on May 25, 2014, actually went and became their first suicide bomber in Syria. He grew up in a gated community. This particular social media platform is the fire that fuels the radicalization and the challenge that we face. I would say one additional thing that we need to understand.

Mr. DeSantis. I appreciate it. We'll do the written comments. Your time is up. And we'll be sure to give you an opportunity in the question and answer to expand on that.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Purdy follows:]*https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/radicalization-social-media-and-the rise-of-terrorism/*]

Mr. DeSantis. And, now, Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DAVEED GARTENSTEIN–ROSS

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Thank you, Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, distinguished members. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

What I would like to focus on is the broader view of how social media is having an impact on the strategic information environment. Social media is revolutionary in so many ways. And I thought both the opening statements and also my colleagues have done a very good job of articulating those ways. But, ultimately, it's something which is tried and true in an armed conflict, that is, it's a tool of strategic communication.

I think in addition to understanding the direct impact of what ISIS is doing, we also need to understand how an organization like this, which has achieved a technical mastery of this strategic communication tool and also is branded by its over the top violence, we need to understand the impact that has on the overall information environment.

Chairman DeSantis, you spoke of the many extremist groups today that are operating in Syria and elsewhere and the many extremist groups that use this social media platform. ISIS is much more adept at it than others in terms of directly mobilizing people to their cause. But other groups also have their communication strategies.

ISIS, of course, was born out of the Al Qaeda organization and now challenges it for supremacy over the global jihadist movement. In so many ways, ISIS's rise has harmed Al Qaeda, including stealing away their fighters, stealing away their affiliates. But in other ways, it's actually benefited the Al Qaeda organization. In fact, today, Al Qaeda members are speaking openly of the ways in which ISIS's rise has helped them in terms of their communication.

In the latest issue of al-Risalah, which is an Al Qaeda-affiliated magazine published out of Syria, Usama Hamza Australi, who is a longtime confederate of the Al Qaeda organization, referred to ISIS's rise as a blessing in disguise. The reason he gave is that previously when people talked about extremism, they talked about people, Australi said, who wage jihad as being the extremists. Australi said now they know that it's not people who wage jihad that are the extremists, it's not those who avoid it, who are moderates, rather, he said, ISIS is the extremists and we, Al Qaeda, are the moderates.

Bin Laden recognized before his death that grave damage had been done to the Al Qaeda brand through the excesses of ISIS's predecessor, Al Qaeda in Iraq. He wanted to re-brand Al Qaeda. And he wanted to do this so badly, so deeply that he even thought about changing the organization's name. Well, two things have given Al Qaeda tremendous opportunities. One of which is the awful Sunni-Shia conflict which is racking the region, which has shifted strategic priorities and made some Sunni gulf states see Al Qaeda as a possible counterbalance against Iran.

The second thing is the rise of ISIS, which Al Qaeda is able to use as a foil. And they've done this successfully, much more successfully than we're now acknowledging and in ways that going to cause lasting problems for us. Right now, Al Qaeda is receiving state support. This is out in the open. The Jaysh al-Fatah Coali-

tion, of which both Al Qaeda Syrian affiliates Jabhat al-Nusra and also the other jihadist group, Ahrar al-Sham are leading members. Receives open support from Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. In Yemen, Al Qaeda is at the forefront of opposing the advance of Arabian-backed Houthis. Right now, Al Qaeda controls territory on the ground in Yemen, in Al Mukalla, which is the 5th largest city, and also in Aden. In fact, we're seeing the collapse of the anti-Al Qaeda sanctions regime with Mohammed Islambolly, a high-level member in the Khorasan Group in Syria, being delisted by the United Nations just 2 days ago.

Our own actions have an impact and prevent us from countering some of these negative developments. Let's not lose sight of the fact that our actions are communicated acts. When you look at our policies in Syria, which the Oversight Committee also is concerned about, one thing that has come up in the past few weeks after Russia started bombing is complaints from officials about how Russia was bombing U.S.-backed rebels.

There's an amazing article by Ken Dilanian in the Associated Press, published on October 10, where he talks about how U.S. officials said that our rebels were gaining ground prior to the Russian bombing. When he names where those rebels were gaining ground, in Idlib, in Hama, it's obvious that the people at the forefront were Jaysh al-Fatah, the coalition that's associated with Al Qaeda. I wish this were conspiracy theory. I wish that this was hyperbole.

But U.S. officials are talking about the fact that our rebels are helping Al Qaeda make advances on the ground. This is of grave concern because it's ultimately a communicated act. Our actions are communicated acts. And if we take actions that are contrary to our values and arguably contrary to U.S. law, that can stop us from preventing this tremendous shift where Al Qaeda is operating much more openly. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Gartenstein-Ross follows:]*https:// oversight.house.gov/hearing/radicalization-social-media-and-the rise-of-terrorism/*]

Mr. DESANTIS. Ambassador Fernandez, welcome. You're recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ALBERTO M. FERNANDEZ

Mr. FERNANDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Ranking Member Lynch, other members, and ladies and gentlemen. It's a pleasure to be here with you today.

The ISIS appeal is truly revolutionary. This is a complete package, which includes a strong ideological component, deeply rooted in a specific Salafi jihadist reading of the period of formative Islam, a political project of building the caliphate state which is seen as a going concern and a 21st century appeal to substantive and consequential participation, aimed at youth searching for purpose and identity, in a seemingly aimless, empty, and hedonistic world.

Social media itself is not the heart of the issue. Social media is the accelerant. It's the thing that turbocharges a poisonous and powerful message. This appeal that ISIS has, has come closer than that of many other Islamic terrorist groups in mainstreaming its discussion. Mainstreaming its world view, and has, as other wit-

nesses have said, ignited a terrorist media arms race with other groups seeking to match and even try to supercede what the Islamic State is doing.

The propaganda of ISIS is connected to the reality on the ground. The carnage in Syria and the victories in Iraq are eventually what led to the declaration of the caliphate. And we saw online support spike through the roof in the aftermath of these events.

What are some of the practical steps that can be taken? Number one, we need to realize that military victory is the best way to weaken ISIS propaganda appeal. There is a connection between the real world and the propaganda. The propaganda gets weakened when the reality on the ground changes.

Number two, as has been said here, there needs to be much better policing of social media. Not all social media companies are the same. Facebook has made real progress. But YouTube, Twitter, and others lag behind. It's overdue for Congress and for others to have a serious exchange of views, a serious conversation with social media companies on the terrorist presence on the Internet and how these companies violate terms of services, let alone the question of legality. Better policing of the Internet will decrease the number of ISIS propagandists and help those who are fighting it be increased. There is value in making it inconvenient for them.

Number two, people are radicalized in clusters as part of a personal relationship either directly or in person online. We know that recent converts, 40 percent of ISIS, people who want to join ISIS have been recent converts in the United States. And second generation immigrants are particularly at risk. We need to empower domestic and international civil society by both consistent funding and training to be on all the time, to be intervening and engaging with these lost and questing souls, enlist people who have a talent for engagement.

Third, Syria is important. ISIS seeks to present Syria as a mobilizing factor to mobilize people, to radicalize them, to get them to do something. They present a false image of the reality in Syria. And there is power in helping the Syrian people, victims of ISIS, survivors of ISIS violence, being able to communicate the reality on the ground that is often not known by a teenager in Mississippi or in California.

Finally, the last point I would mention is the issue of volume. Volume has value. We all know in our personal lives how you may see an obscure idea or strange idea be amplified by social media because a lot of people are pushing it. It's incredible to me that to this day, the United States, friendly countries in the West and in the Middle East are out numbered by the Islamic State. And you need volume to make the message more powerful. You need a network to fight a network.

