

# ALLIES UNDER ATTACK: THE TERRORIST THREAT TO EUROPE

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## JOINT HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, AND EMERGING THREATS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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## **ALLIES UNDER ATTACK: THE TERRORIST THREAT TO EUROPE**

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**TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2017**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE  
AND  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, AND EMERGING THREATS,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 2:00 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ted Poe (chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade) presiding.

Mr. POE. The subcommittees will come to order. Without objection, all members will have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules. At this time I will make my opening statement.

Over the past 3 months, three deadly terrorist attacks have struck the United Kingdom and an additional five other plots were thwarted. These were just the latest in a wave of deadly terrorist attacks that have swept Europe since 2014. In 3 years, there have been more than 36 attacks across Western Europe killing nearly 400 people including a number of Americans. The number of potential plots has skyrocketed, posing a serious challenge to European authorities. According to British authorities they are investigating as many as 23,000 suspected and 500 potential plots.

While security services have to be lucky all of the time to protect our freedom, the terrorists just have to get lucky once to threaten our sense of safety. Terrorists are also no longer focusing on big sophisticated attacks. Everyday items such as kitchen knives and delivery trucks are now used as tools of terror. The evil is directed to anyone, be it the French police strolling the streets of Paris or children and their families exiting a concert in Manchester. They have struck bystanders in the heart of European capitals and targeted symbols of Europe's rich culture. They have also struck small towns—where they killed priests, imams—also struck rural communities.

To many, this challenge seems impossible. How can we stop such relentless murder? The first step is not giving in to defeatism. We cannot accept this terror as the new norm. Some people unfortunately are accepting terror as a way of life. We also cannot write this off as a European problem.

The terrorists want to destroy shared values and our way of life. They want to kill Americans as much as Europeans and we must stand together with Europe and fight this battle together. Frankly, our European partners have put up with dangerous extremism for far too long.

Groups openly advocating Islamic law calling for the end of democracy and supporting a brand of Islam shared by ISIS operate freely across the European continent. These groups are breeding grounds for extremism and ground zero for terrorist recruitment. We must not allow our Western values to be exploited by those who seek to destroy those values, and we must not allow the technology borne of our free and enterprising societies to be exploited for murder by terrorist groups.

Terrorists today use social media and apps to spread their hate, to fundraise, to recruit, and to advise untrained supporters how to carry out murder. They even offer plots on how to build bombs on social media. We must fight the terrorists both on the battlefield and online. Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook have taken some steps to shut down extremist accounts. We applaud those efforts and stand ready to assist them to do more. Others need to do a lot more, specifically Telegram, which has been described as the app of choice for jihadists, and is one of the services doing not near enough. If we seriously want to defeat terrorism, we will have to bring down, bring the fight to cyberspace.

Last year, I introduced the Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act which requires a strategy to get terrorists offline. The bill eventually became law as part of the Department of State Authorities Act, and we still are waiting for the administration to provide this critical strategy because lives are at stake.

Additionally, we must keep the vital intelligence sharing channels with our allies open. Since ISIS made its rapid advance across the Middle East in 2014, a concerning amount of Westerners have made their way to the terrorist battlefields. This is especially true in Europe. As many as 5,000 Europeans have traveled to Iraq and Syria. Now that ISIS is losing on the battlefield, many of these foreign fighters may want to bring the fight back home and kill people where they originated from.

A recent report on jihadist attacks in the West says that 73 percent of attackers are citizens of the country they are attacking, and as many as 82 percent of attackers have been previously flagged by law enforcement authorities. Sharing intelligence will help us to spot these individuals returning from battlefields. Intelligence sharing can only be useful if we protect our borders from these individuals.

One of the London Bridge terrorists earlier this month was allowed to enter the United Kingdom despite being put on a security watch list. If someone has been flagged for terrorism they should not be able to enter another country until that case has been closed. What is the purpose of placing someone on a watch list if that person is able to travel freely?

Vigilance is more critical today than ever before. The terrorists will exploit our values and loopholes to maximize death, fear, and terror. We must stand together and fight this threat with our European allies because a threat to one is really a threat to all. And



I will recognize the ranking member, Mr. Keating from Massachusetts, for his opening statement.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you, Chairman Poe and Chairman Rohrabacher, members, and Ranking Member Meeks, and thank you witnesses for being here. Chairman Poe and I, as well as other members of our subcommittees, have introduced resolutions regarding terrorist attacks when they have been carried out against our European allies including countries that stood with us in honoring their Article 5 commitments under our NATO alliance. We stand with them in solidarity of this recent and all too frequent loss of innocent lives in their countries.

We are convening this hearing because understanding how to address this threat to our allies is not only an issue related to their security and our own, but also an arena where there is an incredible opportunity to learn from and collaborate with our European partners. Europe faces diverse and significant challenges in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

At the country level, the landscape is unique to each country with foreign fighter travel posing a significantly greater threat for some, whereas for others the individuals carrying out these attacks were radicalized without ever leaving their country. At the regional level, our allies' commitments to open borders within the EU proved to be a challenging aspect of European integration within the context of the fight against terrorism.

However, I have seen firsthand how member states and EU institutions have taken this threat seriously and how they have been working diligently to improve their collaboration around tracking individuals who may have been radicalized and in identifying the best ways to tackle this threat. They have also experimented with different models for rooting out and preventing extremism and for dealing with foreign fighters returning home from ISIL-held areas.

Some models have relied heavily on civil society organizations and communities themselves and in investing in productive collaboration between them and law enforcement. Some have focused on inclusive strategies to address extremism by working closely with the women in these communities and with religious leaders. Others have tried to address the profound threat of radicalization in prisons, where one strategy to imprison and therefore remove the threat posed by those who travel abroad to support ISIL and other terrorist organizations backfired, and instead exacerbated that threat.

They are also exploring different ways to remove extremist content online that is used to recruit vulnerable individuals to engage in terrorist activity and to take down terrorist financing and money laundering schemes that make it possible for ISIL and others to fund the operations that target innocent civilians in these brutal attacks.

As we work here in Congress and with agencies in the executive branch to make sure we are nimble and effective in countering terrorist threats here and threats to our allies abroad, we can learn a lot from the efforts of our European friends. So today I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about what we can learn from Europe and their experiences with terrorism and the efforts to combat it, as well as what we can do better here in the United States

to work with our European partners to eradicate the threat of terrorism here at home and abroad. I want to thank the witnesses for being here and I yield back.

Mr. POE. And I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts. The Chair will now recognize Chairman Dana Rohrabacher from California, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats, for his opening remarks.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Good afternoon and thank you, Mr.—I always want to call him Judge Poe.

Mr. POE. You should.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Your Honor, thank you very much for holding this hearing jointly with the Europe and Eurasia Subcommittee which I am the chairman of, so thank you to the witnesses as well.

Our partners and our allies in Europe have suffered terribly at the hands of violent Islamic terrorists. We can say that. For a long time our Federal Government didn't seem to be able to say that. The latest outbursts of violence in the United Kingdom have been shocking to all of us. The resilience of the British people, however, is inspiring and reminds me of why America is fortunate to call the British people our friends.

This hearing serves as one more example of our trans-Atlantic solidarity and our commitment to confront and destroy evil forces in this world. These same forces seek to brutally murder innocent people in order to terrorize the people of the world into submission to their fanatic brand of Islam. While our strength and will remains consistent, the tactics and methods of extremist Islamicists continue to evolve.

As our police and security services have been foiling elaborate plots and breaking terrorist networks, ISIL and other terrorist organizations created new kinds of plots that require more ingenuity and more flexibility to counter. Such insidious methods are hard for any security service to thwart. As we see today, police forces in Europe are being especially challenged.

Large migrant populations, some of which have remained famously unintegrated into their new country, present a perplexing challenge that pits humanitarian impulses to try to help poor refugees against the necessity of protecting one's own populations. To some extent, these domestic issues are the ones that European citizens and European governments will have to work out to their own satisfaction and find a balance between these humanitarian impulses and these ideas of protecting their society.

However, we Americans must stand in solidarity against what evil doers do, against those evil doers who murder vulnerable populations to achieve their ends. I look forward to learning from the witnesses today on how the United States might be able to lend a hand to our European friends that are under attack and understand also the threat that faces us.

And one last point that I would like to add into the discussion and that is, I had the pleasure of actually going after one terrorist attack in Boston with my ranking member at the time, and we were there in order to see if there could be cooperation between Russia and the United States in dealing with the terrorist threat. I would say that when we left, I was very satisfied that the Russian Government was willing to work with us and they actually

gave us information at that time which was very valuable in analyzing what had happened in this massacre of people at the Boston Marathon.

And with that said, since that time our relations with Russia have gone down so dramatically that it has hindered us from working together with the Russians to defeat this threat to the planet. This is a threat, we are talking about radical Islamic terrorism, is a threat to every good person on the planet whether whatever country they come from.

And let me just note I am interested in hearing our witnesses to see if there is something if you believe that working with Russia in trying to thwart radical Islamic terrorism is something that should be on our to-do list. So with that said, thank you for being with us today, I look forward to hearing your testimony. And I especially want to thank Judge Poe for calling this hearing and letting my subcommittee participate.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman from California. The Chair recognizes the ranking member on the Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats Subcommittee, Mr. Meeks from New York, for his opening statement.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Chairman Poe and Chairman Rohrabacher, for calling this hearing to address the growing threat to come to our—that is coming and that is with our allies in Europe, terrorism.

Let me just point out, it is not only a threat to our allies in Europe, however, it is a threat to those outside of NATO as well. It is a threat to our free democratic system in this sense and we need our allies together. In fact, we had a meeting today with the secretary general of the U.N. When asked what was his number one fear was, it was the international aspect. He stated it was the international aspect of terrorism and how they can try to come together to create a global terrorist threat.

So it is extremely timely and I think important to appreciate the effort to signal that this problem, you know, that we have specifically for our European allies, because they are asking what are we thinking and how can we work together. It is especially important when we find that our President has found it difficult at times to talk about the importance of such alliances, you know, because as Mr. Keating has indicated, after 9/11 that is the only time when Article 5 was triggered.

So I would hope that we speak with one voice in regards to our President not sending conflicting messages out about NATO and the EU. In fact, it was disturbing when I saw the new PEW polling shows how drastically confidence in the United States President has eroded around the world, not just in Europe, and a fractured trans-Atlantic alliance allows more space for terrorists to recruit and act both in Europe and here at home.

Terrorism in Europe is a multifaceted threat that while credible and deadly in some countries has proven to be more nuanced in others. Most recently in the United Kingdom and France, for example, we witnessed the barrage of coordinated and other lone wolf attacks. However, in Central Europe, governing politicians point to welcoming refugee policies in other European countries as a leading contributor to terrorism in order to push their agenda of

stronger border control. In fact, you have to go all the way to Russia to find similar examples of terror in Eastern Europe.

But in Turkey, another NATO ally that has been under attack by terrorists have pummeled cities across the country, but seemingly we see less attention for doing so. So this brings me to my first point of clarification, threat perception.

Politicians on all sides and the media are attracted to shocking stories of terror in Europe. These acts have taken center stage with the help of CCTV and cell phones that can immediately transmit horrifying videos across the world. In this sense, advanced technology has made the terrorized aspect of terrorism a lot easier and also something that we must focus on because the threat is very real.

Foreign fighters from Western Europe, the Balkans, and Russia will return home from Syria having perhaps become more radicalized in their quest for glory. Some may return home disheartened, giving our authorities an easier opportunity to learn more about the attraction. And we have got to figure out the differences too so that we can make sure it is to our advantage.

One key aspect to preventing radicalization in the first place, which is something that we should look at also, is understanding the drivers that push a young man or woman into such radical territory. Thankfully, we have best-practice examples that show us there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that the problem is evolving.

Italy, a country with thousands of migrants and refugees arriving on its shores, is able to accept them in a humane manner, discern the proper status for the people, and move the process along. The process is by no means perfect, yet the help of Frontex and Europol and international humanitarian organizations are absolutely essential.

And the American story can be of use here. I believe that despite our bumps and bruises we can help European nations in integrating communities into their societies. On paper European states may be all-inclusive, but this often differs in practice which it does as well here in the United States. As a result, some communities are forgotten or isolated and susceptible to radicalization.

So we have got to focus on what we can do to try to prevent them from being radicalized. I look forward to engaging with our witnesses to discuss how the U.S. can learn from and help our European allies who are under attack. And I thank you and I yield back.

Mr. POE. And I thank the gentleman from New York.

Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, extraneous materials for the record subject to the length limitation in the rules. And, without objection, all witnesses' prepared statements will be made part of this record. I ask that each witness keep your presentation to no more than 5 minutes. If you see a red light come up in front of you that means stop.

I will introduce each witness and give them time for their opening statements. Mr. Seamus Hughes is the deputy director of the program on extremism at George Washington University. He is an expert on terrorism, homegrown violent extremism, and countering violent extremism.

Mr. Robin Simcox is the Margaret Thatcher fellow at the Heritage Foundation's Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom. He specializes in counterterrorism and national security policy.

Dr. R. Kim Cragin is the senior research fellow for counterterrorism at the National Defense University. She recently left a position as a political scientist at the Rand Corporation and also has taught at Georgetown University and the University of Maryland.

Ms. Georgia Holmer is the director of CVE at the United States Institute of Peace where she oversees a broad portfolio of CVE and rule of law related subjects and projects and research. She chairs the USIP working group on Counter Violent Extremism.

And, Mr. Hughes, we will start with you. You have 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MR. SEAMUS HUGHES, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
PROGRAM ON EXTREMISM, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

Mr. HUGHES. Thank you. Chairmen, ranking members, distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege to be invited to speak to you today. Europe is facing a sustained threat from the Islamic State. It is estimated more than 5,000 Europeans have traveled to Syria to join ISIS. The percentage of European foreign fighters who have returned to their countries of departure is estimated as high as 30 percent.

In the United States, some 250 Americans have traveled or attempted to travel to ISIS controlled territory. Of the 250, the Program on Extremism has identified more than 60 U.S.-based individuals who successfully migrated to Syria. There is not a typical profile of an American or European ISIS recruit. They vary in socioeconomic background, age, gender, location, and the degree of religiosity.

Until recently, ISIS operated a relative safe haven from which they could plan attacks. Despite recent territorial losses, it continues to maintain a cadre of sympathizers who feel an obligation to help the caliphate. This is one of the main factors that helps explain the wave of attacks, both thwarted and successful, that have hit Europe and the United States in recent months.

