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**15 YEARS AFTER 9/11: THE STATE OF THE
FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM**

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15 YEARS AFTER 9/11: THE STATE OF THE FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIC TERRORISM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 21, 2016.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:02 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William M. “Mac” Thornberry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM M. “MAC” THORN- BERRY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM TEXAS, CHAIRMAN, COM- MITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. This meeting will come to order. Today the committee meets to consider “15 Years After 9/11: The State of the Fight Against Islamic Terrorism.”

All of us marked the 15th anniversary last week of the attacks of 9/11. That was an opportunity to remember and honor the victims of those attacks. It was also an opportunity to remember and honor all of those who have sacrificed to prevent a recurrence of 9/11.

But it gives us, I think, not only an opportunity but an obligation to look back on these 15 years and look at the state of the fight against terrorists, what has worked, what hasn’t. How is the threat changing? Are we adaptable to meet the change of the threat?

My view is that the people in the military, the intelligence community, and law enforcement have done an incredible job to prevent another successful attack on the scale of 9/11. But the rest of the story is we have been lucky. Some of the bombs just didn’t go off because they weren’t constructed appropriately.

Just the events of the past few days remind us how this threat is changing and how difficult it is to detect it and prevent it as well. In my view, we still have not dealt effectively with some of the root causes. We have not effectively dealt with the ideology that radicalizes people here and around the world.

And it is essential, moving forward, that we not just try to muddle through, contain, try to prevent a catastrophe, but that we have a strategy that will be successful in dealing with the threat as it is evolving.

As you all know, ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] says even if it loses its physical caliphate, it will pursue a virtual caliphate. One of the questions for us, are we ready to deal militarily and otherwise with a virtual caliphate?

So we face, I think, a number of serious challenges in our responsibility to keep the American people safe. We have some outstanding witnesses to help guide us through those challenges. But

first I will turn to the ranking member for any comments he would like to make.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED
SERVICES**

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I think this is a very appropriate hearing to gauge 15 years later where are we at in fighting the groups that attacked us on 9/11 and the ideology that is behind it. And I think the chairman laid out fairly well the challenges that we face post-9/11.

We took a very clear look at it. We had a clear group of folks in Al Qaeda that were challenging us. And we went after that network. And then I think we went after that network fairly effectively.

And I think it was General McChrystal at the time who said, "It takes a network to defeat a network." And we pulled together all the different elements of U.S. power, and our allies, with the intelligence, law enforcement, military and built a very sophisticated operations center and tracked this group, first, of course, in Afghanistan, and then into Pakistan and Yemen and elsewhere and have done a successful job of taking out their leadership and then minimizing their ability to move forward.

What we have not been successful at is turning back the ideology. And that is where other groups have popped up. And, you know, whether it is Al Qaeda or ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] or Ansar al-Sharia, or any of, you know, Boko Haram, you know, dozens of different groups that adhere to this nihilistic, violent death ideology. That ideology has, quite honestly, spread since 9/11. There are more people adhering to it now than there were then.

And that is the great threat. And that is what we have seen in Europe and here as people not directly affiliated with Al Qaeda or ISIL or any of these other groups, but simply pledging allegiance and going off and committing violent acts in their name.

Now in some cases these are people who have bought into the ideology, but even more frightening, it now seems like this ideology is the last refuge for every sort of violent loser and loner in the world. Some of these folks, you go through their history, they haven't had much of a connection to this. They just wanted to act out and use this as an excuse to commit violent acts and threaten the lives of others.

So I think the most interesting question for this hearing is, how do we turn back that ideology? And this is particularly important for our work with the Muslim world on how do we promote the more peaceful brand of Islam that the overwhelming majority of people in that religion adhere to and work with them to defeat the ideology?

And the last thing I will say is I think that is a challenge because this is what Osama bin Laden wanted. He wanted a war of civilizations. He wanted the West versus Islam. And every time we take a look at this and, you know, cast a broad net and cast aspersions against the entire Islamic religion, we only empower Al Qaeda and ISIL and their message.

We have to find a way to work with our friends in the Muslim world both at home and abroad, to confront this ideology and turn it back.

And, yes, I think we have to continue the military aspect of it as well. If there are specific groups plotting and planning against us we need to know about them and stop them from carrying out those threats. But that is but one piece.

The larger, and more difficult piece, and what I want to hear about is, you know, what is our strategy for rendering the ideology neutral? Ultimately that is what won the Cold War for us, is we proved that communism was a failed ideology. And not only did the Soviet Union collapse, but with the exception of a couple of isolated places in the world, communism collapsed. The entire idea behind it collapsed.

And before we are successful in this struggle, the ideology that Al Qaeda and others have advanced is what we are going to have to defeat and what is ultimately going to have to collapse. And I don't personally have any easy answers for that. Certainly, I know some things we should be doing, but I look forward to hearing more about how we can approach that.

And with that I would yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN. Let me welcome each of our witnesses. We appreciate you all being with us and the insights that you will deliver.

We are pleased to welcome Honorable James Jeffrey, who has been U.S. Ambassador to both Turkey and Iraq; Brian Jenkins, senior advisor to the president of RAND, a frequent witness over the years on these topics; and Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Bryan Price, who happens to be the director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. But he is not here representing the Combating Terrorism Center or the Army. He is here only in his personal capacity as an academic and terrorism expert.

So we again thank you all for being here. Without objection, your full written statements will made be part of the record.

Ambassador Jeffrey, we are pleased to recognize you for any comments you would like to make.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES JEFFREY, FORMER U.S.
AMBASSADOR TO TURKEY AND IRAQ**

Ambassador JEFFREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. Thank you very much for holding this hearing on the 15th anniversary, particularly given the events, as you mentioned, in the last week. The fight against Islamic terrorism in its various manifestations is both a key element of our national security and a central component in the effort to stabilize the larger Middle East.

I would like to touch briefly on where we are and, in response to your questions, where we may be going on this campaign in a very broad brush. This and the last administration's combination of playing defense, protecting the homeland, and going on the offense, both with military action and in the effort to deal with the political roots and psychological and cultural and religious roots of terror, all in all is a good model, and we should stick with it.

Nonetheless, as you have just indicated, there are problems with what we have done up to now in our success so far. Homeland de-

fense, all in all, high marks. On military action, directly and with partners, the record is mixed.

The U.S. was slow countering ISIS's rise, and we didn't react as quickly to events in Syria that have led to a major increase both in ISIS as a terrorist threat and in the underlying dysfunctionality of the region that feeds terror of all sorts, including terror supported by Iran, which is a major factor that I will touch on in a second.

In terms of the root causes of terrorism, as the ranking member said, this is not something that we can do directly. This is something the region has to do itself. And if we try too hard to do it, it tends to be counterproductive, as someone who spent 20 years in the region. But there is much that we can do, and that is what I would like to talk about right now.

First of all, this is going to take a lot of time. As we all know, we are already 15 years into it, and the roots of this problem stretch back decades before 2001. The military element, while it cannot solve this problem, is critical, both in defending ourselves, limiting the expansion of terror, and stopping the creation of new ungoverned zones.

You create an ungoverned zone by one or another breakdown of order in the Middle East, and we have more than a half a dozen right now. You will get ISIS, Al Qaeda, or other terrorist groups, from Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, to the Sinai, to Gaza, to the Fatah of Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, on and on. These are breeding grounds for a huge threat, not just to us from terror, but to the basic structure of the region.

Now military operations, this committee and the American people have discussed a lot over the past 15 years. They don't have to be large-scale, costly or high casualty, but we have to thread the needle.

If we try to transform the region, and to some degree we tried to do that in the last administration and in this administration with the surge in Afghanistan and with Libya, we tend to go too far, overshoot the objective, and it doesn't work out. On the other hand, when we pull ourselves back and don't respond, as I said, as we did initially with ISIS, as we have done in Syria, we see the problem just morphs. The problem just metastasizes without American presence.

So you have to thread that needle. Enough military force, but not too much to challenge the American people's patience and sensitivities in the region.

Those sensitivities are important if we are going to work with folks in the region and, in the end, they are responsible for the kind of cultures they have, the truces they have among themselves, and how they deal with the rest of the world, including us and Europe.

There is a lot of work to be done. We can help, but only on the margins. But there are a few things we need to keep in mind. First of all, only a few people in the Middle East really endorse this kind of extreme terrorist violence.

A much larger percent of the population, however, accept views of Islam that are orthodox, that are quite strong, that include Sharia and basically challenge modernity in some ways. So that

means that the path we are on is very thin. We have to be sensitive. Sensitivity can go too far.

One of the things I am concerned about is we seem to avoid speaking publicly of this threat as an Islamic terrorist threat. It is an Islamic terrorist threat. I am very, very sensitive to not generalizing, as the ranking member said, but if we try to hide this, people in the region, Muslims know what is behind this.

They know this is struggle for the region. And to play this down, frankly, doesn't play very well in our own population or in a population in Europe. And it is very important to keep those people behind us.

We have to support the governments of the region, recognizing that often they are going to be imperfect partners. But it is not just that they are partners we have. They are the only basis we can use to work against terror, but also partners throughout the region are watching how we deal with an Egypt, how we deal with an Iraq, how we deal with the leadership, again, however imperfect they are. We have to not only say what we are against, but what we are for.

The United States stands, since 100 years, for an international order based on certain laws, national sovereignty, national unity, peaceful resolution of disputes, and the sanctity of borders. That is an important message also in the Middle East, because all of these are being challenged by movements close to or supporting terror.

Finally, our campaign must also focus on Iran. Iran simply is not an acceptable partner in the war against terror, despite a recent article published in the United States by the Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif to that end.

The theocratic Iranian regime's Islamic roots have much in common with Sunni Islamic extremism. It uses terror itself, including here in Washington. It has relations with Al Qaeda and Taliban elements, and undercuts international order and sovereignty, and thus provides a breeding ground for terror of all sorts.

But in particular, and we saw this in Iraq repeatedly, regional states generally view Iran as a greater existential threat than Sunni Islamic terror. There is thus a real danger that if the Sunni-Shia conflict now seen in Syria emerges region-wide, our Sunni partners could see violent Sunni Islamic movements, not as threats, but as allies against Iran.

Mr. Chairman, I will stop there. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Jeffrey can be found in the Appendix on page 39.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Jenkins.

STATEMENT OF BRIAN MICHAEL JENKINS, SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT OF RAND CORPORATION

Mr. JENKINS. Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee, thank you very much for inviting me to address this important issue. Fifteen years of U.S. efforts to destroy the jihadist terrorist enterprise have not led to victory in the classic military sense. Such victory may not be achievable in this kind of war.

Instead, our counterterrorist efforts have achieved successes in some areas, far less so in others, in what is likely to be an enduring task. On the plus side, our worst fears, as you pointed out, have not been realized. There have been no more 9/11s, and none of the worst-case scenarios that post-9/11 extrapolations suggested.

The operational capabilities of Al Qaeda and ISIL remain limited. The vast majority of Muslims express negative views toward both jihadist organizations, but even a very low percentage of favorable ratings still represents in actual numbers a large reservoir of potential recruits.

The constellation of jihadist groups is less than it appears to be on a map. To be sure, Al Qaeda and ISIL have sought declarations of loyalty from local groups across Africa and the Middle East and have established a host of affiliates, provinces, and jihadist footholds.

This is growth by acquisition and branding. These partners share a banner, but are focused, for the most part, on local quarrels, rather than a global jihad. There is no central command, no joint operations.

ISIL has lost territory and can be defeated as a quasi-state. Al Qaeda's central command has been reduced to exhorting others to fight. But these continuing calls on local supporters, terrorist supporters in the West, to take action have thus far, despite the occasional tragic event, have produced only a modest response. However, right now, large volumes of homegrown terrorists and returning foreign fighters pose a significant threat to our allies in Europe.

In the United States, fortunately, the number of homegrown terrorists remains far less. I believe that Americans are safer now than they were on 9/11 in the 15 years since jihadist terrorists.

Since 9/11, jihadist terrorists have been able to kill fewer than 100 people in the United States. True, we have been lucky, and while every death is a needless tragedy, this is a far better result than certainly was feared or expected immediately after 9/11.

On the minus side, the targets of the American-led campaigns have survived intense U.S. counterterrorist efforts. Al Qaeda and ISIL have been cornered, not crushed. And we can't claim to have dented their determination. The jihadists have a powerful ideology, as both of you have mentioned. It arouses extreme devotion.

However, that ideology, which we have not yet effectively countered, has, fortunately, gained little traction in most Muslim communities, especially here in the United States.

Personal crisis is the dominant attribute of most American jihadists. ISIL has made more effective use of social media to reach a broader audience, but its advertisement of atrocity makes it a magnet for marginal and psychologically disturbed individuals.

The Taliban remains a formidable foe. The continued deployment of U.S. forces will be necessary to prevent their comeback. The fighting in Syria and Iraq will go on for the foreseeable future. Foreign powers cannot impose peace from the outside. Faced with the loss of territory, ISIL will not quit. The leaders of ISIL fought clandestinely for years and will go underground again to continue the struggle.

Syria and Iraq will remain fragile states, sources of continued violence, regional instability. The current partitions are likely to per-

sist. The big problem is going to be that the Sunni areas in both countries could become a persistent badlands.

The world will be dealing with the effluents of these conflicts for years to come. Thousands of foreign fighters who have joined ISIL cannot survive in an underground campaign. Indeed, the construction of the Islamic State could bring about a spike in terrorist activity by its scattering veterans.

Refugees pose a long-term challenge. Those going to Europe right now include a large proportion of single young men coming from violent environments with little education. They already are the targets of radicalization.

The primary threat to the United States will come from the ability of Al Qaeda or ISIL to inspire attacks by self-radicalized individuals here. The United States is now better organized and equipped to combat terrorism, but America's frightened, angry, and divided society remains the country's biggest vulnerability. So after 15 years, there has been progress, but we are not through it yet.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jenkins can be found in the Appendix on page 49.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.

Colonel Price.

**STATEMENT OF LTC BRYAN C. PRICE, USA, PH.D.,
COUNTERTERRORISM EXPERT**

Colonel PRICE. Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I have been asked to reflect on the state of our counterterrorism fight since 9/11 and provide some lessons learned over the past 15 years.

As an Active Duty officer, my testimony is based on my academic work and my personal and professional experiences. I am here today in my personal capacity, and my testimony should not be taken to represent the views of the United States Military Academy, the Army, or the Department of Defense.

Congressional hearings like this allow us to reflect and critically analyze where we are in this conflict. I can tell you that our enemies are doing the same.

In my written testimony, I highlighted a 50-page, 2008 lessons-learned document, produced by the precursor organization to the Islamic State, that shows our enemies are in this for the long haul and are serious about learning from their mistakes. My written testimony contains a list of our many counterterrorism successes, as you just heard from my fellow panelists, but I want to focus my oral testimony on lessons learned for the future.

To begin, the threat has evolved and metastasized in ways few could have predicted after 9/11. Today, the threat posed by jihadist terrorism is more geographically diffuse, decentralized, and unpredictable than it was on September 12th, 2001.

Nobody could have predicted that the greatest terrorist threat to the United States 15 years later would not be Al Qaeda, but its rival, the Islamic State, which now governs territory inside two sovereign nations. This reality should give us pause about the unpredictable nature of the threat and the challenges we face in combating it.

So what is the best way to conceptualize this threat, moving forward? Unsettling as it may be, one alternative is to view this threat not as a war, but as a chronic disease like cancer. In other words, it may be worth viewing the fight against jihadism not as a national security threat that can be solved, defeated, or vanquished, but as an inevitable fact of modern life that can be managed and contained, but never fully eliminated.

With that in mind, I offer a few lessons learned in preview of counterterrorism efforts in the future. First, in my opinion, I think we need to do more in articulating realistic public expectations about the threat posed by terrorism and our ability to combat it. It is impossible to stop all attacks in a free and open society, and not every terrorist attack represents a political failure, nor are they existential threats to our national security.