There have been some small steps taken by the State Department, by friendly governments to begin to do this but we need to do a lot more. You need to encourage people and inspire them like ISIS does to do propaganda, or you need to rent them. But you need to find a way to form loose, open source communities of interest or swarms that can swarm back and push back against the ISIS message. It's not an impossible thing to do. It can be done.

We just need to have a little more will and a little more support in doing so. Thank you very much.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Fernandez follows:]*https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/radicalization-social-media-and-the-rise-of-terrorism/*]

Mr. DESANTIS. The chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes. Ambassador Wallace, you talked about how you can be in a queue if you report something to social media companies. But I noticed there was that incident, it was probably a month, month and a half ago, where you had an individual, a deranged individual, film him killing a newspaper reporter online. And he was posting that on social media. And that got taken down very quickly. And rightfully so. So they actually, they definitely have the capacity to do it. So why, what is keeping them from acting with that same swiftness when you're talking about terrorism?

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's obviously the question of the moment in my opinion regarding many of the social media companies, particularly Twitter. There's this notion, and perhaps it's hubris, that we have a right to social media in the Constitution, that we have a right to tweet in the Constitution. Last time I checked my Constitution, there's no reference to Twitter. It's a reference to free speech.

And for history, throughout our history, we have thoughtfully debated the appropriate limitations on what is legitimate speech and what is not legitimate speech. And I hope by this hearing and by my colleagues that we have that debate on the nature of some of these communications. Twitter does not effectively take down accounts quickly enough or search them out quickly enough when it does so in a variety of other areas, whether it's stalking of women or other abuse, like the example that you referenced, child pornography and the like, that's the first problem. They don't effectively take it down when it's up. Even when we report it, it's not taken down quickly.

And the second problem, if I may, is they come back. Congressman Lynch referred to the game of whack-a-mole. I used that in a previous testimony. And I agree that whack-a-mole is apt analogy except for one point. When you bop one in whack-a-mole, it comes back with fewer followers. But look at this example. You have a jihadi tweeting that he is having his 100th account suspended with similar names. That's unacceptable. We have to have a debate. We have to have a discussion at this committee about how we, if Twitter and the likes of Twitter don't find ways of solving this problem themselves, we need to find a way to help them solve that problem.

Mr. DESANTIS. There's this #CEPDigitalDistruption. Can you explain what that means and talk about the work you're doing to combat radicalization propaganda?

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As my colleague Ambassador Fernandez said, we took it upon ourselves to create a hashtag to try to report accounts and digitally disrupt, if you will, the misuse of online accounts. So we have created a team of young people, many of whom are behind me today, and in offices in New York and Washington, where we try to report and take down as many accounts as we can, effectively engaging in the game of

whack-a-mole. And by creating a dynamic online constituency, we call on those that support our effort to also report accounts. But we need a partner. We need a partner in the likes of Twitter that will respond quickly to our work and hopefully the work of others.

I think Alberto mentioned that we need to have a thousand, he didn't use these words, but a thousand flowers blossom. We should do it in private. The government should do it in public. If we all report these accounts and create a network to take it down, we can be effective. #CEPDigitalDisruption, is our bit in that effort.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Purdy, you mentioned radicalization by people like Anwar al-Awlaki. What tools are used to radicalize individuals that I think that are the most concerning?

Mr. PURDY. I think the tools that we constantly see people using on social media are videos and also referring individuals to books and others individuals who can help in that radicalization process. You know, 14 years ago when that kid from California was going down that pathway of radicalization, he had to go and sit with somebody out there in California not in a mosque but after mosque.

Today, these individuals, anybody with a phone can now go online and they're directed to particular sites where they can watch videos. They can actually be tweeting with somebody that's in Syria today who is sending them back pictures and look at what we are doing today. And especially for young people who ISIS is targeting, and they are targeting young individuals. If we look at the people, the individuals who have been locked up the last year, you know, the individuals are clearly, there are certain themes, they're all very young, they're disenfranchised in one way or another.

Last night, I just happened to, in speaking to a group, I had a girl come up and speak to me. And she said I was a student with Zachary Chesser in Falls Church, Virginia, I went to high school with him. And these are some things that I remember about this. And this individual kind of what changed as this young woman knew him, kind of that radicalization process. She said all of a sudden, he started growing a beard. All of a sudden, he started not hanging out with kids and individuals, that almost self-cloistering of this one individual, and then changing and not wanting anything to do with females or other Westerners.

And we have seen that from Mohammad Sidique Khan in London with the July 2005 bombers that, again, self-radicalized themselves, being able to go online and go to particular sites where they can acquire this information.

Mr. DESANTIS. Great. My time is expired. I now recognize the ranking member, Mr. Lynch, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. I want to thank you again, members of the panel, for your wonderful testimony.

The struggle in dealing with some of the platforms, whether it be Twitter or WhatsAp or Facebook, and I acknowledge that there's variable response rates from those different organizations. The problem we have is that we have to try to balance national security. And we all agree that ISIL is out there and is an immediate threat. We also have to try to balance that against the rights of free speech that people have. And that's been a struggle here.

But in reality, Ambassador Wallace, your group has been out there, you're engaged in some, you're doing some good work, and you're reporting on some of these efforts over the top. Where do you draw the line? I mean, where do you, you know, it's, you know, Mr. Purdy, you mentioned, Milestones by Qutb, you know, which was written probably back in the 1950s, maybe even earlier. I'm not sure if I'm right on that. But it's a piece of literature that, you know, has led to the radicalization of some groups. But people might argue that has value elsewhere in Islam.

Where do you draw the line where, you know, some postings are a threat and you need to take them down? And are the things that we are seeing now an easy call? Or do we get into this debate? Some of these people are clearly, you know, they're putting videos on there of executions, things like that, which is an easy call I would imagine. What are the, you know, how does your organization do some of its greatest work in terms of forcing, you know, these platforms to take down some of this stuff?

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you, Congresswoman. Look, I think that the analysis and this debate that you just framed very eloquently, is a debate that we have had in other contexts before. We have, at times in our history, weighed free speech versus a challenge that we think is against the law or a challenge to our society. And there are a whole realm of areas of speech that we have said is wrong and we prohibited it. I think the mere fact that we're having this discussion is advancing the ball. I would just hope that we could invigorate an even bigger discussion about that debate because whatever comes of it will be better than we have now in my opinion.

But look, I think that the analysis for us is relatively simple. If I were to send a hunting knife to ISIS, I think all of you would say Wallace, you're providing material support to ISIS because that hunting knife could be used for dastardly things. And a hunting knife is pretty benign. So, ultimately, it's really a material support analysis. And we feel that if an online propagandist is recruiting, I think material support is seeking financial support, material support, is calling to act on behalf of a terrorist group, that's material support. I think the propaganda sometimes can be a closer call. But I think we should have the debate. I personally believe if you are a Twitter person and putting out boatloads of propaganda on behalf of the specially designated national ISIS, I think that that should be prohibited speech. And I think we should have the debate on that.

And so I think the analysis is already found in our law. It's a question of expanding upon it and ensuring that we implement that in the context of social media.

Mr. LYNCH. Okay. That's helpful. Anybody else want to take a crack at that? I have another follow-up question in terms of, you know, how we actually accomplish this. There are two models that, and the testimony here this morning, one is sort of a cyber battalion where we would have a government screening process of, you know, taking these down and looking at them.

The other is, has also been raised by testimony this morning, which is, you know, let a thousand flowers bloom where you have private society, individuals out there reporting, so that we use that

force multiplier, if you will, of just people online, if you see something, report it, and then have others take action on that. Is there a preference?