Since 2014, we have identified 51 attacks in Europe and North America. The vast majority of the perpetrators were citizens of the country in which they committed the attack. Only 5 percent of those who carried out the attacks were refugees or asylum seekers. Most had a prior criminal past. Less than 10 percent were directly ordered by ISIS to commit the attacks.

In most cases, the attackers were ISIS-inspired or had some touchpoint but no explicit direction. About 20 percent of the attackers were returning foreign fighters, but those that did commit those attacks were more lethal in their attacks. The majority of the perpetrators who pledge allegiance to ISIS before their attacks and after their attack, ISIS took credit for about 40 percent of them.

France has experienced the highest number of attacks at 17, followed closely and perhaps surprisingly by the United States with 16 attacks. Attacks in the U.S. tend to be significantly more unstructured and spontaneous than Europe even though some of

them, Orlando and San Bernardino being good examples, have been no less deadly.

According to Europol, there have been 395 jihadist-related arrests in 2014, 687 in 2015, and 718 in 2016. Numbers are much lower in the United States where 18 individuals were arrested for terrorism-related activities in 2014, 75 in 2015, which was a banner year for us, and just 36 in 2016. Unlike Europe, the United States does not seem to possess extensive homegrown militant organizations that provide in-person ideological or logistical support to individuals drawn to ISIS.

Jihadist propaganda has been and it continues to be easily accessible through various online platforms for the last 10 years. It has played a role in radicalizing Westerners. Now with the advent of numerous social media applications, a would-be recruit can access real-time support and have a stronger sense that they are part of a wider network.

An important dynamic that is at play right now is ISIS has systematically employed what we call ISIS virtual entrepreneurs who use social media to connect people in the West. These are individuals in Raqqa, about six to eight English language folks that are reaching out to Americans and Europeans, individuals like Junaid Hussain, a British citizen. They were involved in at least 21 percent of domestic plots in the U.S. During that same time period, 19 of 38 ISIS-linked plots in Europe involved some form of online instruction.

Technology companies have addressed ISIS online activities in two ways, content based regulation and counter messaging. Although well meaning, the current approaches by Twitter, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, to name a few, may not necessarily address the new types of encrypted channels on platforms like the chairman mentioned, Telegram, now commonly frequented by violent extremists.

And even though online radicalization phenomenon receives a lot of attention, offline dynamics still matter a great deal. That one-on-one human interaction still matters. Perhaps more than in the U.S., physical networks in Europe remain of significant importance.

Finally, it is important to note that far right movements in Europe have taken advantage of the recent wave of ISIS-inspired attacks in Europe to mobilize old and new followers. These groups tend to ignore distinctions between Islam, Islamism, and jihadism, seeing all Muslims as a threat. It has triggered indiscriminate attacks against innocent Muslim communities.

We have seen how both extreme movements, jihadists and extreme far right, have fed off of each other and used this to assist in their recruitment efforts. This pervasive dynamic of reciprocal radicalization between jihadists and far right extremists is a troubling trend that needs to be monitored. Thank you for an opportunity to testify before you. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hughes follows:]

# Program on Extremism

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## **Allies Under Attack: The Terrorist Threat to Europe**

Written testimony of:

**Seamus Hughes**  
**Deputy Director, Program on Extremism**  
**The George Washington University**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee**

June 27, 2017

Chairmen, Ranking Members, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be invited to speak on the threat international terrorism poses to Europe and the United States.

### **Overview of Threat in Europe and America**

Europe is facing a sustained and unprecedented threat from Islamic State (IS) as a group and from its sympathizers. It is estimated that more than 5,000 Europeans traveled to Syria to join IS. A recent study places the percentage of European foreign fighters who have returned to the countries of their departures as high as 30%.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, some 250 Americans have traveled *or attempted* to travel to Syria and Iraq. Of the 250, the Program on Extremism has identified more than 60 U.S.-based individuals who successfully migrated to Syria. Through interviews with small numbers of returnees, we have learned about the sophisticated bureaucratic nature of the Islamic State.<sup>2</sup>

One American militant told us of his experience in the Islamic State, which started with three weeks of religious training in a IS “sharia camp”, followed by three weeks of military training. A highly efficient and structured entity, IS required him to fill out detailed Microsoft Access questionnaires that allowed them to make decisions about his placement in the organization. The questionnaire asked for details which included general information such as his name, family background and blood type. The form asked the applicant to describe his prior work history and a job he would have liked to have in the Islamic State.<sup>3</sup> Should he have chosen to become a frontline soldier or suicide bomber, he was asked to note his next of kin, thereby ensuring notification of his death.

The American’s experience matches up with the accounts of European foreign fighters who have revealed the same ritualistic path into the Islamic State. Further details about the intake process are just as interesting; foreign fighters are separated, sometimes self-selected, into groups based on their native language. If a Westerner showed an interest in military operations, he would be allowed into what one American returnee described to us as “commando camps.” The commando camp provided the recruits with additional military training.

Another returnee explained how an IS wing focused on external plotting would encourage enrollment by making detailed presentations to Westerners to educate and encourage them to redirect their efforts from IS’ “nation building” efforts in Syria and Iraq to return to their home countries. The external plotting wing reportedly told foreign fighters from Western countries that they could better serve the Caliphate by carrying out attacks in their respective countries.

Until recently, IS operated a relative safe haven from which it could plot and plan attacks. Despite its recent territorial losses, it continues to maintain a cadre of sympathizers who feel an

<sup>1</sup> Boutin, Berenice, Gregory Chauzal, Jessica Dorsey, Marjolein Jegerings, Christophe Paulussen, Johanna Pohl, Alastair Reed, and Sofia Zavagli. 2016. “The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies.” Eds. Bibi Van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann. ICCT Research Paper. The Hague, Netherlands: International Centre for Counterterrorism- The Hague. [https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report\\_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU\\_1-April-2016\\_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf](https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Report_Foreign-Fighters-Phenomenon-in-the-EU_1-April-2016_including-AnnexesLinks.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Author’s ongoing research and interviews conducted with the Program’s Research Director, Dr. Alexander Mcleagrou-Hitchens.

<sup>3</sup> Two examples of these forms can be found in the trial materials from USA v. Mohammad Jamal Khweis.



obligation to help the beleaguered Caliphate. This is one of the main factors that explain the wave of attacks, both thwarted and successful, that have hit Europe and the United States in recent months.

Since the announcement of the so-called Caliphate in June 2014, GW's Program on Extremism has identified 51 "successful" attacks in Europe and North America.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of perpetrators were citizens of the country in which they committed the attack. Only five percent of those who carried out the attacks were refugees or asylum seekers. Most had a prior criminal past. Less than 10% were "directly ordered" by IS to commit an attack. In most cases, the attackers were IS-inspired or had some touchpoint with it, but no explicit direction.

About 20% of the attackers were returning foreign fighters, which is fewer than most analysts would have expected. But those who did return to commit attacks tended to be much more lethal in their actions.

The majority of the perpetrators pledged allegiance to IS before or after their attack. In turn, IS took credit for nearly 40% of the attacks. France has experienced the highest number of attacks (17), followed closely, and perhaps surprisingly, by the United States (16). Attacks in the United States have tended to be significantly more unstructured and spontaneous than in Europe, even though some of them (Orlando, San Bernardino) have been no less deadly.

According to the most recent data from Europol, there were 395 jihadist-related arrests in 2014, 687 in 2015 and 718 in 2016.<sup>5</sup>

Numbers are much lower in the United States, where eighteen individuals were arrested for terrorism-related offenses in 2014, 75 in 2015, and just 36 in 2016.

There appears to be no discernable profile of an American IS recruit. However, American IS supporters tend to be young, with the average age being 27. But in 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the cases, the supporter was 21 years or younger.<sup>6</sup>

Their profiles vary in socioeconomic background, age, geographical location, and degree of understanding of their faith. Nearly half were arrested because they sought to travel to Syria or Iraq to join the Islamic State.

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<sup>4</sup> Vidino, Lorenzo, Francesco Marone, and Eva Entenmann. 2017. "Fear Thy Neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West." Milan, Italy: Joint Program on Extremism, ICCT-The Hague, ISPI Report. <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/extremism.gwu.edu/files/FearThyNeighbor%20RadicalizationandJihadistAttacksintheWest.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> "2017 EU Terrorism Report: 142 Failed, Foiled and Completed Attacks, 1002 Arrests and 142 Victims Died." 2017. Europol. June 15. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/2017-eu-terrorism-report-142-failed-foiled-and-completed-attacks-1002-arrests-and-142-victims-died>.

<sup>6</sup> Vidino, Lorenzo, and Seamus Hughes. 2015. "ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa." Washington, D.C.: Program on Extremism. <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/extremism.gwu.edu/files/downloads/ISIS%20in%20America%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>.

American IS supporters do not tend to be radicalizing in large clusters, as many of their counterparts in Europe do.

Unlike Europe, the United States does not seem to possess extensive homegrown militant organizations that can provide in-person ideological and logistical support to individuals attracted to IS. In contrast, many European countries have militant Salafist organizations that provide individuals undergoing the radicalization process with ideological underpinnings and, in many cases, also with concrete help that facilitates their travel to Syria or Iraq.

Additionally, U.S. legislation, namely the material support statute, has given authorities more flexibility to prosecute terrorism cases aggressively. American law enforcement agencies dedicate a significant amount of financial and technical resources to thwarting the travel of American militants to territories occupied by the Islamic State. Many European countries do not possess comparable resources to address the numbers of foreign fighters that are considerably larger than the U.S.

Yet it could be argued that the prosecutorial effectiveness of the material support to terrorism statute may have indirectly stunted the development of long-term radicalization prevention programs in the United States.

Conversely, because of the comparatively short prison sentences and fewer available law enforcement tools, European nations have been forced to develop counter-radicalization strategies which include ground-breaking intervention programs. These programs promote disengagement and de-radicalization efforts in the community.

### **Social Media/ IS Virtual Entrepreneurs**

A synergistic fusion between social media and encrypted technology has fueled one of the most recent developments in the terrorist threat to the West: the rise of “IS virtual entrepreneurs.”<sup>7</sup> A handful of IS-inspired attacks in America, Europe, and South Asia, which were initially believed to be the work of lone actors, were subsequently discovered to be planned and coordinated over the Internet by agents based in IS’ territories in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and even Somalia. The Islamic State’s use of social media and online tools to radicalize and recruit Westerners has become a subject of great debate between policymakers, researchers, and intelligence officials. Recently, attention has focused on the group’s use of its English-speaking members, primarily

<sup>7</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, and Seamus Hughes. 2017. “The Threat to the United States from the Islamic State’s Virtual Entrepreneurs.” CTC Sentinel 10 (3). <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-threat-to-the-united-states-from-the-islamic-states-virtual-entrepreneurs/>; Callimachi, Rukmini. 2017. “Not ‘Lone Wolves’ After All: How ISIS Guides World’s Terror Plots From Afar.” The New York Times, February 4. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/04/world/asia/isis-messaging-app-terror-plot.html>; Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, and Madeleine Blackman. 2017. “ISIL’s Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation.” War on the Rocks, January 4. <https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/isils-virtual-planners-a-critical-terrorist-innovation/>; Moreng, Bridget. 2016. “ISIS’ Virtual Puppeteers.” Foreign Affairs, September 21. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-09-21/isis-virtual-puppeteers>; Joscelyn, Thomas. 2016. “Terror Plots in Germany, France Were ‘remote-Controlled’ by Islamic State Operatives.” FDD’s Long War Journal, September 24. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/terror-plots-in-germany-france-were-remote-controlled-by-islamic-state-operatives.php>.

based in Syria and Iraq, to virtually connect with Europeans and Americans and often encourage them to commit terrorist attacks within their own countries.

IS virtual entrepreneurs represent a natural progression of the IS threat to the West. As military pressure has squeezed the group from its territory in Iraq and Syria, and governments have largely staunched the flow of foreign fighters from their shores, the group has sought to exploit its online reach to maintain a presence. In total, these virtual entrepreneurs were involved in at least 21 percent of IS-inspired domestic plots and attacks in the United States. The involvement of virtual entrepreneurs is even more pronounced in Europe. 19 out of 38 IS-linked plots in Europe between 2014 and 2016 involved some form of online instruction.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, IS virtual entrepreneurs present such a threat that many have been individually targeted and killed in anti-IS coalition airstrikes.

Jihadist propaganda has been and is easily accessible through various online platforms over the last decade, and has played a role in radicalizing Westerners. Now, with the advent of numerous social media applications (many of which use encryption technology), a would-be recruit can access real-time support and have a stronger sense that they are part of the wider movement. This online support sustains and encourages the recruit's continued participation in the Islamic State.<sup>9</sup>

In response to concerns about violent extremists' use of digital communications technology, several Western governments, including the U.S. and the U.K., have leaned heavily on social media companies. In the U.S. for example, an initiative colloquially known as the 'Madison Valleywood Project' encouraged technology, advertising, and entertainment companies to assist the fight against terrorism with counternarratives and stringent enforcement of their respective terms of service.<sup>10</sup> The precise impact of such attempts is difficult to quantify. Even so, it is crucial to review the various methods tech companies use to counter violent extremism in the digital sphere.

The most prevalent approaches fall into two camps: content-based regulation and counter-messaging. Existing policies range from stand-alone initiatives by one company to collaborative engagement by several. Most social media companies' efforts fall into content-based regulation and account suspension.<sup>11</sup> According to the company's latest *Transparency Report*, Twitter "suspended a total of 636,248 accounts" for the promotion of terrorism between August 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016.<sup>12</sup> Twitter's suspension strategy only goes so far. An IS sympathizer whose account is suspended simply starts over with a new Twitter account.

<sup>8</sup> Nesser, Petter, Anne Stenersen, and Emilie Ofteidal. 2016. "Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10 (6), p.9. <http://www.terrorismanalysis.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/553>.

<sup>9</sup> See also, Alexander, Audrey. 2017. "How to Fight ISIS Online." *Foreign Affairs*, April 7.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2017-04-07/how-fight-isis-online>.

<sup>10</sup> Kang, Cecilia, and Matt Apuzzo. 2016. "U.S. Asks Tech and Entertainment Industries Help in Fighting Terrorism." *The New York Times*, February 24. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/25/technology/tech-and-media-firms-called-to-white-house-for-terrorism-meeting.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "Partnering to Help Curb the Spread of Terrorist Content Online." 2016. *Twitter Blogs*. December 5. <https://blog.twitter.com/2016/partnering-to-help-curb-the-spread-of-terrorist-content-online>. Government TOS Reports - July to December 2016." 2017. <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/gov-tos-reports.html>.