These subtleties are often lost in the public discourse, which leads to unwarranted fear, divisiveness, and knee-jerk decision making. Unfortunately, ridding the world of every jihadist is just as fanciful as ridding the world of every criminal or racist. Acknowledging this is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of pragmatism.

Number two, decapitation tactics must be a part of a broader strategy. Targeted strikes by unmanned aerial systems are often the most lethal and precise methods that counterterrorism officials can use without putting American service men and women in danger. But they are not sufficient by themselves to defeat highly capable groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

On the positive side, I have done research in this, and my research analyzing 207 groups from 1970 to 2008 showed that killing or capturing the top leader significantly increased the mortality rate of terrorist groups. But timing matters.

Decapitate a group in the first year of its existence, and it is more than eight times more likely to end than groups that have not been decapitated. The effect is halved in 10 years and potentially nonexistent after 20 years. Decapitating strikes are not a silver bullet solution. They must be a part of a broader strategy.

Three, we should acknowledge that the military will be a critical part of any effective CT [counterterrorism] strategy moving forward, but it is only one part, and it may not be the most important part for long-term success.

I have had the privilege of briefing many of our Nation's top counterterrorism officials over the past 4 years, and in these engagements there has been one common refrain. We cannot kill or capture our way to victory. Our military is the best in the world at taking out terrorists, but long-term success in this conflict lies in altering the sociopolitical dynamics in the region. Otherwise, this conflict will be without end.

Four, future CT strategy should do more to leverage public-private partnerships in the war of ideas. Lamenting on the slow progress that the U.S. was making in this domain, the late Richard Holbrooke once asked, "How can a man in a cave," meaning Osama bin Laden, "out-communicate the world's leading communication society?"

Our difficulty in this domain stems from two inescapable challenges. The first is overcoming the credibility gap that the United

States has in strategically communicating these issues. Simply put, prospective jihadists do not turn to the U.S. Government for career advice.

The second is that government bureaucracy invariably produces a slower, more risk-averse and uninspiring approach to counter-messaging that does not incentivize creativity, experimentation, or risk-taking. One fix for this is more public-private collaboration.

The government is incentivized to fund such programs, but it does not have the credibility to be the primary messenger, and it lacks the latest marketing and advertising capabilities. Whereas the private sector, to include nongovernmental organizations, often has the credibility and the requisite competencies to deliver the message, but it is not financially incentivized to do so.

Last, in my opinion, we need to find more systematic and dedicated means of understanding our enemy and exposing their hypocrisy to the world. The best way to do this is use their own words against them.

These functions can be accomplished with more aggressive efforts to declassify captured battlefield documents after they have already been exploited for their tactical and operational value and made available to academic institutions like the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Price can be found in the Appendix on page 63.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. A lot of things I would like to follow up on, but let me just backtrack for a second. You have all touched on this, but I will just ask directly.

Looking back at the first 15 years, what is the most significant way that the terrorist threat to us has changed, looking back 15 years? Looking ahead 15 years, what do you think the most significant change in the terrorist threat to us will be? And then the third part of that is are we prepared to deal with that change you see coming?

So what is the most significant way it has changed in the past 15 years, the biggest way it will change in the next 15, and are we ready for that change, I guess.

Ambassador.

Ambassador JEFFREY. Tough questions, Mr. Chairman. I would say, over the past 15 years, the thing that is most significant is terrorist movements have been able to exploit the changes and the challenges of the broader Middle East very effectively.

A good example, and the best example perhaps, is the Arab Spring. That wasn't generated by radicals, let alone terrorists, but basically people who wanted a better civilization, and in many respects closer to the West, thus seemingly a good idea.

The result has been, in Syria, parts of Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, and on the margins in other countries, a decrease of state authority. And who fills the gap? Terrorist groups. Their ability to exploit this underlying set of malignancies in this region is extraordinary.

And I think that is the lesson at the strategic level I take from this, 1,001 things that work and things that don't. But now getting to the second question, what will happen, the risk is not that this

will just continue, because believe me it will. The risk is that they hit a home run. We almost saw that with ISIS, as it consumed a third of Syria and a third of Iraq in 2014 and didn't look like it was going to be stopped.

We can't have one or two more of those without bringing the whole region into a strudel of chaos and dysfunctionality, and then it will really morph in ways that we can't imagine at this point. How do we deal with this?

Again, what the three of us have said. You can't directly deal with the core sociological, religious roots of it, but you can deal with the manifestations of it. I would just advocate you have to deal aggressively with it.

And one of the rare things here, I would disagree a bit with Colonel Price, although I think I was saying almost the same thing as him, but I would be careful about this idea of the goal of containing ISIS or other terrorist movements. In the end, that is what we are going to accomplish.

But if we set out to contain these movements, they will beat us. If we set out carefully to destroy them, we will probably succeed in containing them. And I think that the history of our relationship with ISIS from January 2014 to late 2015 is a good illustration of that.

So we need more aggressive action and willingness to take risks, not only in our public message but in our military and diplomatic activities. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. I think that the—a couple of significant changes in the last 15 years. First of all, the adversary is now broader, more diffuse, more complex. A lot of that, as Ambassador Jeffrey has correctly pointed out in my view, is a consequence of the so-called Arab Spring.

That itself is a symptom of a fundamental turmoil that is going on in this region, and we have to deal with it. But we are on the margins of being able to intervene to change things fundamentally. We simply don't have the resources to do that.

The other thing that is clear in the last 15 years, is that our adversary here has been the beneficiary of these events. They would probably claim of the beneficiaries of God's will. But they have proved to be extraordinarily adaptive, able to morph to meet new circumstances. That is much more difficult for us to do. We are reacting.

With regard to the next 15 years, first of all, I am glad you said "the next 15 years" because I think we have to realistically think of time horizons in those terms. This turmoil that we see now is going to go on. I think the ambassador is correct in underscoring that state authority in this area has weakened.

That is clearly the case in Syria and Iraq where power on the ground has shifted from national institutions to militias that are under foreign or local, not central government, control and rebel formations that challenge that.

That is happening completely across the region. In dealing with that and accepting a long-term thing, I think we have to be very, very careful about picking our tasks very, very carefully.

I would agree with the ambassador that we have to destroy the Islamic State, so long as that exists. Without any illusions that the fight stops if we destroy the Islamic State, it has to be, and I am going to sound like the ancient Senator Cato on this, and furthermore, the Islamic State must be destroyed, but it has to be. It continues to be a source of propaganda, an attraction for these fighters.

And, in addition to destroying it, I think we really do have to try to, for those that want to go down and make it their final fight, we have to close that ring around them and give them the opportunity to do so. Better to do it there than to deal with tens of thousands of them scattered across the globe.

In terms of our own actions going forward, there is not going to be a single strategy that any of us can determine now that events over the next 15 years won't oblige us to revise and alter as new circumstances arise. That is the feature of a long conflict.

But a couple of principles ought to continue, and that is, since it is going to be long, whatever we do, we have to be able to sustain it for a long time. So we have to be careful not to overcommit.

At the same time, what we have learned again and again is prematurely walking away from these things, whether it is in Iraq or Yemen or Afghanistan, that just risks a comeback by the adversaries that we have already successfully contained, so—

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, thank you.

Colonel Price.

Colonel PRICE. Mr. Chairman, in terms of answering those questions, I agree they are all three tough questions. In terms of what happened in the past, in the past 15 years and what has changed, I guess first I should just mention that my discussion of containment earlier does not make me think that we should not go on the offensive and attack the Islamic State.

I guess my fear though is if we focus too much on defeating the Islamic State, and if we are unable to do that, what does that mean in terms of our counterterrorism credibility moving forward. And even I would argue that if you killed every single last member of the Islamic State, the ideology that is behind them is not. It is just going to mean it is going to be other groups that are going to enter the fray.

In terms of the structural conditions that have changed in the past 15 years that I think are most important, I would echo my panelist, Mr. Jenkins, when he talks about the geographical diffusion.

September 12th the threat was largely contained to the AfPak [Afghanistan-Pakistan] region and some other pockets. Today it stretches from Western Africa all the way through the Middle East, the Levant, South and Southeast Asia. And so that is obviously a challenge for U.S. counterterrorism.

The second that has not been mentioned, but you mentioned in your opening, sir, was the internet, the virtual caliphate, if you will. I think that has really changed the jihadist landscape over the past 15 years and is also one of the things that I think presents the most challenges to us moving forward.

The other thing I would argue in terms of the next 15 years that poses the greatest challenge is the exploitation of jihadists to ex-

plotted lack of governance or governance issues in places around the world. And so those two things have brought a very broad tent. A lot of people are gravitating towards that type of ideology.

How should we fix those or what are the most promising ways to fix those moving forward? I think there is promise on the internet side of the house, and I think this goes back to my point earlier about public-private partnerships, and I know that our government is already working with the private sector to work around some of these issues.

I can tell you that jihadists, particularly online, are very aware of the rules and limitations that they have in order to not come on the radar. And they are also getting more adept at communicating via the dark web.

And then final challenge is, and this has been echoed by both Ambassador Jeffrey and Mr. Jenkins, but going back to the issue of lack of governance in these places, I think the United States has found it difficult and challenging in order to affect governance in other places, particularly when some of these countries are not as allied with us like others.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, just two points I want to pursue. I want to pursue the ideology piece of it, but before I get there I think, you know, part of the problem, and Mr. Jenkins mentioned, you know, we can't leave too soon from places like Iraq and Afghanistan, but what I have sort of found, as we have tried to do this, that sort of imposing an outcome with our military might, whether it is in Afghanistan or Iraq or Libya or Syria or wherever we try to do it, has not proven to be terribly successful, in large part because of the credibility issue that Colonel Price pointed out. You know, having a Western army in a Muslim country, or a Western military in a Muslim country just fuels the problem.

So I guess the first question would be how do we get out of that trap? Because it seems like, you know, when you look at the different countries involved, we stay too long, we get out too soon. I mean, you can take our state of the three examples of Libya, Syria, and Iraq.

In Iraq we went all-in. You know, we, you know, and we were there for a long time and I know a lot of people say, well, we got out too soon. You know, I think if we had been there in those numbers for another 10 years, at the end of those 10 years people would have been saying we got out too soon.

So at some point, you know, like I said, Western military might is not going to force the outcome we want. And I think Iraq proved that even though some may disagree.

In Libya, we decided, okay, we will go in, we will take out the leader but then we will have less of a footprint. We will let the locals sort of decide with a little bit of help. That didn't work out.

In Syria we said, gee, you know, for a long time, there is really not much we can do here. Let's not make it worse and let's stay out. So basically all three methods have ended in failure. Libya, Syria, and Iraq to all varying degrees are not where we want them to be in this ideological struggle. So how do we handle that in terms of our presence?

And then the second question is how do we deal with that ideology? How do we make the Muslim world move in the direction? And there are some groups out there that embrace modernity, that are willing to accept other religions, other viewpoints while pursuing their own. Because that is the ballgame, basically, is that there is not a reasonable alternative right now in terms of governance and religion.

So that gives fertile ground for these, you know, crazy ideologies to grow. So those are the two questions.

And then, Colonel Price, if you could start out, since you sort of touched on those in your opening, what is the best approach to handling that?

Colonel PRICE. Yes, sir. So on the first question, I think the way we will have to move forward and what we have done since 9/11 is realize that this is not a unilateral fight. And that it is going to require multilateral efforts in order to make the most effective CT policy.

That obviously entails a number of functions, building partner capacity, security force assistance, and those types of programs. But I don't think I have a good answer to, say, to come back with the perception problem of having the U.S. in those countries.

On the second one, how to deal with the ideology, this is more difficult. And in your opening statement, sir, you mentioned some parallels to the Cold War and communism and how we were able to defeat that type of ideology.

So I think the major difference that we are talking about here and the threats to the United States in the past century, when we were defeating fascism and totalitarianism, we defeated that largely on the battlefield. There was no mistake of who was the victor in that fight.

When you want to talk about defeating the ideology of communism, that was done via a mix of methods to include the military, but I think a lot of people would say that our economic system had a large part in debunking that. There is not a lot of new nations popping up today trying to have a communist economic system.

And so the difference here, though, is when you are talking about jihadists, they do not perceive defeat the way other ideologies do. And so when we defeat them on the battlefield, the lesson that they learn is not that this is a failed ideology. The lesson that they take back is that they were not resolved enough, committed enough to the cause, and that they see this as being a very long-term fight.

And the second dynamic which we can't get around of is the fact that as long as the United States enjoys a significant amount of power asymmetry over other states but also specifically non-state actors, the United States will continue to be a convenient foil for non-state actors and jihadists that want to blame the United States for all their grievances. And so that is why I am largely so pessimistic about the fight in the long run.

Mr. SMITH. Thanks.

Mr. Jenkins, earlier you had mentioned some of those issues. Do you want to take a stab at that?

Mr. JENKINS. You know, I am not sure that being blamed for the ills of the world is necessarily new territory for us. I mean, the

United States is blamed for the world's problems, blamed for not solving the world's problems, and blamed when it tries to solve the world problems. That comes with the status.

Second point is for those who are really committed to this ideology, it would be nice to think we can bring them back in an ideological struggle. I am somewhat skeptical of that. I think for those who are truly committed this is a fight.

So, you know, and as Colonel Price correctly points out, I don't know how many Nazis were left in Germany in terms of the mindset at the end of World War II, but it lacked the military capacity to inflict that on other nations, so it was defeated.

Insofar as these particular adversaries not accepting that defeat, whether they accept it or not, what we want to do is blunt their capacity to impose it on others.

With regard to the various models of U.S. intervention, I don't think under any circumstances, however exquisite our counterinsurgency strategies may be in terms of their sensitivity to local populations, U.S. troops in a foreign country killing local people is not going to be a winning formula. It may be absolutely necessary at times to conduct limited operations, but we want to avoid that as much as possible.

First of all, it is difficult to sustain in terms of American political support, but also we accumulate enemies fairly quickly in trying to do that. So what this means is it is going to be indirect methods, it is going to be working with allies, and it is going to be working with local partners.

Now, that is an imperfect way of doing things. And these coalitions and these things are going to be messy. But that is preferable to sending in tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of American forces unless we are really prepared to keep them in for the next half century and to bear the price of doing that. And I am not even sure it would work then.

Mr. SMITH. I was going to say, I don't think it would work then either. I have taken up quite a bit of time.

I want to let others get in, so I am sure someone will ask a question later on, Mr. Jeffrey. You can offer your comments on that, but I want to let other members ask questions, so I will yield my time.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Jones.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, thank you. And, Mr. Jenkins, I was thinking about your comments. The fact is I am not an isolationist, but I am a realist. We are \$19.4 trillion in debt. We continue to spend billions and billions of dollars in Afghanistan. I don't know what we are getting out of that, quite frankly, except from time to time a soldier will lose a leg or get killed, and we keep doing it.

And I wonder, from you three experts, well, is China concerned about jihadist? I don't think so. And here we are, because of our foreign policy that I blame both parties for. Bush taking out Saddam Hussein was a horrible mistake. Then Obama going and taking out Gaddafi was another horrible mistake.

So here we are, as I think one of you said, and I am going to stop in just a second, you said that when we get trapped into a situation—they are my words not yours—that we keep doing the same thing. And all we are doing is enhancing those who hate us with drone strikes and these other strikes that end up killing inno-

cent people. And then that is what they talk about for the next 100 years, just like the Pashtuns in Afghanistan who defeated the Russians.

So what kind of foreign policy do you think makes sense, instead of going in this direction of spending billions and billions of dollars in a failed policy in Afghanistan, that we will continue to pass bills to keep funding it, and then at some point in time, when we hit \$21 trillion to \$22 trillion in debt, which might happen in the next 2 years, then our whole country is in an economic collapse?

How do you get, say, a Congress to understand what is the right policy versus a policy of keeping to spend, spend, spend, and you get nothing but chaos in Afghanistan?

John Sopko has said that corruption is worse today in Afghanistan than it was 16 years ago. To my comments, would you give me a statement in rebuttal or a statement that I am somewhat not off track?

Mr. Ambassador, I will start with you.

