

# **TERROR IN EUROPE: SAFEGUARDING U.S. CITIZENS AT HOME AND ABROAD**

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## **HEARING**

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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## **TERROR IN EUROPE: SAFEGUARDING U.S. CITIZENS AT HOME AND ABROAD**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2016**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room 342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Ron Johnson, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Johnson, Portman, Lankford, Ayotte, Ernst, Sasse, Carper, McCaskill, Tester, Baldwin, Booker, and Peters.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHNSON<sup>1</sup>**

Chairman JOHNSON. Good morning. This hearing will come to order.

I want to welcome the witnesses. Certainly, thank you for your thoughtful testimonies. We are looking forward to hearing those and having the opportunity to ask a number of questions.

When this hearing originally was planned, we were going to be talking about an issue that Senator Carper and I are also very concerned about: biosecurity and the threats that we face in that respect. With the unfortunate tragedy in Brussels, we thought we would, maybe, expand it. We, maybe, can still pick up on some of those biothreats, as well, but we thought we would like to hold a hearing to really take a look at the root causes that are driving this activity in Europe as well as to discuss the implications for us here in America.

In January 2016, there was a foiled plot in Milwaukee, Wisconsin against the Masonic Temple by an individual named Samy Mohamed Hamzeh. Now, I would say this is a real success story on the part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and those individuals—the informants—that worked to foil that plot. In the complaint filed against Samy Mohamed Hamzeh—I just have four little sentences. They are disconnected, but it, certainly, reveals what is going on in the minds—or in the mind of an individual that actually plots to slaughter innocent human beings. This is what he was quoted as saying:

“I am telling you, if this is executed, it will be known all over the world. The people will be scared and the operations will increase. This way, we will be igniting it. I mean, we are marching at the front of the war and we will eliminate everyone.”

<sup>1</sup>The prepared statement of Senator Johnson appears in the Appendix on page 49.

Now, in his plotting, he was trying to accomplish the killing of 100 people. And, in the complaint, he also said he would be 100 percent happy if he was able to kill 30 people. These threats that Europe is facing—these threats that America is facing because of Islamic terrorists are real and they are growing. And, the purpose of this hearing is really to—again, to take a look at the root causes of those problems and to see what we can do here, in America, to try and keep this Nation—our homeland—as safe and secure as possible.

I also do have to say, on March 22, we did reach out, the day after the Brussels attack, to the FBI, to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and to the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to have witnesses appear before this Committee today. Unfortunately, nobody from any of those Departments or Agencies agreed to testify, which is disappointing to me. I know Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson is on the Hill today having a press conference on additional funding for DHS, which—listen, we want to support the Department by giving it the tools and the resources it needs to keep this Nation safe. I think, probably, a pretty good way to try and secure those resources would be to come before a Committee like this to lay out the reality of the problem. So, I am disappointed that we do not have a government witness—or witnesses—today, but I certainly appreciate the fact that you all have come here today and are willing to testify.

So, with that, I will turn it over to Senator Carper.

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARPER<sup>1</sup>**

Senator CARPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for pulling this together today.

To each of our witnesses, it is good to see you and I want to thank you for your preparation and for joining us on this occasion.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families—and with the victims—of those who died 2 weeks ago. And, my hope is that something good can emerge from something awful—and this hearing is part of that process.

As with the terrorist attacks in Paris, the similar attacks in places around the world—like Pakistan and Turkey—as well as the attacks in our own country—at the Boston Marathon and in San Bernadino—it exposes, yet again, the vulnerabilities that we face in public places—places that are hard to defend—malls, trains, train stations, airports, and the like.

With today's 24-hour news cycle, Americans are seeing these attacks unfold, literally, in real time. From our living rooms, we can see the devastation that these attacks cause and the pain that they inflict on the victims and on their loved ones. So, Americans are understandably uneasy and they are concerned for their own safety and for the safety of their families, friends, and neighbors.

I think that it is important for us to remember that fear is the most potent weapon that terrorists—like those who committed these attacks—have. They want to scare us into turning against one another and turning against our neighbors in this country. They want to make us afraid to go about our everyday lives.

<sup>1</sup>The prepared statement of Senator Carper appears in the Appendix on page 51.

We might feel a little bit safer if we saw more obvious security at every single public place we visit—even if that were possible—but those measures come at a very high price and do not necessarily deter terrorists, who do not value other lives or even value their own lives. And, many would argue—I believe, correctly—that turning every public place into a heavily guarded fortress would restrict Americans’ own personal freedom—even if we could afford to do so.

Instead, we need to be smart about how we combat these ever-evolving terror threats. We must continuously sharpen our ability to predict and prevent terrorist plots through the use of our robust intelligence and law enforcement capabilities and through our ability to share information.

Refining these tools and ensuring that we keep pace with the evolving threats we face are important responsibilities for our Federal agencies, for Congress, and for the folks at the local level as well. We have a responsibility, along with our international partners, to continue to take the fight to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—and to many other places.

ISIS’s recent losses have been severe. It has lost at least 40 percent of the territory that it once held in Iraq. Coalition forces have killed more than 10,000 ISIS fighters and 20 key ISIS leaders in recent months, including ISIS’s chief propagandist and executioner. And, just over a week ago, American forces carried out a strike that led to the death of ISIS’s finance chief and second in command.

Simultaneously, we continue to enhance the capabilities of the Iraqi counterterrorism forces. Iraqi forces captured Ramadi from ISIS just 2 months ago. And, a battle to seize the ISIS stronghold in Mosul is well underway. And, with the cease-fire in Syria holding so far, more guns are being turned on ISIS. ISIS is being pushed back on its heels in Iraq and in Syria.

Consequences may very well be that the group, out of desperation, will seek to project the facade of power and momentum by directly inspiring terrorist attacks against unprotected targets in Europe, in the United States, and in other places around the world. We must not let these cowardly acts deter our resolve. To the contrary, we must redouble our efforts to destroy ISIS and to take away its safe havens. We must also learn from the Brussels terror attack to ensure that our intelligence and law enforcement authorities, at all levels of government, are ready and able to identify and stop similar attacks—both here at home and in other places—before they are set in motion.

I just want to mention one last thing. There are lessons to be learned from what happened—the tragedy in Brussels—lessons for people who live there, for people who live in Belgium, for people who live in the European Union (E.U.), and for people who live in other places—and there are lessons for us to learn too. And, for us, this means the need to better understand what happened there and to figure out what we can do to deter attacks—not just here in this country, but to help them better defend their own people in their own places.