<sup>12</sup> "Government TOS Reports - July to December 2016." 2017. <https://transparency.twitter.com/en/gov-tos-reports.html>. Please note that these accounts hailed from multiple extremist persuasions but an official blogpost

Google's Jigsaw, a 'technology incubator,' strives to counter online extremism by implementing the so-called Redirect Method, which diverts supporters to "curated YouTube videos" that confront IS's recruitment themes.<sup>13</sup> Facebook launched a new measure employing artificial intelligence software with efforts targeting image matching, language understanding, removing terrorist clusters, and cross-platform collaboration.<sup>14</sup> While in its infancy, the artificial intelligence component of Facebook's approach is promising as it allows the approach to more effectively recognize emerging trends.

Multilateral and multi-directional partnerships between the U.S., E.U., and global tech companies must remain vigilant of the shortcomings of social-media-centric approaches to countering violent extremism. First and foremost, states cannot dictate the cooperation of tech companies; even if they could, IS adherents and other violent extremists would continue to adapt to developing pressures. The private interests of media tech companies do not always align with the security interests of Western states (or any country for that matter). As Pavel Durov, the creator of Telegram explained, "that privacy... and our right for privacy is more important than our fear of bad things happening, like terrorism."<sup>15</sup> Again, though well-meaning, the current approaches by Twitter, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and YouTube, may not necessarily permeate the types of encrypted channels now commonly frequented by violent extremists.

Moving forward, policy-makers and practitioners need to reconfigure the approach to countering organizations like IS in the digital domain, and better traverse the liminal space between the virtual and the physical. Even though the 'online radicalization' phenomenon receives a lot of attention, a substantial body of research highlights the enduring relevance of the physical world and interpersonal dynamics that affect radicalization and recruitment. Perhaps more than the U.S., physical networks in Europe remain of paramount importance to many violent extremists. Such dynamics are best illustrated by "hubs" of jihadist mobilization in places like Lunel, France, Molenbeek, Belgium, and Portsmouth, UK.

### **Reciprocal Radicalization**

Finally, it is important to note a concerning trend. Far right movements have taken advantage of the recent wave of IS-inspired attacks in Europe to mobilize old and new followers. These groups tend to ignore any distinction between Islam, Islamism, and jihadism, seeing all Muslims as a threat. This narrative has taken hold among a growing number of people on both sides of the Ocean. It has triggered indiscriminate attacks against innocent Muslim communities. These episodes feed into IS' narrative, which tells Western Muslims that the West is waging a war

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asserted that suspensions were "primarily related to ISIS." Combating Violent Extremism." 2016. *Twitter Blogs*. February 5. <https://blog.twitter.com/2016/combating-violent-extremism>.

<sup>13</sup> "The Redirect Method - Jigsaw." 2017. <http://redirectmethod.org>.

<sup>14</sup> "Hard Questions: How We Counter Terrorism | Facebook Newsroom." 2017. Newsroom. June 15. <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/06/how-we-counter-terrorism/>.

<sup>15</sup> Kaplan, Sarah. 2015. "Founder of App Used by ISIS Once Said 'We Shouldn't Feel Guilty.'" On Wednesday He Banned Their Accounts." *Washington Post*, November 9. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/11/19/founder-of-app-used-by-isis-once-said-we-shouldnt-feel-guilty-on-wednesday-he-banned-their-accounts/>.

against Islam. Thus, we have seen how both extreme movements feed off of each other and use this to assist in their recruitment efforts. This perverse dynamic of 'reciprocal radicalization' between jihadist and far right extremism is a troubling trend that needs to be monitored. Any prevention program developed both in the United States and Europe should seek to address all forms of extremism, lest we get caught up in a never-ending cycle of polarization and violence.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. I welcome your questions.

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Mr. POE. Mr. Simcox?

**STATEMENT OF MR. ROBIN SIMCOX, MARGARET THATCHER  
FELLOW, DAVIS INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND  
FOREIGN POLICY, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

Mr. SIMCOX. Thank you. Chairman Poe, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. The views I express in this testimony are my own and do not represent the official position of the Heritage Foundation.

My goal this afternoon is to highlight the severe threat that Islamist terrorism poses to Europe. There are several aspects to the threat which I will discuss today. The first is the scale. As we all know, recently there has been much discussion by governments across the continents of the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. This refers to the at least 5,000 to 6,000 Europeans who have fought alongside ISIS and other Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq and are now returning to their home countries.

Most devastatingly, members of the cell that committed ISIS' attacks in Paris in November 2015, killing 130 and wounding 368, had traveled to Syria from Europe, fought and trained with ISIS, and then returned to Europe to carry out an attack. This cell also contained ISIS members who had entered Europe from Syria after making false asylum claims.

While the majority of Syrian refugees are not tied to terrorism, Germany in particular has seen a sharp uptick in the threat it faces following the recent influx. There was an eightfold increase in plots between 2015 and 2016, largely due to a surge of those involving refugees. In fact, Germany faced more Islamist plots last year than it did in the entire 2000 to 2015 period.

As the U.S. has experienced with the attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando, European governments also have a very significant problem with homegrown radicals. To give an idea of the scale of this threat, the U.K. has approximately 23,000 terrorist suspects on the radar. Within this are 3,000 suspects assessed to be the most imminent threats. However, such assessments will never be foolproof and there always lies the possibility that the likes of Westminster Bridge attack of Khalid Masood, who was on the radar but not thought to be an imminent danger, slips through the net.

The second aspect is the breadth of terrorism throughout Europe. Data from my forthcoming Heritage research demonstrates that the number of plots Europe has faced since 2014 has risen year-on-year. Between January 2014 and the end of May 2017, there had been 15 separate countries targeted, most commonly Belgium, France, Germany, and the U.K. This year there have been multiple attacks on traditional Islamist targets in the U.K. and France.

Yet, an ISIS-linked asylum seeker from Uzbekistan also killed five people and injured 15 in a truck attack in Stockholm and an Italian Tunisian inspired by ISIS stabbed multiple police officers and soldiers at a train station in Milan. Furthermore, while there are certainly trends, it is impossible to build that catch-all profile of who will carry out these attacks. It is not just young men, for example. Khalid Masood, the Westminster Bridge attacker, was 52.

My research has even shown an uptick in plotting by teenagers and girls. For example, in February 2016, a radicalized 15-year-old German girl in contact with ISIS stabbed a police officer in Hanover.

So you have those who have criminal records and those who do not, those who trained with terrorists and those who have not, those who are well educated or affluent as well as those who are poorly educated or are from a lower socioeconomic background. All were drawn into the terrorist orbits and planned attacks in Europe.

The third aspect is the range of weapons now used by terrorists. Since November 2015, Belgium, France, Germany, and the U.K. have all seen operatives requiring expertise and materials to assemble suicide bombs without having their plans thwarted. There has not been a lack of willing volunteers to carry out these suicide missions, including Salman Abedi who committed the attack in Manchester.

There has also been a multitude of plots involving firearms, knives, or some other form of edged weapons such as a machete or an axe, and of course the use of vehicles. There have been no publicly disclosed instances in which these vehicular attacks have been thwarted by authorities. We have seen the consequences of this in Nice, Berlin, Stockholm, London, and elsewhere. Because of such factors, over 1,400 people were injured and over 300 people killed in Islamist attacks in Europe in the past 3½ years. Included in this number are nine Americans.

Chairman Poe, distinguished members of the subcommittee, the grave danger that terrorism poses to Europe is only likely to increase. The U.S. must work with Europe to defeat those threats. Thank you for inviting me to discuss this with you, and I look forward to any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Simcox follows:]




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## CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

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**Allies Under Attack: The Terrorist Threat to Europe**  
**Testimony Before the Joint Subcommittee on**  
**Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade**  
**Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats**  
**Committee on Foreign Affairs**

June 27, 2017

Robin Simcox  
 Margaret Thatcher Fellow  
 Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom,  
 The Heritage Foundation

Chairman Poe and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

My name is Robin Simcox and I am the Margaret Thatcher Fellow at The Heritage Foundation. My responsibilities consist of research on terrorist groups, particularly those targeting Europe, as well as research on intelligence and security policy. These are issues I have helped governments across Europe shape their response to for almost 10 years. I also regularly speak to relevant US government agencies on such matters.

The views I express in this testimony are my own and do not represent any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

My goal this afternoon is to highlight the severe threat that Islamist terrorism poses to Europe. There are several aspects to the threat which I will discuss today.

### **The Scale**

There has been much discussion by governments across the Continent of the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. This refers to the minimum 5,000 to 6,000 Europeans who have fought alongside ISIS and other Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq since 2011 and are now returning to their home countries.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, this is a major problem: There are approximately 1,000 returnees alone just from the U.K., France, and Germany.

Past attacks in Europe have demonstrated that there is good reason to be wary of the dangers posed by these returning fighters. Members of the cell that committed ISIS's attacks in Paris in November 2015—killing 130 and wounding 368—had traveled to Syria from Europe, fought and trained with ISIS, and then returned to Europe to carry out an attack.

This cell also contained ISIS members who had entered Europe from Syria after making false asylum claims. Security agencies are cognizant of ISIS using this avenue to infiltrate Europe. While the majority of Syrian refugees are not tied to terrorism, Germany in particular has seen a sharp uptick in the threat it faces following the recent influx. There was an eightfold increase in plots between 2015 and 2016, largely due to a surge in plots involving refugees. Indeed, Germany faced more plots last year than it did in the entire 2000–2015 period.<sup>2</sup>

As with the attacks the US suffered in San Bernardino and Orlando, European governments also have very significant problems with homegrown radicals—the majority of whom are unlikely to have any formal ties to conflicts taking place in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, or Yemen.

To give an idea of the scale of this threat, the U.K. has approximately 23,000 terror suspects on the radar.<sup>3</sup> Within this are 3,000 suspects assessed to be the most imminent threat. However, such



CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

assessments will never be foolproof and there always lies the possibility that the likes of Westminster Bridge attacker Khalid Masood—who was on the radar but not thought to be an imminent danger—slips through the net.

### **The Breadth of Terrorism Throughout Europe**

Data from my forthcoming research for Heritage demonstrates that the number of plots Europe has faced since 2014 has risen year-on-year. The countries most commonly targeted are Belgium, France, Germany, and the U.K.; yet plots targeting Europe are not consigned to only those countries. In fact, between January 2014 and the end of May 2017, there was eleven additional countries targeted: Albania, Austria, Bosnia, Denmark, Italy, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

This year, there have been multiple attacks on traditional Islamist targets: the U.K. and France. Yet an ISIS-linked asylum seeker from Uzbekistan also killed five people and injured 15 in a truck attack in Stockholm; and an Italian Tunisian inspired by ISIS stabbed multiple police officers and soldiers at a train station in Milan.

Furthermore, while there are certainly trends, it is impossible to build a catch-all profile. It is not just young men, for example. Khalid Masood, the Westminster Bridge attacker, was 52. My research has even shown an uptick in plotting by teenagers and girls.<sup>4</sup> Converts and those raised as Muslims; those who have a criminal record and those who do not; those who trained with terrorist groups and those who have not; those who are well educated or affluent,

as well as those who are poorly educated or from a lower socioeconomic background. All were drawn into the terrorist orbit and planned attacks in Europe.

### **The Range of Weapons Now Used by Terrorists**

Since November 2015, Belgium, France, Germany, and the U.K. have all seen operatives acquiring the expertise and materials to assemble suicide bombs without having their plans thwarted. There has not been a lack of willing volunteers to carry out these suicide missions, including Salman Abedi, who carried out the attack in Manchester.

There has also been a multitude of plots involving firearms, knives or some other form of edged weapon (such as a machete or an axe) and, of course, the increasing use of vehicles. Unfortunately, there have been no publicly disclosed instances in which these plans for vehicular attacks have been thwarted. This is perhaps unsurprising considering how easy it is to acquire such vehicles. We have seen the consequences of this in Berlin, London, Nice, Stockholm and elsewhere.

Because of such factors, over 1,400 people were injured and over 300 people killed in Islamist attacks in Europe in the past three and a half years. Included in this number are nine Americans.

Chairman Poe, distinguished Members of the subcommittee, the grave danger that terrorism poses to Europe is only likely to increase. The U.S. must work with Europe to defeat this threat.

Thank you for inviting me to discuss this with you and I look forward to any questions.

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## Endnotes

1. "More Than 6,000 European Jihadists in Syria, EU Official Says," *The Telegraph*, April 13, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11531884/More-than-6000-European-jihadists-in-Syria-EU-official-says.html> (accessed June 21, 2017).
2. "11 Terror Plots Foiled in Germany Since 2000," *The Local*, March 29, 2016, <https://www.thelocal.de/20160329/german-security-service-saves-its-sheep-from-terrorism> (accessed June 6, 2017), and forthcoming Heritage research.
3. Sean O'Neill, Fiona Hamilton, Fariha Karim, Gabriella Swerling, "Huge Scale of Terror Threat Revealed: UK Home to 23,000 Jihadists," *The Times*, May 27, 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/huge-scale-of-terror-threat-revealed-uk-home-to-23-000-jihadists-3zvn58mhq> (accessed June 21, 2017).
4. Robin Simcox, "The Islamic State's Western Teenage Plotters," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (February 2017), p. 21, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-islamic-states-western-teenage-plotters> (accessed June 21, 2017).

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman.  
Dr. Cragin?

**STATEMENT OF R. KIM CRAGIN, PH.D., SENIOR RESEARCH  
FELLOW FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, CENTER FOR COMPLEX  
OPERATIONS, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

Ms. CRAGIN. I would like to thank the chairs and the ranking members for inviting me to testify on the subject of the threat posed to Europe and the West by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS.

Over the past 20 years I have explored the topics of what motivates individuals to become terrorists, how terrorist groups adapt, and counterterrorism. Much of this research has focused on what is often referred to as foreign fighters or individuals who leave their homes and travel abroad to fight. My written testimony provides the details of this research and I plan to summarize it briefly today.

As you know, ISIS stepped into the global spotlight in June 2014 after its spokesman, al-Adnani, announced a newly formed Islamic caliphate. Soon thereafter, ISIS began to consolidate control over territory within Syria and Iraq, but it also established provinces outside the Levant. Today, ISIS has 25 provinces in 11 countries.