I realize the scope of this is pretty large. But is there a preferred approach as to having government do it versus calling on individuals citizens to be more vigilant? Mr. Gartenstein-Ross? Doctor?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Sir, I think you can do both. And I think it's best if you have both functioning at once.

The main thing that I would argue for both government and also civil society activists is that when you look at what ISIS has done online, it's very innovative. And often our own efforts aren't as innovative and aren't as strategic.

In terms of strategy, and I think Ambassador Fernandez did a good job in his testimony of highlighting some areas of vulnerability for ISIS. I mean, there's a group that is so invested in its brutality, in its, what I call its winner's message in my testimony, that once chinks are put in this armor, once there are clear areas in which they're failing and not living up to this image of strength, then they actually very much are in danger of a brand reversal.

I would suggest that one thing we can look to in terms of bodies of literature is literature being put out by people in the, who do academic work on business. They're very much an organization that has a certain brand. And it's a brand that's working now but it won't always work.

The second thing I'll say in terms of innovativeness, we have talked about taking down their accounts individually. And that has a disruptive effect. But, ultimately, they're in an online environment. We actually have the capability to literally map every single member of a distribution network, every single account, and take them all down at once, as opposed to reporting them individually. That's thinking innovatively. Let's not take them down one at a time, let's take them all down.

And Twitter is willing to take down these accounts. They don't have a good algorithm to take them down. But these accounts are violating their terms of service. And so I think that there's an area in which either from the governmental angle or from a civil society angle, one can help to map these networks, and you'll have a much more disruptive effect if you take down the whole network as opposed to one note at a time.

Mr. LYNCH. All right. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman's time has expired. The chair now recognized Mr. Duncan for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, you know, many people today, both liberal and conservative, say that the original decision to go into Iraq in 2002 was the biggest foreign policy mistake in the history of this country. William Buckley, for instance, said similar words to that shortly before he passed away. George Will wrote a column saying that the neoconservatives, who were the strongest advocates of our war, were really the most—very misnamed people, he said actually they were the most radical people in this city. And the more we read about this, the worse it seems to get.

Just yesterday, for instance, I read that the New York Times had written that most of the leadership of ISIS and most of its soldiers

were former members of the Iraqi Army and that we made a mistake when we followed our policy of de-Baathification and disbanding the Iraqi Army shortly after we started that second war in Iraq. Do you gentlemen think the New York Times was correct? Are most of the leadership of ISIS former Iraqi military people?

Anybody? Yes, sir.

Mr. FERNANDEZ. I'm happy to take that. Yes, sir, it seems like the majority of the leadership are, if you talk about sheer numbers, have a connection with the Iraqi Army at some point. There was Islamization process that occurred ini the last years of Saddam Hussein where the Baathist ideology of the government was, they allowed Islamists to flourish.

But what causes ISIS to succeed I contend are three elements. One is the one you mentioned, absolutely Iraq. Two, Syria. And, three, the rise of social media. When ISIS does its propaganda in 2013, 2014, it's not telling people to go fight in Iraq. It's telling people to go fight in Syria because the Muslims are being killed in Syria.

So, yes, the leadership of ISIS is overwhelmingly Iraqi with a strong former military component. But the message that they use, first was about Syria and after June of 2014 is about the caliphate.

Mr. DUNCAN. Let me say this, I know some of us are wanting, some people will want us to go in a big way back into Syria. Yet, General Petraeus testified a couple of weeks ago at a Senate hearing that Putin's foreign reserves are less than $200 billion total. And I saw the 60 Minutes report this past Sunday night about ISIS and it said in that report, and I have the transcript here, that we're spending $10 million a day, in our bombing campaign, which has been going on for 14 months, that's $300 million a month. Apparently over the 14 or 15 months we have been doing this, we have spent about $4.5 to $5 billion on this so far.

Yet, the military man said that ISIS has been able to replace its bed with new recruits. So the estimated number of enemy figures remains unchanged, 20 to 30,000 last year, 20 to 30,000 this year. David Martin, the CBS correspondent, said so as long as they can keep bringing fighters in there, are you just shoveling sand against the tide? And then he ended up his report saying this, he said some 25,000 American bombs have been dropped so far, all the firepower and technology of a superpower, even supersonic stealth aircraft directed against an enemy in pickup trucks intent on dragging the Middle East back to the Middle Ages.

I think at some point, since we are over $18 trillion in debt, at some point, somebody is going to have to start showing some progress as far as I'm concerned. And you can do anything to ISIS, the worst punishment that you can come up with. But, on the other hand, we can't just keep throwing billions and billions and billions of dollars and not showing any progress. And, in fact, some people think it's helping to radicalize or even help recruit troops for ISIS.

At some point, these people in the Middle East are going to have to start fighting their own wars because we can't afford to just keep pouring billions or even trillions down these Middle Eastern rat holes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Lieu, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with Representative Duncan that we're wasting taxpayer funds by bombing in Syria. I have seen no good results from that. In fact, you've seen more Syrians flee. And that sort of goes to my question to you, Ambassador Fernandez, which, I agree with you, that you say that social media is not the cause of radicalization, it's an accelerant. And really the problem is the message. Don't you think the U.S. bombing in Syria actually gives a lot of propaganda to ISIL and ISIS?

Mr. FERNANDEZ. Thank you, sir. If you look at the propaganda, actually U.S. bombing of Syria is not a major element in ISIS propaganda. It's occasionally featured. It's not a big element in the propaganda. The number one element in the propaganda is about building this paradise on Earth, building the caliphate. Come and join us, come and emigrate, let's build the beautiful future, you know, like communists or Nazis talk about the beautiful future that you're building.

But if you look at the propaganda, they talk about America, the head of the snake. They talk about destroying America. But very few of their videos actually show U.S. bombing. That's just not there. There are a handful. But considering the thousands of videos that they produce, it's a tiny part of what they show.

Mr. LIEU. So they don't talk about U.S. attacking them or killing them?

Mr. FERNANDEZ. They talk about the U.S. in general. In other words, for caliphate jihadist groups, the U.S. is the enemy. The U.S. is the new Rome. And they were saying that before we started bombing them. And if we stop tomorrow, they would continue to say that.

Mr. LIEU. All right. So their message is more about building the caliphate there?

Mr. FERNANDEZ. And conquering the world, yes.

Mr. LIEU. And do they say conquer the world? Or they just want their ISIL area?

Mr. FERNANDEZ. Well, they want their ISIL area obviously to start out with. But the new five dinar gold coin that ISIS issues, on the back it has a map of the world.

And when the ISIS spokesman explained why the ISIS gold dinar has the map of the world, they said because that is the place that the rule of the law has to take place. And he says specifically it means three places, Constantinople, Istanbul of the Islamic prophecy, Rome, and America. Those are the three ones that they talk about. Obviously, this is rhetoric but this is what they say.

Mr. LIEU. Okay. And your view is U.S. bombs in Syria isn't really affecting their propaganda?

Mr. FERNANDEZ. It's not a major element of it. It's there. But it would rank really low in the top themes that they use. It's not a primary theme in their propaganda.

Mr. LIEU. And does their leadership sort of get upset when their folks get killed by U.S. bombs?

Mr. FERNANDEZ. They don't tend to talk about that. So actually it does. Because, obviously, if your message is [speaking foreign language], the Islamic State is here to stay and growing. And why is it growing? Because God's permission is that it is to grow. Anything that shows them as losers, anything that shows them as

going backwards is problematic with them. So when a person is killed, obviously, they say this person is a martyr. But they don't usually play up that such and such a person was killed by the Americans.