Ambassador JEFFREY. You are not off track, Congressman. Our national budget and the deficit are core national security concerns. Nonetheless, there are ways to do this over the long term without breaking the bank. There are ways to do it over the long term without, as Mr. Jenkins rightly said, antagonizing those people because we are in Muslim lands killing their people.

For example, I did an inventory. We have from Pakistan to Egypt, in that region, long-term presence in 13 countries. In each country the presence is relatively minimal, but it is serving a good purpose over the long term securing things.

Taken all together, I am sure it is less than the 28,000 troops we have in Korea since 1950. And that is probably costing us more money than most of what we are doing in the Middle East.

But we all understand that on the long run it buys us, and it buys the region security without getting us, at least up until now, in trouble. So that is the only way forward I could point out.

You try to limit your commitments to be something that is sustainable in terms of the American public, the budget, and casualties, and also not try to provoke people in these regions. And we have been successful both in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world in doing that. It is not impossible.

What is impossible and gets to the second question that came up, is changing the region. Because of the concerns you raised, Mr. Jones, people want to somehow rush in and just end this. We don't want to keep being there for decades, so we try to find a solution. We try to get to hearts and minds, and that is where, A, we start sending up the bills.

Right now, the fight against ISIS, I think over the last year, was \$7 billion. I think, this committee would know better than I, but somewhere around that. We burned through \$7 billion in a few weeks in Iraq for years, and I was there to watch it.

So I think that there is a way we can do this. But I realize it is hard to persuade people because this is a very, very good question. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here and increasing our understanding. In light of the discus-

sion right now, where would you suggest that resources really be focused and directed in a way that perhaps you don't see them being directed today? And could you include with that any additional authorities that you think are required to continue this battle, essentially?

If I can—Ambassador Jeffrey, you were going on that vein. If you want to focus on it a little bit?

Ambassador JEFFREY. Bearing in mind, having just committed myself to limit the public's resources trying—

Mrs. DAVIS. Understanding that, but where should they be that maybe they are not being?

Ambassador JEFFREY. While I am personally a skeptic about working to try to change the mindset in the region about terrorism, about extremist philosophies and such, it doesn't hurt to try because I could be wrong and it isn't a lot of money.

So that is one place where we are putting a lot of attention with, as you heard so far, limited success, but we might succeed tomorrow. We have done this in other areas, Eastern Europe, for example, successfully. And so perhaps it is worth—it is certainly worth trying.

Secondly, intelligence. That is crucial that we know what is going on out there and who is coming at us as soon as possible. That has helped us a lot in homeland defense. That is something that is really vital.

Thirdly, supporting this very limited but effective military force, who will not be large, who will not be tasked to change the mindset of whole populations, but will be given specific military missions that they can do.

We can take out ISIS in Mosul. We want to do it with partners, which is right, but a lot of that will require U.S. leadership, U.S. firepower, U.S. combat experience and some people on the ground, at least as advisors. That is the kind of thing we have to reinforce as well.

But, again, if the region is all screwed up, there is nothing we can do to deal with this popping up of new terrorist movements everywhere. So everything we can do diplomatically, politically, economically, and militarily to keep the region in the sort of calm state that we have been so successful elsewhere in the world, from Central and South America to the Balkans, that will help.

Mrs. DAVIS. Mr. Jenkins, can you respond?

Mr. JENKINS. You know, in all of the questions that have come up, thus far, there is an understandable skepticism about what we have received in return for the resources that we have invested. And that reflects the fact that Americans are pragmatists. If we invest something, we want to know what we get in return and how are we doing in this.

But in this particular case, that skepticism on the part of Congress, I think, is entirely appropriate because in the immediate wake of 9/11 the issue was spare no expense. Do whatever we have to do to prevent another 9/11.

It is not which button we will press. We will press every single button. One of them has to work. And fortunately, it worked, a combination of what we did and luck.

But now, looking for the long haul, we have become more sensitive to both how much we do and how we go about doing that. Part of that is imposed by the terrible costs that we have incurred thus far.

But here, to underscore the ambassador's remarks, in that if you look at the more recent activities, where we have worked together with the Kurds or other Arabs in Syria, or we have done more things with special forces, or we have done more things with local partners, military and nonmilitary, the resources there have been a fraction of the terrible price that we have paid, if you look back at the previous 15 years, especially the first 10 years after 9/11.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Could I let—Colonel could you just respond quickly then?

Colonel PRICE. Yes, absolutely. I agree with most of what has been said. I mean, in my opinion, the three places to improve. I agree, intel is one place where you will always get a great return on your investment. The two places—one cost efficient one where I think we can make a lot of room is in the informational domain; again, I think that public-private partnerships is the way forward there.

The last one is not very cost efficient, but it has to do with improving governance programs, diplomatic and economic programs to improve governance in the places that are fostering this violence.

Mrs. DAVIS. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank each of you for being here. And Ambassador, in particular I want to thank you for pointing out that the people of the Middle East really do want to live in the 21st century.

Having had the opportunity to visit from Beirut to Amman to Dubai, I explained to my constituents at home that many of these countries, cities, look like Hilton Head on steroids. And so they really want to really be part of the 21st century.

And then it is personal to me. All four of my sons have served there. My oldest son was field artillery in Iraq. My second son was a doctor serving in Baghdad. My third son served Bright Star Signal in Egypt, and my fourth guy was an engineer in Afghanistan serving with the local military. And so I am just so hopeful that we can back them up.

But sadly, the legacy of President Obama is a failure by not taking ISIS seriously, by declaring a red line that was not serious, by not having a status of forces agreement. To me, he has not learned the lesson of 9/11, which was where there is a safe haven, such as Afghanistan, that the American families are at risk.

And we see it even today. I was in New York on Monday and thank goodness that there were police officers, there were law enforcement, there were first responders, there were National Guard, every 5 feet in a city that shouldn't be under siege, but they are. And I want to make every effort that we can to defeat terrorists from overseas.

And with that in mind, Colonel Price, you have referenced this, and that is that we need to counteract the social media of the Is-

lamic terrorists. And how can we do this best, and what is the role of the Department of Defense?

Colonel PRICE. Sir, so obviously I am not here speaking on behalf of the Department of Defense, but I can offer some of the academic perspectives in terms of what we can do in a social media realm. And I think this goes back to the public-private partnerships that we can foster in order to do more in this space.

What is interesting is that, as I mentioned before, the jihadists are very adept at skirting around the different ways to both communicate, but to do it in a way that is not always illegal. And so I think this will ultimately come down to a policy question that I am not really equipped to speak on.

Mr. WILSON. And for each of you, and it could relate to how we address this, and that is, are there legislative authorities that are needed to address the specific aspects of countering the cyber threats to our country?

Mr. JENKINS. I don't know it is a matter of legislative authority. I think those authorities are there, and I think we are making some progress. A couple of areas that have already been mentioned that I think we are not fully exploiting, one is, Colonel Price is absolutely correct.

There is an extraordinary trove of documents produced by Al Qaeda, produced by ISIL, which I don't know why they are classified. I don't see that it is our responsibility to maintain our enemies'—protect their secrets. These would be better served in the public domain, because I think they would be really instructive. I would make those available.

And I think another thing that is an underutilized resource is we have some of these people coming back from this experience. We do have—they can be utilized more. I know our tendency is, and it is understandable, this is a nation of law, to say, well, we will lock them up and put them away and forget about them.

That is fine, but that is an underutilized resource. And it doesn't make any difference whether we think they are sincere or not, but certainly they, not we, represent the most effective voices against jihad, against radicalization.

So among these many hundreds who we have in Europe and here, we could utilize them a lot more in terms of their own propaganda against their own side.

Mr. WILSON. And we look forward to your input.

And, Ambassador, I want to thank you also. You cited success stories. People need to know. I have just returned from a wedding in Bogota, Colombia.

The success of Plan Colombia, just it would have been inconceivable, the thought that anybody would have gone to a wedding and feel like they would have been safe. But due to the success of the American military, now that dynamic country of 40 million people is free and dynamic. So thank you for your service.

Ambassador JEFFREY. Thank you. We diplomats will take some credit for Colombia, too, Congressman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to comment on some of the lessons learned that have been described by the panel, all of which are very helpful, some of which, especially Am-

bassador Jeffrey, you talked about our failure to react in a timely fashion.

But I also want to talk about some of those things that we have done in the past that have precipitated some of the problems that we see today. And perhaps looking forward, some of the actions that we can take that could potentially prevent them that may not be military in nature.

And I really appreciate my colleague, Mr. Jones, pointing out that 2003, the invasion of Iraq set off a chain of consequences, some of them factoring into what we are talking about today. And then the decision to remove Muammar Gaddafi in Libya had some very negative consequences, which we are still dealing with today.

There is an interesting article in addition to the one that Mr. Jenkins contributed to in the Atlantic, published in the New York Times, written by Scott Anderson, "How the Arab World Came Apart."

And one of the things that he notes is that in these areas where we are concerned about ISIS in Syria, in Iraq, and in Libya, they all had something in common, which is that, you know, 100 years ago they were creations of the West. They weren't inherently—you know, there was no real Syria. There was no real Libya. There was no real Iraq.

And these artificial political constructions could really only be kept together by a strongman. And typically the West would put a strongman of the minority tribe or sect in power. And it has produced some of the problems that we see today.

This lack of coherence, this lack of national identity, this problem that despite the fact that we spent \$60 billion training and equipping the Iraqi Army, there was no real Iraqi Army and they melted in the face of a far more insignificant force in ISIS.

And so my question is, to expand on the excellent question from the chairman, let us look 15 years back, let us look 15 years forward. Could you look 100 years back and 100 years forward with me? Is there something we could do to facilitate a different political construction in these three countries?

You know, the shorthand term for this is partition, but that acknowledges that these are not real countries the way that we think of countries and acknowledges the sectarian interests, the tribal interests, the familial interests that trump national identity. It may be the least bad option of a number of bad options before us. Convince me why it is not worth exploring and pursuing.

Mr. JENKINS. I think the reality is, as I mentioned in my testimony, that the partitions that we currently see in Syria and Iraq are going to persist. I know diplomats have to be optimists. And for a variety of reasons we have to remain committed, at least in theory, to the territorial integrity of Syria and Iraq. The reality on the ground is quite different.

Without abandoning the notion that we are in the business of being the new Sykes-Picot people who will now draw new lines in the sand, I do think that it might alter our approach to recognize that reality and instead of thinking in terms of broad peace agreements that will encompass the entire nation or governments that will be created that will be able to command the loyalty of all citi-

zens within those territories, that we accept the reality and perhaps go for more modest local accommodations.

That is, instead of one grand peace treaty, a series of small steps that are aimed only at limiting—lowering the level of violence and allowing some commerce to take place and life to come back to something approaching normality, as opposed to going for these three-point diplomatic shots that we sometimes try for.

Ambassador JEFFREY. If I could very quickly, Congressman, I agree with everything Mr. Jenkins said, but there are two problems with this that I think we need to consider.

First of all, other than East Asia, I know of no part of the world where you have got countries with each its own ethnic religious group by and large, and a little bit Europe.

What you described in the Middle East is absolutely correct, but Sub-Saharan Africa saw the same thing without the same level of huge turmoil and generator of terrorism that we see in the Middle East.

And Latin America, again, that was basically one big Spanish set of colonies that then broke apart with very similar ethnic and religious backgrounds, but managed to survive as a set of independent countries. So that is the first thing. It may be that there is a special problem in the Middle East that we don't see elsewhere, and fixing borders won't fix that special problem.

The second thing is, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, supporting the international order, national sovereignty, national unity should be our default position because it is what we represent. We can make exceptions to that, as Mr. Jenkins said, and as I was involved in in the Balkans where we helped break up countries.

But one requirement that worked in the Balkans and that hasn't worked in the Middle East is if you are going to do any fiddling inside a country, everybody in that region has to be with you. Because if only one is against you, Syria and Iran with Iraq, Pakistan with Afghanistan, we know all too well in this room what happens. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Lieutenant Colonel Price, I wanted to follow up on your written testimony where you talked about what the United States did after major operations in Iraq ceased and our presence there and lack of presence there and what led to the current security situation.

We find ourselves now 5 years after that significantly reduced military presence in Iraq. We see what is happening now. I expect in the months to come there will be another major offensive, perhaps to retake Mosul.

The question then becomes what should the U.S. role be to ensure security in Iraq after Mosul is, hopefully, regained from ISIL?

Colonel PRICE. Yes, sir. So in my testimony I did discuss that a little bit. Unfortunately, this problem is not unique to the United States, as Ambassador Jeffrey pointed out earlier. Doing this type of work and finding leverage in other countries to govern the way you would like to govern is extremely difficult.

One thing I will say, though, is that I believe that if you take a look at most of the debates surrounding our campaign against

the Islamic State today, I would argue that most of those debates are centered around the ways and means of attacking them, discussions about boots on the ground and troop levels, rules of engagement, airstrikes, building partner capacity, and so forth. I think the real debates need to focus around what happens after.

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes.

Colonel PRICE. I think the Islamic State, the last thing I will say is that they have created an interesting scenario because they have created a lot of enemies in the region. And so I believe that we are going to be successful in retaking territory. My concern is what happens after, and I would like to see more national debate on that.

Mr. WITTMAN. Let me ask this. Having visited there—I went up to Kurdistan, visited with the Kurds, visited with the government in Baghdad—and I use the term “government” loosely, and seeing what they are dealing with with Sunnis and Shias in that region versus the Kurds up north, the disagreements the Kurds have had with this Baghdad government.

Is the future one that is likely to hold a country that is not like we saw Iraq previously, with it having those three areas united as one country, would it be potentially divided where you would have a Kurdistan, you would have Shia and Sunni regions that would be regionalized governments, perhaps operating under some centralized government in Baghdad?

Give me your perspective about how governance would occur after you regain security. Obviously, security has to happen first, but give me your idea about what governance would—what you think it would look like after that?

Colonel PRICE. Yes, sir. There is no really easy answer to that question, and I would honestly be interested in hearing what Ambassador Jeffrey would have to say on this topic.

I think the only thing that I will add, and again, this is in my own personal opinion, the key question, whether you are talking about post-hostilities in Iraq or Syria, the key fundamental governance question is are these states able to provide an alternative and credible form of government that is going to be preferable to living the jihadist lifestyle?

Mr. WITTMAN. Yes.

Colonel PRICE. A very difficult task. I will cede my time to my colleague.

Mr. WITTMAN. Ambassador.

Ambassador JEFFREY. Very quickly, to build on Colonel Price’s comments, first of all, government in parentheses, you are absolutely right.

Mr. WITTMAN. Yeah.

Ambassador JEFFREY. But that is okay.

Mr. WITTMAN. Yeah.

Ambassador JEFFREY. That is how most of East Asia 40 years ago looked, corruption, quasi-dictatorial regimes, army generals coming in in Korea. Taiwan was a problem. Thailand is still a problem. But we somehow deal with them.

The answer to Iraq is it was functioning pretty well in the period of time from the end of the surge, 2009 to roughly 2013. Many factors led to the decline of the state, including a lack of attention by

us, and increasing sectarian thought and actions, particularly by the largely Shia Arab government against the Sunni Arabs. The Kurds and the Shias kind of worked things out in their own unique way.

But I would say that you could go back to that. You will have all of the problems that you hear when you are out there, but you have a lot of problems in Egypt. You have a lot of problems elsewhere in the region. It can work. I have seen it work.

The most important thing, though, the delta, is we have to stay in there diplomatically and militarily. That means dealing with Iran, because job one for Iran, as soon as the ISIS battle is over, is to get our 5,000 people out of there.

We have to find a way to persuade everyone in Iraq that that is a bad idea, and to some degree, to persuade Iran that it is a bad idea in the long run for Iran, too. That is a much bigger problem. I touched on it in my testimony. But it is going to haunt us as long as we are trying to stabilize the region.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Gabbard.

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just briefly, a follow-up to Ambassador Jeffrey on that point. Do you think that the very closely and intertwined relationship between the Shia government in Baghdad and Iran can be so easily supplanted by our 5,000 troops on the ground in our engagement there?