The apparent focus by ISIS on control over territory caused many to conclude at the time that ISIS was less interested in attacking the West than al-Qaeda. This has proven to be false. The first successful attack by a foreign fighter returnee took place in May 2014 at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. The perpetrator was part of a cell overseen by al-Adnani until his death in August 2017. This suggests that ISIS leaders intended to attack the West months before they even declared a caliphate.

The overall pattern of attacks by ISIS reinforces this conclusion. Between June 2014 and May 2017, ISIS operatives conducted approximately 225 attacks outside Syria and Iraq, 42 percent were external operations or attacks outside of those provinces. To put this in perspective, ISIS has been more aggressive in its external operations than al-Qaeda.

Only 10 percent of al-Qaeda's attacks between 2008 and 2010 took place outside of countries with affiliates, 10 percent for al-Qaeda, 42 percent for ISIS. And to truly understand this threat we need to examine both successful and failed attacks and the numbers become even more grim. Fifty-eight percent of all ISIS external operations, including both attacks and plots, have taken place in the West.

Let's take the November 2015 attacks in Paris as an example. There were nine core operatives, seven foreign fighter returnees, two Iraqis. They recruited an additional 21 individuals to help with logistics once they arrived in Europe, seven of these recruits were foreign fighter returnees and 14 were not. Foreign fighters return home to conduct attacks, they also recruit others to help. That is the bad news.

The good news is that the Paris attacks acted as a catalyst for the West. Since then, Spain has detained 159 individuals and interrupted at least six plots. France has foiled 22 plots. The U.K. has detained almost 300 and foiled 18 plots. In fact, the combined

efforts by law enforcement intelligence and military forces led to a plummet in the number of successful external operations by foreign fighters in late 2016. This predates the Mosul offensive. It tells me that the U.S. and its allies have come up with the correct formula to minimize the threat posed by foreign fighter returnees.

But it is only a short-term solution because arresting individuals preemptively causes short prison terms. It also presents the threat of prison radicalization, and it is hard to see how this formula can be applied by less affluent countries. Unfortunately, ISIS has also proven itself to be adaptive and the recent attacks in England tragically underscore that there is still more to be done.

I mentioned that successful attacks by foreign fighters plummeted in August 2016, but the overall trend in external operations continues to go up. So why? As attacks by foreign fighters plummeted, they were replaced by attacks conducted by local recruits with directed guidance from ISIS fighters based in Syria, sometimes referred to as virtual planners or virtual entrepreneurs. Virtual planners identify local recruits, introduce them to individuals with technical expertise, and help pick the target, all via Telegram or WhatsApp, which brings me to the final question of what more can be done.

I don't want to leave the impression that we solved the problem in the West by foreign fighter internees, we haven't. But the most urgent need is to find a way to take this formula developed by the U.S. and its European allies and expand it geographically. And beyond this most urgent need, we need to fit these and other programs within a wider transregional strategy that includes a global architecture to address the threat from foreign fighter returnees and virtual planners.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cragin follows:]

Kim Cragin, PhD<sup>1</sup>  
National Defense University

*Europe's Terrorist Threat*

Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittees on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade  
Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats  
United States House of Representatives

27 June 2017

I would like to thank the Chairs and Ranking Members and the House Foreign Affairs' Subcommittees on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, as well as Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats, for inviting me to testify on the subject of the threat posed to Europe and the West by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and also to take this opportunity to commend the Committees for recognizing the importance of understanding this evolving threat.

Over the past twenty years, during the course of my research on terrorism, I have explored the topics of what motivates individuals to become terrorists, how terrorist groups adapt, and the effectiveness of counter-terrorism instruments. For the past decade, much of this research has focused on what is often referred to as "foreign fighters." Or, specifically, individuals who leave their homes in (e.g.) France, Australia, or Indonesia and travel abroad to participate in a conflict. My most recent research on this topic can be found in two journal articles: first, "The Challenge of Foreign Fighter Returnees," which was released in April 2017 by the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*; and, second, an in-depth study of the ISIS attacks in Paris in November 2015, published by *Orbis*, also this past spring.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to share the results of this research with you today. But also set it in the wider context of "external operations" conducted by the Islamic State over the past three years.

**Intentions vis-à-vis the West**

As you know, the Islamic State stepped into the global spotlight in June 2014 after its spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, announced a newly-formed Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Al-Adnani claimed that ISIS had established governing structures and religious law in its territories. He also claimed that all Muslims had a religious obligation to transfer their allegiance to ISIS and relocate to this caliphate.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, this announcement was made in defiance of Ayman al-Zawahiri and other al-Qaeda leaders based in Pakistan. They had been attempting to broker a peaceful resolution to infighting between Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of what we now refer to as ISIS, and al-Qaeda's representative in Syria, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, the leader of al-Nusra Front, now called Jabhat Fatah al-Sham.<sup>4</sup>

This defiance or divergence between al-Qaeda representatives in Iraq and its leaders in Pakistan did not begin in 2013 and 2014. ISIS traces its origins back to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and "al-Qaeda in Iraq" (AQI), which fought against US and allied forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2011).<sup>5</sup> Al-Zarqawi himself was a foreign fighter. He travelled from his home country of Jordan to Afghanistan in 1989 to fight with the *mujahideen* and then returned again in 2002 to establish a training camp.<sup>6</sup> During his time in

Afghanistan, al-Zarqawi interacted with al-Qaeda leaders, but he disagreed with them on a number of issues, including the extent to which Muslims perceived as unbelievers or apostates by al-Qaeda, including Shi'a, should be killed in pursuit of an Islamic caliphate.<sup>7</sup> These disagreements caused friction between al-Qaeda leaders and al-Zarqawi, even after he established AQI in October 2004.<sup>8</sup> The disagreement finally went public after al-Qaeda leaders rebuked al-Zarqawi first in September and then in December 2005 for AQI's brutal tactics on the battlefields of Iraq and his attacks on Muslims outside Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

This historical tension between AQI and al-Qaeda leaders provides the context for the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. When al-Adnani declared the creation of an Islamic caliphate, he did so not only in defiance of al-Zawahiri's attempted brokering of an alliance between al-Qaeda fighters in Syria and Iraq, but also in defiance of the accepted al-Qaeda strategy for waging jihad. That is, al-Qaeda strategists – such as Abu Musa'b al-Suri – argued for a more gradual approach and believed that they should only declare a caliphate once it could be defended successfully. Al-Suri also cautioned against brutal tactics deployed against so-called unbelieving Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

Soon after its announcement, ISIS began to consolidate control over territory within Syria and Iraq, but it also established so-called provinces outside the Levant. Today, the Islamic State has 25 provinces in 11 countries worldwide.<sup>11</sup> These countries include Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, Egypt and the Philippines. And while it might be easy to conclude that ISIS has simply convinced terrorist groups in al-Qaeda's network to defect, this is not correct. Based on my analysis, 48 militant groups have pledged their allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and only one third (16) are former al-Qaeda affiliates.<sup>12</sup>

The apparent focus by ISIS leaders on *control over territory* caused many to conclude at the time that ISIS was far less interested in attacking the West than al-Qaeda. This also has proven to be false. The first successful attack by a foreign fighter returnee – or an individual who returns home after fighting in Syria and Iraq – took place in May 2014 at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. 4 people were killed in this attack. The perpetrator was a part of a cell led by Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the leader of the November 2015 attacks, and overseen by al-Adnani until his death in August 2016.<sup>13</sup> This indicates that ISIS leaders intended to attack the West months before they even declared an Islamic caliphate.

#### **External Operations**

The overall pattern of attacks by ISIS reinforces the conclusion that its leaders very much want to attack the West today, as they did in the past. Between June 2014 and May 2017, ISIS operatives conducted approximately 225 attacks outside Syria and Iraq. Of these, 58% have been in countries with ISIS provinces. The best way to think about this is that 58% of all ISIS attacks outside Syria and Iraq have occurred in countries with ISIS safe havens. 42% can be considered “external operations” or attacks that take place outside of the 11 countries with ISIS provinces.<sup>14</sup>

To put this in perspective, ISIS has been much more aggressive in its external operations than al-Qaeda. For example, only 10% of al-Qaeda's attacks between January 2008 and December 2010 took place outside countries with acknowledged affiliates: 10% for al-Qaeda, 42% for ISIS. Over half – or 52% -- of the Islamic State's *successful* external operations have been in the West.

But, of course, to truly understand the nature and extent of the threat posed by ISIS external operations in the West, we should examine both successful and failed attacks. The numbers become even more grim if we broaden the aperture along these lines: 58% of all ISIS external operations – including both attacks and plots – have taken place in the West. Foreign fighters have been a significant part of this. They have been directly involved – as operators or logisticians – in 47% of all ISIS external operations.<sup>15</sup>

Let's take the November 2015 attacks in Paris as a concrete example. As I said, I recently completed an in-depth analysis of the individuals involved in this attack, as well as the planning process. As you know, there were 9 core operatives involved in these attacks: 7 foreign fighter returnees and 2 Iraqis sent by ISIS to participate in the attack. They travelled to Europe in two waves. The first arrived in September 2015 and the second in October. Once in Europe, they rented a total of 8 different safe houses outside of Brussels and Paris (including in Charleroi and Auvelais). They also began to recruit local residents for logistical support: an additional 21 individuals provided direct logistical support to this attack, 7 of them were foreign fighter returnees and 14 were not. This illustrates a secondary threat posed by foreign fighter returnees: they can recruit others to conduct attacks locally.<sup>16</sup>

### Foreign Fighters

This brings me to the issue of foreign fighters and returnees. As you know, the National Counterterrorism Center has said that 40,000 individuals have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight in the conflict. These numbers are much higher than we have ever seen before. The next closest was Afghanistan between 1984 and 1993. Between 20 and 25,000 "Arab Afghans" fought in this conflict. Only 5,000 travelled to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. 3,000 fought in Bosnia.<sup>17</sup>

Historically speaking, the recidivism rate of returnees – or the extent to which they re-engage in violence upon their return home – is disturbingly high. Based on my research, only 20% of the Arab Afghans either remained in Pakistan, travelled to other conflict zones, or went to Sudan with Osama bin Laden. The rest returned home. And, if we look at the case of the Algerians in Afghanistan, they had a 90% recidivism rate.<sup>18</sup> That's with no rehabilitation program and, eventually, a horrific civil war. But the case of Indonesia is even more disturbing. Indonesians, who fought in Afghanistan, had a 40% recidivism rate *after a 10 year delay*.<sup>19</sup> They eventually became Jemaah Islamiyyah, the group responsible for the 2003 and 2005 Bali bombings. So, if we look at historical precedent, we cannot count on foreign fighters reintegrating peacefully.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that, after the Paris attacks, it became clear that this threat would not go away and Western security services began to take steps to address it. The United Nations Security Council had already passed Resolutions 2170 and 2178, encouraging countries to strengthen their laws to address foreign fighters, prior to the Paris attacks. But the Paris attacks acted as a catalyst for the West. Since then, Spain has detained 159 individuals and interrupted at least 6 plots. France has foiled a total of 22 plots, one per month in 2017. The United Kingdom has detained 294 individuals and foiled 18 plots.

In fact, based on my research, the combined efforts by law enforcement, intelligence, and military forces led to a plummet in the number of successful external operations by foreign fighters in late summer 2016. This pre-dates the Mosul Offensive by several months. It tells me that the United States and its allies in the West have come up with the correct formula to minimize the threat posed by returnees. But it's only a short-term solution.

It's only a short-term solution because arresting individuals preemptively leads to short prison terms, only 3-5 years in some instances. It also presents the threat of prison radicalization. And it's hard to see how this formula can be applied by other, less affluent, countries. For example, Tunisia's prisons are already at 150% capacity. Indonesia has arrested and detained 3,000 individuals on terrorism-related charges, even though it only has the capacity for 900 in its Cipinang jail.<sup>20</sup> Even though this hearing is focused on the threat facing Europe, it is important to remember that most foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq come from the Middle East and North Africa. It is not a stretch to expect that these foreign fighters will also return home to conduct attacks.

Unfortunately, ISIS also has proven itself to be highly adaptive and the recent attacks in London and Manchester tragically underscore that there is more to be done, even in the West. In fact, I mentioned previously that successful attacks by foreign fighters plummeted in August 2016. But the overall trend in external operations by ISIS continues to go up. Why?

If you look at these data over time, you'll see that as the number of successful attacks by foreign fighter returnees plummets, it is replaced by those conducted by local recruits with detailed guidance from ISIS fighters based in Syria, sometimes referred to as "virtual planners".<sup>21</sup> These Virtual Planners identify local recruits, put operational teams together, sometimes introduce new recruits to others with technical expertise or provide technical guidance, and help pick the target, all remotely via Telegram or WhatsApp.

Recent examples of this type of external operation by ISIS include a bomb placed outside the Notre Dame Cathedral by an ISIS cell of all women in September 2016. They received detailed guidance from Rachid Kassim, a French-born foreign fighter based in Syria. By my count, Kassim acted as Virtual Planner for at least 4 external operations in France during 2016. He was targeted by US airstrikes in February 2017. Similarly, in December 2016, Indonesia's counter-terrorism police, Detachment 88, disrupted a plot against the Presidential compound in Jakarta. Indonesian foreign fighter, Bahrun Naim, recruited and planned this attack using Telegram Messaging. Thus far, Virtually Planned attacks have not been as successful as attacks conducted by foreign fighter returnees. But it is too soon to claim victory in this area.

## Conclusion

Which brings me to the final question posed by this hearing, "what more can be done by the United States and its European partners to mitigate this threat to the West?"

First, I do not want to leave the impression that we have solved the problem of foreign fighter returnees in the West. We have not. But the most urgent need is to find a way to take the formula developed by the United States and its European allies and expand it geographically.



Specifically, we need to augment partner countries' police, judiciary, and prison systems so that they can handle what is likely to be a flood of returnees. This is not simply about the security and stability of the Middle East, North Africa, or Southeast Asia. Some of the most significant attacks and plots against the U.S. homeland have originated overseas, including the 9/11 attacks.

To do this, I recommend a combination of police training, including social media exploitation, as well as training for prosecutors, and resources for rehabilitation programs. It makes sense for these programs to be overseen by US embassies and FBI Legal Attachés on-the-ground. But they need to fit within a transregional strategy and be tightly coordinated with the US intelligence community and military.