Thank you so much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper.

It is the tradition of this Committee to swear in witnesses, so if you will all stand and raise your right hand.

Do you swear the testimony you will give before this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Mr. ZARATE. I do.

Ms. SMITH. I do.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I do.

Mr. WATTS. I do.

Chairman JOHNSON. Please be seated.

Our first witness is Juan Zarate. Mr. Zarate is chairman of the Financial Integrity Network (FIN), chairman of the Center on Sanctions and Illicit Finance for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and Senior National Security Analyst for CBS News. Mr. Zarate.

**TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE JUAN C. ZARATE,<sup>1</sup> SENIOR ADVISOR, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

Mr. ZARATE. Chairman Johnson, thank you very much for that introduction. Ranking Member Carper and distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am honored to be here with my fellow panelists to discuss the current terrorist threat environment in Europe and the security implications for the United States.

In the wake of the horrific attacks in Brussels and Paris, this is a critical moment to take stock of, what I consider to be, the quickening terrorist threat and adaptation spurred by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, along with the continued threat from and intent by, al-Qaeda and its affiliates to hit the West.

The rise and reach of ISIS has continued to outpace expectations and surprise authorities. Dangerously, failing to understand and anticipate ISIS's intent and capabilities has led to some misguided assumptions that have now been shattered in the wake of the recent attacks in Europe. ISIS has intended to confront the West. It has used Western operatives, flowing into the conflict zone by the thousands, and it has attempted to inspire singular attacks by sympathetic radicals in Western societies. It has built these capabilities over time and has taken advantage of intelligence and security gaps to implant operatives in Europe.

This should not have come as a surprise. Over 2 years ago, my colleague at CSIS, Tom Sanderson, witnessed parts of the foreign fighter pipeline when he visited a shabby café at a Turkish-Syrian border crossing. This was a final stop for those slipping into Syria to join terrorist groups. Passports were for sale and such fighters could exchange their passports for cash. At that time, a Belgian passport was for sale for \$8,000. A buyer could have it altered—and new passport photos were being snapped in the parking lot.

European authorities are now coming to grips with the realization that ISIS is targeting the heart of Europe with dozens of

<sup>1</sup> The prepared statement of Mr. Zarate appears in the Appendix on page 53.



operatives. But, unfortunately, Europe suffers from three fundamental and interrelated terrorist problems. First, there is the immediate threat of ISIS's European networks. ISIS has trained and deployed Europeans back into the heart of Europe to perpetrate sophisticated attacks.

Second, ISIS and al-Qaeda have taken advantage of longstanding radicalized networks in Europe as a baseline for recruitment and plotting in the heart of Europe, relying on a lineage of radical Islamic terrorism to tap into criminal, prison, and other radical networks for their purposes.

Third, Europe suffers from longstanding deep pockets of radicalization affecting their nationals and embedded in particular communities and neighborhoods. Throughout Europe, such nodes of radicalization have served as micro-safe havens and they persist in particular prisons, universities, and apartment blocks.

Now, ISIS has been able to take advantage of the weaknesses and seams in the European system. Even the best authorities in Europe are overwhelmed by the number of new and historical terrorists and radicalized individuals for whom they need to account. Fortunately, the United States has not faced the same kinds of threats from ISIS and al-Qaeda that Europe does—but these threats are real for U.S. citizens and for interests abroad and in the homeland. Let me just describe them quickly.

The most immediate threats to the United States are to our citizens and interests in Europe. ISIS would like to target Americans wherever possible. The visa-free travel permitted for Europeans and others creates a gap that could, unknowingly, allow an ISIS or an al-Qaeda operative into the country. The lack of information—and real-time information—sharing are major impediments to Western security. The United States also has to be concerned about the demonstration effects of successful or attempted terrorist attacks—especially in the West.

And, new technologies and methodologies could spur innovation in how terrorists and operatives operate in the United States—to include new technologies that allow lone wolves to act as packs to attack the homeland.

And, finally, the most strategic impact of the European threat, perhaps, is whether it, ultimately, weakens or strengthens European resolve and capability to counter the terrorist threat from ISIS and al-Qaeda as well as the radicalized citizens from within.

We need a strong Europe and we need to work together with them. We are facing a common enemy and we are all at war together. The United States must, therefore, work closely with its European partners to enable, support, and lead where necessary. We must also work to disrupt ISIS's and al-Qaeda's safe havens, gather and share intelligence, disrupt terrorist networks and plots, and continue to build layers of defense with our Western partners.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Brussels, this is an important moment to reflect on our counterterrorism capabilities—and we need to do this in concert with our European partners. And, we should never underestimate the ability of our terrorist adversaries to innovate and to adapt—especially when they have time and space to plot and to plan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Zarate.

Our next witness is Julie Smith. Ms. Smith is a senior fellow and the director of the Strategy and Statecraft Program at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). Previously, she served as the Deputy national security advisor to the Vice President. Before her post at the White House, she served as a principal director for European and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon. Ms. Smith.

**TESTIMONY OF JULIANNE SMITH,<sup>1</sup> SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR OF THE STRATEGY AND STATECRAFT PROGRAM, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY**

Ms. SMITH. Thank you, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. It is an honor to be here.

The Brussels attacks revealed a number of worrisome trends and policy gaps inside Belgium, across Europe, and among the transatlantic partners. Any successful strategy moving forward is going to require changes in all three of those categories and I want to address each of them, one by one, over the course of the next few minutes.

Let me start with Belgium. The attacks, as Juan pointed out, have confirmed what experts have been stating for years—and that is that Belgium has one of the largest home-grown extremist problems in the West. Five hundred Belgians have traveled to Iraq and Syria in recent years and 20 percent of those individuals now have returned to European soil with sophisticated training and unknown intentions.

The Brussels and Paris attacks also revealed a number of intelligence and law enforcement shortfalls and failures. These are, primarily, rooted—in part—in incompetence, but also in crippling budgetary constraints and severe personnel shortages. Belgium also has not had a functioning Federal system for some time now, so its ability to uncover and dismantle jihadist networks has been severely hampered.

In terms of wider Europe, Belgium, of course, is not facing this challenge alone. Preventing the radicalization of Muslim minorities across Europe has become a priority for a number of European countries over the years. But, the tools with which national capitals can actually counter radicalization, slow recruitment, or arrest terrorist operatives has suffered from a chronic lack of investment over the years.