Mr. LIEU. Great. Thank you. And then, Ambassador Wallace, thank you for your public service. I think some of the things you said I do find alarming. I do not believe that the U.S. Government should be prohibiting speech based on content. And if you had the Government sort of refereeing what is propaganda or not, it becomes very problematic because if we're going to start shutting down a Twitter account because someone says I support ISIL, then what happens if someone says, you know, I support Assad? Sort of a brutal dictator.

Or what if someone says I support the Ku Klux Klan? At some point, how does the Government determine what message it's going to shut down and what they're not? And I'm all for what you do and what the private sector does and what non-profits do. I just believe that Government ought not be sitting there deciding what content to shut down or not. And even if we did, I believe the U.S. Supreme Court would strike it as unconstitutional.

And so with that, I'll let you have a chance to answer that. And then I'll yield back.

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you, Congressman Lieu. First of all, I think we would be remiss in saying that it's American bombs. The President has done a very capable job, in my opinion, of establishing an Arab coalition that is bombing ISIS. And some of the horrible deaths that we have seen of soldiers in theater have been non-Americans, such as the Jordanian pilot that was shot down and killed. So let's be clear, there are Arab bombs that are going in there as well as American bombs.

Look, on your point, I think there are a lot of lawyers in the room. I suffer that affliction as well. I don't think this is as controversial as you think. We're having a thoughtful discussion about it. We have had this thoughtful debate for years about all sorts of speech. And we have concluded some speech is not acceptable. For example, the Ku Klux Klan, I don't mean to pick on any particular horribly obnoxious group that is entitled to speak freely in the United States, but they get to say I'm a member of the Ku Klux Klan if they want to. That's not what we're talking about here. We have litigated and have an entire body of law that says some speech is legitimate, some is not.

I've offered a framework under the material support area of what speech should not be legitimate and should be prohibited in the context of terrorism. And I think that, for example, just saying look, ISIS, maybe they stand for some good things, I think that that's a much closer call than saying please go out and kill for ISIS, please go out and give money to ISIS, please go out and give your life to ISIS. That should be prohibited speech. That's what is dominating the Internet. That's where there are tens of thousands of accounts. And I think we can thoughtfully have this debate on Capitol Hill. And your opinion is absolutely, even though I disagree with it, a legitimate opinion. And let's have that debate. And let's figure out where we draw the line.

We have done it many times in the course of our law, from stalking women to abuse to screaming fire in a crowded theater, to child pornography. Let's have it in the context of terrorism.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia for 5 minutes.

Mr. HICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, panel, for being here today. Very interesting and informative, and I appreciate the expertise that you bring to the table.

Mr. Purdy, let me begin with you. Can you describe for me a little bit about the program, the Mirror Image? I understand that it's something that allows law enforcement to walk in the shoes of terrorists or something to that effect. Could you describe that a little further, please?

Mr. PURDY. Yes, the Mirror Image Training to Combat Terrorism is a program that we designed almost 14 years ago to allow law enforcement, military, and intelligence to step into the shoes of a terrorist cell or a network. And the idea behind that was what Sun Tzu said, you know, if you know the enemy and you know yourself, you're going to be able to defeat them. And so what we came up with after a series of interviews with some individuals, we thought that would be a good training format to get people to understand, first and foremost, what is it that these terrorists are trying to do.

One of the things I think we have to do a better job is getting people to understand what terrorist organizations are trying to do, when they put a communication online. So through Mirror Image, we would take a group of usually 40, 50 people, and for a week to 2 weeks, we would show them by having them become the terrorists.

So FBI, law enforcement, military, military intelligence, intelligence folks, so that they could then actually have done this. Usually they're working against these individuals, but it's been quite eye-opening for these individuals to see it from the other side. There's a lot of great lessons that can be learned by reading what they're putting out, by doing the types of things that they do, and trying to get people to understand that mentality so as they combat these individuals, they'll have a greater understanding and hopefully be able to deal with the situation.

Mr. HICE. So I take it then from your answer, that you believe this has been quite beneficial?

Mr. PURDY. I have had military individuals tell me that when they went to Iraq, that training saved lives. I've had law enforcement individuals say what we learned in your program enabled us to not only understand the terrorists, but to be somewhat predictive in what a terrorist was attempting to do, so yes, sir.

Mr. HICE. Very good. Let me transition over to you, Mr. Gartenstein-Ross. What do you think at the end of the day is actually attracting people to ISIS caliphate?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I think there's multiple things attracting people to the ISIS caliphate, and I think it's somewhat different based upon personality and region. ISIS actually has on some of their web pages a different interface that you receive depending upon where you're from. So if you're looking at them and you're a

westerner, for some of their pages you'll get a different page than if you're visiting from the Middle East.

There's two major themes in their propaganda, though, that I would point to, even though there are many things that draw people to them. One theme is their strength. And as I said, they're extraordinarily brutal, but they're okay with that because their brutality, beheading people, burning people alive, this is a sign that they're winning. This is a sign of how strong they are. That's one element that's very strong in their propaganda.

A second element, and Charlie Winter writes about this for the Quilliam Foundation quite well, a British-based think tank, is that they're building a state. Ambassador Fernandez referred to that. That's the second aspect of their propaganda, both destruction and also creation. I think both of those are vulnerable to disruption. On the one hand, we were talking a bit about whether the bombing campaign has accomplished anything or not. Right now ISIS is fighting a ten-front war. And if you look at the past couple of months, they've experienced one loss after another. One of their biggest gains this year, Ramadi is under a lot of pressure, and the odds are that they will lose it within the next, say, 8 to 10 months.

Mr. HICE. If you don't mind, let me interrupt. I've only got about a minute left, and just open up a question to each of you. Do any of you know what the objectives are of our current administration in terms of their national strategy for countering violent extremism?

So I take it from that that no one knows what our strategy is?

Mr. WALLACE. The President in his global summit did identify two areas he was focusing on. We might disagree with the parameters of that, but he focused on training youth around the world to promote tolerance and counterextremist ideology at a young person's level and generation.

Mr. HICE. Promote tolerance, to extremism?

Mr. WALLACE. You asked a question about what they're doing. I'm not taking sides here, sir. I'm giving you——

Mr. HICE. No. I'm just asking is that what you're saying?

Mr. WALLACE. I'm saying that's what I understand that the President's agenda is. I'm giving you an answer to your question. I'm not in the administration, sir. I'm retired.

Mr. HICE. All right. Well, Mr. Chairman, I see my time is expired. It's amazing to me that we virtually have no understanding of our own administration's strategy to deal with this, and what we do hear of what we believe is quite alarming. With that I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas for 5 minutes.

Mr. HURD. Thank you, Chairman. Ambassador Wallace, good to see you again. It's been a while since we served together in New York City. One of my first questions to you, sir, you mentioned the individual that had opened and closed a hundred accounts on Twitter by a different name. What are you proposing that Twitter do about it?

Mr. WALLACE. Good to see you, Congressman, and thank you for allowing me to appear before you as well. Look, there was a classic example—I'm sure some of my colleagues remember Mujahideen

Miski, who was one of the most influential and prolific online Jihadis. He was a Somali-American, ostensibly tweeting from Somalia, we believe Iraq, ostensibly killed in a drone strike a couple months ago, I think guys? He was incredibly prolific and kept coming back. I don't remember his handle, but it was Mujahideen Miski 1, take him down; Mujahideen Miski 2, take him down. And it would rely on people reporting his reappearance on Twitter. I think that——

Mr. HURD. But them taking it down, isn't that a success?