Second, at a more strategic level, any diplomatic resolution to the conflict in Syria must include a provision that deals with foreign fighters. Foreign fighters must be told to leave. This is not a new idea. The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement required that foreign fighters depart the area within 30 days.<sup>22</sup>

Third, and finally, it is clear to me that, if the most immediate threat to the West comes from foreign fighters, the future threat is attacks guided by Virtual Planners. I would recommend that as the U.S. government puts together a strategy to deal with ISIS external operations, it also consider an architecture to address the ongoing, global, threat from both foreign fighter returnees and virtual planners.

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<sup>1</sup> The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of the National Defense University, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Department of Defense or the United States government.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Cragin, "The Challenge of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, accepted February 2017. First release April 2017, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1043986217697872>; and, Kim Cragin, "The November 2015 Paris Attacks: The Impact of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Orbis*, Spring 2017, available online at <http://www.fori.org/article/2017/03/november-2015-paris-attacks-impact-foreign-fighter-returnees>.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, *This is the Promise of Allah*, statement released by al-Hayat Media Center, 30 June 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "Militants Kill al-Qaeda Emissary in Syria," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor*, 25 February 2014.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015); and, William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of The Islamic State* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), pp. 281-282; and, Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent, Life of Abu Musab Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, 8 June 2006, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>.

<sup>7</sup> William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse*, pp. 10-11; and Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent, Life."

<sup>8</sup> General Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, (New York: Penguin, 2014), pp. 152.

<sup>9</sup> See "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi" and "Atiyah's Letter to Zarqawi," available online at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>; and, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/atiyahs-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>.

<sup>10</sup> M.W. Zackie Masoud, "An Analysis of Abu Musa'b al-Suri's Call to Global Islamic Resistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 2013), pp. 1-18.

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<sup>11</sup> Kim Cragin, "Why the United States Needs Foreign Law Enforcement to Succeed Against the Islamic State," *Lawfare Blog*, 18 June 2017, available online at <https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-united-states-needs-foreign-law-enforcement-succeed-against-islamic-state>.

<sup>12</sup> Kim Cragin, "The Global Islamic Threat in Historical Context," *Pathways to Peace and Security*, No. 1 (52), May 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Kim Cragin, "The November 2015 Paris Attacks: The Impact of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Orbis*, Spring 2017, available online at <http://www.fpri.org/article/2017/03/november-2015-paris-attacks-impact-foreign-fighter-returnees>.

<sup>14</sup> Kim Cragin, "Why the United States Needs Foreign Law Enforcement to Succeed Against the Islamic State," *Lawfare Blog*, 18 June 2017, available online at <https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-united-states-needs-foreign-law-enforcement-succeed-against-islamic-state>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Kim Cragin, "The November 2015 Paris Attacks: The Impact of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Orbis*, Spring 2017, available online at <http://www.fpri.org/article/2017/03/november-2015-paris-attacks-impact-foreign-fighter-returnees>.

<sup>17</sup> Kim Cragin, "The Challenge of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, accepted February 2017. First release April 2017, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1043986217697872>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Kim Cragin, "Why the United States Needs Foreign Law Enforcement to Succeed Against the Islamic State," *Lawfare Blog*, 18 June 2017, available online at <https://www.lawfareblog.com/why-united-states-needs-foreign-law-enforcement-succeed-against-islamic-state>.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, David Garstenstein-Ross and Madeline Blackman, "ISIS' Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation," *War on the Rocks*, blogpost, 4 January 2017, available online at <https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/isils-virtual-planners-a-critical-terrorist-innovation/>.

<sup>22</sup> *Dayton Peace Agreement, General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 21 November 1995, available online at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3de495c34.html>, last accessed 12 September 2016.

Mr. POE. And Ms. Holmer?

**STATEMENT OF MS. GEORGIA HOLMER, DIRECTOR, COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE**

Ms. HOLMER. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairmen and ranking members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Please note that my comments reflect my own views and not necessarily that of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

I began my career working on terrorism in Europe for the FBI over 20 years ago. That was the tail end of a wave of Marxist and nationalist political violence in Europe that included kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations that led to the loss of many lives and generated the same feelings of fear and outrage as we are experiencing today.

The wave of political violence being experienced in Europe is different today, however. The groups are less cohesive. We are witnessing not only directed attacks, but self-inspired acts of violence. The goals, motives, and justification for the violence have changed as well and the ideology is rooted now in a narrative of religious militancy. Unlike the wave of terrorism in Europe in the 1970s through the 1990s, the targets today are more indiscriminate and there is more of a willingness on the part of attackers to die.

But what has also changed has been the response. Counterterrorism investigations today are more sophisticated. There are more mechanisms for international cooperation and collaboration. There has also been a steadily increasing awareness and understanding that effective counterterrorism operations are critical but insufficient without an investment in prevention.

Law enforcement and security services cannot possibly anticipate and disrupt every potential attack, especially low-level attacks involving one man and a truck and a knife.

Understanding why individuals are willing to give their lives to a violent extremist movement or cause and working to address the issues and grievances that push them in that direction is a critical investment of American time and resources.

Last year, USIP conducted research on understanding why the small European country of Kosovo had one of the highest rates per capita of foreign fighters traveling to support ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The answer, in short, was that a robust recruitment infrastructure had flourished in the region and youth found their messages particularly compelling because of their frustration with their own lives, lack of opportunity, conflicting ideas about their identity, and an inherited legacy of conflict and violence.

Kosovo faces a multifaceted challenge now, managing the return of those who went to Iraq and Syria as well as those who never left but have radicalized and are intent on causing harm, and also preventing new recruits from forming and radical groups from flourishing. Kosovo is not alone in facing these challenges, but their experience illustrates how important it is to have effective programs and strategies to prevent individuals from radicalizing and joining these groups, or rejoining once they are out of prison.

I would like to offer that there are three critical and interrelated areas in which efforts to prevent radicalization can be most effective.

tively advanced and in which our European partners have made significant progress, in part because of their long history of dealing with terrorism. First, is increasing public awareness and engagement in preventing radicalization.

Preventing early stage radicalization, especially for those who have never engaged in criminal activity, is out of reach of law enforcement and is more appropriately addressed by family and community members who know and care about those who are vulnerable to recruitment. Much of this work in Europe is led by NGOs, but supported by municipal and national governments in the EU.

Community level programs involving teachers and social workers, religious leaders and families who help build the resilience of youth and then intervene appropriately when they show signs of influence have proliferated in Europe. These efforts include but go beyond countering the radical ideology that underpins these groups and attracts groups to address the relationships and practical issues that make youth vulnerable to recruitment in the first place. Ideology, after all, is how they are recruited, not why they join.

Secondly, ensuring effective and accountable criminal justice and law enforcement procedures. An individual's touchpoints with the criminal justice sector can profoundly influence his or her trajectory away from or toward violence. Police play critical and sophisticated roles in deterrence. The establishment of accountable information sharing mechanisms between the public and law enforcement helps ensure that individuals are not prematurely criminalized, and many European law enforcement services have implemented referral mechanisms, especially as more and more non-government actors are involved in this space.

Third, working to prevent recidivism. After prison, many individuals return to the same environment in which they radicalized in the first place. And even if they do not engage in violent activity directly, they may continue to espouse ideas that encourage violence or help with recruitment. Effective reintegration programs are an imperative, and Europe has a number of programs that were originally developed to address members of biker gangs, neo-Nazis, and quasi-criminal groups. Some of these programs have been tailored in recent years to address the reintegration of former violent extremists and support their continued disengagement from violence.

The U.S. has been a leader in efforts to prevent violent extremism and counterterrorism and can continue to support our allies in Europe in this role in prevention. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Holmer follows:]



**United States Institute of Peace**

**Allies Under Attack: The Terrorist Threat to  
Europe**

**Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade &  
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats**

**Georgia Holmer  
Director of Countering Violent Extremism  
United States Institute of Peace  
June 27, 2017**

### **Introduction**

Chairmen Poe and Rohrabacher, Ranking Members Keating and Meeks, and members of the Subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the terrorist threat to American allies in Europe. Your attention to this issue is appreciated.

I testify before you today as the Director of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) at the United States Institute of Peace, although the views expressed here are my own. USIP was established by Congress over 30 years ago as an independent, national institute to prevent and resolve violent conflicts abroad, in accordance with U.S. national interests and values. Violent extremism and terrorism pose significant challenges to peace and security in our world today, and understanding its causes and finding ways to address it are priorities for USIP.

I began my career working on terrorism in Europe for the FBI almost 20 years ago. It was the tail end of a wave of Marxist and nationalist political violence in Europe that included kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations that led to the loss of many lives and generated the same feelings fear and outrage as today. The wave of political violence being experienced now in Europe is different, however, in that the groups are less cohesive. We are witnessing not only directed attacks, but self-inspired acts of violence. The goals, motives and justification for the violence have changed as well, and unlike the wave of terrorism in Europe in the 1970s through the 1990s, the targets today are more indiscriminate and there is more of a willingness on the part of the attackers to die.

What has also changed is the response. Counterterrorism investigations today are more sophisticated. There are more mechanisms for international cooperation and collaboration. There has also been a steadily increasing awareness and understanding that effective counterterrorism operations are critical but insufficient without an investment in prevention. Law enforcement and security services cannot possibly anticipate and disrupt every potential attack, especially low-level attacks involving one man and a knife or a truck. Understanding why individuals are willing to give their lives to a violent extremist movement or cause and working to address the issues and grievances and that push them in that direction is a critical investment of American time and resources.

### **A Case Study: Kosovo**

Last year, USIP conducted research on understanding why the small European country of Kosovo had one of the highest rates per capita of foreign fighters travelling to support ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The answer, in short, was that a robust recruitment infrastructure had flourished in the region and youth found their messages particularly compelling because of their frustrations with their own lives and lack of opportunity, conflicting ideas about their identity, and an inherited legacy of conflict and violence.

Kosovo faces a multi-faceted challenge now: managing the return of those who went to Iraq and Syria as well as those who never left and who are radicalized and intent on causing harm at home, and preventing new recruits from forming and radical groups from flourishing. Kosovo is not alone in facing these challenges, but their experience illustrates how important it is to have

effective programs and strategies to prevent individuals from radicalizing and joining these groups, or re-joining once they are out of prison.

There are **three critical and interrelated areas in which efforts to prevent radicalization can be most effectively advanced**, and in which our European partners have made significant progress, in part because of their long history of dealing with terrorism:

### **1. Increasing public awareness and engagement in preventing radicalization**

Preventing early stage radicalization, especially for those who have never engaged in any criminal activity, is out of the reach of law enforcement and is more appropriately addressed by family and community members who know and care about those who are vulnerable to recruitment. Much of this work in Europe is led by NGOs, but supported by municipal and national governments and the EU. Community level programs involving teachers, social workers, religious leaders, and families who help build the resilience of youth and intervene appropriately when they show signs of influence have proliferated in Europe. Organizations such as Women without Borders, based in Vienna, help parents understand the risks and support them in interventions. The City of Brussels just released its 2016 annual report outlining the work they have underway that includes video tools, training and neighborhood meetings. EU bodies such as the Radicalization Awareness Network help support and connect these practitioners to one another across Europe. These efforts include – but go beyond- countering the radical ideology that underpins these groups and attracts recruits, to address the relationships, practical issues and grievances that make youth vulnerable to recruitment in the first place. Ideology, after all, is how they are recruited, not why they join.

### **2. Ensuring effective and accountable criminal justice and law enforcement procedures**

An individual's touchpoint with the criminal justice sector can profoundly influence his or her trajectory away from or towards violence. Police play critical and sophisticated roles in deterrence. The establishment of accountable information sharing mechanisms between the public and law enforcement helps ensure that individuals are not prematurely criminalized. Many European law enforcement services have implemented referral mechanisms, especially as more and more non-government actors are involved in this space. Rehabilitation programs in prison are another crucial piece of this effort, and the Nordic countries in particular are able to build upon on a long history of prison rehabilitation programs for all criminal offenders to address this issue. These programs work to ensure a new start for the offender by providing vocational and educational support, helping repair family and community ties, and leveraging psycho-social assistance.

### **3. Working to prevent recidivism**

After prison, many individuals return to the same environment in which they radicalized in the first place and even if they do not engage in violent activity directly, they may continue to espouse ideas that encourage violence or help with recruitment. Effective reintegration programs are an imperative and Europe has a number of programs that were originally developed to

address members of biker gangs, neo-Nazis, and quasi-criminal groups. Some of these programs have been tailored in recent years to address the reintegration of former violent extremists, and support their continued disengagement from violence. They function both as preventative and disengagement efforts in that some who participate in the programs may have not engaged significantly in violent crimes, and others have been incarcerated.

I highlight these important efforts because they have some relevance beyond Europe and also because a commitment to prevention requires global support.

### **Recommendations**

The U.S. has been a leader in efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism, and can continue to support our allies in Europe in the following ways:

#### **Continue to prioritize and support prevention.**

The U.S. helped lead the charge in conceptualizing and developing preventative solutions to violent extremism, and was at the forefront of recognizing the value of community-led and municipal level initiatives. Continued U.S. involvement, commitment and dedication of resources to this line of effort is critical, and is a vital corollary to law enforcement efforts.

#### **Make distinctions with a difference in efforts to fight terrorism.**

The reasons why young men in the suburbs of Paris or Brussels radicalize are different from the dynamics in the Western Balkans or the former Soviet Republics or North Africa, all regions which have produced high numbers of foreign fighters. The circumstances, causes and motives are even more different when examining what leads youth to join Boko Haram in Nigeria or what enables Al Shabaab to flourish. Although these threats are interrelated from a security perspective, they require different tools and strategies and approaches to mitigate them. The U.S. needs to ensure these distinctions and nuances are reflected in its policies and engagement.

#### **Remain active partners and leaders within the international community.**

Terrorism is a transnational threat and a global and shared challenge. There are a number of multilateral fora for helping advance cooperation and collaboration in addressing this challenge to include the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Global Counterterrorism Forum. The U.S. should remain steadfast in its engagement and commitment to helping build the capacity of countries to develop sustainable and effective CVE and CT strategies, along with allied partners. American leadership is crucial.

Thank you for your continued focus and attention to this critical issue. I look forward to answering your questions.