Europe's most glaring problem, though, is its inability to share information among its member states. This was highlighted by the fact that one of the three bombers in the Brussels attacks was someone that Turkey had actually warned the Belgians about, in advance, as they were deporting him to the Netherlands. Unfortunately—and rather tragically—that information was not followed up on and it was, certainly, not disseminated across the European continent.

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<sup>1</sup> The prepared statement of Ms. Smith appears in the Appendix on page 68.

From a transatlantic perspective, we also need to strengthen our transatlantic cooperation with the E.U. and other European countries. We have done a lot since the attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11). We have done a lot to ensure that we can halt terrorist financing. We have worked together to enhance our intelligence sharing. We have worked to safeguard border controls. But, serious gaps remain.

Most notably, the primary obstacle surrounds the differences that we have over privacy, data sharing, and data privacy. These concerns, obviously, were more pronounced after the 2013 revelations that the National Security Administration (NSA) had been tracking a number of world leaders—most notably, German Chancellor Angela Merkel—and these differences have hampered the E.U.-wide implementation of the Passenger Name Recognition System, which would enable us to enhance our intelligence sharing.

Going forward, obviously, Belgium is going to have to make a lot of changes—Europe, as well, but we also have to focus on the transatlantic relationship. From a Belgian perspective, they are going to have to undertake a complete audit of their security procedures. They are going to have to overhaul their surveillance laws. I think they need to review the security staff at major transportation hubs. And, certainly, they are going to have to invest more in their very small security budget.

Europe also is going to have to do more, from an E.U. perspective, but the individual member states that make up Europe—all of them are going to have to do more to invest in their own security and they are also going to have to address the grievances and the isolation of the Muslim minorities inside of their borders.

But, I would also urge our European friends not to view this strictly as an internal challenge. They tend to focus on homeland security measures and counter-radicalization efforts, but we have to ensure that Europeans are working with us in far away places, like the Middle East and North Africa, which, by the way, are not that far away from European soil. So, for that reason, I would urge more Europeans to join us in the anti-ISIS coalition. Some are already doing so over Iraq and Syria. But, they should also think about how they can do more to invest in the future of the region.

Lastly, in terms of E.U.–U.S. cooperation, we have to get past our differences on data protection and privacy. I think, as Juan pointed out, this is going to require significant U.S. leadership. I know some, occasionally, urge the United States to pull back and withdraw from Europe, but, to be frank, this is a threat that we face together and the biggest card we have to play is E.U.–U.S. counterterrorism cooperation.

Thank you very much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Smith.

Our next witness is Daveed Gartenstein-Ross. Mr. Gartenstein-Ross is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, an adjunct professor in Georgetown University's Security Studies Program, and a lecturer at the Catholic University of America. He is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Valens Global, a consulting firm focused on the challenges posed by violent non-state actors. Mr. Gartenstein-Ross.

**TESTIMONY OF DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS,<sup>1</sup> SENIOR  
FELLOW, FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES**

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Thank you, Chairman Johnson, for that introduction. Ranking Member Carper and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you at this very grave time.

We have had, obviously, in a span of about 4 months, two major attacks strike Europe. It is a watershed for a variety of reasons, one of which is that this is the first time that a European jihadist network has succeeded in, not only carrying out one major attack, but then bearing the brunt of the law enforcement resources being drawn down upon it to then succeed in carrying out a second major attack.

If you look at what has been said following the Brussels attack—about the scale of the network—it is striking. You have investigators saying that only now, 4 months after Paris, are they starting to get their heads wrapped around this network. You have, according to recent Wall Street Journal reports, about 22 members of this network who are still at large. Now, other media outlets have not been able to verify that specific number, but it seems to be roughly accurate.

One analogy I use a lot to describe the problem of trying to combat terrorist and militant groups, is that of start-up firms versus legacy industries in the economic sphere. I use this not to be cute or trite, but because I think it explains something about the ability to innovate, the ability to adapt, and the problems that we have in dealing with these kinds of organizations.

Today, it is very clear that start-up firms have some inherent advantages over their larger competitors. They are de-bureaucratized. They are able to innovate quickly. They are able to shift their strategy very quickly, while larger firms are often encumbered by their own weight, have too much bureaucracy, and are unable to maneuver at the same kind of speed as their smaller adversaries.

Julie, I think, did a very good job of talking about the kinds of incompetence and problems that occurred and helped to allow the Brussels attackers to succeed. When we go back through them—and it is important to do so—one thing that looms large is bureaucracy—the lack of internal coordination—an organizational structure that is not suited well for the challenges of the 21st Century.

According to open source reporting, one thing that may have allowed Salah Abdeslam to be free as long as he was, was Belgian restrictions on what time raids can occur. You had other instances where intelligence was not acted upon, like the fact that Ibrahim El Bakraoui—one of the suicide attackers at the Brussels airport—was not picked up after Turkish authorities revealed that he had been arrested in Gaziantep, which is a major entryway into Syria that foreign fighters frequently use. That, obviously, as the European officials now indicate, should have raised a red flag.

So, what to do about this? In the short term, Europe needs to deal with the scale of the problem that it has—not just this one network, but authorities have been all but waving their hands

<sup>1</sup> The prepared statement of Mr. Gartenstein-Ross appears in the Appendix on page 74.

around and saying that they are overextended. In Belgium, just before this attack, basically, all of their resources amongst investigators and detectives were used to try to deal with their jihadist problem. Likewise, in France. Likewise, in Britain. There are many indications that this problem has overwhelmed the system.

In the short term, Europe should be encouraged to undertake a much more disruptive policing model. A good example is from the United States and our own experience with the mob. Al Capone, who was the U.S.'s first celebrity criminal, was ultimately arrested, indicted, and convicted, not for being a mobster, not for being a killer, and not for being a bootlegger, but, rather, for not paying taxes on his illegal income. It was said that, under Robert Kennedy's Department of Justice (DOJ), they would arrest a mobster for spitting on the sidewalk.

Ultimately, finding lesser offenses is important. And, within European jihadist networks, which are identifiable and under surveillance, there is often financial fraud and other small crimes that they can pick people up for. This is not, ultimately, a perfect solution, but, in the short term, where we have had these two major attacks and have more would-be attackers—who are at large right now—I think that it is very important to disrupt and then bring down the networks that you are trying to monitor.

In the longer term, looking at the problems I raised with bureaucracy are very important. There need to be reforms within the E.U., including within countries. And, we also need to be very much apprised of those that affect the United States. This is a very unique time, because the Schengen Agreement has all but fell apart. And, in the past, the Europeans' interpretation of Schengen has detracted from and served as a barrier to our own measures, which we have tried to take to uphold our own border security.