Mr. WALLACE. Well, only after reporting. I think where Twitter was failing to act is that if he was coming back with a similar handle, it shouldn't have had to go through the fairly elaborate time-consuming reporting process. Twitter should have said, ah, Miski 2 is up; let's make sure he goes down. Miski 3 is up, and take him down. And I think that's one of the issues with Twitter that they are not actively policing in an appropriate manner terrorist content on their site.

Mr. HURD. So when your organization gets this kind of information, do you share it directly with Twitter? Do you share it with Department of Homeland Security? Do you share it with the FBI? Who do you share it with?

Mr. WALLACE. We certainly share it with Twitter, and we go through a reporting process with Twitter that is somewhat cumbersome.

One of the things we have called for, I have called for in this testimony and in previous testimony, is that trusted reporting status, which would be an accelerated reporting status, be granted to organizations like ours, the State Department, some of my colleagues on this panel, so that it doesn't fall into the really lengthy queue, if you will, of reporting on Twitter. Twitter has not yet taken that action. We think that's a problem.

Mr. HURD. And earlier, I just want to make sure I'm clear. Were you intimating that social media companies are providing material support to terrorists?

Mr. WALLACE. I'm intimating that we should have that debate, and I'm glad that you asked the question, and I'm honored to provide the answer.

Mr. HURD. So when I was chasing al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the back alleys, they would do things called night letters. They would write a letter, leave it on a doorstep. Were we intimating that the companies that produce pens and pencils and paper are providing material support to terrorists?

Mr. WALLACE. I've learned over the years never to throw back a question to a Congressman asking you a question, but I'm really tempted to do it here. What about a Kalashnikov? What about a hunting knife? I think that our debate has to say—we have debated in other contexts—maybe a pencil isn't material support, but is a hunting knife, is an AK, is an RPG——

Mr. HURD. I would say that providing an account on a social media site is not material support. I don't think that's anywhere close to material support, and if these organizations are not providing taking these things down, they are working closely with the Department of Homeland Security, so, you know, I have to echo the concerns of the gentleman from California about talking about, you

know, yes, it's good to have a conversation about legitimate speech, but I think we also need to be careful. You're not a law enforcement organization. You're not an intelligence organization. The information that you're getting is valuable and should be shared, but saying that that's the only game in town is a little scary.

Changing gears, there is a Professor visiting from Spain at GW, Dr. Javier Lesaca, who has done some very interesting work on analyzing the social media campaigns of ISIS. They do four campaigns a day. They are promoting it in about 49 different languages. My question is, who's out there that is countering this ideology? And Ambassador, I think it was you. Actually it was, Mr. Gartenstein-Ross. You mentioned about some of these failures of ISIS. They talk about we have this great functioning land. Well, it's not really that much. They encourage young men to come to ISIS to fight the infidel, but you're more likely to get a bomb dropped on your head or a bullet in your chest than you are to find excitement in Syria.

This is not just for the Federal Government to get that message out. It's going to be organizations. It's going to be our Sunni Arab partners in the region. Who is out there actually countering that narrative and getting that message out?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. First of all, let me say, sir, that I agree with that entirely; that it's not just a job for the Federal Government. You have a variety of centers which are out there. A new one just opened up in the United Arab Emirates in Doha, which is a joint project of the United States and the Emirates. There is also a communication center which has opened in Nigeria. So I think there are some interesting innovations that are occurring to try to get the U.S. to work with local partners.

Secondly, there are civil society organizations, such as the one that I mentioned before, the Quilliam Foundation, which really makes an effort to try to push out messages that are counter to extremism. I think some of the more effective ones highlight the bad experiences of defectors, people who had gone over to fight with the Islamic State and found that life was not all they will thought it was cracked up to be. I think that those are both important.

A third thing I would mention is that tech companies, in fact, are starting to get interested in this problem set. If you look at, and this has been reported openly, Google/YouTube has helped to finance content providers, including in the United States, people from the American Muslim community who have messages that are quite contrary to ISIS' message.

I will highlight one final thing, which is one problem I have noted in the past, is that ISIS is very good at creating facts, fabricating facts. It makes itself look stronger than it actually is. One area where I think the U.S. Government can play a very good role, is contacting media companies with fact sheets in order to counteract ISIS' exaggerations. Things like when they convinced CNN, BBC and others that they controlled the City of Derna in Libya, which they never did. Being able to quickly reach out to media contacts and say you've reported this. ISIS has fabricated this fact. It's untrue. Would be helpful in just making sure that the mainstream media doesn't end up echoing ISIS' propaganda.

Mr. HURD. Excellent. Thank you, sir. I apologize for going over time, Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. We just have so many people in the queue. You know so, I appreciate it I know Steve and I are going to have some more questions, so we will go another round if the other members are inclined.

We have been talking about, and rightfully so, about the propaganda about this global caliphate, and it's a Sunni caliphate, but I've noted that Ayatollah Khamenei will tweet different things. And so, Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, what is the use of social media from the Shi'ite extremism side? Iran is establishing a de facto Shi'ite caliphate from Afghanistan border to the Mediterranei Sea. Are we seeing the same type of techniques being used with groups like Hezbollah and other Shi'ite-type militias in maybe Yemen or these places?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes. We're seeing similar efforts on the Shia side. Most of the U.S.' focus is on Sunni extremism Groups. An analyst who I think has done the best work on this is Phillip Smyth, S-m-y-t-h, who wrote a monograph earlier this year published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and he has looked extensively at the Shia side. They also do mobilize people through social media. They also have Shia foreign fighters who have gone to Syria, and it presents a similar set of concerns.

The final thing I'll mention there is similar to ISIS, they also are committing grave atrocities in the theater. While they have different goals than ISIS, it also is something which definitely is running counter to U.S. strategic interests and is causing a major humanitarian problem.

Mr. DESANTIS. How has the social media affected terrorism by Palestinians against Israelis? You look at the intifada at the beginning of the last decade, yeah, we had the Internet and stuff, but you didn't have Twitter. You didn't have a lot of this stuff. Now I know that there's some significant problems that are going on. Are we seeing evidence that some of the Palestinian terrorists are using social media?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Definitely. There's a few ways in which social media has a direct impact on the current nascent intifada that's occurring. One is it's a remarkable mobilizing tool, a tool that can get people out, and you can have a campaign that's organized via social media. People can organize much more quickly than they could previously.

The second thing, one thing that is occurring in this conflict is people will be out there, for example, throwing rocks with a cell phone, and they'll be taking photos of what's happening to them in order to try to make sure that they capture the moment, and it gets disseminated right away via social media. So it is a tool that is at the center of how people are tactically thinking about this current conflict.

Mr. DESANTIS. Yeah. Great. And then when someone gets killed, I know some of the headlines in the New York Times will say somebody was killed by a rock. They won't say how or what. But anyway, that's not a discussion for today.

I'm going to yield to Mr. Lynch for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to move out a little bit from the tactical discussion we have been having about social media, and really look at this from a long-term strategy perspective, if we could for a minute. I spent a lot of time on this issue. I'm one of the few that have actually gone in and talked to Assad. It was a few years ago.

The paradox here, and I've also met with all the major rebel groups, and I just have to say that this idea, this fiction of a moderate Syrian rebel group, I just don't see it, not in the terms of moderate in which we in this country regard it. The rebel groups are all Islamic. Oddly enough, Assad—and he needs to go. No question about it. There's a consensus around that, except for Russia, and Iran and Hezbollah—ironically he provides protection to religious minorities. And the people that we're trying to help, and I've met with them in refugee camps in Gaziantep and Istanbul, and they're Islamists, and they want to create an Islamic republic, and to various degrees they want to you push an Islamic model on the population there. So it provides a real dilemma for us.