*The view expressed in this testimony are those of the author and not the U.S. Institute of Peace.*



Mr. POE. I thank the witnesses and thank you for staying on time. We all appreciate that. The Chair will reserve its questions for last. I will recognize the chairman of the European Subcommittee, Mr. Rohrabacher, for his questions.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, first and foremost, I want to thank the witnesses. You have given us a really good foundation to look at this. And, you know, it is perplexing, people's lives are at stake, and your statistics and your analysis of it, frankly, we needed your help and thank you for being here. And thank you, Your Honor, for holding this hearing.

I would like to ask—you have some information for us on this I am sure. How much spying is being done by our Government of our own people? I mean every time it has come for a vote, I voted against permitting the government to have more spying on American citizens, all right. And we are faced with this decision. Are we going to allow more and more people to tap our telephones or whatever they do, go into our internet systems and things?

Do you think that we should be—that that is a wrong vote on my part? Am I wrong for not agreeing to allow the law enforcement and our protectors to actually have greater leverage in spying on American citizens who might be related to someone who came, migrated here last, you know, 10 years ago or something? Who wants to answer that question? Oh, come on. Be courageous. We have to vote on it.

Mr. HUGHES. Yeah, I will take the easy one. I agree with the chairman in terms of the question of intelligence is onefold, right. Now the fact that you have a FISA and thousands of documents on that individual gives you insight into the person, but it is one thing to have the intelligence and another thing to have their agents and resources to run that down.

And I think that is a lot of the problem with the issues we are dealing with in Europe and some parts in America, where you have an influx of information whether it is social media, whether it is wiretaps and things like that, but not an ability to kind of act on that and not knowing when to act. So to the extent we can kind of limit the data to just what exactly what we need and help kind of bring down the level of general—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We are cooperating with Europe, correctly, are we involved in spying on European citizens in order to track down these terrorists that we wouldn't be allowed to do in our own country? Anybody know the answer, go for it.

Mr. SIMCOX. Well, I know that the European governments, especially the ones that work very closely with the U.S. of which the U.K. certainly is one of those countries, are tremendously grateful for the help that the U.S. offers in terms of the intelligence capacity that it provides which far outstrips that of the vast majority of European countries.

I tend to think and we have a lot of these debates in the U.K. as to the privacy, liberty, security debate, obviously it is a very tricky one, I tend to think that as long as the oversight is robust. And it seems to me, I am not a subject matter expert but having looked at the U.S. intelligence community oversight seems to be quite robust certainly compared to many of the European governments, some of whom perhaps complain in public about American

spying, but then in private are grateful for some of the intelligence that is passed on.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I think it is highly likely, and I am not getting into details right now but probably behind closed doors, that we are conducting extensive and then listening and hacking, if you will, overseas and we are sharing that with our European allies and I would hope we are.

Let me just ask this and go to this one other issue then before my time comes up here. And I mentioned that the ranking member and I, Mr. Keating, went to Russia and we met with the head of their renamed KGB—FSB, I guess they call it—and they were very generous with us with information and they actually gave us some information that we believe gave us a better understanding of the Boston Marathon bomber and where he was coming from and his family background. And by the way, I believe had they shared that with us beforehand we might have then put him on a higher level of observation.

And do you think that we should be working with the Russians? I would just tell you that I personally, of course I am a lone wolf here in the Congress, we need to be working with Russia to defeat radical Islam because that threatens their people and it threatens our people. And there is no reason in the world that I think because we have disagreements in other parts of the world that that cooperation should be in some way shut off.

Do you have any thoughts on that and please feel free.

Ms. CRAGIN. I will take that one since you—

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I have run out of time but I think they will give you time to answer.

Mr. POE. You can answer the question about Russia.

Ms. CRAGIN. Over the past couple years I have been involved in some Track II diplomacy discussions with Russian academics, and we have wrestled with this issue of to what extent could we cooperate and how could we cooperate on counterterrorism. So I will just tell you sort of my impressions from that.

We kept getting bogged down. Now we were academics so we are not policy makers. We kept getting bogged down and I will summarize how we got bogged down. We kept getting bogged down because as an American I am comfortable with a certain amount of instability in pursuit of democratic values, so I am probably more risk-seeking. I am willing to accept some risk with democratic values being established. And my Russian counterpart, the ultimate goal was stability.

And so we just kept getting bogged down in these areas. Almost everything came down to this almost cultural or value-based tension. And so I would just offer that to you as you think about the practicality of it. We just couldn't seem to come to a lot of solution on it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. But it is worth trying, right?

Ms. CRAGIN. It was an interesting experience, I will say that.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you.

Mr. POE. The gentleman's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a great hearing. Between this committee and the Homeland Security Committee I am on, I spend a great deal of my time looking at issues of terrorism and it is a complex area. There is no simple solution. But we are spending some time today on an area that I am very intrigued by and I think we haven't come close to maximizing our prevention efforts in.

And I was listening to Ms. Holmer's testimony as a former FBI person and my own experiences as a district attorney, and there are similarities between how we approach crime issues and these terrorist crimes as well. You know, when I was in Europe a couple of years ago, the Hollings Center was doing a study on trying to find common characteristics among terrorists, people that were radicalized.

And, you know, they were dealing with things like whether there was a male role model, strong male presence in the family, and some of these characteristics in fact much less scientific. I remember the testimony of the former FBI Director Comey in front of our committee saying, describing these people as poor souls, but there is something to that.

Ms. Holmer, could you tell us from your experience, I could tell from your testimony, some of the common characteristics that are there that make people more prone to being radicalized?

Ms. HOLMER. So I think the first answer to that question is that it is unique per individual. There are some common trends that make people more vulnerable. Certainly we find in the European context it has to do with issues of assimilation. It has to do with issues of opportunity. It has to do with exposure to violence, exposure to criminality, and all of those issues make people more vulnerable to recruitment. I think that the challenge of course though when you are dealing with such a large pool of potential recruits is that it is outside the reach of law enforcement to possibly identify them especially when you are dealing with such low-level attacks that are self-inspired.

Mr. KEATING. Right, so how could we empower? I think the committee as a whole here is very strong in their support of empowering women and mothers to be able to recognize this radicalization as it occurs. Are you familiar with any of those?

Ms. HOLMER. I am very familiar with it. There is one NGO based in Vienna called Women Without Borders that has done some very groundbreaking work in this space. And their approach is to work with mothers to help them understand early warning signs of radicalization in their families so that they might intervene, they might know when the role is appropriate for the parents, and when it is indeed appropriate to pull in law enforcement into a conversation.

Mr. KEATING. Yeah. I think that law enforcement you can look at—I had programs like alternatives to prosecution for young people. I had mental health diversions and certain juvenile probation areas. And really, there is that opportunity at an early stage for law enforcement to deal with a lot of these issues that correspond.

In any case, here is a question that I am perplexed with too, when you look at Europe and the U.S. in particular, it is the amount of radicalization that occurs in prisons in Europe versus

the radicalization that occurs here. Now it occurs in both places, but it is not even close in scope given my knowledge in this area.

Why is it so much more of a problem in Europe? Why is this so commonplace in Europe as opposed to the U.S.? What are the factors there and what are they doing to correct that—anyone?

Mr. SIMCOX. Well, part of the problem is that in Europe the release rates are a lot quicker than the U.S., right, so people get—the example I always give is that somebody like the person that carried out the Brussels 2016 attack had previously been convicted for a bank robbery where he shot a Kalashnikov at a police officer. I mean in America I think that would lead to a pretty lengthy jail sentence. I think in Belgium he got something like 3 years. And so he had contact with radicals in prison, he was out very quickly, then he carries out these attacks.

I know that European governments are trying all sorts of different strategies to deal with this. France has tried isolating certain high-risk people, certain radicalizers, but then that hasn't really worked. The U.K. has taken a slightly different tack. I think part of it is down to numbers. There has just been the over, the population of the Muslim population in prisons is way, way disproportionate in comparison to the overall population. And I know that lots of countries are wrestling with different strategies and nobody has been terribly successful. And so I think we just need to keep experimenting to be frank.

Mr. KEATING. Yes, if could, one more, Mr. Hughes; is that all right, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. POE. Why not.

Mr. HUGHES. I mean that in terms of the U.S. context, we tend to segregate our convicted terrorists and use specially administrative measures in order to monitor their phones, things like that, put them in Terre Haute or Supermax. So if they are radicalized then they are just radicalizing guys already radicalized next to them and that tends to work. I would agree with Robin, the numbers are smaller.

I would mention a public policy question we need to grapple with; the average prison sentence for an American ISIS recruit is about 13 years. We have had about two folks who have already been released. We are going to have to grapple with a large number of Americans who were arrested for ISIS-related activities that are getting out of jail in the not-too-distant future.

And we haven't figured that out. If you talk to the Bureau of Prisons or the Department of Homeland Security their eyes glaze over on these questions, and I think it is incumbent for us to roll up our sleeves and figure this out.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Duncan.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you. I thank the gentleman from Texas for holding this hearing and the gentleman from California. I think it is important. It is a broad topic. I don't think we are going to get to all the areas of discussion in this one hearing. I hope we will do it again.

My concern has been ISIL operatives infiltrating the Muslim migration into Europe that we saw last year, last 18 months. A lot

of those were military age men coming into Europe. Countries like Hungary are recognizing their own sovereignty and securing their borders, but you don't have that throughout Europe especially with Schengen. We are seeing that, you know, free flow of people across Europe was exploited by I believe one of the Brussels attackers or somebody headed to Brussels had a carload of automatic weapons, grenades, and Semtex.

So a lot of folks that I represent are concerned about those folks getting to Europe and staying long enough to gain citizenship and being able to come to this country at some point in the future. Not present day, but possibly the future. ISIL has been in existence for 24 months, 36 months, and so we are getting into that timeframe where citizenship can be earned and folks could possibly come to the United States with the visa waiver programs, et cetera.

Dr. Cragin, you have done a lot of work regarding the threat of returning foreign fighters, Europeans that have gone to Syria and Iraq, Libya, and returned back. Now we just saw that recently in England. So how can Congress better understand this and fight back against that threat?

Ms. CRAGIN. So I guess I will start with the refugee issue. In my dataset of external operations, so outside of the provinces, about 3 percent of the attacks had a refugee involved in them. I am not saying it is a nonexistent threat, but it is very, very low relative to inspired individuals who are already residents and citizens, those directed by virtual planners and foreign fighter returnees.

So when you are looking at a risk assessment and you are putting all those in place, my tendency as a counterterrorism professional is to look at the foreign fighter returnees and now the virtual planners, so just to put that in context.

Now looking at the foreign fighter returnees, I do think that intelligence cooperation and in coordination with law enforcement and military activities has improved significantly I would say since 2016, late 2015, early 2016, and so we are on the right track. My biggest concern in that area are the foreign fighter returnees that are going to be going to North Africa. And Tunisia, we said all of Europe was 5,000, Tunisia has 6,500 and Tunisia is awfully close to Europe. And so that is my concern, they simply do not have the capacity nor the intelligence assets that we have.

So if you are interested in helping out Europe, the next step is actually to broaden that cooperation and try and find a way to help Egypt, help Tunisia, and Jordan to a certain extent, to make sure that they can absorb and reintegrate their foreign fighters returnees and those are very, very large numbers that are coming home.

Mr. DUNCAN. I agree with you on that. Do you think you are going to see and we already have seen, but do you think you are going to see more border control measures put in place, less Schengen, free travel? We have seen Germany do a little bit of that, France do a little bit of that, but definitely saw Hungary, which wasn't Schengen, I realize that, but concern about migration into their country or at least through their countries.

Do you think Europe will address the open border situation and see more return to border controls or do you think they are going to continue with the open border situation that we have now? And

Dr. Cragin, I would just address that to you. Whichever one would want to answer, but we are on the clock.

Ms. CRAGIN. So I haven't talked to European officials so I don't know what they intend to do. As a counterterrorism professional, border security is one part. But personally, in my research the more you can push out the threat and deal with it outside of Europe, as I said in sort of North Africa and the Levant, then that is better than relying on border security measures as they are crossing back into Europe, quite frankly. That is just sort of my—

Mr. DUNCAN. You are talking about wide range in Middle East and North Africa and we have seen the fighters coming across from Libya, Tunisia to Morocco over to Portugal over to Spain—Italy has got a huge problem. People getting on rafts out of Libya to Malta, and in Malta they are in the European Union. So there is a lot of issues. That is a big, broad area.

The fact of the matter is there are people already in Europe that could be radicalized. There are people already in Europe that have traveled from the Middle East through this migration that are military age men who could have been inspired before they ever left. They have got a problem in the country. I understand what you are saying, but the problem and what we have seen have been people inspired in Europe, maybe they came from North Africa at some point, but they have been there long enough.

So the issue today are the people that are in the country, their ability to travel around and they are getting inspired through online measures. Mr. Chairman, those are some questions I hope the Europeans are asking themselves. We are not going to solve it for them, but I appreciate the information.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York, Mr. Meeks.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to agree this has been a very interesting hearing and something that we have got to really dig into. Let me just try to go a little bit further, I guess, on what Mr. Duncan was talking about, because I hear a lot of folks now talking about the way to prevent terrorist attacks is by banning immigrants and refugees and individuals from coming back into, or going into various different countries.

So I guess my first question is, do you think by banning immigrants—and I think you said, Ms. Cragin, it was only 3 percent of individuals who were not coming from post, from the war areas, those who are returning from battle, you know, over there, but the actual refugees and immigrants who we can—do you think by banning all refugees and immigrants will that cut down on terrorism in these various areas in Europe or anyplace in the world for that matter because terrorism is all over the place now?

Ms. CRAGIN. The way that you successfully put together a counterterrorism strategy is you have layers and lots of different security measures throughout. So my data suggests that of external operations, that is, attacks conducted by ISIS outside of its provinces, its 25 provinces, 3 percent included somebody who had come through the refugee system. So that is not zero, it is something.

But then you start talking about where do you put your resources because nobody can devote just everything to this problem.

Do you devote it to border security measures? Do you devote it to intelligence operations? Do you devote it to military operations? That is sort of what we are talking about.

As a counterterrorism professional, I prefer to see more devoted out toward intelligence, law enforcement investigations, and military operations than border security. That doesn't necessarily mean you don't do border security. Now I am just talking about relative resources and what you devote to what type of operation.

Mr. MEEKS. So let me ask Ms. Holmer, because one of the things that I have also seen that we could be taking our eye off the ball, for example, in the western Balkans where we talk about where there is a space of very high unemployment, disenchantment, and religious extremism present and I think that can help present a dangerous recipe. So what can be done in this region to help secure pathways or their path toward NATO and EU while minimizing the risk of terror in those particular areas?