Ambassador JEFFREY. Absolutely not, Congresswoman. We have to live with the fact that Iran will have a great deal of influence in Iraq, not just with the largely Shia government and the Shia in the south, but frankly, with many of the Kurds in the north. I have seen that as well.

The question is do we want to compete with Iran or turn the place over to them? One of the problems with letting the place split into its three components is the other two components tend to anchor the Shia south in a sort of independent status.

If Iran really were in charge, it would have long since picked up the phone and said why are you exporting up to 4 million barrels of oil a day? This is killing us on oil exports.

And believe me, those 2 million additional barrels of oil that Iran—Iraq is exporting now compared to a decade ago, thanks largely to us and international oil companies, that is one of the reasons oil prices are so low. That is good for your American consumers, but it is not good for Iran.

Iran doesn't do that because it knows the Iraqis would say no. You break that country up, the Shia south is going to have to gravitate into Iran's orbit in a way much more than today. Total oil reserves in Iran and the Shia south of Iraq are greater than Saudi Arabia's.

That is something worth combating, and I think we can stay in there, and I think we can push back. But it takes a lot of effort, and it is going to take, again, dealing directly with Iran.

Ms. GABBARD. That is a big conversation that we can get into about the three-state possibility for Iraq and the consequence of, as

Mr. Jenkins mentioned, the reality on the ground, which is that this partition, in essence, has already taken place.

And the vacuum that has been created by the oppression of the Sunni tribes and others by the Shia government has allowed groups like ISIS to, in fact, come in, which leads me to my question. Much of the testimony today and much of the talk in the media, much of the conversation from the administration as well as from military leaders on the ground in places like Syria, is their mission is to defeat ISIS, period.

And when we ask questions about what about Al Qaeda? What about the group formerly known as al-Nusra? What about these other jihadist groups? Why are we not targeting them, or are we targeting them? And the answers are really insufficient and really speak to the fact that we are not.

As a result, groups like al-Nusra, now JFS [Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham], have really integrated themselves deeply within Syrian society right under our noses to the point where if the administration is successful in removing Assad, the likelihood is that these groups, a.k.a. Al Qaeda, would take over, creating a greater threat, not only to the region but to the world.

Can you speak to the issue of why things have been so completely focused on this group called ISIS rather than recognizing the fact that Al Qaeda still has leading terror groups all around the world? And why more is not being done, therefore, then to take the next step to address defeating the ideology?

Mr. JENKINS. I am not sure that we are ignoring Al Qaeda around the world. I mean, there are continuing efforts and efforts that have achieved the measure of success in reducing the capacity of al-Shabaab in Somalia, an Al Qaeda affiliate.

There is an ongoing campaign, which the United States is supporting, to go after Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, in Yemen. And at least with the air campaign some of that has been also directed against Al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria.

But you do underscore an issue here, and that is that what used to be the, you know, the performing actor formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra has, in fact, become a part of, embedded itself deeply in this broader coalition of rebel forces against them.

And it is extremely difficult and will become more so for us to precisely target that component without weakening what is essentially still a U.S.-backed broader rebel effort against Assad.

All of this comes about because of the fundamental problem. And that is, for the Sunni population in Syria, the only avatars they have, the only military defenders they have right now are the Islamic State and this coalition of rebel forces dominated by jihadists.

There is not another force in the area that can protect that Sunni population. So we have the dilemma that part of the people we are supporting includes a component of the very people we are against.

Ms. GABBARD. Precisely.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Gibson.

Mr. GIBSON. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate the panelists. We heard from you earlier your testimony about how important the competition of ideas is.

And also in some of your testimony you talked about declassification of information. And it caused me to reflect on a very significant experience that I had during the surge. Ambassador Jeffrey, you may remember this from Iraq.

But in the early summer, General McChrystal and the Joint Special Operations Command had captured a high-value target, and in his debriefing, essentially exposed the fraudulent nature of Al Qaeda in Iraq.

At that point, they were really trying to say how this was homegrown and there were all kinds of Iraqis that were involved in this. And this individual we had captured, he basically said no. It is all penetrated. It is all foreign. They have one token that is in the lead.

And I bring it up because General McChrystal, I think, made a very courageous and smart decision. He declassified all that information the first week of July and—I think it was about the first week of July—and that helped us so much.

I mean, as the operations officer for everything north of Baghdad, this helped us in Mosul and Khilafah and Baqubah and Tikrit because we were able to have engagements and say look. Look what has happened. This was right on the cusp of the Sunni Awakening moving from the west over to Diyala Province. And say look, these guys are complete frauds.

And, you know, it really struck me that, you know, he was—which is not surprising for General McChrystal, but he was really taking on some risk in declassifying this information and using it in a way that we were targeting with it.

And so my question is, you know, looking across now and elevating and thinking about this as a national endeavor, you know, what recommendations do you have as far as laws or guidance on enhancing our agility to declassify to win this competition of ideas?

And in your remarks, any specific recommendations you would have for either the President and the executive branch or for us from the Congress in terms of congressional delegation trips, messaging, hearings that will help on this score.

Colonel PRICE. Sir, the case that you just mentioned was one that we highlight in the Combating Terrorism Center all of the time because General McChrystal actually gave those documents to the CTC. They were referred to as the Sinjar Documents. And they disclosed, like you accurately mentioned, the foreign fighter threat that was going. It was not a homegrown threat.

In fact, when we were able to do that analysis on those documents, we were able to determine that, when you take a look at the per capita donors from specific countries, I think everyone had assumed that Saudi Arabia was going to be the largest donor at that time. And they did—they were number one on the list.

But another state that was number two was Libya. And when you—we were able to parse out that data down to the actual towns where these individuals were coming from. Again, as you mentioned, this is 2007. The two highest per capita were Derna and

Benghazi. And this was well before Benghazi was a household name.

And so when you talk about what systems are available for us to do this, there is a joint collaborative program between the Combating Terrorism Center along with U.S. Special Operations Command called the Harmony Program.

And that was the vehicle by which General McChrystal and others used in order to declassify those. That program is still in function today, and we look forward to getting more declassified documents.

Mr. GIBSON. How about other thoughts in terms of how we can get, you know, more agile and more effective in this domain, this competition of ideas? Because, you know, certainly there is a continuum between speed and effectiveness and protection of sources, and I get all that. But are there any sort of lessons that you can draw out of this that we could really hone in on and be more effective with the whole-of-government approach?

Ambassador JEFFREY. In my experience, which includes trying to supervise parts of that underlying—trying when I was in the White House, it is very complicated because there are always two reasons why you classify information.

One is the actual damage that that information might do if it came out into the public sector. But as Colonel Price and you just indicated, Congressman, in many cases it is advantageous for us to have that information out there.

The second reason, and that is where you get to bureaucracy, your role, the role of the executive, is sources and methods. That is, it is an innocuous piece of information. It would do good, not bad if the American public could read it, if people abroad could read it, if you could have access to it freely.

But people are afraid because, by some algorithm of steps and actions and mathematical formulas, that could somehow reveal how we gather information. I am less worried about that, I think, than many people are.

But this is something that you have to discuss with the intelligence committees and the intelligence community because they are very ferocious on this, sometimes correctly, sometimes not. But if you want to be fast and agile, you need to look into that specifically.

The CHAIRMAN. I think we should.

Mr. Nugent.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And you don't paint a pretty picture as to how this is going to be resolved in the future. Only because, I think, the dynamics in the Middle East are so diverse. We have talked about, you know, in Colombia, in other states, we didn't have the two religious organizations that are the largest in that area, the Shia and the Sunnis, at odds with each other.

So how do we ever resolve that issue, which I think, you know, is the underlying issue that percolates up through all of this, whether it is, you know, tribal? But it really goes back to their, you know, you got Iran who the majority is Shia, right? And, you know, the rest of the countries in that area, the majority is Sunni.

So how do we resolve that issue? Is there a resolve? And can we play a part in that? And Mr. Ambassador, you have had the ability to deal with those over the years. What is your take?

Ambassador JEFFREY. I have had about 30 years, counting Turkey, in the region and working on the region, and I was just out there and talked to the leaders of Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey over the past month. I like the area. It is fascinating, and it doesn't have to be what we see right now.

And there are times when it hasn't. For example, the Shia-Sunni split and the conflicts that emerged from them, which I was so worried about I put considerable time into it in my written testimony as an accelerant for terrorism in this region.

That is something that while it has been latent before, these people, Sunni and Shia Arabs and other ethnic groups with that split, have lived together in relative peace for most of the history of the Middle East.

It is something that can go back together, just like Orthodox and Muslims lived in peace in Bosnia and other places in the Balkans for centuries. And then bang, in the 1990s, what happened? A breakdown in order, an unwillingness of the international community to engage, and the evil forces that are always latent, bubble up and become omnipresent. We have that with a vengeance right now in the region.

But again, while we can't go in and fix it per se, the region itself can fix it if given enough time and given enough stability. Our job from the outside, and it is not something we can do alone, we need to do it with our European friends and our allies and partners in the region, is to dampen down the exploitation of this violence and insecurity by forces, beginning with terrorist forces, Iran, and at times even our own friends who get carried away in responding to these threats.

But that takes a very present United States. Not with whole armies, not with hundreds of billions of dollars a year in expenditures, but the kind of presence that over most of the period since the 1970s we have been able to do in the region and with relative success. Over the long term, I am optimistic, but I realize it may be a hard sell today.

Mr. NUGENT. Well, I mean, we tend to want to force our view of government on other governments. And I think, you know, we saw that with Saddam Hussein, with, I mean, all the dictators out there. And we want to impose what we think is the proper form of government.

And not every country or people are ready for democracy as we see it for a number of reasons. And Iran, obviously, you have touched on it, Iran is a huge player.

And I agree with your testimony that we can't just leave a void there and allow Iran to fill that. If we abandon the Middle East, what are we going to get? And I think we have seen part of it.

And Lieutenant Colonel Price, I am very interested, having two sons that went to West Point, on your take in regards to what are we trying to impart upon our future leaders and our leaders within the military as to how we go about this?

Because we do have the ability militarily to do certain things, but I don't know that—and we have talked about we don't have the

will in the United States, nor the money to continue. What is your take?

Colonel PRICE. Yes, so very briefly, sir, one of the reasons why the organization that I lead and stood up was for that very reason. When I was a cadet, we did not have any type of formal education when it came to these types of topics, whether it be terrorism, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency. These are complex issues that our young American service men and women are facing.

Mr. NUGENT. And I—you know, my son was a plebe when the Twin Towers went down, or he just finished his plebe year. So you are right. We didn't have a whole lot of experience in that. But I am sorry to interrupt.

Colonel PRICE. Yes, sir. So part of this is learning about these topics in a more academically rigorous session. The other things that we have done is we have enhanced the academy's overseas programs to get more cultural education to our cadets.

But ultimately, at the end of the day, and this is not specific to the U.S. Military Academy or others, but it is teaching our young military leaders how to think and not what to think. That is all.

Mr. NUGENT. I appreciate it.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Bridenstine.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ambassador Jeffrey, you were our ambassador during the withdrawal from Iraq. You were our ambassador to Iraq. I wasn't in Congress at the time, but I was in the military.

And what we were being told at the time was that there was no status of forces agreement ratified by the Iraqi Parliament and therefore we had to pull out. That was the talking point that we heard over and over again.

Currently, we have 5,000 troops in Iraq. Did the parliament ratify a status of forces agreement, and if not, how do we have 5,000 troops there now?

Ambassador JEFFREY. And that is a good question, Congressman. Give me a second to track this back, because I was involved in this first in the White House in the Bush administration, and then on the field in the Obama administration.

As part of the—our authorities in Iraq up until 2008 were based on a U.N. Security Council resolution. The Iraqi government in 2008 said this has got to end.

So President Bush then went in and got a status of forces agreement that gave us immunities for our troops, but the cost of that was—to get it through the Iraqi Parliament, and everybody agreed that it had to go through the Iraqi Parliament to be legally binding, was we had to put a limit on how long we would stay.

So that limit was the end of 2011. The Obama administration came in, and then after General Austin and I—

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. So in 2008, it did go through what was—

Ambassador JEFFREY. It did go through the parliament. That is right, sir.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. It did. Okay.

Ambassador JEFFREY. Then, in 2010, General Austin and I came to Iraq. And soon we said, hey, we don't want to do a withdrawal in 18 months. Let us recommend that we keep troops on.

We went back and forth with the administration. President Obama brought us in and said, okay, we will try to negotiate a new status of forces agreement.

With one exception, all of his advisers and all of them at the top two tiers, said, yeah, we have to get one through parliament because the last one went through parliament and, in a democratic system, it really won't have legal—because what you are doing with a status of forces agreement is saying Jim—or you as a soldier, or you as a soldier, Congresswoman, are exempt from the laws of a country.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Right.

Ambassador JEFFREY. It is not something—

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Critically important.

Ambassador JEFFREY. Yeah. It is critically important, but it is something that it takes either diplomatic status, which is a treaty, or it takes something that has to be legally binding in a state like Iraq under that constitution, and that is the parliament.

So our position was we need a status of forces agreement. In the end, the Iraqis said, okay. We can put up with troops in-country, but we don't want to give you a status of forces agreement that will go through the parliament because, hey, the Russians didn't need this. Why do you need it?

And Prime Minister Maliki said, "I will just sign a document." Everybody, with one exception, concluded that that wasn't acceptable, so we went without the troops at the end of 2011.

Then in 2014, under very different emergency conditions, the President decided that he could live with, essentially—and I haven't seen the document, but I know it exists—an executive agreement that our troops will have, to the extent possible, immunities. I don't know what the language.

It is pretty threadbare. The difference is when you have an emergency where foreign horrific forces gobble up a third of your country and kill tens of thousands of your citizens, probably we can send forces in in an emergency basis without those same legal protections, because the country dramatically needs us.

In 2011, when the troops left, Congressman, there was almost no fighting in-country. People were—Iraqis were not quite sure why we wanted to stay on. That was my concern, that we would be harassed by, for example, Sadrist police, extremist judges, and other things, and therefore, we needed that protection. Now—

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Well, that is more clarity than I have had on that the entire time I have been here. So thank you. That is a great answer.

Ambassador JEFFREY. Thank you.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. I want—and I have got just maybe a minute left. Colonel Price, how important is human intelligence to winning this fight?

Colonel PRICE. I think it is absolutely critical, and I think that it has led to a lot of our counterterrorism successes since 2001.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Real quick, do you know offhand how many prisoners, how many ISIS prisoners we have captured?

Colonel PRICE. No, sir. I wouldn't be able to answer that.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. A couple of months ago, I asked the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and they gave me one. Do you know if we have captured any more than that since then?

Colonel PRICE. I don't know, sir.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Is that important to being able to get human intelligence?

Colonel PRICE. Sir, is your question is that taking prisoners is important to—

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. That is my question.

Colonel PRICE [continuing]. Gaining intelligence?

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Yes.

Colonel PRICE. Yes, I think that you can glean information from captured terrorists. Yes, sir.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Okay. We have had a conversation about hard power and soft power. You talked about public-private partnerships. One thing I would like to get on record. Are you familiar with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation?

Colonel PRICE. No, sir.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Anyone else on the panel familiar with it? Can you guys talk about whether or not that is important, and if it is something we as Members of Congress should be involved in making sure continues?

Ambassador JEFFREY. It is really good bang for the buck. I have dealt with it. It has been a long time. I cannot talk specifics, but it is one of the things we sort of smile when we hear about our government doing abroad as opposed to other things that we are a little skeptical about, that are bigger, clumsier, and don't get money out.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Okay.

Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. Absolutely. It is extremely useful in providing the assurance that we need. Not to put aside insurance, but the assurance that investors need and traders need to make this work. I would agree with the ambassador. It is a big bang for the buck.

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. That is good to know.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Byrne.

Mr. BYRNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen. I think I am the end here, so that is the good news for you.

I want to go to the topic of our allies in the Middle East. I think if not explicit, implicit in all of your testimony is we can't do this alone. Now, I am concerned about the relationship that we presently have with our allies.