We need to understand just how much the system is in play right now. We need to recognize, as Senator Carper said, that, perhaps, something good can come from something awful—and that something good can be us pushing for the necessary reforms—both within Europe and also in the transatlantic relationship—to better protect our own homeland.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Gartenstein-Ross.

Our final witness is Clint Watts. Mr. Watts is a Robert A. Fox fellow in the Foreign Policy Research Institute's (FPRI's) Program on the Middle East and a senior fellow with its Program on National Security. Mr. Watts has served as a U.S. Army Infantry Officer, an FBI Special Agent on the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), and as the executive officer of the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

First of all, thank you for your service and thank you for your testimony.

**TESTIMONY OF CLINTON WATTS,<sup>1</sup> ROBERT A. FOX FELLOW,  
FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

Mr. WATTS. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and Members of the Committee.

In 2012, many researchers and I watched as thousands of young men flocked to Syria to join the ranks of those fighting against the regime of Bashar al-Assad—and most of those eventually coalesced around the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. I, personally, along with others, flew with lists of names of Europeans that we knew were operating there—because all you had to do was watch them on Twitter. They told you they were there. Not only did they tell you, they flaunted it. They would turn on their location beacon as soon as they got to those countries, to let everybody know they were there.

We have known that these boys were there for a long time. And, we should have known—and we did know—they were always going to come home. This problem was not probable—it was inevitable. And so, we are now flat on our face. And, while we talk about disrupting ISIS recruitment, it has already happened. It is over. We are now on the defense. We are reacting, rather than preempting—and that is a position we never want to be in.

So, today, the situation in Europe is such that we have terrorists operating without borders and we have counterterrorists operating with all borders. ISIS has done, in Europe, what al-Qaeda never did. In one year, they have achieved a level of violence al-Qaeda could not achieve in 10—and they can do that because they have a volume of foreign fighters, passport holders, E.U. citizens—or people who have resided there—who have traveled together and cemented the longstanding relationships they had in their homelands in disparate communities. And, they have traveled to Syria and Iraq and gained unprecedented combat experience. We always heap credit on old al-Qaeda members. They did not see nearly the same number of battles that these new ISIS boys have seen—and they have brought that experience home.

Not only are they more connected socially than ideologically, they are more criminal than they are pious. And so, they have fewer reservations about committing violence and they operate with an autonomy we never saw with al-Qaeda. al-Qaeda tends to micro-manage their recruits. ISIS does not. They issue a little bit of what we in the military, call commanders' intent. They pick targets that they know well. They do not pick large symbolic targets. They hit a soccer stadium or a transportation hub they know. And, they plan those plots and put them together almost—it seems like—at random—and they do it aggressively and quickly.

They move faster and communicate more freely than our counter-terrorists do in Europe. And so, when we look at the situation we have today, with the counterterrorists, we have them operating on all borders. They are way over capacity. They cannot follow all of the leads for every ISIS member that might be returning to Europe.

Not only that, but they also have uneven capability. France, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and Germany—they all have significant

<sup>1</sup> The prepared statement of Mr. Watts appears in the Appendix on page 87.

experience and a lot of specialty, in terms of counterterrorism and intelligence, but that is not shared with a lot of these smaller countries. Belgium is the prime example, but many others have had foreign fighter recruits, like they have never seen, come from their country. And, at the same time, they have much more of a limited capacity to deal with these. They do not have specialties. They have a lot of rules around intelligence sharing, information sharing, and data privacy that prevent them from doing both technical collection and human intelligence the way we would do it here in the United States.

So, when you look at this patchwork that we have, in terms of the bureaucracy, there is no “heavy.” There is no FBI-type apparatus. Europol and Interpol are great and they do excellent coordination and research, but they cannot step across borders as fast as the terrorists can. And so, the terrorists have run wild through Europe today.

My fellow panelists up here today have talked about the dangers to Americans abroad, but I would tell you that the most dangerous result, really, of this situation is that every success that ISIS has in Europe breeds more success here at home. A successful attack in Paris, Istanbul, or Brussels inspires an adherent here in the United States, who maybe has no connection to the Islamic State or al-Qaeda, to start to move forward. We have seen that with San Bernadino, a Philadelphia police shooting, and, maybe, even with the 50 plots that our FBI has disrupted since then. Success breeds success. And so, every time we stand by and watch Europe suffer an attack, it only inspires people at home.

So, while we should look at a lot of defensive measures, in terms of what we can do to protect American citizens abroad, I would tell you we have to go on the offense, in Europe, the way we did, here, after 9/11. I would push to help the European Union put together a counterterrorism task force—not a committee, not a hearing, and not another bureaucracy, but an aggressive approach—now. We are looking at what I call the “iceberg theory” of terrorist plots. For every eight you see participating in a plot, there are three or four times as many that are helping support it or are somewhere in that network. We saw that with Paris and then it extended to Brussels.

The other thing we can really help out Europe with, is intelligence sharing—both pushing them and then helping them to integrate their own systems.

And, the last part, I would say, is better risk assessment and travel warnings for our American citizens. We tend to issue travel warnings after an attack happens. But, we could sit right now and tell you where the foreign fighters are that are in these European countries, where are the targets that have been hit, and which ones are most likely to be hit—and I think that is a service we should make sure to provide to our citizens.

Thank you for having me.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Watts.

I want to start with you because you mentioned, I think—the key point here is most of the testimony has been talking about being on defense. You talked about going on offense. But, even in talking about going on offense, you are talking about having America go

on offense to help Europe be on defense. I want to talk about actually going on offense.

I want to talk about the fact that you said that this has been building in Syria and Iraq and that it was inevitable. And, as we watch the events unfold here—and yes, we are pushing ISIS back in Iraq, but they are gaining territory in Syria. They are setting up a stronger base in Libya. They are getting into Afghanistan. We are having Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations affiliate themselves with ISIS. This is growing.

I want to talk about an effective offense—and again, I want to just give some evidence here. There is a Department of State (DOS) report called the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START) Report. And, let me issue this caveat: I realize these statistics are very uneven. But, if you take a look at the years prior to 9/11, on average—and this is the largest measure, on average—there were less than 5,000 fatalities due to terrorism prior to 9/11. In 2012, that report shows there were about 15,000. In 2014, there were about 43,000. Again, I realize the measurement is very difficult on this, but it gives us some indication that global terrorism is a growing threat.

And so, if we are all going to just be on defense, I do not see how we can succeed. I mean, just speak about what constitutes a real offense to wipe out this threat and how long is it going to take to do so.