I heard some testimony yesterday from Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and also our new head of the Joint Chiefs General Dunford. They were talking about Sergeant Wheeler, who had been killed recently—God bless him and his family—they were talking about the possibility of putting boots on the ground to some extent for various purposes. And, you know, if you go back to what Petraeus talked about in Iraq in terms of the surge, and giving the Iraqis an opportunity there, his counterinsurgency program, which was very successful until we handed off our responsibility, that was the weak link in his program, in the program. I see it as the weak link in any program that we have with Syria.

When you look at Syria, let's just say that Assad goes, either by negotiation or by force, who do we hand off to? And I'm not saying that rhetorically. I'm asking you who do we hand off to? Because I met with all the players there, and I mean, I don't think anyone is there, of any significant strength that we could say, okay, we have killed the bad guys, if that's what we say, or we have taken out Assad. Here you go. I don't see anybody in the region now who could actually step in and do that job.

So if you're going to envision using boots on the ground, you ought to have an exit strategy going in, and I just don't see anybody we can hand off to, and I think we would be sucked into a program where we would have to try to create—this is Iraq 2.0. We would have to create the institutions to guide that country for the next 10, 15, 20 years.

So I know you weren't hired to do this job, but you all spend time on this. If you could just share your thoughts on that whole question with me, that would be great. Mr. Wallace?

Mr. WALLACE. Thank you for your thoughts. I would say that Assad isn't doing the job. That's one thing that we do have to remember. I mean, obviously Syria is an area of incredible turmoil and otherwise, and on top of him not doing the job because of the incredible migration problem, the human suffering, the toll that's taken there, he is the proxy of Iran.

And I think we have somewhat overlooked it. Not to any intention, I don't want to speak for my colleagues, but the State Depart-

ment and I think all of us still view Iran as the number one state sponsor of terrorism in the world. I think the growth of Iranian hegemony in the region has stoked the sectarian flames. So I think we have a double problem, if you will.

Assad isn't the solution. Whether or not he was before, it's beyond, we don't get a do-over; it's whatever it is now, and I think we can do much better in finding a better solution than Assad and the human suffering that's taking there. And hopefully not continue to empower the Iranian regime, which I think has been regrettably on the march since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and now Yemen.

So I think that the concern is Iran and the number of Shia and the destabilizing influence of Iran throughout the region that is stoking sectarian conflict and radicalizing a lot of the Sunnis. Let's remember that the initial rebellion against Assad was actually pretty secular. It was a secular movement against Assad, but that was a missed opportunity.

Mr. LYNCH. Doctor, I know you wanted to say something.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Definitely. I think your question is a very important one, and that's why I mentioned this issue of Syria in my testimony. I think that fundamentally what we're doing in Syria and what we do in Syria is linked to our ability to communicate effectively on these issues related to extremism.

I agree with the way that you framed it, very strongly. And I think that in addition to the fact that these groups are not what we would regard as moderates, we should also note that the degree to which al Qaeda is strong enough on the ground, to really dominate Syrian factions whom we'd otherwise consider to be acceptable. So in the LA Times on October the 12th, you have an individual Major Fares Bayoush, who is the commander of Fursan al Haq, which is a group we regard as moderate, who said that some level of coordination with al Qaeda-style groups was unavoidable.

The quote in the LA Times is: "There is something misunderstood by world powers. We have to work with Nusra Front and other groups to fight the regime in Daesh. And this is someone who we're supporting. That reenforces your point about the rebels, and we have to fundamentally understand that.

TOW missiles have used—American-provided TOW missiles— have been used to help these groups advance. Now let me be clear. It's not because the United States is trying to help bad people. I think that the U.S. tends to be on the side of the angels, but we're very blunderingly on the side of the angels. And i think that we wanted to back this uprising against Assad, given that he is an awful dictator; but then when the facts on the ground revealed just how much extremism factions were dominating the battle space, we didn't adapt. Our adaptation was to go ahead and help those extremist factions to gain ground.

In addition to the idea of boots on the ground being problematic for the reasons that you articulated, I think it is important to look into our current policies. As I said, following the Russian bombing, U.S. officials were talking about how they considered our program of supporting rebels through the CIA to be successful. And when they looked at rebel successes, they were pointing to areas where the Nusra Front gained ground.

If we are backing rebels to help al Qaeda to make advances, we can't very credibly say to Saudi Arabia, to Qatar, to Turkey, now you guys cant support them because we are indirectly, not directly, but we're doing the same thing. And I think that's something which is very much worth looking into, including the question of whether these programs violate U.S. law and the question of whether Congress has been given accurate information on what the rebel groups that we're supporting are doing.

Mr. LYNCH. I'm not sure—Ambassador would you mind?

Mr. DESANTIS. No.

Mr. LYNCH. Ambassador Fernandez.

Mr. FERNANDEZ. I would make two points. I think your concerns are well-stated. There's a shocking reality, and that is that for millions of Sunni Arab Muslims in that area of Syria and Iraq, ISIS and ISIS rule seems as the least bad option considering the alternatives. That's a huge problem for U.S. foreign policy.

And on the rebels, on the moderate rebels, you're right. There was a golden opportunity earlier this year when Jaish al-Fatah, the Conquest Army supported by the Qataris and the Saudis took over most of the province of Idlib. This is a province that had a Christian minority and a Druze minority, so it was a golden opportunity for them to prove their tolerance. And the Christian minority has ceased to exist. They're gone. And the Druze minority was forced to convert to Islam. The rhetoric was a little less nasty, a little less hard-edged than ISIS, but the reality was not much different.

Mr. LYNCH. All right. Mr. Purdy?

Mr. PURDY. I think one of the problems we have is when the United States removes leaders, and there's kind of a historical list in this region from Egypt, kind of Mubarak; Yemen, Salah; Libya, Qadhafi, and now we're talking about removing or trying to push out the President of Syria. None of these individuals are angels, and none of these individuals are people that our government would want to truly be partnered with because of human rights and all kinds of other things that these individuals have done.

But when we push one of these leaders out, there always seems to be a void that's created. And what we constantly see is whether it's AQAP or al Qaeda or ISIS, they step right into that void that we have had a hand in kind of creating. And it causes us long-term problems because now as we try to look and gain coalition partners and other people, there are other geopolitical reasons maybe why somebody might want to go in and do something or hold back because we have created a mess.

Mr. LYNCH. Okay. I thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, I went way over time. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. No problem. I'd like to thank our witnesses for taking the time to appear before us today. If there's no further business, without objection, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:27 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

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ADL

Anti-Defamation League®

October 28, 2015

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Chairman
House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Member
House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeSantis and Ranking Member Lynch,

As the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security holds hearings on "Radicalization: Social Media and the Rise of Terrorism," we write to provide the views of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and ask that this statement be included as part of the official hearings record.

The Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League is the foremost non-governmental authority on domestic terrorism, extremism, organized hate groups, and hate crimes. In the United States, adherents of a variety of extremist movements – from white supremacists to Islamic extremists – perceive Jews as their enemy and target the Jewish community with both propaganda and violence. Extremists also target other communities or minorities, as well as the democratic foundations of government that protect everybody's rights.

Through its Center on Extremism, whose experts monitor a variety of extremist and terrorist movements, ADL plays a leading role in exposing extremist movements and activities, while helping communities and government agencies alike in combatting them. The League also provides the public with extensive resources, such as its analytic reports on extremist trends and its Hate Symbols[1] and Terror Symbols databases, which have generated more than 10.5 million views.