Ms. HOLMER. I know one issue that is important to the Kosovo Government is that they are not members of Interpol. And I think that having the Balkan countries fully integrated into all of the cooperative mechanisms that are in place in Europe would be significant, and also acknowledging that the threat is not just from returnees but from people who are already in the country who haven't left who may be inspired to engage in acts of violence. And that speaks to not just bolstering law enforcement intelligence operations, but also to having a commensurate resource commitment to prevention.

Mr. MEEKS. Now let me ask this question. As I talk to some of my, well, some are friends, some are constituents, et cetera here in the United States, those who happen to be Muslim also, they do say the words that we utilize in the United States and in Europe and others are important. Some would help, you know, words are important, some helps to recruit, will help recruiters recruit individuals.

Do you think that words matter and how we entitle or how we title, I should say, for example, I know my friend from California says we are free to now say radical Islamic terrorist. Or I heard Mr. Simcox, he indicated, he used the word, he used the phrase, Islamic terrorist as opposed to Islamic terror. Does that make a difference or is that just semantics for us or et cetera? Does words matter in this regard when we are fighting terror? Ms. Holmer?

Ms. HOLMER. I think all political violence is an affront to democratic values regardless of the ideology that underpins it. And while it helps us understand the motives, helps us to understand the recruitment dynamics, helps us understand and counter those ideologies to know exactly what they are, I am not sure there is a very big difference, ultimately, between the types of violence that were inspired by Marxist ideologies in the 1980s or the separatist groups during that period as well from what we see today.

So while I think it is important as part of our understanding and it is an important piece of a layered counterterrorism strategy, it is only one piece of the puzzle and overemphasizing it is going to keep us away from the other pieces.

Mr. MEEKS. Out of time.

Mr. POE. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Garrett.

Mr. GARRETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am curious because we have spent a lot of time on the entity that I call Daesh or ISIS, some people call it ISIL. And my understanding of the term Levant in its historic context would be essentially the entire eastern Mediterranean region extending into what some would argue would be Iraq to include North African nations, currently Libya, Egypt, as well as in fact the island of Cyprus and Greece, et cetera.

You spoke—Dr. Cragin, is that historically, roughly, correct as to what the Levant would mean?

Ms. CRAGIN. Yeah. Normally, North Africa is the Maghreb, so probably up through Egypt, but you wouldn't then go into Libya and to Algeria. That would be considered the Levant.

Mr. GARRETT. So, and I am not going to be rude, but—

Ms. CRAGIN. Lebanon, Jordan, yes.

Mr. GARRETT. Sure, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, I mean in the broadest historical sense. And so if you were to refer to ISIL, you would actually be giving a larger geographic footprint to the entity that is ISIS as opposed to ISIS which would be Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; am I correct?

Ms. CRAGIN. I think this is a semantic thing of do you use the word that they used to call themselves, do you assign something to them? This is the Daesh, this is the ISIS versus ISIL.

Mr. GARRETT. Sure. But having spent a little bit of time affiliating with both law enforcement and warfare, it strikes me that unless you wish to bolster your enemy, unless you wish to strengthen your enemy and the view of your enemy themselves in the world, you minimize. You might refer to them say, for example, as the JV team, right? I mean that would be, but normally, traditionally, you don't want to build your enemy up, right? I guess what I am driving at is that the Levant is larger than Iraq and Syria and why someone would choose to call them ISIL, which would give them greater credibility, is beyond me and yet that has been done.

I want to speak briefly to FISA. A recent report in the case is that up to 5 percent of FISA Court applications and upstream information gathering during the last—is the previous administration, was actually used against American citizens. And Section 702 of the Code allows for us to use FISA because it orders that American citizens be masked, wherein those citizens' identities might have accidentally been associated with a foreign intelligence target, because why, because we don't know who has called whom. It could be a wrong number or it could be a call for entirely unrelated methods or reasons.

If in fact this is the case and that shakes the confidence of people like my colleague from California and myself in FISA, does that also run the parallel risk of undermining our intelligence gathering operations and stymieing our abilities to stop attacks before they happen, Mr. Simcox?

Mr. SIMCOX. I am going to have to—I just don't know enough about the FISA Section 702 to be able to answer that satisfactorily.

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Hughes, do you have any opinion on that?

Mr. HUGHES. No, I would agree with Robin on that.



Mr. GARRETT. Okay. I would submit for the record, Mr. Chairman, that if we weaponize Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act processes that have existed in this country since 1979, so for 38 years, against Americans, that people like myself and others who are reasonable and appreciate the Bill of Rights and specifically the Fourth Amendment thereto, might then rail against the use of those particular intelligence gathering techniques.

And if we rail against the use of those particular intelligence gathering techniques, I would argue that we will gather less intelligence and therefore be less effective in stymieing or stopping the next attack. And so I would submit that perhaps the blood of Americans who are victimized in an attack that is missed because a prior administration or individual determined that it was worthwhile and reasonable to completely subvert the intent of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and thus Congress acted appropriately to defend the legitimate privacy expectations of American citizens, that entity or actor might have blood on their hands.

I am going to switch subjects briefly to the Muslim Brotherhood. I have sourced from probably four or five different sources the Muslim Brotherhood motto. I know there is a bill that would designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization before this Congress. I understand the political sensitivity as the Muslim Brotherhood engages in things certainly not directly related to terror.

But I would ask you, if the Muslim Brotherhood motto is roughly translated into Allah is our objective, the Prophet is our leader, the Koran is our law, Jihad is our way, and dying in the name of Allah is our goal, couldn't a reasonable person think that was an imploration to commit extremist acts, Mr. Simcox?

Mr. SIMCOX. Yeah. I think that the question with the bill is, I think one of the main concerns is whether you are going to be able to legally designate the Brotherhood as a terrorist entity and whether that will achieve what we want to achieve. By that—

Mr. GARRETT. Are there subordinate entities to the Brotherhood that might be able to be singled out that would be more accurate? Mr. Hughes?

Mr. SIMCOX. I think that would—

Mr. GARRETT. Sorry. He was nodding so he got the call.

Mr. HUGHES. Yeah, there are a number of Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations I think you could take a hard look at in terms of—

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Chairman, I am out of time. I would ask you, Mr. Hughes and Mr. Simcox—I apologize. If you all would please contact my office with the names of subordinate entities that might be more appropriately designated, thank you.

Mr. POE. And I would ask the gentlemen to provide that list to the Chair. And the Chair recognizes the gentlelady from California, Ms. Torres.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses that are here today. I am a new member of this committee. Prior to coming here I was on Homeland Security. I was a local mayor. In the state legislature in California I spent a lot of time studying and dealing with state prison issues. In my district

I have a men's prison, a women's prison, and a juvenile detention which has now been closed.

So going back to a question that was asked by Ranking Member Keating regarding our prison system versus the European prison system, if incarcerated people in Europe are spending less time in prison than incarcerated people here in the U.S., wouldn't that be less time that they have inside, you know, a prison system to recruit?

Mr. SIMCOX. Well, I think part of the problem is the people who don't go into prison as radicals but come out with it that way. And so this is especially relevant when you think of ISIS' connections to the criminal nexus and their ability to recruit from criminal fraternities, because you have certainly had, you have very influential people within French prisons, let's take an example, who have a very long track record now of being able to connect to the people that have gone in for somewhat petty crimes that are going to be leading to release in 6 months to 2 years.

Mrs. TORRES. So, and U.S. prisons are, you know, institutions. We try to separate the Mexican mafia, for example, with other gangs. The Bloods and the Crips, we try not to hold them within the same area. Is this different than what is happening in Europe?

Mr. SIMCOX. Well, in Europe they have experimented with different approaches, but I think that it is, there has definitely been a problem when you have had key radicalizers in among the general prison population increasing radicalization. The problem is you get some groups who are concerned if you stop putting, for example, terrorist-only wings, then there are complaints that you are creating a British Guantanamo Bay or something like that. I don't find those to be persuasive arguments, but that is the sort of things you hear on the other side.

Mrs. TORRES. So let's talk a little bit about community policing. Having come from also that environment, spent a lot of time representing, you know, a city that has high crime and numerous gangs and very at-risk youth, there is a lot to be said about at-risk youth and the lack of services and the lack of education and opportunities.

Here in the U.S., I think at least the Muslim community within my district is very much integrated. They are very much a part of the quilt that, you know, is the makeup of our very diverse and culturally diverse community and they are seen as a positive influence in our community, not as a negative influence. They tend to want to work and be a part of the solution with law enforcement and with FBI officials.

So in the case of San Bernardino, I mean that really comes out. And I have lost constituents. I used to represent the city of San Bernardino as a state senator. And it really troubles me that there weren't real signals out there from a young mother with a young baby and a young father. What could we do? What is a lesson there that we could learn certainly without having to racially profile someone just because of the way they look?

Mr. HUGHES. Maybe I will jump in. George has done some really good work on the RESOLVE Network and looked at these kind of community-oriented policing things, but I would say in the U.S. context community engagement is one step. So I used to do—

Mr. POE. Is your mic on?

Mr. HUGHES. Yes. I used to——

Mr. POE. Talk louder then.

Mr. HUGHES. Sorry, sir. I used to do community engagement mostly in Mr. Keating's district, which was you go to a mosque with 300 people in a room and you talk about terrorism radicalization.

Mrs. TORRES. But you don't talk down at them.

Mr. HUGHES. No.

Mrs. TORRES. You let them talk to you.

Mr. HUGHES. No. Yeah, you have to. And it has to not be numbers. It has to be human stories, right. How do you reach the kid before they cross the line? When you look at the U.S. cases, you have what we call a bystander effect in the majority of them where individuals see something concerning but don't know what to do with it and don't have the tools to deal with it.

And we haven't provided as the U.S. Government or communities, really, alternatives to prosecution, intervention programs, so that if you have a case like Enrique Marquez who was on the law enforcement radar for a number of years but don't have enough to arrest him, we can't veer him off to somewhere else. Our European partners have developed these kind of one-on-one interventions, nascent in some places, but at least they are putting resources behind it.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My time is up.

Mr. POE. The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from Illinois, Ms. Kelly.

Ms. KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to you and the rankings for holding this hearing today on terrorism in Europe.

Given the recent terrorist attacks in Europe, especially the three attacks that have taken place in the United Kingdom since March, understanding and combating terrorism is increasingly important to both the United States and our allies across the Atlantic. Over 70 percent of the perpetrators of terrorism in Europe are citizens of the countries they attacked. This is an indication that radicalization is taking place within countries in Europe and could also happen within the United States.

Richard A. Stengel, the former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, testified before Congress that other countries can better deal with terrorist information operations than the United States. So for all of you, is the current Global Engagement Center being run by the Department of State the best messenger to counter extremism, and also how should we be coordinating our information operations to counter extremist propaganda to help protect the homeland and help our allies? And whoever feels they can answer.

Mr. HUGHES. Yeah, I will jump in on the Global Engagement Center or the GEC. We have seen a number of different iterations there. I tend to be a believer that the U.S. Government shouldn't cede the space, meaning that I am okay with the stamp of the U.S. Government on communications as long as you also have the black, the gray, and the white still going on at the same time.

And I think we are seeing an evolution at the GEC of away from this broad-based, here is a 30-second video on YouTube that won't

get your target audience to more of how do we move folks that we have identified in the online space to offline intervention, boards, or groups, NGOs in Europe and other places, where we can start to try to bring these people back in the fold?

I would hope the Global Engagement Center moves away from large scale programming toward more targeted programming and then you are able to then measure effectively. If you can go back to them and say it is working and Congress I need more money or you can say it is not working, let's shift gears.

Mr. SIMCOX. On the Global Engagement Center I think you need to have a, I think it is important to have an approach that is flexible, the changes, if necessary, region by region. It is not going to be a cookie-cutter strategy that you can just implement across any area or concern by. I tend to agree with Seamus. I don't think the U.S. Government should cede this space. I know that people would say somehow it is an imperfect messenger, but I think while that may be true what is perfect about this area we are working in? So I hope the U.S. remains engaged.

Ms. KELLY. Okay.

Ms. HOLMER. I would just add that the success of any counter messaging program is that the message itself is local, locally originated and locally given. So the success of any sort of effort in that is rooted in having partnership in the countries that are the recipients of those messages.

Ms. KELLY. And do you feel in light of changes that have gone on in the United States that the countries feel confident in us, like our European allies?

Ms. HOLMER. I think that depends country to country.

Mr. SIMCOX. I still think that there is—whenever I speak to European governments on this I don't think what you should overestimate in the U.S. the distrust that is coming from Europe. People in Europe still want to work with the U.S. on these issues. There is a great level of, I mean, trust that still exists and alliances that have been built up over decades that aren't going to, they aren't dependent on one President or one party.

And so all the conversations I have had with European governments throughout various levels have been people saying like how do we increase contacts, how do we carry on this work in these relationships, because they know that the U.S. is important on so many levels—the diplomatic, intelligence, military—all the things that go into forging effective counterterrorism policy.

Ms. KELLY. That is good to hear.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentlelady and I will recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. We in the United States per capita faced far less Islamic extremism from plots hatched on our own soil which of course excludes 9/11. What is it about what we are doing that is better or worse in terms of assimilating our Muslim American communities and convincing them not to engage in the behavior that we see from Brussels to Paris to London? Mr. Simcox?

Mr. SIMCOX. Well, there are host of things. I would offer one quite simple, and I hope it doesn't seem trite, example. The word

you used, assimilation, is not a word that is ever used in Europe. It is not——

Mr. SHERMAN. Is it thought to be politically incorrect?

Mr. SIMCOX. Yeah, I think people just don't see, people talk about integration perhaps, but then there is also a lot of debate about, well, should we really expect people to integrate? I mean this is how you allow parallel societies essentially to develop in the way that unfortunately we have in Europe. So I think there is an incredible reluctance, still, to even talk about—I mean like I say the word assimilation just isn't used. And I think that is an area where Europe certainly needs to change.

There are a whole host of other issues relating to the type of immigration that has taken place whether, for example, the U.S. took in people from more affluent backgrounds perhaps as opposed to the ways of migration that came into the U.K. or Germany perhaps. I think there is a whole host of things around that that you could debate and go back and forth on. But I do think the assimilation v. integration on is a kind of an interesting component to this.