Mr. WATTS. What I would say is that I do like how we are approaching counterterrorism with a lot of these affiliates already. We have already started to take action against the ISIS in Libya. That is the second most important affiliate that is out there.

We will have to pursue special operations force attacks, aggressive Joint Terrorism Task Force investigations here in the States, and robust intelligence sharing across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East for as long as we live. Everybody in here will have to do that. We will have to watch that. This will not go away. There is no beginning and there is no end. There is only degrees of winning and losing.

So, I think the notion that we need to put forth, both in our country and, particularly, in Europe—who seems to only react to these situations—is that a constant offense is the only way to keep terrorists on the defense.

I would say that foreign fighter task force tracking is the most essential thing we should be doing—and that we should have done. This is what I call countering terrorism now from the third foreign fighter glut. We had a massive ingress of foreign fighters to Afghanistan. That later mutated into al-Qaeda 20 years ago. We then had a massive ingress into Iraq and Afghanistan in the last decade. That, eventually, mutated to become the al-Qaeda/ISIS split.

And now, we are looking at ISIS being squelched in Iraq and Syria. There will always be some sort of militant organization there, because we cannot restore any sort of governance—or we have no plan for it. And, therefore, this will mutate into what could be a more dangerous scenario—one which is not al-Qaeda or ISIS. Those are just Washington terms we sort of throw around on the Cable News Network (CNN) because it gives people a label to use to understand it.



We very well may be facing five to seven regional terrorist nodes across the entire world that have varying degrees of connection. They communicate and cooperate when they need to—and then they do not. They may choose different parts of the ideology to pursue, mostly based on local political environments.

But, the one thing that you can look at, across all of these regions, is a lack of governance. We thought the Arab Spring would bring about an opportunity for democracy to grow—and as a democratic nation, for some reason, we really helped everyone to vote, but we never helped them after they voted. And so, we have safe havens stretched all of the way from Western Africa to Southeast Asia, at this point, where they can operate.

The ISIS label—they will pick up that label and use it whenever it is convenient for them. If they think they can pull in money or recruits, they will. But, they will pursue their own objectives. The dangerous part for us is when they pursue their own objectives, it creates a capacity and capability problem for us, in the United States, and for the globe as an entirety. How do we track that many threats, which are out there, if they spread?

Chairman JOHNSON. When we witnessed ISIS just roll up the cities in Iraq, that to me indicated an organization that is pretty strategic.

Mr. WATTS. Absolutely.

Chairman JOHNSON. It had a game plan and they were able to execute that game plan. That is no fly by night operation. That is just no junior varsity (JV) team. Now, they are setting up training centers. And, they are training youth and they are training the next generation. Can anybody speak to the real danger there?

Mr. WATTS. What I would say is that this is going to happen routinely, because there is a lack of governance. There is no opposing force. And so, we have gotten into a situation where we did clear, hold, and build—let us deploy massive military force in the last decade at great expense, which, ultimately, created a security vacuum in itself—and we have retreated to the other end, which is hoping that drones and special operations forces will keep everyone down and sort of keep this problem at bay.

In between—in the middle—is the question of how we work with foreign nations and proxies. And, if you look at our competitors around the world, they are picking their proxies as they see fit to pursue the interests they want. Our greatest problem in the United States, in terms of counterterrorism, is we do not really know what we want. All we know is that we do not want anything bad to happen. And, if all you know is what you do not want, you will never get what you do want—and we have not picked out what our strategic objectives are. So, we are constantly in a patchwork—moving and chasing.

The one thing I do like is that we are pursuing the threat. I think that it is a great testament to our counterterrorists, who, over the past 15 years, have gone where the threat is. Our special operations forces have pulled off amazing feats in recent months. But, that alone will not get us there. We will always be vulnerable until we pick out where we want the focus to be.

Right now, I think that Libya—and North Africa, generally—are places that we need to be very concerned about. That will be a nat-

ural expansion point for them. I think that Yemen is another big area of concern as well.

Chairman JOHNSON. Mr. Zarate, very quickly—Mr. Gartenstein-Ross talked about the difference between big bureaucratic organizations and small start-up companies. I am from one of those small start-up companies and know exactly what you are talking about. It was easy to compete against big companies.

In your testimony, you talked about the innovation of ISIS—

Mr. ZARATE. Yes.

Chairman JOHNSON [continuing]. And, one of my concerns—and I want you to speak to this—is we know that two of the terrorists involved in Brussels—in their apartment we found surveillance videos of a nuclear facility. Can you speak to the dangers of that and what might be on their minds there?

Mr. ZARATE. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. I think one of the dangers that you see with the ISIS is that they have been adapting new methodologies very quickly. And so, in the field—in places like Iraq and Syria—this includes the use of tunnels and multiple sophisticated attack prongs as part of their attack vectors. It also includes the use of chemical weapons, with reports just today of another chemical attack against some of our allies on the ground. And, certainly, there is a real question as to whether or not they have ambitions to engage in weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism. The reality is that they have set up a unit to develop chemical weapons capabilities. They are obviously using it, now multiple times—

Chairman JOHNSON. They have the labs—really sophisticated labs at universities to access—

Mr. ZARATE. That is right. And, Mr. Chairman, just to touch on the conversation you were just having, I think that one of the major differences between the safe havens of today and the safe havens of the past is that we are not talking about the jungles, mountains, deserts, and the hinterlands of the safe havens of old that we worried about. We are talking about real cities—real urban environments—the second largest city in Iraq and Mukalla in Yemen, which is controlled by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. These are real cities with real resources, real populations, and real financial systems—all of which they are taking advantage of—to include universities' labs, scientists, and experts—much of which we are blind to.

And, I think one of the major dangers we have to keep in mind is that the safe havens and the ink blots that are emerging that are tied to the ISIS are qualitatively different—and that is leading to strategic innovation. And, you have seen this, not just in the context of WMDs, potentially, but you have also seen it with even naval attacks in Egypt. You saw it with the attack on the civilian aircraft out of the Sinai. And so, you are going to continue to see adaptations to the extent that they have fighters to train, resources to apply, space in which to plan, and leadership that is intent on attacking the West.

Chairman JOHNSON. And, by the way, that is the offense that I was talking about—taking those resources—that territory—away from them. Senator Carper.

Senator CARPER. Thank you so much.

This is an exceptional panel of witnesses. Thank you so much for joining us. And, some of you have been before us before, but we are delighted that you are here today.