Assisting Law Enforcement

ADL is the largest non-governmental provider in the United States for law enforcement training on hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism. Each year, ADL experts deliver customized, in-depth training on these subjects to over 10,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement officers. ADL arms law enforcement with the information it needs to respond to those extremists who cross the line from espousing hateful ideologies to committing violent or criminal acts, thus protecting the Jewish community and all Americans.

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[1] http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/hate-on-display/#.VVtmlvlVhHw

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Involvement in Countering Violent Extremism
ADL professionals were directly involved in the February, 2015 White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. Convened by President Obama, the three-day program involved experts from around the world working to develop an action plan to address violent domestic and international extremism. Oren Segal, Director of ADL's Center on Extremism, provided insight into the nature of violent extremist movements in the U.S., as well as how Americans of all religions, races, and backgrounds are being recruited by international terrorist organizations online.

The Summit also provided a showcase for pilot programs in three cities, which have developed collaborative networks of government and non-governmental stakeholders. ADL is a partner in the Boston area pilot program, which developed a framework for prevention and intervention strategies in the wake of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Under the leadership of Carmen Ortiz, United States Attorney for Massachusetts, the collaborative has been meeting since the fall of 2014. The Framework developed by the Boston collaborative, including the League's New England Regional Director, Robert Trestan, takes a multi-disciplinary and community-wide approach to addressing the threat posed by violent extremists.

In advance of the White House Summit, ADL issued an online report titled "Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2014: The Rise of ISIS & Sustained Online Recruitment,"[2] which includes the League's research and detailed analysis on homegrown violent extremism motivated by radical interpretations of Islam in 2014 and the influence of ISIS and its use of social media for recruitment purposes.

Terrorist Exploitation of Social Media
As Internet proficiency and the use of social media grow ever-more universal, so too do the efforts of terrorist groups to exploit new technology in order to make materials that justify and sanction violence more accessible and impactful.

Terrorist groups are not only using various online and mobile platforms to spread their messages, but also to actively recruit adherents who live in the communities they seek to target.

While the fundamental ideological content of terrorist propaganda has remained consistent for two decades – replete with militant condemnations of perceived transgressions against Muslims worldwide, appeals for violence and anti-Semitism – terrorists groups are now able to reach, recruit and motivate extremists more quickly and effectively than ever before by adapting their messages to new technology.

In the past, plots were directed by foreign terrorist organizations or their affiliates and recruitment and planning generally required some direct, face-to-face interaction with terrorist operatives. Indoctrination came directly from extremist peers, teachers or clerics. Individuals would then advance through the radicalization process through constant interaction with likeminded sympathizers or, as the 2007 New York Police Department (NYPD) report on radicalization described, with a "spiritual sanctioner" who gave credence to those beliefs.

Today, individuals can find analogous social networks, inspiration and encouragement online, packaged neatly together with bomb-making instructions. This enables adherents to self-radicalize without face-to-face contact with an established terrorist group or cell.

Individual extremists, or lone wolves, are also increasingly self-radicalizing online with no physical interactions with established terrorist groups or cells – a development that can make it more difficult for law enforcement to detect plots in their earliest stages.

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[2] http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/homegrown-islamic-extremism-in-2014-the-rise-of-isis-and-sustained-online-recruitment.pdf

The overwhelming majority of American citizens and residents linked to terrorist activity motivated by Islamic extremism in the past several years – including at least 63 U.S. residents in 2015 – actively used the Internet to access propaganda or otherwise facilitate their extremist activity.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been particularly aggressive in pursuing multiple sophisticated online recruiting and propaganda efforts. ISIS's far-reaching propaganda machine has not only attracted thousands of recruits, but has also helped Syria and Iraq emerge as the destinations of choice for this generation of extremists.

ISIS's online presence is worldwide, and presented in multiple languages, as is the propaganda it distributes. The terror group regularly releases magazines in Arabic, English, and French, and it has also released propaganda statements and videos in other languages, including Hebrew, Spanish, Turkish, Russian, Kurdish, and German.

Official ISIS accounts are augmented by supporters, some of whom seem to have quasi-official status. These supporters both share official propaganda and contribute to the barrage of online voices supporting terrorist ideology. Some supporters add personal details about their experiences in the group – information that adds to the authenticity of their narratives by providing concrete experiences.

ISIS supporters also use these sites to publish links to downloadable propaganda materials, instructions for traveling to Syria and Iraq, manifestos encouraging lone wolf attacks and much more.

Social media platforms that enable users to conceal their identities tend to be more heavily exploited by ISIS. And while many social media platforms regularly disable terrorist accounts, new ones can almost always be immediately established.

Furthermore, some platforms do not have clear or effective policies regarding terrorist content, enabling terrorists and their supporters to exploit their services more easily and uninterrupted.

For example, WordPress hosts a website that features hundreds of ISIS propaganda videos, statements and publications. Among the hundreds of items on the site are beheading and execution videos, as well as videos and articles encouraging Westerners to travel to join ISIS or to commit attacks on its behalf in their home countries. The site remains online despite efforts to flag the material.

The increase in small arms attacks in both the U.S. and abroad serve as a testimony to the potential power of social media. Spurred at least in part by extortions by ISIS propaganda on social media to undertake attacks by any means possible, including with knives, the U.S. has seen a disturbing increase in small arms attacks. These have been directed at law enforcement in particular, but pose a more general threat as well.

David Wright and Nicholas Rovinski, who were arrested in June, allegedly plotted to behead local law enforcement. Their alleged co-conspirator, Usaama Rahim, was killed in a confrontation with law enforcement in June when he threatened officers with a knife. In addition, Fareed Mumuni and Munther Omar Saleh of New York allegedly used knives in confrontations with law enforcement officials. A fourth individual, Amir Said Abdul Rahman Al-Ghazi, had also purchased a knife but did not use it. He had allegedly bought it for use in propaganda videos that he wanted to film.

A similar, but more widespread phenomenon is ongoing in Israel. Instructional videos on stabbing,[3] clips of Muslim preachers calling for attacks on Jews, images and hashtags, are all going viral. Such incitement on social media is widely understood as having a significant link to the stabbing attacks against Israelis, and the online approbation of each attack further spreads the message and encourages would-be attackers.

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[3] http://blog.adl.org/international/instructional-content-on-how-to-stab-jews-spreads-on-social-media

Anti-Semitism: A Pillar of Islamic Extremist Ideology
As new technology and social media continue to alter the nature of global communications, terrorist groups have quickly adapted to these tools in their efforts to reach an ever-widening pool of potential adherents. As a result, anti-Semitism in its most dangerous form is easily accessible by a worldwide audience.

In a video message in August 2015, Osama bin Laden's son, Hamza bin Laden, utilized a range of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel narratives in his effort to rally Al Qaeda supporters and incite violence against Americans and Jews.

Bin Laden described Jews and Israel as having a disproportionate role in world events and the oppression of Muslims. He compared the "Zio-Crusader alliance led by America" to a bird: "Its head is America, one wing is NATO and the other is the State of the Jews in occupied Palestine, and the legs are the tyrant rulers that sit on the chests of the peoples of the Muslim Ummah [global community]."

Bin Laden then called for attacks worldwide and demanded that Muslims "support their brothers in Palestine by fighting the Jews and the Americans... not in America and occupied Palestine and Afghanistan alone, but all over the world.... take it to all the American, Jewish, and Western interests in the world."