Some of us have been over there and talked to our allies. We certainly read things that they have been saying. It seems that they are worried that we have gotten too close to Iran at their expense.

And so I would like for you to speak to this notion that we have to pick who we are going to be with. In other words, is it the situation where we can have a relationship with Iran and cause problems thereby with our other allies, our Gulf allies, our Saudi Arabia allies, our Jordanian, Egyptian allies?

Or can you thread that needle where, yeah, you can have some sort of a relationship with Iran and still have that very strong, important, positive relationship with our allies?

There are some of us that are worried that we are leaving the girl we brought to the dance at the dance and going off dancing with another girl, and that is not a good thing. Or perhaps a better way to say that, we are in a fight and we have left our friends in the fight and gone to our adversary in the fight.

I might also add that I would like, if you can, talk a little bit there also about how we are presently treating the president of Egypt, Mr. el-Sisi, who has in many ways been very strong in advocating our interests in that region. So if you could speak to our relationships with our allies and whether it is in the right place or whether it needs to change?

Ambassador JEFFREY. If I could start, as I said, I have just been in the region, and I have talked to Prime Minister Netanyahu, the head of the Israeli opposition, to the king of Saudi Arabia, the crown prince, deputy crown prince, and to President Erdogan.

And everybody is echoing exactly what you are saying, Congressman, that they want more American presence in the region, military, diplomatic, political, obviously economic, but they focus on diplomatic. And they want a stronger position against Iran.

Now I mentioned earlier, both Iran as a source of basically pushing the area more into terror, but also as someone in Iraq and elsewhere we have to deal with. And we do have to deal with it. We had to deal with it one or another way on the nuclear account. We have to deal with it in its presence in the region.

But here is where I draw the line. There are countries, however flawed, that support the international status quo and want us in the region. Egypt is a good example. Turkey is another, however difficult.

Secondly, there are countries that while we may have to deal with them on things, ultimately don't want us there and want a different Middle East. That is ISIS. That is Iran. And therefore how we deal with them has to be different.

We had relations with the Soviet Union for 40 years. We did agreement after agreement with them. But we never lost sight of the fact they and we have totally different visions of the world.

We and Iran have totally different visions of how the Middle East should be shaped up, and lest we forget that, we open the door to exactly the kind of problem you have described.

Mr. JENKINS. Let me underscore that. I think there was a sense of perhaps ill-founded euphoria when we signed the deal with Iran that this would be the beginning of rapprochement and good relations.

This was a deal. And the notion of some type of rapprochement, and ultimately some even spoke about strategic partnership in the region, I think is something that may be decades down the road, if ever. It is not clear that the Iranians are interested in that at all.

I think, in terms of dealing with our traditional allies, as flawed as they are, in the region, I think we have caused them consternation, not simply because of the arrangement with Iran, but because

of some of our inconstant behavior as we went through this turbulent Arab Spring, and that caused them to——

Mr. BYRNE. The red line, et cetera.

Mr. JENKINS. Various things, a whole list of things so that the notion was, their concern was if they face a threat, an overt, obvious threat, we would probably come and assist them. A more insidious kind of a threat, we would probably give them a lecture on human rights and democracy and so on. And so that caused them to be greatly concerned.

Now, I am not saying we ought not to be committed to those things of human rights, of democracy, and so on. But we also have to accept that these are not values that we can automatically export and impose on others or demand as preconditions for any type of relationship.

And therefore, I think that we have not been as successful as we could be in exploiting some of the initiatives that have come out of the local partners that we might do, including some of the Gulf countries.

Mr. BYRNE. Thank you. My time is up, but I hate not to let Colonel Price respond to that, Mr. Chairman.

Colonel, could you respond to that?

Colonel PRICE. Sir, I wouldn't have anything to add than what the other two panelists have already said. Thank you, though.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Jeffrey, you don't have to comment on this if you don't have an opinion, but your conversation with Mr. Bridenstine on the Iraq status of forces agreement leads me to think about an issue that we have before us now. And that is the bill that allows victims of terrorism to sue in court other nations, conduct discovery, and so forth.

The United States has more people in more countries around the world than anybody else. And one of the arguments that leads to concerns about that is that when you start eroding sovereign immunity, then that is a slippery slope that puts our people in greater danger.

Do you have an opinion about this? And again, I don't want—this is kind of out of the blue, but if you want to, fine.

Ambassador JEFFREY. I have a very strong opinion, Mr. Chairman. Normally, I am 90 percent, 10 percent, 70 percent, 30 percent. There are a few issues I am 100 percent on. This is a really big mistake. This will open the door, potentially, to legal action against Americans by, you know, criminal courts in other—criminal in the sense of corrupt—in criminal courts in other countries.

It will risk the diplomatic immunity that people like me needed to work in very difficult countries, communist Bulgaria, for example, in the 1980s. I have seen up close what they were trying to do to us and how we wrapped ourselves in that immunity.

This I cannot—totally apart from the importance of Saudi Arabia in the fight against terror and the competition with Iran, against any country this would be a mistake. It opens the door to extraordinary threats to Americans of a legal nature around the world. Thank you for asking me.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, no, I appreciate it. Those are some of my concerns as well.

One thing we hadn't really talked about today and in my memory was the, you know, dominant shadow overhanging 9/11, and that was what if terrorists get their hands on weapons of mass destruction?

We have seen ISIS use chemical weapons. It has been made public that Al Qaeda, among others, have worked on biological sorts of weapons. Do any of you have any comments about that prospect, how that might change the way we view terrorism, et cetera?

Mr. JENKINS. I think that any use by terrorists of chemical, biological, radiological, let alone nuclear weapons, would have a profound effect on public psychology.

I hesitate to call them weapons of mass destruction because I think there is a range there. And when we look at what they were experimenting or what capacities have, the capacity, while chemical weapons may be more accessible, the capacity would be quite limited.

While radiological is one that is frequently mentioned, the so-called dirty bomb, in looking at that from an operational standpoint, the bomb part, that is the explosion, would be the source of casualties far more than the radioactive component, which is likely to be very small quantities of radioactive material.

These are really weapons where the terrorists use them to achieve not so much physical effects, but maximum psychological effects.

And so, beyond taking all reasonable measures to try to ensure that they don't have that capacity, ranging from improving security as well as intervening in a preemptive fashion to ensure that if we have any operational intelligence that they are moving in that direction, we head it off.

Beyond that, there is a real issue of how we would address such an event if it occurred, heaven forbid, and that has a lot to do with how we will handle the media, societal resilience. If we look at the psychological effects in our saturated media environment that we operate in and concerns of what has happened in even ordinary conventional attacks, whether it is Orlando or the more recent events, one really worries about the kind of frenzy that would be fueled if they were to get these weapons.

So I am less concerned about the physical aspects of it than the psychological impact, which is what terror is all about.

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah. No. It's a great point. Which I guess leads me to my last question, Colonel Price. Optimistic scenarios say that Iraqi military with our help clears ISIS out of Mosul in Iraq.

It is hard for me to see how they get cleared out of Syria in the foreseeable future, but as I mentioned at the beginning, ISIS itself says, okay, we may lose our physical caliphate, but we are going to remain in the virtual caliphate.

Can you comment on that? Does that mean a diminished danger? Just how big a deal is that if ISIS continues on in a virtual sense and are we equipped to deal with that? I mean, you have talked about the public-private partnerships to fight the ideology, but talk a little about a virtual caliphate.

Colonel PRICE. Sir, and this goes back to my earlier points regarding the difficulties and challenge of saying that you are going to destroy the Islamic State. While you can remove their military

capability, their ability to inspire and potentially direct attacks with those that are outside of the theater of combat operations poses a significant threat to others.

As Mr. Jenkins also alluded to earlier, the pathways of radicalization are extremely complex. And so this is an area where I think that academics will need to do a better job of providing more policy-relevant specific recommendations to bodies like this in that regard.

The danger posed with the advent of the internet now is that there is no geographic limitations to where this threat can reside. And so those are the challenges that I see moving forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Thank you all very much. Helpful and yet challenging, and I think that is kind of what the country faces going ahead. But thank you all for being here. With that, the hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

**15 YEARS AFTER 9-11: THE STATE OF THE FIGHT AGAINST
ISLAMIC TERRORISM**

**Hearing Before the House Armed Services Committee,
September 21, 2016**

James F. Jeffrey, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

SUMMARY

I wish to thank the Committee for the opportunity to discuss this extraordinarily important issue.

The fight against Islamic terrorism in its various manifestations is both a key element in our national security, and a central component in the effort to stabilize the broader Middle East. While America may face greater strategic threats, the direct impact of large scale terrorist attack with loss of life in America, and the danger terrorism poses for the still critically-important Middle East, warrant priority attention.

The Administration's combination of homeland defense, military action and political support for the region's own efforts against the sources of terrorism is generally sensible and has had some success. Any final victory will require much more time, continued military pressure, close cooperation with partners, support for a regional order that rejects terror, and special attention to Iran's malignant role as both a supporter of terror and "accelerant" for Sunni extremism.

THE SITUATION

On the first element of our post 9/11 counter-terrorism policy, securing the homeland, the United States has been successful stopping attacks prepared outside the U.S. and limiting those launched by home-grown terrorists.

On the second element, combating terrorist movements with military force, directly and with partners, the record is mixed. With the exception of ISIS and Hezbollah, radical Islamic terrorist movements do not hold strategic territory, although they have presence in 'ungoverned areas,' from Western Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan through Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Sinai, Libya, Somalia and North Africa south of Algeria.

The U.S. was slow countering ISIS' rise, and at times hesitant bringing necessary force against it. That campaign is gaining ground slowly, but events from refugee flows to the recent erroneous U.S. strikes on Syrian troops demonstrate that as long as ISIS operates as a state it can further destabilize the region. But as seen in the U.S.-led Coalition's operations, defeating a terrorist group on the battleground undercuts recruiting just as terrorist military success encourages it.

On the third element, countering the root causes of terrorism, the U.S. has had less success. Most analysts and the Administration understand that this is not primarily a job for the outside world. Islamic terror is both a component, however marginal, of the Islamic world, and a major contributor to the dysfunctionalities within that world that fuel terrorist sentiment.

The current high levels of terror in the pursuit of political goals is a function of the crisis within Middle Eastern Islamic civilization. This crisis has antecedents that stretch back centuries, and gained strength with the collapse of the Ottoman

Empire. For 60 years thereafter the region witnessed a struggle between models for governance, from traditional royalty to modern military or party dictatorships, to Islamic movements. Beginning in 1979, with the founding of the Iranian Islamic Republic and the seizure of the Mecca Grand Mosque, and later the rise of the Taliban and al Qaeda, Violent Islamic movements challenged both individual states and the principle of modernity with its integration of the Middle East into the global system.

The underlying strength of these movements was manifest with the “Arab Spring” in 2011. Despite a decade of counter-terrorist success after 9/11, the Arab Spring movements, while themselves not instigated by violent extremists, by collapsing four military-party dictatorships, in Libya, Syria, Egypt and Yemen, opened the door not to moderate governance but to Islamic terrorist movements.

In addition, this revolt of populations throughout the Middle East, especially in Sunni Arab regimes, empowered Iran and its brand of Islamic extremism. As both a state and a pan-regional religious movement with a history of using terror, Iran poses a special challenge. As a state with whom we must deal diplomatically, and with an internal struggle between moderate and extremist elements we erroneously think we can influence, we often tolerate its use of violence, including an attempt to bomb a Washington restaurant in 2011 and attacks by Iranian surrogates from Lebanon to Azerbaijan and Bulgaria.

Thus, until these societies establish truces within themselves, and with the outside world, based on political, economic, social and theological visions purified of violent extremism, terrorism in some form will continue.

ONE WAY FORWARD

These three elements are a useful platform upon which the next Administration could build. The first, homeland defense, is essential. The second and third represent the offense, the second direct and primarily military, the third ultimately political, working with entities in the region to dry up sources of Islamic terror. Information and intelligence operations compliment these military and political campaigns.

The military element, while it cannot solve this problem, is critical both in defending ourselves and limiting the expansion of Islamic terror and the creation of new 'ungoverned territories.' As such it complements the political effort to eradicate root causes of terrorist violence.

The latter is not our job from the outside, but one for states, societies and peoples in the Middle East to resolve. The United States and our European allies can influence that outcome through military and political action, but can also exacerbate grievances and inadvertently open the way to more terror.

Thus America cannot do this political/sociological job on its own, but only support partners on the margins. Sympathy for Sunni violent extremists in the region according to polls is very low; but support for political Islam, Sharia codes and generally a bigger role for Orthodox Islam is widespread, and this increases ambiguity in the face of terror and limits willingness to speak out. Consequently, counter-terror efforts by our friends are often indirect, limited, locally-crafted and slow to produce results. But patience, and cultural sensitivity, are necessary.

This sensitivity has limits. The Administration's unwillingness usually to speak publicly of this threat as "Islamic" is a mistake.

Muslims understand the nature of this threat including its Islamic roots. We will not make enemies calling a truth true; failure to do so out of political correctness erodes support for balanced responses to terrorism among Western populations. But we cannot generalize, linking entire Muslim populations with terrorists. The former are our actual or potential allies. We will not win without them.

Supporting imperfect partners in this struggle is often complicated. As in Egypt today we share the fight frequently with governments some of whose actions encourage terrorist recruitment. While this requires balancing, the first principle--as America's actions are judged by other partners throughout the region—is to emphasize cooperation, not criticism.

More generally, America can help rollback support for terror by explaining not just what we are against but what we are for. Aside from supporting partners, this must include undergirding the international order based on state sovereignty, non-recourse to violence, collective security and international law.

America's military offensive against terror should be directed in particular to advance this order in the Middle East, where it faces multiple stresses. Thus we should have acted sooner against ISIS in 2014 as it gained territory and an army, and should have never contemplated a military withdrawal from Afghanistan. This military component might be less crucial than the region's own development of antibodies against Islamic terror, but military operations can give the region the time needed to do so. These operations need not be large-scale, costly or high casualty, but must long continue with clear

victory elusive.

Finally, our military and political campaign against Islamic terror must focus on Iran as well as Sunni groups. It is not an acceptable partner in the war against terror. First, the theocratic regime's Islamic roots have much in common with Sunni Islamic extremism. It and its surrogates use terror themselves, and it has had relations with al Qaeda and Taliban elements. In either its Islamic or Persian xenophobic guise it undercuts international order and state sovereignty. Furthermore regional states generally see it as a more existential threat than Sunni Islamic terror. There is thus a real danger that, if we are not resolute containing Iran, and if the Sunni-Shia conflict now seen in Syria emerges region-wide, our Sunni partners could see violent Sunni Islamic movements not as threats, but as allies against Iran.

The Honorable James Jeffrey

Ambassador James F. Jeffrey is the Philip Solondz distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute where he focuses on U.S. diplomatic and military strategy in the Middle East, with emphasis on Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

One of the nation's most senior diplomats, Ambassador Jeffrey has held a series of highly sensitive posts in Washington D.C. and abroad. In addition to his service as ambassador in Ankara and Baghdad, he served as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor in the George W. Bush administration, with a special focus on Iran. He previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, where his responsibilities included leading the Iran policy team and coordinating public diplomacy. Earlier appointments included service as senior advisor on Iraq to the secretary of state; chargé d'affaires and deputy chief of mission in Baghdad; deputy chief of mission in Ankara; and ambassador to Albania.

A former infantry officer in the U.S. Army, Ambassador Jeffrey served in Germany and Vietnam from 1969 to 1976.

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Witness name: James F. Jeffrey

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

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2016

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2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

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2016

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment

2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment

None
2010 To
2014

21 34 2016

3

Fifteen Years After 9/11

A Preliminary Balance Sheet

Brian Michael Jenkins

CT-458

Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee on September 21, 2016.