I spent a number of the years of my life in the Navy. I remember being in Southeast Asia. In the office of the commanding officer of our squadron, there was a cartoon up on the wall and the cartoon was a depiction of a man on a very small island trying to climb up a single tree surrounded by alligators. And, the caption under the cartoon was, "It's hard to remember that your job was to drain the swamp when you are up to your eyeballs in alligators."

Our friends in Europe are up to their eyeballs in alligators and we are trying to help them help themselves. How do we go about draining the swamp? Root causes—just spend a minute, each of you—a minute discussing root causes, please. Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator Carper, I think, first and foremost, we should be very open and honest about where these pockets of radicalization have existed. These are not new in Europe. Neighborhoods like Molenbeek—neighborhoods in the U.K., like Luton—have developed radicalized environments and ecosystems that have allowed radical clerics to recruit and have allowed pipelines of generations of radicals to continue to be enlisted and mobilized.

And so, first and foremost, identifying what are the those hot spots—because, if you look at a map, whether it is in Europe or even in North Africa, you will see that there are particular—not just countries and not just regions—but also neighborhoods or particular segments of communities that are the most at risk. If you look at the neighborhood of Tetouan, out of Morocco, it has produced the bulk of foreign fighters over the years, dating back to the Iraq War. And so, there are these pockets that need to be identified—and, in many ways, then, focused on for law enforcement and intervention purposes.

Then, you have the general problem of integration and assimilation. This is a problem that is only going to grow worse in Europe, given the refugee crisis. And so, working with European authorities to understand how they can best—and how we can help them—integrate these populations better, so that you do not have a new generation of radicals emerging out of these refugee populations.

Senator CARPER. OK. I am going to ask you to hold it there, just so the other witnesses have a chance to respond.

About one minute, if you will, Ms. Smith.

Ms. SMITH. The integration challenge is enormous. A lot of these Muslims, in Europe—there are about 13 million—came in the 1960s and 1970s to respond to a labor shortage. Many of them did not expect to stay. They have. Now, we have second and third generations in these communities. They have several grievances. They do not have access to educational opportunities. They face discrimination. Unemployment is very high in their communities. And so, the nature of the challenge is enormous—and this is not just, as I noted, in Belgium, but in several countries across Europe.

What makes this particularly challenging right now is the fact that European public opinion of Muslims is worsening. European citizens, as you well know, are incredibly worried about their own employment numbers and about their own opportunities. They have had a complete loss of faith in institutions like the European

Union. And so, you have seen the rise of these populist parties that are actually more discriminatory. They are more anti-immigrant.

So, just as European governments need to double down on these integration programs, you are finding a resistance and pushback from European society. I cannot stress how challenging this is going to be.

Senator CARPER. Thank you very much.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I find that, when looking to answer questions like this, it is often useful to look at it through the eyes of the adversary. So, if we take an enemy-centric perspective, if I am ISIS or al-Qaeda, and I am trying to grow larger and stronger in Europe—the first thing this panel has remarked on is weak law enforcement, which allows me to operate transnationally and to operate fairly openly. They do not have the surveillance resources to cover the network.

Second, given the integration problem that was just mentioned and this massive influx of migrants, who will also have trouble integrating, just as the problem already exists, there is the potential for recruitment there—especially if you can trigger a nativist backlash. We are, of course, already seeing that nativist backlash. Every time you carry out an attack, that increases hostility toward the Muslim population. And, as ISIS has said, they want to destroy what they regard as the gray zone—that zone between ISIS and the European population where European Muslims can exist.

The final thing I will mention about looking over at European politics is—one of the things that is happening with the rise of far-right parties is that other parties are not addressing these issues. When you see the discursive environment to the worst of the worst, they are the ones who are going to seem like they speak to people's concerns. So, I think, understanding why they are rising is an important part of understanding this very dangerous environment that exists within Europe.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Mr. Watts.

Mr. WATTS. I would say that we cannot fix European politics or the integration problem. And so, I would, instead, focus on why it is attractive to these young men—and some women—to join ISIS. And, I would focus on two messages. One, can you turn the ISIS and its leaders into villains, rather than martyrs? And, that really is about how you change the narrative, in terms of how they are perceived by those people that are seeing it.

The second one is the message that the leading killer of an ISIS member is a fellow ISIS member. Right now, we are watching defectors flee from Syria and Iraq. They are killing the defectors, internal spies, or people that are starting to ask questions about the direction of the group. I think it is important to put that into the minds of those young people. They are believing one narrative. You need to offer them another one, which is more full of truth.

So, I would instead focus on the Iraqi allegiants that are within ISIS, who are very much pushing away the foreign fighters now and not giving much respect and fellow rights to their foreign fighter brothers. The question is, how can you drive a wedge between them?

I would focus on defectors and their messages, when they come back from the Islamic State. There are a lot of them right now

talking about what happened to them when they were in Iraq and Syria. It was not the fantasy that they had had in their minds.

And then, I would absolutely publish the silly and pointless deaths of every European foreign fighter. They use them to settle personal scores and for suicide bombings against local adversaries. That would not be a Google search that would happen in one of those hotspot communities.

And, I would add to that, 80 percent of the towns that foreign fighters come from, today, are the same towns that produced foreign fighters in Afghanistan in the 1980s and in Afghanistan and Iraq 10 years ago. I have them on my own computer. I could tell you what those 20 towns are. So, it is not a matter of, like, not knowing where to go for the hotspots in Europe. It is just about whether we are actually going to push to do something in those places.

Senator CARPER. Mr. Chairman, if I could, I just want to ask a yes or no question to each of the panelists.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson has been before us. And, one of the initiatives that he is pushing is a partnership, really, with Muslim communities to counter violent extremism (CVE) in our country. Our Committee has reported out legislation—bipartisan legislation—to support this issue. Is this, in terms of responding to, potentially, the root cause in this country—is this a smart policy to pursue or not? Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. I think, absolutely, and, in fact, we have established a commission at CSIS, led by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, to look at precisely this issue and to provide policy guidance on it for the next administration. So, it is absolutely right. These are issues—not just of safe haven abroad, but also questions of identity and dislocation.

And, one thing we need to look at—and this was something I was going to mention with your last question—the last element is family and networks. We find that family and networks are critical to the support of extremism as well as to counter it. And, it is often family members that are able to intervene and we are not finding ways of enlisting them aggressively enough.

Senator CARPER. My time has expired. Ms. Smith, just briefly.