Mr. SHERMAN. And I would point out that we as a country have a much longer period of assimilating people while they still retain their religious traditions. And there is a tendency to think that if you are doing better than someone else that everything you are doing is right and everything they are doing is wrong. What can we learn? What is Europe doing right that would make sense to do here in the United States? Ms. Holmer, or anyone else who wants to answer.

Ms. HOLMER. Sure. Europe is spending a lot more resources and time on the prevention agenda. They have a lot more programs that are about diversion, that are about interventions before people at early stages of radicalization. This is something that the EU has invested heavily in. This is something that happens on both the municipal and the national government level in terms of funding and support and they have a lot more programs than we do.

Mr. SHERMAN. And yet they have the bigger problem.

Dr. Cragin?

Ms. CRAGIN. If I could just add, not to pat ourselves on the back too much or to get too critical of Europe, their networks, and this was mentioned earlier, exist all the way back to the conflict in Bosnia. So these networks of recruitment and radicalization have been around a lot longer than we have had in the United States. And so part of the explanation for why there is more——

Mr. SHERMAN. So let me get this straight. NATO, a predominantly Christian or Christian-heritage organization, went to war with a Christian country, Serbia, to defend the people of Bosnia, then of Kosovo, the two of the three Muslim majority states in Europe today, and instead of people saying, my god, here NATO is living up to its values and defending people regardless of their religion, instead, somehow the narrative was now it is time to blow things up in the countries that saved the people of Kosovo and Bosnia, the Muslim people of Bosnia and Kosovo.

Ms. CRAGIN. So let me explain it on two levels. You are talking about motivations, and I think there is still part of that that exists that NATO and the United States intervened too late, so there is that. But I am actually talking about——

Mr. SHERMAN. Wait a minute. The Muslim majority countries intervened not at all and saved almost no one, but those who saved people didn't do a good enough job. Continue.

Ms. CRAGIN. Right. No, I agree. But what I want to actually point out is the logistics network that exists and the financing network that exists that then funneled fighters and money into that conflict then reversed, and that network is what they are trying to root out now.

Mr. SHERMAN. Now the countries of Kosovo and Bosnia and the Muslim majority area of Bosnia-Herzegovina exist because of NATO. Have their leaders and imams been helpful in pushing back against Islamic extremism given the fact that we saved them?

Ms. CRAGIN. So I will just say—I know you have done work on this. I will just say one thing that I think is really interesting about the Dayton Accords which is that they actually required all of the foreign fighters who went, and there were 3,000 who went to fight in Bosnia, to leave. And this is something that the countries have been working hard to make sure that they reinforce more recently than they did earlier, but I think that it is a good precedent and they are trying with limited resources.

Mr. POE. The gentleman's time has expired. The Chair recognizes itself for its questions. Thank you for being here. There has been some discussion about American intelligence sources spying on Americans. I have a great concern about that under the FISA Court, secret courts issuing secret warrants on secret individuals.

I do believe we can have security and safety and we can have civil liberties in the United States. The abuse by the intelligence services of specifically 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act must end or Congress must take immediate actions to stop FISA in its entirety. They are abusing the law as it already is, in my opinion, and that is our obligation because we are unique among nations. We have actually the Fourth Amendment to protect people and Americans in the United States.

Something that hasn't been talked about very much is the use of social media. We have foreign terrorists using American companies to recruit, to raise money, to spread propaganda, and to teach other terrorists how to make bombs. The Europeans are talking about trying to rein in social media. We have a legislation that requires our Government to tell us what the plan is on social media. To be very clear, the Supreme Court has said that the terrorists do not have a constitutional right to use social media. It is not a free speech platform that they are entitled to use. That is not an issue. I am a big First Amendment guy.

But what are we doing to rein in our social media companies to stop recruitment, raising money, propaganda, and the building of bombs? Anybody want to talk about that? The Europeans are talking about fining these businesses, social media companies. What are we doing?

Mr. HUGHES. Sure, if I may jump in. So if given the option social media companies would want to be libertarian in their views, right, and take down no content. Because of pushback they have gotten from Capitol Hill, from the public in saying why are you letting your platforms be used by terrorists—

Mr. POE. But they don't have a constitutional right to do that. It is no free speech issue.

Mr. HUGHES. No. And they could enforce the terms of service more rigorously. In fact, we have seen that happen at least recently on Twitter. If you had asked me 2 years ago what the platform of choice would be I would tell you Twitter. My concern now is that it is largely, the ISIS recruits are largely concentrated on Telegram which—

Mr. POE. A German company.

Mr. HUGHES. German, yeah. And so it allows for ident encryption, and so what you are seeing is less of the fence sitters. So you are less likely to get a kid from the Midwest who is curious about ISIS. You are more likely to get the true believers who are looking for connectors and guys in Raqqa, the legion in there saying here is the bomb you should use.

Mr. POE. So what can we do? Cut to the chase, Mr. Hughes.

Mr. HUGHES. Cut to the chase, no problem. So there is a couple ways to do it. It is one, I think, more pressure on Telegram to the extent that the larger—

Mr. POE. Should they be held criminally liable for that?

Mr. HUGHES. I think you could argue some level of civil liability may be in play here. I think the larger question we are talking—

Mr. POE. Our social media companies have brought down all of the child pornography sites with absolutely no problem about liberty, and that works. Why not use the same protocol to bring down terrorist sites? Why is that not occurring, do you know?

Mr. HUGHES. Yeah. I think it is occurring more rapidly in Facebook and less so in other places. And so I would encourage social media companies to do what they are doing now which is using AI and hashtagging technologies to proactively take down content.

Mr. POE. Are any of you in favor of criminal or civil penalties against social media companies that don't bring down terrorist sites, any of you? I guess that is a no. We shall see where we go with that.

I have a question for all of you. How many ISIS terrorists are there in the world? Does anybody know an estimate? You all are the experts, you have got to give me a number here. Does anybody know how many? Nobody wants to say. Well, I think we ought to at least know how many of the enemy there are if we are going to be able to defeat them.

What is the definition of a terrorist? Give me a working definition of a terrorist as opposed to some outlaw, criminal, whatever. What is a terrorist?

Ms. Holmer, the FBI.

Ms. HOLMER. A terrorist is someone who commits an act of violence or violent crime justified by an extreme radical political or religious or social ideology.

Mr. POE. And Mr. Hughes, you were not very encouraging. You said the problem is going to get worse on terrorist activity. I believe it was you or Mr. Simcox, one of you said it is going to get worse in the future. We are not going to have a grip on this. Why is it going to get worse? And that will be my last question.

Mr. SIMCOX. I think it is going to get worse because in terms of the relation and the subject matter today, I think the problems in

Europe are stark, severe, and only getting worse. I don't see integration improving. I don't see security improving and that obviously has an impact on the U.S. I think there are a number of trends in Europe, which look terrifying, and that has an impact here.

Mr. POE. All right. I want to thank all of you for being here. I will allow the ranking, or the gentleman, the chairman of the European Subcommittee to make a comment, a final statement.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. A short closing statement, but let me just note one of the things let me just say, with all due respect, saying that only 3 percent of the terrorists come from the migrant camps or have migrated in totally distorts the view of what we are really talking about, because I imagine that 97 percent then come from migrant families that came and migrated into the Western European societies maybe 20 years ago or 30 years ago or even 40 years ago.

I mean this isn't like you have a bunch of basically, what we used to have in Northern Ireland, where you have a bunch of Catholics coming out who are basically part of the Irish society. This is basically the 3 percent figure you say, and every time you said it I think it was deceptive, and I don't mean you intentionally were deceiving people, but it was deceiving to us as to what the real threat is. If you have a bunch of migrants coming into your country and you are saying, well, only 3 percent of them will actually become terrorists, fine.

But if 90 percent of the terrorists come from their children or their children's children, yeah, you are putting yourself on a line to have a lot more terrorism in the future. And that is why maybe when they say terrorism is going to be an expanding problem that is what we mean. So I don't feel comfortable saying, oh, well, only 3 percent of the people who are immigrants into my community are going to be susceptible to terrorism. But if their children are, 97 percent of the children are or whatever it is, that is a problem.

So with that said, again we are a country of freedom and I have voted against—with Your Honor, I voted with you to make sure we don't step on people, people who are here legally. I think that is very—I am in favor of legal immigration whether there is Muslims or other people. But the fact is, whoever comes here we have to make sure that we understand the potential if they are coming here from a country that has a lot of terrorism or upheaval and radical Islamic culture then we have to be careful with that.

We have to make sure the people—in San Bernardino, Mr. Chairman, in San Bernardino we had a young man who, I guess he was born here of Islamic parents. He went out with this wife and they slaughtered social service workers. They just went out and slaughtered them. No, we should have taken more care there. We should have made sure that someone who was susceptible like that got a lot closer attention than what he obviously got.

And it is a challenge for all of us, freedom versus security, like we were saying, in all of our countries. So I don't think we can side totally with freedom, but I don't think we can side totally with security either. So thank you for helping us make up our minds to where that is, but I think the 3 percent number didn't help us. Okay, thank you very much.



Mr. POE. The Chair will recognize for the final statement, the ranking member, Mr. Keating from Massachusetts.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank the witnesses. We deal with this terrible epidemic that we have that is not just domestic but worldwide in so many different ways.

Today we had a chance to focus in part on one of the things that really hasn't been fully utilized as a tool against this terrorism and that is the idea of prevention. Sometimes the difficulty with prevention is you can't quantify it in statistics, because if you prevented it you may never know what indeed was responsible for stopping it. But just as the chair started the hearing saying, for instance, in 1,000—I am paraphrasing. In 1,000 attempts, all the terrorists have to do is be successful once.

In prevention in some of the techniques we are learning from Europe and they are learning from us, all we have to do is be successful one of those times to stop one of those terrible terrorist acts. So in programs that Mr. Hughes was involved in my region and other areas, they are successful but they need resources and they need commitment and they also need an understanding that law enforcement needs help outside of the traditional system to deal with preventing this. And thank you for a glimpse of that and some ideas today. I yield back.

Mr. POE. I thank the gentleman. I thank the witnesses for being here. You are advised now that you may have some questions presented to you by members of the subcommittee that ran out of time. Please respond promptly to those questions and send us answers.

And I thank the members for being here as well. This has been a very important and enlightening hearing. Thank you very much for your expertise. The subcommittees are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]



## A P P E N D I X

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade**  
**Ted Poe (R-TX), Chairman**

**Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats**  
**Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Chairman**

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held jointly by the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

**DATE:** Tuesday, June 27, 2017

**TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Allies Under Attack: The Terrorist Threat to Europe

**WITNESSES:** Mr. Seamus Hughes  
Deputy Director  
Program on Extremism  
George Washington University

Mr. Robin Simcox  
Margaret Thatcher Fellow  
Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy  
The Heritage Foundation

R. Kim Cragin, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Fellow for Counterterrorism  
Center for Complex Operations  
National Defense University

Ms. Georgia Holmer  
Director  
Countering Violent Extremism  
United States Institute of Peace

**By Direction of the Chairman**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Terrorism, Nonproliferation, & Trade and Europe, Eurasia, & Emerging Threats HEARINGDay Tuesday Date June 27, 2017 Room 2172Starting Time 2:09 p.m. Ending Time 3:45 p.m.Recesses ☐ ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to )

Presiding Member(s)

*Chairman Ted Poe*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒Executive (closed) Session ☐Televised ☒Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*"Allies Under Attack: The Terrorist Threat to Europe"*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*Reps. Poe, Keating, Rohrabacher, Meeks, Duncan, Sherman, Perry, Kelly, Zeldin, Torres, Garrett, Schneider*

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

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*QFRs submitted by Rep. Torres for Ms. Homer and Mr. Hughes*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE

or

TIME ADJOURNED 3:45 p.m.
  
 Subcommittee Staff Associate

**Questions for the Record of Representative Titus**

**House Foreign Affairs Joint Subcommittee Hearing TNT and EE&ET**

**“Allies Under Attack: The Terrorist Threat to Europe”**

**Question for the Record from Representative Titus to Ms. Holmer**

Ms. Holmer - In your written testimony you recommend that one of the most important ways to combat the rise in extremism is for the United States to “remain active partners and leaders within the international community.” You go on to say, “The U.S. should remain steadfast in its engagement and commitment to helping build the capacity of countries to develop sustainable and effective CVE and CT strategies, along with allied partners.” I share these sentiments. It is important that we remain closely engaged with our partners on C-V-E efforts, including sharing information and best practices. Last night a former Ambassador tweeted that “tumbleweeds are blowing through the corridors” at the State Department, as a number of critical positions, including the Assistant Secretary for Europe and Eurasian Affairs, are without permanent appointees. Are you concerned that the number of vacancies at the State Department will hurt those important partnerships and capacity building initiatives?

**Ms. Holmer’s Response:**

The Department of State plays a critical role in fostering the international partnerships that enable a collective and impactful response to transnational security threats. Beyond the vital bilateral and multilateral points of engagement that ensure cooperation and coordination in counterterrorism strategy, the US Government is also positioned to address and mitigate the root causes of violent extremism.

According to the Global Terrorism Index, in 2014 78% of deaths from terrorism occurred in Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Violent extremists groups have flourished in these regions by taking advantage of the absence of legitimate governance and rule of law and have harnessed their agendas to already existing conflict dynamics. Addressing these problems and investing in building stability in these regions will not only provide long terms benefits, but also help mitigate the terrorist trends we are witnessing in the West.

**Question for the Record from Representative Titus to Mr. Hughes**

Mr. Hughes - A number of senior leadership positions at the Department of Homeland Security remain either vacant or occupied by an “acting” official, including the Assistant Secretary for International Affairs (vacant). Do you believe the lack of permanent leaders at the Department may be hindering C-V-E efforts domestically, as well as with our international partners?

**Mr. Hughes' Response:**

Representative Titus,

I have concerns about the lack of senior leadership positions being filled at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Regarding efforts within DHS to implement Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), the majority of the Department's efforts in this field have been assisting organizations that operate in the United States. DHS plays a much more limited role in CVE internationally.

Filling vacant senior positions at DHS will be critical to the department's efficacy moving forward. It is hoped that in the very near future, these positions will be filled to ensure that the Department can work to its full potential. CVE programs in the Department have historically been managed and implemented by the department's mid-level civil servants, and even in the absence of senior leadership, have continued to develop programs. However, CVE programs would benefit from the long-term strategic guidance and planning that only senior level positions can provide.