For more information on this publication, visit www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT458.html

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Fifteen Years After 9/11: A Preliminary Balance Sheet
 Testimony of Brian Michael Jenkins¹
 The RAND Corporation²

Before the Committee on Armed Services

United States House of Representatives

September 21, 2016

Fifteen years of U.S. efforts to destroy the jihadist terrorist enterprise have not led to victory in the classic military sense. Indeed, such victory may not be achievable in this kind of war. Instead, there have been both successes and failures in what will likely be an enduring task.

Measuring progress in irregular warfare without front lines is always difficult. The diverse dimensions and multiple fronts of the continuing U.S. campaign against terrorists inspired by jihadist ideologies make doing so an exceptional challenge.

In long wars, there are invariably events that, although external to the immediate conflict, can alter the contest and change strategic calculations.³ Indeed, such events have affected U.S. strategy and altered its path in the war on terror since September 11, 2001. Some of the events are a result of U.S. policy, such as the decision to invade Iraq, the overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi in Libya, and the decision to withdraw from Iraq. Others include the global economic crisis, the still-continuing political upheaval that spread across North Africa and the Middle East, and the emergence of a more aggressive Russia, all of which complicated U.S. efforts against the jihadists. And while the basic goal of destroying the terrorist enterprise of al Qaeda, its affiliates, and its successors remains unchanged, U.S. objectives have also been redefined.

A thorough appreciation of the current situation requires assessing progress in different fields of action and different geographic theaters. A close examination of each of these aspects

¹ The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of the RAND Corporation or any of the sponsors of its research.

² The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

³ The assessment presented in this testimony draws from the analysis in Brian Michael Jenkins, "Fifteen Years On, Where Are We in the 'War on Terror'?" *CTC Sentinel*, West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, September 7, 2016. As of September 19, 2016:
<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/fifteen-years-on-where-are-we-in-the-war-on-terror>

suggests a complicated balance sheet. In some areas, counterterrorism efforts have been successful; in other areas, less so. And for every plus or minus entry, there is a “however.” Moreover, the situation continues to be dynamic.

On the plus side, the United States’ worst fears have not been realized. There have been no more attacks on the scale of 9/11 and none of the worst-case scenarios that post-9/11 extrapolations suggested. The 9/11 attacks now appear to be a statistical outlier, not a forerunner of further escalation. Terrorists have not used weapons of mass destruction, as many expected they would do. The degradation of al Qaeda’s operational capabilities reflects a massive U.S. intelligence effort coupled with increasingly sophisticated military strategies, particularly special operations.⁴

Contrary to the inflated rhetoric of some in government, the operational capabilities of al Qaeda and the Islamic State remain limited.⁵ Both enterprises are beneficiaries of fortune (they would argue, of “God’s will”). They are successful opportunists. Much of their military successes in Syria and Iraq reflected the collapse of those governments’ forces, not al Qaeda’s or the Islamic State’s military prowess.

Neither al Qaeda nor the Islamic State has become a mass movement. The vast majority of Muslims express negative views of jihadist organizations,⁶ but a significant minority express favorable views of al Qaeda and, more recently, of the Islamic State. However, while the percentage of favorable ratings for the terrorists is generally low, it still represents large numbers of people—a deep reservoir of support.

The constellation of jihadist groups is not as meaningful as it appears to be. Competing for endorsements, al Qaeda and the Islamic State have attracted declarations of loyalty from local groups across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia and have established a host of affiliates, provinces, and jihadist footholds. This is growth by acquisition and branding. A lot of it is public relations. Many of these groups are the products of long-standing local grievances and conflicts that would continue if there were no al Qaeda or Islamic State. Some groups are organizational assertions that represent only a handful of militants. The militants share a banner but are, for the most part, focused on local quarrels rather than a global jihad, and most of their violence is directed at local regimes and populations. There is no central command. There are no joint operations. The groups operate autonomously. In many cases, their connections are tenuous, although, with time, they could evolve into something more connected.

⁴ Helene Cooper and Eric Schmitt, “ISIS Detainee’s Information Led to 2 U.S. Airstrikes, Officials Say,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2016.

⁵ The organization’s name transliterates from Arabic as al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-‘Iraq wa al-Sham (abbreviated as Da’ish or DAESH). In the West, it is commonly referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (both abbreviated as ISIS), or simply as the Islamic State. Arguments abound as to which is the most accurate translation, but here I refer to the group as the Islamic State.

⁶ See “Muslim Publics Share Concerns About Extremist Groups,” Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, September 10, 2013; and Jacob Poushter, “In Nations with Significant Muslim Populations, Much Disdain for ISIS,” Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, November 17, 2015.

Like all terrorists, jihadis can kill, destroy, disrupt, alarm, and oblige governments to divert vast resources to secure against their attacks, but terrorists still seem unable to translate their attacks into permanent political gain.

The Islamic State is losing territory, and as a quasi-state entity controlling land and people, it can be defeated. With coalition air support and other external assistance, government forces in Iraq and U.S.-backed Kurdish and Arab fighters in Syria have been able to retake territory held by the Islamic State. Progress is slow, though faster than many analysts initially anticipated. Meanwhile, al Qaeda Central's command has been reduced to exhorting others to fight.

The Islamic State has made very effective use of social media to reach a broader audience, although its advertisement of atrocity as evidence of its authenticity appears to have been a magnet for marginal and psychologically disturbed individuals. Jihadist ideology has become a conveyor of individual discontents.

Continuing calls on local terrorist supporters in the West to take action have thus far produced only a meager response. Measured against other recent terrorist campaigns, the level of violence has been low. During the eight years of the Algerian War, more than 5,000 people were killed in France.⁷ More than 3,600 died during the Irish Republican Army's terrorist campaign.⁸ More than 1,000 were killed during the Basque separatists' struggle in Spain.⁹ With larger volumes of homegrown terrorists and returning foreign fighters, Europe faces a greater threat than the United States does. Recent terrorist attacks there have also provoked a backlash, which right-wing extremists have exploited, raising the specter of civil strife.

In the United States, the number of homegrown terrorists remains a fraction of the number seen in Europe. All of the recent Islamic State-inspired attacks and plots uncovered in the United States have been the products of a single individual or a tiny conspiracy with no direct connections to any organization. Nonetheless, these attacks create alarm.

But Americans are safer now than they were on 9/11. In the 15 years since those attacks, jihadist terrorists have been able to kill fewer than 100 people in the United States. While every death is a needless tragedy, this is a far better result than many feared or expected immediately after 9/11. And more than half of those deaths were the result of the violence in an Orlando, Florida, nightclub in June 2016, which many analysts see more as a mass shooting by a disturbed killer than as a true terrorist attack. The Secretary of Homeland Security has warned that more Orlando-type terrorist attacks are possible, but even so, the loss from such events would be orders of magnitude below the prospects of another 9/11-scale attack.

⁷ This includes casualties from violence between Algerian militants inside France, as well as from terrorist attacks on French targets. See Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994.

⁸ Seamus Kelters, "Violence in the Troubles," BBC, February 2013.

⁹ According to the Global Terrorism Database, 1,047 known fatalities resulted from the Basque separatist struggle in Spain between December 1970 and September 2014. See National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, Global Terrorism Database, web tool, College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, June 2016.

Despite the difficulty of detecting lone offenders and tiny conspiracies, federal authorities and local police have uncovered and thwarted about 90 percent of the jihadist terrorist plots.¹⁰ Some, however, will succeed.

On the minus side, the targets of the American campaign have survived U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Al Qaeda has survived intense U.S.-led campaigns for 15 years, and now the Islamic State has survived them for two years. Al Qaeda and the Islamic State have been cornered, not crushed. No victory is final. These organizations have proven resilient and adaptive. They have morphed to meet new circumstances and exploit new opportunities, and they will continue to do so.

The United States cannot yet claim to have dented the determination of the jihadis to continue their armed struggle. They derive benefit from commitment, regardless of immediate outcomes, which they believe remain in God's hands. Furthermore, they believe that they will prevail in the long run because they are on the side of God and their enemies are not.

The jihadis have a powerful ideology that arouses extreme emotion and devotion. Observers cannot deny its appeal, especially to persons predisposed by other collective grievances or personal problems. The United States has not yet proved able to effectively combat this narrative, and, realistically, may not be able to do so. But on the plus side, the low numbers of U.S. casualties suggest that the ideology has gained little traction in America's Muslim communities. Personal crisis is the dominant attribute of America's jihadis.

The Taliban has been driven from power in Afghanistan, but it remains a formidable foe and will not be tamed. The continued deployment of U.S. forces will be necessary to prevent both the Taliban from regaining control of much of Afghanistan and al Qaeda from making a comeback by riding the Taliban's coattails.

The United States has come to realize that getting out of a conflict and region is difficult. American withdrawals in the wake of terrorist and military disasters in Lebanon and Somalia led to the perception by Osama bin Laden that the United States would fold easily if hit hard, and this perception encouraged the 9/11 attacks. What many regard as a premature withdrawal from Iraq and the abandonment of Libya following the overthrow of Qaddafi arguably contributed to the current bloody conflicts in those countries. Following what appeared to be the successful containment of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the United States turned its attention away from Yemen to other matters, only to see a comeback by that group. Does America's homeland security demand open-ended military engagements in the never-ending turbulence of North Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia?

The fighting in Syria and Iraq will go on for the foreseeable future. Foreign powers have much at stake, but they have conflicting agendas and cannot impose peace from the outside. For local belligerents, the contests have become existential.

Faced with loss of its territory, the Islamic State will not quit. A long insurgency is likely to follow. The leaders of the Islamic State fought clandestinely for years in Iraq and could go underground again to continue the struggle. They could relocate to another jihadist stronghold, creating a mobile Islamic State. Or they could try to carry out some sort of dramatic attack that

¹⁰ See Jenkins, 2016.

alters perceptions or changes the dynamics of the conflict. The declining Islamic State has become the launching pad of an international terrorist campaign.

Syria and Iraq will remain fragile states, arenas of international competition, and sources of regional instability and continued violence. Current partitions are likely to persist. National institutions have eroded. Power on the ground has shifted to militias under local or foreign control and to the rebel formations. Neither government can restore authority throughout its national territory. The Shia and Kurdish portions of Iraq and the Alawite-dominated bastion in western Syria may be economically viable, but the poorer and less-populated Sunni areas of both countries currently dominated by the rebels and the Islamic State could become persistent badlands.

The world will be dealing with the effluents of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq for years to come. The tens of thousands of foreign fighters who have joined the Islamic State and other jihadist groups have no future under Iraqi or Syrian government authority and cannot survive in an underground campaign. They will likely migrate to other jihadist formations, try to establish new jihadist fronts, or return home—some traumatized, some disillusioned, but some determined to continue their armed struggles. Again, the destruction of the Islamic State could bring about a spike in terrorist activity by its veterans worldwide.

Europe is particularly vulnerable for a variety of reasons, including continuing radicalization efforts that, until recently, have been left unattended for decades and that have produced large volumes of homegrown extremists and foreign fighters who are now returning; under-resourced intelligence services and police departments; porous borders coupled with persistent obstacles to information-sharing; and, as a consequence of recent events, a rise in xenophobic and extremist right-wing political movements.

Refugees will pose a long-term challenge to society and security. Syria's brutal counterinsurgency strategy has generated huge refugee flows. The refugees will not be able to return for the foreseeable future and are thus permanently displaced. However, given their volume, they also cannot be easily absorbed by neighboring countries with small populations and delicate sectarian balances. Migrants and at least some foreign fighters have exploited the refugee flow to Europe. Most of the refugees will build new homes, but the refugee flow includes a large proportion of single young men, always a problematic demographic and especially so coming from violent environments and having little education. These men will not easily find work or assimilate. They are the targets of radicalization.

The United States faces a multi-tiered threat. While the threat of large-scale attacks by terrorist teams infiltrating the country seems to have diminished, authorities still confront the problem of returning foreign fighters—although the numbers are far less than those in Europe, and returning American jihadis will not have a local underground to provide them with hideouts and assistance. The primary threat will come from the ability of al Qaeda and the Islamic State to inspire attacks by self-radicalized individuals, as well as emotionally disturbed persons seeking attention by associating themselves with a terrorist cause.

The United States is better organized and equipped to combat terrorism than it was on 9/11, but its citizens remain fearful. The United States' frightened, angry, and divided society remains the country's biggest vulnerability. Progress in degrading al Qaeda's capabilities or dismantling

the Islamic State is almost completely divorced from popular perceptions. Rather than appealing to traditional American values of courage, self-reliance, and sense of community, the current political system incentivizes stoking fear.

So, after 15 years, a lot has changed in the fight against terrorism, progress has been made, and Americans are safer. But the fight is not over yet. The threat continues.

Brian Michael Jenkins
Senior Adviser to the RAND President
Santa Monica Office

Education

M.A. in history, University of California, Los Angeles; B.A. in fine arts, University of California, Los Angeles

Brian Michael Jenkins is a senior adviser to the president of the RAND Corporation and author of numerous books, reports, and articles on terrorism-related topics, including *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* (2008, Prometheus Books). He formerly served as chair of the Political Science Department at RAND. On the occasion of the 10-year anniversary of 9/11, Jenkins initiated a RAND effort to take stock of America's policy reactions and give thoughtful consideration to future strategy. That effort is presented in *The Long Shadow of 9/11: America's Response to Terrorism* (Brian Michael Jenkins and John Paul Godges, eds., 2011).

Commissioned in the infantry, Jenkins became a paratrooper and a captain in the Green Berets. He is a decorated combat veteran, having served in the Seventh Special Forces Group in the Dominican Republic and with the Fifth Special Forces Group in Vietnam. He returned to Vietnam as a member of the Long Range Planning Task Group and received the Department of the Army's highest award for his service.

In 1996, President Clinton appointed Jenkins to the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security. From 1999 to 2000, he served as adviser to the National Commission on Terrorism and in 2000 was appointed to the U.S. Comptroller General's Advisory Board. He is a research associate at the Mineta Transportation Institute, where he directs the continuing research on protecting surface transportation against terrorist attacks.

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Witness name: Brian Jenkins

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

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Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	\$53,568,731	NDRI

2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	\$59,560,208	NDRI

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	\$63,759,734	NDRI

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2016

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2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
Please See Attachment			

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
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Contract/Payment	Foreign Government	Dollar Value	Subject of contract or payment
Contract	Commonwealth of Australia	\$1,521,072	Research
Contract	Jinan Water Resources Bureau – Peoples Republic of China	\$355,652	Research
Contract	Japan	\$207,700	Research
Contract	South Korea	\$224,040	Research
Contract	United Arab Emirates	\$3,155,000	Research
Contract	Kurdistan Regional Government	\$2,714,789	Research

FY15

Foreign Contract/Payment	Foreign Government	Dollar Value	Subject of contract or payment
Contract	Commonwealth of Australia	\$9,104,636	Research
Contract	Canada	\$17,624	Research
Contract	Japan	\$207,700	Research
Contract	South Korea	\$100,000	Research

FY14

Foreign Contract/Payment	Foreign Government	Dollar Value	Subject of contract or payment
Contract	Commonwealth of Australia	\$3,923,158	Research
Contract	Japan	\$190,000	Research
Contract	Instituto De Nutricion De Centra America y Panama	\$16,300	Research
Contract	Israel	\$59,175	Research
Contract	Kurdistan Regional Government	\$3,040,001	Research
Contract	Mongolia	\$750,000	Research

Prepared testimony to the House Armed Services Committee
15 Years after 9-11: The State of the Fight Against Islamic Terrorism

LTC Bryan C. Price, Ph.D.

September 21, 2016

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

I have been asked to assess and reflect on the state of our counterterrorism fight since 9-11, provide some lessons learned over the past 15 years, and identify gaps and opportunities that can help us moving forward. As an active duty officer, I should note that my testimony is based on my academic work and my personal and professional experiences. My testimony should not be taken to represent the views and opinions of the U.S. Military Academy, the Army, or the Department of Defense.