Ms. SMITH. Absolutely. I think it is critical for us to pursue those types of programs here in the United States—but we also need to work with our European partners. We face different challenges, but we can share lessons learned and see what works and what does not.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Mr. Gartenstein-Ross.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes, with the caveat that a lot of the early efforts will certainly be awkward and faltering. So, some of the benefit will be learning from what does not work.

Senator CARPER. Alright. Thank you. Mr. Watts.

Mr. WATTS. I would not put much effort into it, to be honest. I have worked on a lot of those programs over the past 10 years. There is some value in building trust with the communities—that I do respect. But, I do not think they are going to be a great weapon in thwarting recruitment. Communities—these people are already disenfranchised from it. And, parents are the worst ones when it comes to knowing what their teenage kids do. That is true

whether you are in the United States or Europe. So, I think it is good for community policing purposes, just in general, but I do not think it really will get at the problem. I think it is a tangential effort.

Senator CARPER. Thank you so much. Thank you all.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Ayotte.

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR AYOTTE**

Senator AYOTTE. I want to thank the Chairman. This is an excellent panel.

But, let me just say, the fact that we had a major terrorist attack in Europe and we cannot get, before this Committee, an official from the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, or the NCTC, to me, speaks volumes. If this Administration thinks they are doing a good job fighting ISIS, then come and make the case before this Committee. So, I want to back the Chairman up on the point that he made, I think, very respectfully, earlier.

I would like to ask each of you—one of the things that I heard coming from you all, loud and clear, is about the lack of intelligence sharing in Europe and the problems we have as a result of that lack of intelligence sharing. As you know, we have 38 countries that are a part of our Visa Waiver Program (VWP). And, to be part of that program, you have to, essentially, meet certain basic standards of information sharing. You have to enter into an agreement with the United States to report lost or stolen passports and, most importantly, you have to have an agreement with the United States to share information regarding whether a national of that country, traveling to the United States, represents a threat to U.S. security.

As I hear your testimony today, I see a huge, glaring red flag, because, at the end of December, we passed a law here—which I was glad we did—that, essentially, said that individuals who had traveled to Iraq, Syria, and Iran—and also, now the Homeland Security Secretary has added some other countries, like Libya, to that list, which I support—but here is the problem.

If we do not have good information sharing, as highlighted by what happened in Belgium, we can put that in place all that we want, but, if we do not know that someone traveled to Iraq and Syria—in fact, if you look at what happened with Paris, obviously, one of the individuals had come over from Greece and had a fake passport. We also know now, with the situation in Belgium that, in fact, the information that came from Turkish authorities was not properly acted upon. So, I would have to think that they were not exactly sharing that information with us, if they were not acting upon it fully, themselves.

So, what does this mean, in terms of what we should be doing to protect our citizens, with the lack of information sharing? Obviously, it needs to be a priority for us to start information sharing between us—and the transatlantic relationship—and to promote better information sharing among Europe. But, I think our citizens need to understand—what do we need to do to protect our citizens to make sure that someone does not travel to Iraq and Syria and we are unaware of it because the information has not been

shared—and then, is able to travel to the United States without a visa?

Mr. Zarate, do you want to comment on that.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, those are great questions and very important concerns. I think, as you mentioned, you have the problem of the lack of information sharing, the lack of real time information sharing, the lack of details of the information, as well as gaps of information just generally. And, I think you have seen that the terrorists have adapted around this and they understand it. So, they are infiltrating some of the refugee flows. You have seen, from some of the plotters in recent attacks, that they have used methodologies—returning into Europe using backpacker routes, so as to avoid connections back to the countries of concern.

So, I think there are really two things we need to do. One, is we have to engage in self-help. We have to gain more intelligence on our own. We have to be aggressive about what we are doing, on the ground, in these places, as well as along the routes that we expect the foreign fighter pipelines to be operating. The Turkish-Syrian border—we know exactly where that strand of border is, where they continue to move in and out. I am hoping and expecting that we are on that like hawks, trying to get as much information as possible about people moving in and out of there and understanding, then, where else they are flowing to.

Second, I think we need to spur the Europeans to work more closely together. And, I think that means we have to collect them together—whether it is at a clinch point in a task force model or in some other fashion.

Senator AYOTTE. One of the things I called upon—when this happened, is I asked President Obama to bring NATO together. Do you not think NATO could be a helpful avenue to, at least, bring the NATO members together?

Mr. ZARATE. NATO could be, but what you need are the intelligence services that focus on counterterrorism. And, again, the French and the British are very good at this. The Germans are very good. What you need is some mechanism to knock heads—and there is something to the fact that passenger name records, in a transatlantic way, are shared on a real time basis, but passenger name records are not shared within the European Union. So, just think about that. We have developed a protocol to understand where there are suspect actors trying to access the commercial aviation system. Europe does not even have that internally.

So, in a sense, we are going to have to catalyze a lot of this innovation and a lot of what my fellow panelists have talked about. We are going to have to do it—and we have to take a leadership role—frankly, like it or not, because we have vulnerabilities of the type that you describe, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. Yes, Ms. Smith.

Ms. SMITH. Senator, that is an excellent question. I would just add to that that the United States has a number of bilateral relationships. So, the cooperation we have with Europe is completely uneven. There are some that are wonderful and others that are in complete disrepair—and we have to bring everybody up to the same standard.

There are improvements that need to be made to our intelligence sharing with Europe. The emphasis should be put on Europe and sharing inside of the continent. The fact that they are not going to move forward with an E.U.-wide implementation of the Passenger Name Record (PNR) directive until our election is ridiculous. They are waiting to see who the next President will be in order to get our views on intelligence, when they need to move out on this, yesterday. And so, we should push them not to wait for our election, but to advance this agenda as soon as possible.

I mean, journalist David Ignatius, in a recent piece, really put it best. The Europeans are very interested in our intelligence, for all of the obvious reasons, but they have this real distaste for collection—and we have to break past this and break through it to say, “enough is enough.” We need to make progress on these issues and to work through these issues on data privacy and data sharing.

Senator AYOTTE. I see Mr. Watts wanting to comment over there—and you also made a statement, in your testimony, about how you believe we need better warnings, as well, based on what we know.

Mr. WATTS. Yes. I think one thing the United States can do for the European Union is—we just spent a decade building the National Counterterrorism Center with all of these integration functions and doing intelligence sharing both up and across. So, we do it from the Federal level, to the State level, to the local level and we know how to manage that and push it—and we know how to do that with partners and in the interagency context.

I think that is something that we can help them to do—and I think it is how we develop those relationships. They are all bilateral. So, why should we, as the United States, provide the French and the British the same intelligence individually? They need to, somehow, synchronize their systems. Maybe, we can offer a way for them to do that or provide support to them, in a way, to do that.