While such violent expressions of anti-Semitism have been at the core of Al Qaeda's ideology for decades, terrorist groups motivated by Islamic extremist ideology, from Al Qaeda to ISIS, continue to rely on depictions of a Jewish enemy – often combined with violent opposition to the State of Israel – to recruit followers, motivate adherents and draw attention to their cause. Anti-Israel sentiment is not the same as anti-Semitism. However, terrorist groups often link the two, exploiting hatred of Israel to further encourage attacks against Jews worldwide and as an additional means of diverting attention to their cause.

And they have more tools at their disposal than ever before.

Recent terrorist attacks against Jewish institutions in Europe, and the spike in incitement materials encouraging stabbing and other attacks against Jews and Israelis around the world, not only speak to the global reach provided by these new technologies, but also to the pervasive nature of anti-Semitism in terrorist propaganda that encourages violence directed at Jews.

In September, ADL issued a report[4] examining the nature and function of anti-Semitism in terrorist propaganda today. It focused on ISIS, Al Qaeda Central, and two of Al Qaeda's largest affiliates, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen and Al Shabaab in Somalia, as well as the prevalence of anti-Semitism among supporters of Palestinian terrorist organizations. It also provides examples of individuals linked to terrorist plots and other activity in the U.S. that were influenced, at least to some degree, by anti-Semitic and anti-Israel messages.

Encouraging Attacks
The following is a small sampling of calls for homegrown attacks in the U.S by foreign terrorist organizations since 2014:

- **October 2015**: ISIS released a trailer for an upcoming video titled "We Will Burn America" that shows imagery of the White House exploding.

- **September 2015**: AQAP released the 14th issue of its English-language propaganda vehicle, *Inspire* magazine, which called for lone-wolf attacks against the U.S.

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[4] http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/Anti-Semitism-A-Pillar-of-Islamic-Extremist-Ideology.pdf

- **August 2015**: AQAP released a video praising terror attacks in Western countries and calling for additional attacks against the U.S. Quotes included, "Oh *Mujahideen* (fighters) in every corner of the world, I urge you on America...direct your spears towards them," and, "And to the warriors of Lone Jihad, may Allah bless and guide your efforts....Set your goals with precision and focus your strikes on the enemy's joints. And after seeking help from Allah, seek guidance and instruction from *Inspire* Magazine."

- **May 2015:** ISIS supporters called for attacks against the Draw Mohamed contest set to take place in Garland, Texas. These calls were acted upon by Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi.

- **April 2015:** A video released by ISIS in German with English subtitles encouraged lone-wolf attacks against Western countries, including the U.S. The video showed individuals preparing for different types of attacks, including a stabbing, a car bomb, and a suicide bombing in Times Square, as well as learning about gun use and bomb-making online. Videos showing how individuals could learn about perpetrating attacks online provided an apparent example for would-be domestic attackers and acknowledged the importance of online terrorist propaganda.

- **April 2015:** A video released by ISIS titled "We Will Burn America" featured footage and praise of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center along with narration in Arabic with English subtitles stating, "September 11 will be repeated." It also featured images from the attack on the Paris kosher supermarket and shootings in Canada, both of which were undertaken by individuals acting in ISIS's name, as well as images of beheadings by ISIS.

- **February 2015:** Al Shabaab released a video documenting its 2013 attack against the Westgate Mall in Kenya and calling on its supporters to undertake similar attacks against "American and Jewish-owned shopping centers around the world."

- **December 2014:** The sixth issue of ISIS's English-language magazine *Dabiq* praised individual attacks on various Western countries including the U.S., Canada, Australia and France, stating, "There will be others who follow the examples set by Man Haron Monis and Numan Haider in Australia, Martin Couture-Rouleau and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Canada, Zale Thompson in America, and Bertrand Nzohabonayo in France, and all that the West will be able to do is to anxiously await the next round of slaughter."

- **December 2014:** The thirteenth issue of AQAP's *Inspire* magazine called for attacks on American, French and British airlines and assassinations of prominent Western financial leaders. Quotes included, "The Lions of Allah who are all over the globe – some call them lone wolves – should know that they are the West's worst nightmare," and, "It's not necessary to do what Mohammed Atta (of the 9/11 attack) did, it's enough to do what Nidal Hasan (the Ft. Hood shooter) did."

- **October 2014:** The fourth issue of ISIS's *Dabiq* magazine included the text of a speech released in September (see below) that called for attacks on the West. It also included an image of individuals in business suits walking on a sidewalk with the caption "Crusader 'Civilians.'"

- **September 2014:** ISIS released a text version of a speech by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the group's primary spokesman calling for attacks in the West. Initially released in English, French, and Hebrew, this was the first significant instance where ISIS incited home-grown attacks rather than encouraging travel to Iraq and Syria. Excerpts from the speech include: "If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the...French – or an Australian, or a Canadian...kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military...."

- **August 2014:** A special edition AQAP English-language magazine titled "Palestine: Betrayal of the Guilty Conscience" attempted to harness anti-Israel sentiment to call for attacks against the

U.S. and the U.K. The magazine reprinted instructions for building pressure-cooker bombs and car bombs from previous issues of *Inspire*. Quotes included, "We tell the Muslims in America and Europe: There is a better choice and easier one to give support to your *ummah* (the Muslim community). That is individual work inside the West such as the operations of Nidal Hassan (the Ft. Hood shooter) and Faisal Shazad (attempted Times Square bomber)."

- **May 2014**: Al Shabaab released a video that called on Muslims living abroad to either join the group in Somalia or undertake "a lone wolf mission" in their home country.

- **March 2014**: The twelfth issue of AQAP's *Inspire* magazine provided instructions for making car bombs along with a list of potential targets in the U.S., U.K., and France. Statements encouraging attacks on the West include, "Whether the brother has a channel to join the brothers [abroad] or not it is better for him to perform his duty of Jihad in the West. On the battlefield, you are just another soldier, but in the West you are an army on your own."

<u>Relationship with Tech Industry</u>
Over the past decade, the League has worked closely with the Internet industry and they have been very responsive to information regarding terrorist and extremist exploitation of their platforms. Our relationship has led to increased successes in mitigating the exploitation of platforms by groups such as ISIS. In addition, working with industry officials, the League developed the ADL Cyber-Safety Action Guide,[5] a user-friendly online platform where consumers can learn how and where to report bigoted, bullying, or hateful speech to the major Internet providers and social media platforms.

The League has also convened a Working Group on Cyberhate to develop recommendations for the most effective responses to manifestations of hate and bigotry online.[6] The Working Group includes representatives of the Internet industry, civil society, the legal community, and academia. The Working Group has met five times, and its members have shared their experiences and perspectives, bringing many new insights and ideas to the table. Their input and guidance have been invaluable, and are reflected in a set of Best Practices[7] which provide useful and important guideposts for all those willing to join in the effort to address the challenge of cyberhate.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our views on this issue of high priority to our organization. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information or if we can be of assistance to you in any way.

Sincerely,

Marvin D. Nathan
National Chair

Jonathan A Greenblatt
CEO and National Director

Oren Segal
Director, Center on Extremism
Director, Research Center

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[5] http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/discrimination-racism-bigotry/new-adl-platform-helps-consumers-take-action-against-internet-hate-speech.html#.Vi58MX6rTct

[6] For a comprehensive review of the League's work addressing the scourge of online anti-Semitism since pre-Internet days -- when dial-up bulletin boards were a prominent communications tool -- see *Report of the Anti-Defamation League on Confronting Cyberhate to the 5th Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism*, May, 2015, http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/ICCA-report-2015-With-hyperlinks-May-8-2015_final.pdf

[7] http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/cyber-safety/best-practices/#.Vi58F36rTcs

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