Congressional hearings like this provide a venue to critically analyze our counterterrorism efforts and in doing so, allow us to double-down on what we are doing well and identify ways to fix our mistakes. I can tell you that our enemies are doing the same. In 2008, U.S. forces captured a document produced by the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the precursor to the organization that today calls itself the Islamic State. At the time, ISI was suffering major setbacks and on the run, forced to retreat from major population centers and into the deserts in western and northwestern Iraq and eastern Syria. The captured document is about 50 pages in length and analyzes in impressive detail the mistakes the group had made up to that point and more importantly, how best to correct them in the future.¹ This is particularly telling for two major reasons. First, even though ISI was experiencing its darkest hours, it was still thinking and planning how to improve its tactics, techniques, and procedures in the future. Islamic State members and supporters are in this fight for the long-term, and it is important that we understand that. Second, it shows the group is a learning organization that does not rest on its laurels or meekly accept defeat; it invests in consistent improvement and learning from the mistakes of its predecessors.

Nature and evolution of the threat

The threat posed by jihadist terrorism has metastasized in ways few could have predicted after 9-11. Prior to 9-11, al-Qa`ida enjoyed a safe haven with the Taliban in Afghanistan with few constraints on their freedom of movement and ability to plan spectacular attacks. With the exception of a few other jihadist groups in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, the jihadist

¹ Harmony Document, NMEC-2007-612449, "An Analysis of the State of ISI," accessible at ctc.usma.edu.

landscape was largely dominated by al-Qa`ida and geographically centered in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The group succeeded in conducting three strategic attacks against the United States in a span of three years: the 1998 attacks on our East African embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; the attack in 2000 against the *U.S.S. Cole* in Yemen; and, of course, the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Today, the threat posed by jihadist terrorism is more geographically diffuse, decentralized, and unpredictable than it was on September 12, 2001. At the time, nobody could have predicted that the greatest terrorist threat to the United States 15 years later would not be al-Qa`ida, but its rival and once satellite group, the Islamic State. The span of jihadist influence now ranges from West Africa through the Levant to South and Southeast Asia, from Mali to Manila. In addition, attacks inspired and directed by the Islamic State by homegrown violent extremists and returning foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq threaten the security of the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. The Islamic State continues to hold territory in Syria and Iraq, while al-Qa`ida is one of the main players on the Syrian battlefield, resurgent in its old stomping grounds in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.² In addition to fending off spectacular 9-11-style attacks, the United States now must cope with a steady stream of less sophisticated attacks aimed at stoking fear and mobilizing more individuals to the cause.

Our national strategy documents for combating terrorism have conceptualized the threat in different ways over the years. The 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism declared that the “enemy is terrorism.”³ Three years later, the next counterterrorism strategy framed the principal enemy in a different fashion, this time as “a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals – and their state and non-state supporters.”⁴ The 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism featured yet another conceptualization of the threat. It contradicted previous strategies, making “it clear that [the United States was] not at war with the

² Bill Roggio, “U.S. Adds al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, Leader to Terrorism List,” *Long War Journal*, June 30, 2016.

³ White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Washington, D.C. (February 2003), p. 1.

⁴ White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Washington, D.C. (September 2006), p. 5.

tactic of terrorism” or an amorphous transnational movement. Instead, this strategy focused U.S. counterterrorism efforts against a specific organization – al-Qa`ida.⁵

As other scholars have articulated, terrorism is a tactic, so declaring the *tactic* of terrorism as the enemy provided a lack of clarity in terms of the ends we were seeking.⁶ Narrowing the focus in 2006 to a “transnational movement of extremist organizations” provided more specificity, but it gave too much credit to an amorphous, non-monolithic jihadist threat. Pinning the counterterrorism rose squarely on al-Qa`ida in 2011 provided more focus on the most dangerous organization, but it underestimated the fact that the terrorist threat is dynamic and evolving. In my opinion, that narrow definition ran the risk of downplaying new and emerging threats. The Islamic State is just the latest case in point.

What is the best way to conceptualize the threat moving forward? Since 9-11, the United States has conceptualized the conflict as a war – e.g. the war on terror; the war against violent extremism; and the war against al Qaeda, its adherents, and its affiliates. This is, after all, how the United States has conceptualized other major security threats in the past century, whether they were the Axis Powers or the Axis of Evil. The threat posed by jihadist terrorism, however, is different. First, despite the fear that terrorism can evoke, it is not an existential threat like the ones we faced in World War II or in the nuclear-primed Cold War. Second, notwithstanding our desire and capability of reducing the threat posed by these groups, victory in this fight against jihadism will not look like victory in previous wars. There will be no *U.S.S. Missouri*-like ceremony with groups like the Islamic State or al-Qa`ida unconditionally surrendering to coalition forces. Moving forward, unsettling as it may be, another way of conceptualizing the threat posed by jihadist terrorism would be not as a war, but as a chronic disease like cancer. In this light, the fight against radical jihadism is not a national security threat that can be solved, defeated, or vanquished, but one that is an inevitable facet of modern life that can be managed and contained, but never fully eliminated.

⁵ White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, Washington, D.C. (June 2011), pp. 2-3.

⁶ See, for example, Eugene Robinson, “A Team in Need of a Plan,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 2008, A21.

Successes

Before turning to the lessons learned over the past 15 years, it is important to acknowledge some important counterterrorism successes. The most important accomplishment, which cannot be overstated, is that U.S. counterterrorism efforts have prevented jihadists from successfully executing another strategic, large-scale attack against the homeland. Terrorist attacks like those that took place in Boston, Fort Hood, San Bernardino, and Orlando are certainly tragic, but they do not represent the threat to our security and way of life that the 9-11 attacks did.

Second, the post-9-11 era has seen a successful investment in important kinetic elements of our counterterrorism efforts. No other country can match the U.S.'s operational and intelligence capabilities to identify, track down, and remove terrorists from the battlefield. Such a success can be seen as a double-edged sword, as one could argue that our prowess in this area is one of the reasons policymakers have tended to conceptualize this conflict as a war, and why the military is routinely emphasized over other elements of national power in combating terrorism.

Third, U.S. counterterrorism has dramatically improved its non-kinetic tools to fight jihadist terrorism in other areas, including the tools of counter-threat finance and diplomatic sanctions that freeze terrorist assets and inhibit their ability to travel abroad.⁷ These tools have proven effective in weakening the infrastructure of terrorist groups and making it harder for them to take advantage of the benefits of globalization.

Finally, intergovernmental and intragovernmental counterterrorism coordination has improved significantly since 9-11. The government has taken positive steps toward breaking down organizational stovepipes in the counterterrorism fight, and information is shared more freely within the intelligence community. While better than it was, the challenge of working across deeply ingrained organizational cultures and bureaucratic politics is likely to remain a persistent issue. Additionally, a realization that the United States could not win this conflict unilaterally has led to enhanced cooperation and coordination with partner countries. Programs in security force assistance, building partner capacity, and intelligence sharing with key partners have become,

⁷ See, for example, Juan C. Zarate, *Treasury's War* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013).

and will continue to be, integral components of any U.S. counterterrorism strategy moving forward.

The critical question, then, is whether these improvements now make us safe from jihadist terrorism. The answer is not binary. These tools have undeniably made us *safer*, but Americans will likely never be completely *safe* from terrorism, at least for the foreseeable future. That said, we as a country can continue to mitigate the risk posed by terrorism by continuing to learn and evolve in response to the threat. With that in mind, the following section highlights a few of the lessons learned in the past 15 years that warrant consideration for improving U.S. counterterrorism efforts moving forward.

Lessons Learned

1. Understanding the importance of clearly defining our strategic objective(s)

In crafting any effective strategy, policymakers must identify the ends, ways, and means needed to achieve a particular objective. Strategic ends represent what one hopes to ultimately achieve. Strategic ways represent how one operates to achieve that goal, and the means are the resources one uses to execute the strategy. Perhaps the most important of these components are the ends. Without identifying ends that are achievable, realistic, and easy to understand, it really does not matter how great the ways and means are. As Sun Tzu said, “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”⁸

In my professional opinion, the attacks of 9-11 came as such a strategic surprise to the United States that, in our understandable urgency to respond quickly, we never really took the time to debate what our strategic ends in this conflict should be. Faced with a new and poorly understood threat, we collectively (government, academia, media, polity) focused more on debating the ways and means than on any strategic end in the fight against jihadism. Debates about our strategic ways and means were and remain commonplace, including arguments about the efficacy of preemptive strikes to stave off terrorist threats, the use of drones, detention and immigration policies, and non-kinetic programs to counter violent extremism. Yet there is very

⁸ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith, trans. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

little debate that addresses the most important questions for a counterterrorism strategy: what is our counterterrorism strategy designed to achieve? What does success look like? What does progress look like? Debating ways and means is important, but having a clear vision of our strategic end is even more important.

2. Understanding the importance of proper expectation management regarding our ability to combat the jihadist threat

The United States has faced several serious security challenges in its history, and it has always found a way to overcome them. Some may view this current conflict as being no different than fighting totalitarianism or communism, but it is different in important ways. Regardless, calling it a war carries with it certain implications. As my fellow panelist Brian Michael Jenkins wrote in the *CTC Sentinel*, it is likely that the “use of the term ‘war’ created unrealistic expectations” in the current conflict with jihadist terrorism.⁹ The United States has been focused on combating the threat since 9-11, spending massive amounts of blood and treasure in the process, yet some debate whether we are any closer to “winning” this conflict.¹⁰

The threat posed by jihadists to U.S. security and that of our allies will endure for the foreseeable future, and likely for several generations. Individual groups like al-Qa`ida and the Islamic State will ebb and flow.¹¹ They may be greatly weakened or marginalized, like al-Qa`ida was in 2011, but successor groups will undoubtedly emerge, especially if there is no change to the socio-political dynamics that foster this kind of political violence around the world. Unfortunately, as the United States and other nations have discovered, finding ways to change those dynamics effectively is extremely challenging.

Moving forward, policymakers may consider redefining our counterterrorism goals accordingly. For example, when the United States publicly identifies *defeat* of groups like al-Qa`ida or the Islamic State as its policy objective, and then fails to achieve this standard, it provides our

⁹ Brian Michael Jenkins, “Fifteen Years On: Where Are We in the War on Terror?” *CTC Sentinel* 9:9 (September 2016), pp 7-12.

¹⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does It Mean to Win?” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37:2 (2014), pp. 174-197; Philip H. Gordon, “Can the War on Terror Be Won?” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2007), pp. 53-66.

¹¹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “How al Qaeda Ends,” *International Security* 31:1 (Summer 2006), p. 48.

enemies with ammunition to recruit and fundraise. I believe that declaring *defeat* as the ultimate goal may appeal to the country's sense of pride and match the war paradigm that has been constructed, but every day the Islamic State or al-Qa'ida exists hurts America's credibility and strengthens that of its enemies.

We should be relentless in learning more about how to prevent attacks from occurring and improve our response to them when they inevitably occur, but the government plays an important role in creating realistic public expectations. No politician wants to appear weak on terrorism by publicly acknowledging that future terrorist attacks are inevitable, particularly in an open and free society, but they are inevitable. On the other hand, the public needs to understand that not every terrorist attack is a political failure, nor is it an existential threat to our national security. These subtleties are often lost in the public discourse, which leads to unwarranted fear, divisiveness, and knee-jerk decision-making.

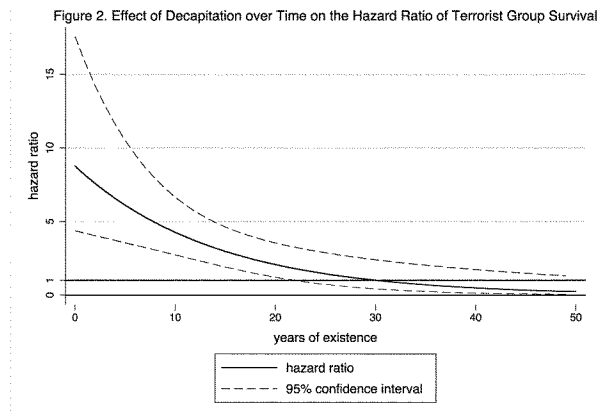
3. Making decapitation tactics a part of a broader strategy

One of the defining features of U.S. counterterrorism since 9-11 has been the military's ability to identify, track down, and target individual terrorists on the battlefield, a task that is often done by unmanned aerial systems (UAS). Decapitation tactics, especially those that result in the lethal targeting of individual terrorists, have been a controversial component of U.S. counterterrorism strategy for a number reasons.

In addition to making legal and constitutional arguments against the use of such strikes, as well as expressing the humanitarian concerns regarding collateral damage, critics of so-called decapitation strikes argue that they are ineffective and potentially counterproductive in our counterterrorism efforts.¹² They argue that killing terrorist leaders creates a martyr effect that increases recruiting and resources for the terrorist group, not to mention deep-seeded resentment towards the United States in the affected population.

¹² Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation," *Security Studies* 18:4 (2009).

In my own research on the subject, I focused on one of the many questions regarding this approach: does killing or capturing the group's leader affect the long-term survivability of the organization? The short answer is that it does. In an analysis of 207 groups from 1970-2008, killing or capturing the top terrorist leader significantly increased the mortality rate of terrorist groups.¹³ The long answer is that the efficacy of such decapitation efforts are nuanced. Timing matters. Terrorist groups that lose their leader to kill or capture in their first year of existence are more than eight times more likely to end than groups who have not been decapitated. If leadership decapitation occurs 10 years into the group's lifecycle, however, effect of decapitation is reduced by half. If decapitation occurs 20 years after the group has formed, then killing or capturing the leader may have no effect on the group's mortality (see figure below).¹⁴ Al-Qa'ida is well over 20 years old, and the organizational roots of the Islamic State date back to 2003, meaning that decapitation strikes against these groups will have less of an effect on their mortality rates than younger groups. It is also important to emphasize that few groups catastrophically collapse following decapitation. Only 30% of decapitated groups in my dataset ended within two years of losing their leader.¹⁵ Policymakers may ultimately decide that the benefits of these tactics outweigh their costs, but it is critical to recognize the tradeoffs involved.



¹³ Bryan C. Price, "Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism," *International Security* 36:4 (Spring 2012), pp. 9-46.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Price, "Targeting Top Terrorists," p. 43.

What does this mean for the future of targeted killings and those conducted by unmanned aerial systems? Regardless of where one stands in the various debates surrounding this tactic, there are several lessons we should learn from their use over the past 15 years.

UAS strikes are often the preferred counterterrorism tool for a number of reasons. Successful strikes provide tangible effects that both the terrorists and our citizens can see and measure. They provide time and maneuver space for the United States and its allies to employ other elements of national power, like diplomacy and governance-improving measures. They force terrorist groups to spend resources to protect their leaders and operational security. They are often the most lethal and precise methods counterterrorism officials can use without putting American servicemen and women in danger.

UAS strikes, however, have important limitations. They are not a silver-bullet solution to the terrorist problem. They are not sufficient by themselves to defeat highly capable groups like al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State. In my opinion, if we make UAS strikes a cornerstone of our counterterrorism strategy moving forward without seriously investing in other areas, we can expect to experience similar levels of terrorist violence, if not more. Another caveat to note is that these strikes have been traditionally conducted in remote regions like the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan or in failed or failing states like Yemen, Somalia, and Syria. It is hard to conceptualize how these strikes can be conducted against terrorists operating in fully functional states, urban areas, and mega-cities.

4. Acknowledging that the military is a part of any effective counterterrorism strategy, but it is only one part, and it may not be the most important part for long-term success

One of the most significant lessons we can learn from the past 15 years is that on its own, the military is a necessary but not a sufficient component in the fight against jihadist terrorism. I have had the privilege of briefing many of our nation's top counterterrorism officials for the past four years, including those tasked with leading forces at the proverbial tip of the counterterrorism spear. In these engagements, there has been one common refrain. It is best encapsulated in the

words of former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who said in 2008 that “we cannot kill or capture our way to victory” in the long-term campaign against terrorism.¹⁶

An oft-repeated critique of the war in Iraq was that the United States paid too little attention to what would happen after major hostilities ended.¹⁷ If media attention is used to evaluate where the emphasis resides in employing elements of national power, then critics could argue we may be making the same mistake in the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In other words, there is no shortage of debate over troop levels, rules of engagement, and military strategy, but very little discussion focuses on how the United States intends to shape political conditions on the ground once the Islamic State is pushed out of the territory that it now controls. In my opinion, recent history in Iraq is proof that failure to address these socio-political concerns can often result in other, potentially more capable jihadist groups entering the fray.

An emphasis on military solutions is also aided by the fact that scholarly work on other, non-kinetic means to combat jihadist terrorism has produced mixed results and few policy-relevant solutions. The pathways to radicalization are varied and complex, and efforts to find effective ways to identify at-risk segments of the population and interdict those who have become radicalized are problematic. With that said, more can be done by academics and policymakers to understand radicalization and ways to prevent it. There is not just a need for this type of work, but a demand for it. In his book *The Great War of Our Time*, former CIA Deputy Director and current CTC Senior Fellow Michael Morell wrote, “For every hour that I spent in the Situation Room talking about counter-radicalization, I spent a thousand hours talking about dealing with young men who had already become radicalized.”¹⁸

This ratio is not unique to the United States, but it is illustrative of the reactive rather than proactive approach many liberal democracies take in combating terrorism. While there will undoubtedly be ways to improve how we respond to and react to terrorists after they radicalize and become violent, we still have a long way to go in learning how to prevent individuals from

¹⁶ Ann Scott Tyson, “Gates Warns of Militarized Policy,” *Washington Post*, July 16, 2008.

¹⁷ See for example Daniel Byman, “An Autopsy of the Iraq Debacle: Policy Failure or a Bridge Too Far,” *Security Studies* 17 (2008), pp. 599-643.

¹⁸ Michael Morell, *The Great War of Our Time* (New York: Twelve, 2015), p. 319.

radicalizing, or to de-radicalize those who have already gone down that path. If there is not more attention given to the prevention side to jihadism, we will likely see little progress in our counterterrorism efforts.

5. Leveraging public-private partnerships in the war of ideas

Just as the United States cannot unilaterally defeat jihadist groups, the government is ill-equipped to unilaterally fight the war of ideas. The Islamic State recognized from the outset the importance of this domain, and they have devoted significant resources to a building a propaganda campaign that is unmatched by previous jihadist groups. The group is also adept at manipulating and taking advantage of the terms of use policies of popular communication platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, that private sector companies have created. The United States, on the other hand, has not been able to match the size, scope, and influence of the Islamic State in its counter-messaging campaign, a dynamic that has existed in our efforts to combat jihadism since 9-11. Commenting on this gap in October of 2001, Richard Holbrooke lamented, “how can a man in a cave [Usama bin Ladin] outcommunicate the world’s leading communications society?”¹⁹

It was not until a decade later that the United States stood up the Counterterrorism Strategic Communications Center (CSCC) in the State Department to compete overtly with jihadists online, and even then, critics argued it was undermanned, underfunded, and too bureaucratically hamstrung to make a serious difference. The establishment of the Global Engagement Center earlier this year was an attempt to address some of these limitations. Time will tell if it has more success than CSCC, but it faces similar challenges.

The first challenge is overcoming the credibility gap that the United States has in strategically communicating to Muslim populations around the world. U.S. government attempts to persuade jihadist fence-sitters that they are at risk of following a perverted interpretation of Islam typically fall on deaf ears. Additionally, it should not come as a surprise that prospective jihadists do not turn to the U.S. State Department for career advice.

¹⁹ Richard Holbrooke, “Get the Message Out,” *Washington Post*, October 28, 2001.

The second challenge is that the rules and regulations associated with government messaging and counter-messaging programs are not conducive to speed or creativity, which are both critical components of effectively competing in today's technology-driven society. Additionally, these efforts lag behind the private sector when it comes to cutting-edge technology. The result is a risk-averse, slow, and uninspiring approach to counter-messaging that does not incentivize creativity, experimentation, or risk-taking.

One fix for this is more public-private collaboration. The government is incentivized to fund such programs, but it does not have the credibility to be the primary messenger and it lacks the latest marketing and advertising capabilities. On the other hand, the private sector, to include non-governmental organizations, often has the credibility and the requisite competencies, but it is not financially incentivized to pursue such endeavors. A public-private collaboration seems to be a logical solution to this problem. To provide one relevant anecdote, in 2015 I asked Pete Favat, the creative force behind the spectacularly effective Truth® anti-smoking campaign, to speak at a counterterrorism conference about the war of ideas. When attendees saw the obvious parallels and similar challenges between advertising that attempts to make teenage smoking “uncool” and our counterterrorism challenge of producing messaging that can make jihad “uncool” in similar demographic audiences, a member asked Favat why he had not worked with the government before.²⁰ “Nobody ever asked me,” he said.

It could be argued that jihadist organizations may always enjoy the upper hand when it comes to their media campaigns, but future counterterrorism strategies should do more in leveraging public-private partnerships to improve how we fight in this domain.

6. Understanding the enemy and exposing their hypocrisy through their own words

Finally, another component that should be included in any counterterrorism strategy moving forward is a dedicated, robust, and systematic effort to understand jihadist groups using primary source materials. This includes more declassification of captured documents produced by jihadist groups after they have been exploited for their tactical and operational value. There are several

²⁰ Pete Favat and Bryan C. Price, “The Truth Campaign and the War of Ideas,” *CTC Sentinel* 8:7 (July 2015), pp. 9-12

organizations that study such materials and produce research that not only helps policymakers understand the fight and make better policy, but helps educate the public as well.

Despite the best attempts by al-Qa`ida and the Islamic State to portray their organizations and their followers as being morally pure and pious, internal documents produced by these groups reveal their true nature. These documents uncover the hypocrisy that pervades these organizations by exposing rampant corruption, bureaucratic infighting, and backroom deals that show leaders routinely compromise their jihadi values.

The Combating Terrorism Center's Harmony Program serves as one successful model. The Harmony Program is a collaborative effort between the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and U.S. Special Operations Command that declassifies captured battlefield documents and makes them publicly available so that researchers can analyze them. This type of crowd-sourcing expands the capabilities of the government by attracting scholars from all over the world, and it ultimately increases our collective understanding of jihadist groups, their histories, and trajectories. This type of research also attracts the attention of our enemies, including top terrorist leaders. In a letter obtained during the Abbottabad raid and subsequently released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Usama bin Laden wrote, "Please send all that is issued by the combating terrorism center of the American military."²¹

²¹ <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ubl/english2/Request%20for%20Documents%20from%20CTC.pdf>

Lieutenant Colonel Bryan Price

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Witness name: Bryan C. Price

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☒ Individual

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Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Mweene Research for Defense Education Faculty (R-DEF)	Department of Defense - OSD Policy	\$79,503	Research on FTO and 13224 designations

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

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2016

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment

2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LANGEVIN

Mr. LANGEVIN. As we look back to the state of our national security 15 years ago, I believe that we are safer from the type of orchestrated attack that shocked us all on September 11, 2001. However, I am concerned that we have not plugged some of the security gaps that still threaten us today—gaps that led to the attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando, for example—and I worry that the progress of those who wish to do us harm has outpaced our ability to defend against nontraditional threats. Do you believe that we as a government and as a nation have adjusted over the past 15 years—militarily, politically, and mentally—so that we can make more rational and effective decisions to mitigate the evolving threats before us?

Mr. JEFFREY. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. LANGEVIN. As we look back to the state of our national security 15 years ago, I believe that we are safer from the type of orchestrated attack that shocked us all on September 11, 2001. However, I am concerned that we have not plugged some of the security gaps that still threaten us today—gaps that led to the attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando, for example—and I worry that the progress of those who wish to do us harm has outpaced our ability to defend against nontraditional threats. Do you believe that we as a government and as a nation have adjusted over the past 15 years—militarily, politically, and mentally—so that we can make more rational and effective decisions to mitigate the evolving threats before us?

Mr. JENKINS. I would agree with you that the United States is safer now from the type of orchestrated terrorist attack that we suffered on September 11, 2001. Over the past 15 years, through its military and intelligence efforts, the United States has made progress both in degrading al Qaeda's operational capabilities and in creating a more hostile operating environment for terrorists. U.S. authorities have a much greater chance now of detecting and disrupting terrorist plots directed from abroad.

The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) created new challenges, both in the Middle East and domestically, but the current military campaigns in Iraq and Syria are reducing ISIL's territory and its operational capabilities. However, we have to anticipate that the defeat of ISIL on the ground could lead to a surge in terrorist attacks worldwide as foreign fighters scatter to other jihadist fronts or bring their violence home. We also have to recognize that the fall of ISIL does not mean the end of the contest—it will move underground, with perhaps greater incentive to export violence. The terrorist threat will continue.

While further improvements can still be made in domestic intelligence, the United States has expanded its collection effort and has improved information-sharing within the federal government and between the federal government and state and local authorities. As a result, authorities have uncovered and thwarted more than 80 percent of the known domestic terrorist plots inspired from abroad since 2001.¹ Without

¹ Counting terrorist plots can be tricky. In my own research, I have identified more than 80 cases in which individuals in the United States, generally motivated by jihadist ideology, plotted terrorist attacks. These were in various states of maturity from half-baked ideas to actual attacks. An earlier list of these cases can be in Brian Michael Jenkins, *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies: Radicalization and Recruitment to Jihadist Terrorism in the United States since 9/11*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2011.

The Heritage Foundation has published a chronology of 60 jihadist terrorist plots to carry out attacks in the United States since 9/11. Jessica Zuckerman, Steven Bucci, and James J. Carafano, *60 Terrorist Plots since 9/11: Continued Lessons in Counterterrorism*. Washington DC: The Heritage Foundation, 2013. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/07/60-terrorist-plots-since-911-continued-lessons-in-domestic-counterterrorism>. See also: David Inserra, "An Interactive Timeline of Islamist Terror Plots since 9/11." *TheDailySignal*, September 10, 2015. As of December 31, 2016, the list totals 91 cases. <http://dailysignal.com/2015/09/10/a-timeline-of-73-islamist-terror-plots-since-911/>.

Obviously, these lists overlap. I would exclude from the Heritage chronology attempts like that of the Shoe bomber, the Underwear Bomber and other plots against U.S.-bound aircraft or trains where the plotting was done outside of the United States along with several other cases. Ultimately, these are judgment calls. Adding or excluding a case does not change the overall remarkable record of federal and local investigators in thwarting terrorist plots. With

Continued

asserting that every single one of these plots would have led to a deadly attack had authorities not intervened, it is nonetheless a remarkable achievement.

One hundred percent prevention is unrealistic. Further terrorist attacks will occur. It is important to keep in mind that the death toll from those that have occurred thus far is only a tiny fraction of the total volume of ordinary criminal violence in the United States. And, together, just two jihadist terrorist attacks (in San Bernardino and Orlando) account for 71 percent of the total number of fatalities caused by such attacks in the United States since 9/11.²

You describe these in your question as “nontraditional threats,” and in a way, these attacks—along with others, like the shooting in Chattanooga—depart from the previously presumed patterns of radicalization.

Like most of the previous plots, the attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando involved a single individual or a tiny conspiracy (a husband and wife). The perpetrators of those attacks claimed allegiance to ISIL, which, in turn, claimed responsibility but played no active role beyond inspiration. Authorities also uncovered al Qaeda propaganda, suggesting that the specific group affiliation was not very important to the killers.

The biographies of the Chattanooga and Orlando shooters reveal mental health issues, records of substance abuse, histories of aggression—these were deeply troubled individuals. Violent jihadist ideology reinforced, channeled, and justified their aggressive tendencies but ought not to be seen as the sole source of their inspiration. A complex skein of motives propelled the shooters to action, and it is difficult to weight the contribution of each. Even without a jihadist accelerant, these shooters still might have killed.

Such attacks are not easily prevented. Violent ideologies will continue to inspire violent behavior. Counter-radicalization programs are worth considering, as long as they don’t lead to government attempts to patrol ideologies and dictate personal beliefs. And as we have often seen in the United States, violent behavior may occur without ideological reinforcement. The mental health problems that were present in some of the recent terrorist attacks indicate that, in a sense, the terrorists are not that far from the other shooters who have appeared in our society.

Intelligence agencies are never omniscient, even in police states. Firearms are available, and crude explosive devices can be improvised. Instructions are available on the Internet, but decades ago, similar instruction manuals were readily available at any library or bookstore, and terrorists then built better bombs than they do now.

Have we as a government and as a nation adjusted over the past 15 years—militarily, politically, and mentally—so that we can make more rational and effective decisions to mitigate the evolving threats?

I believe we have, militarily and politically. Mentally, in my view, we have not. American society is obsessed with security. Our only question is, Are we safer now? That is the perspective of victimhood. It reflects fear and apprehension. According to recent public opinion polls³, Americans today fear terrorist attacks as much as they did immediately after 9/11. Yet the data show that the terrorist threat has been diminished, if not eliminated, and the level of risk to individual citizens is minuscule.

We have to accept that countering terrorism will be an enduring task, but we need not cower in fear of defeat or domination by Islamic radicals. Instead of fueling fear or overpromising security, we should call upon the traditional American attributes of being tough-minded, showing true grit, and sticking together in the face of threats. Our common defense will come, as it always has, from our collective courage.

Mr. LANGEVIN. As we look back to the state of our national security 15 years ago, I believe that we are safer from the type of orchestrated attack that shocked us all on September 11, 2001. However, I am concerned that we have not plugged some of the security gaps that still threaten us today—gaps that led to the attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando, for example—and I worry that the progress of those who wish to do us harm has outpaced our ability to defend against nontraditional threats. Do you believe that we as a government and as a nation have adjusted over

these exclusions, my own list runs to 82 jihadist plots. Of these, 69 (or 84 percent) were uncovered and thwarted by the authorities. In the remaining 14 cases, the plotters were able to carry out an attempt, although these attempts were not all successful. Six of the attacks resulted in fatalities, not counting the attacker. Seven cases resulted in injuries. In the remaining case, the plotter’s bomb failed to explode.

²Ibid. The attacks included above resulted in a total of 89 fatalities; 49 were killed in the Orlando attack and 14 in San Bernardino—a total of 63 (or 70.8 percent of the total).

³“Terrorism in the United States,” Gallup, 2016.

the past 15 years—militarily, politically, and mentally—so that we can make more rational and effective decisions to mitigate the evolving threats before us?

Colonel PRICE. Unfortunately, as long as we choose to live in a free society where civil liberties like free speech and freedom from illegal searches and seizures exist, terrorists will always have an upper hand. With that said, I believe our government has made great strides over the past 15 years to improve our ability to mitigate these nontraditional threats. Although it is always possible to improve how we collect, analyze, and act on intelligence and employ military means to mitigate the threat, the two largest growth areas for improving our counterterrorism efforts, in my opinion, lie in governance and public resilience. Speaking to the former, the same socio-political dynamics which helped give rise to the resurgence of the Islamic State and other jihadists groups in the region are very much still in play. One of the critical lessons learned over the past 15 years, in my opinion, is that our (e.g. U.S. and the West more broadly) ability to affect those socio-political dynamics in other countries has been and continues to be significantly limited. Additionally, the government can do more to educate the public on the terrorist threat currently facing the United States today. If our civil liberties are to remain status quo, we can reasonably expect to see more low-level, unsophisticated attacks conducted by those inspired by jihadist narratives, such as the attacks in San Bernardino, Orlando, New Jersey/New York, and more recently, Ohio State in the months and years ahead. In addition to investing more in countering violent extremism (CVE) programs, the government should invest in ways the United States can assist other countries in the region to offer more credible and alternative government structures than that of the Islamic State. Rhetoric is not enough. Improvements to our military CT efforts will only be seen on the margins, while improvements in governance and public resiliency should be major growth areas for U.S. CT moving forward. While we are safer from another catastrophic attack like the one we suffered on 9/11, due in large part to the improvements we have made across the board in our counterterrorism efforts, we are certainly not safe from the jihadist threat. I would not agree with the statement that our enemies have outpaced our ability to defend against nontraditional threats. I would offer, however, that our constitutional rights make it harder to defend against terrorism, a point that I do not believe is articulated very well to the public.