My fear is that European countries do not want to deal with their data privacy issues and their collection issues until they have an attack. So, how do we communicate that to them? Is there a way we can say, “Look, this is the risk profile for you, Denmark, as a smaller country.” I am speaking hypothetically. “This is what you are facing. Do you want to wait to see what happens? Or, do you want to come into this intelligence?”

So, I think, is there a way we can work with all of those countries—Germany, Denmark, and all of those—to come up with a brokered way to get to the solution? I do not know that that can be achieved, but that is what has to happen, because, right now, they are just having one-off exchanges based on one piece of intelligence and that never will allow you to put together the full picture. We saw that with Belgium and France.

Senator AYOTTE. I know my time is up. I did not want to leave the Doctor out. Is it OK for him to—

Chairman JOHNSON. Yes.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Since the question was about the Visa Waiver Program and ensuring our own borders, I would just point out that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is, ultimately, the last line of defense. When you have a situation where the



search of somebody does not correlate with Iraq, Syria, and Libya, etc. it, ultimately, comes down to the counterterrorism response team.

So, one thing I would put some focus on is whether or not the counterterrorism response teams that CBP has have enough resources. Do they have the training that they need to undertake the kind of human intelligence collection that they are performing at the border to see if somebody is suspicious? And, moreover, do you have enough professionalization and enough incentives to get the best and the brightest to stay in that program, as opposed to going to another Agency? That, I think, is something that is entirely appropriate for Congress to look into.

Senator AYOTTE. I thank you all for your answers and I would just say, based on what you said, I think that we have to take the leadership role here. I do not know of another country that will be able to bring everyone together and get them to act.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

While we are on this topic, I just want to quickly ask a very simple question, because, the theory is that, under the Visa Waiver Program—there are 38 countries that are a part of that program right now—that there is a threshold level of information sharing that should be sufficient. Does anybody want to express an opinion—are all of those 38 countries—are they at that threshold level or should we be really seriously taking a look at putting some of them on probation—or really evaluate that? Just very quickly.

Mr. ZARATE. I think it is worth reviewing—especially in light of the recent attacks. I think we should look at Belgium. There is no question about that, given that the highest level, per capita, of foreign fighters are coming from Belgium—with their own difficulties with information sharing internally—and some of the deficits. I think it is wholly appropriate to look at some of these countries—without prejudice, obviously—being sure to understand the deep economic, social, and diplomatic importance of the Visa Waiver Program. But, I think, a healthy review—and some skepticism—is worth it.

Chairman JOHNSON. Does anybody else want to quickly chime in on that?

Mr. WATTS. I would agree. And, I do not know what the level of all three countries are, but, I would say that we should start with the countries that have the most foreign fighters per capita. That is right where I would begin—and then, move down the list from there.

Chairman JOHNSON. OK. Thank you. Senator Ernst.

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ERNST**

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, thank you to all of you for joining our panel today. This has been very helpful, I think, for all of us.

As I have noted before in my capacity on the Senate Armed Services Committee, I do share the concerns that have been expressed by General Philip Breedlove, as well, about the lack of support for force protection measures for servicemembers, the Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, and their families—and just a couple of examples of that. The U.S. military recently ordered military fam-

ily members to exit Turkey. We have a State Department that ordered the departure of family members of staff at a U.S. Consulate. And, recently, the wife of an Air Force officer was killed in the Brussels attack.

So, if we can focus just on Belgium for a moment, reports are suggesting that the DOD has about 1,300 military personnel and dependents as well as about 600 civilian employees in Belgium, which, of course, we all know, is home to NATO. And, I would like to start with you, Mr. Watts, please, and then, if the rest of the panel could answer, as well. Do you share my concern—and General Breedlove’s—about U.S. force protection in Europe? And, what do we need to do to make sure that force protection is adequate? And, how do we move forward on that?

Mr. WATTS. I would start off—in terms of concern, I am concerned, in particular, for one big reason. So, we have seen two big attacks in Paris and Brussels. And so, now, counterterrorism forces are out aggressively. We also know that there are, as Daveed mentioned, other parts of the network that are still at large. And so, if you are a terrorist and you believe that you are being closed in on, what do you do? Well, you rapidly put together a hasty attack. There is no target better than a military person deployed overseas—and we saw that with, I believe that it was two airmen that were killed in Germany at an airport. That is a target of opportunity.

And so, if you are either an inspired recruit or someone in the network that knows that you are on your last few minutes, this is a great target of opportunity. The same is true for embassies and consulates. So, I think there is a huge risk for that, as these investigations progress. If they cannot operate as cells or as groups the way they have in the past, they are going to pick targets of opportunity. Maybe, they pick Europeans, but the most vulnerable, I think, the most targeted U.S. people, are going to be State Department employees and Department of Defense employees. So, I think it is a concern—and we know the network is there and we know they are going to look for targets of opportunity as things get tougher.

In terms of how you protect them, it is extremely challenging. You really have one of two options. You can try and protect them in place—which is very difficult to do—and so, you put more active defense measures in place. This means increasing diplomatic security, surveillance, and those sorts of things. It is very tough to do.

The other option is that you remove them from those countries. And so, when you talk about removing 1,300 servicemember’s families from those countries—that is a major signal and it also has impacts in Europe. We believe, then, that Europe is insecure. And, it creates a ripple effect.

So, I do not know that I have the right answer as to what to do, but I do think we can start risk forecasting much better than we are doing currently. Now, we kind of wait for an attack to happen and then we say, “Oh, OK. There is, like, something bad out there. Travel warning.” It is, like, “Great. I am already here.”

In a lot of these countries, we know where these foreign fighters are coming from. Like, we could map that out as a risk forecast and, literally, put it out and say, “Here is the risk of traveling in

these nations based on the number of foreign fighters, the capacity we assess the European countries at, in terms of counterterrorism and law enforcement”—which also sends a signal to them—and then where we have seen attacks—what are high-traffic attack locations? We have seen the subways. We have seen popular Western venues. This looks a lot more like what we used to see in the Middle East or North Africa—hitting targets of opportunity where there are lots of Westerners.

I think we can, indirectly, send some signals to Europe by setting up our own assessment—and I would make it public. I would have a map that says—just like you see with disease control maps. It would be, like, “These are the places that we are worried about the most.” And then, the Europeans will figure out, on their own, that they have their own problems as well.

Senator ERNST. That is very good. And, I would like to hear from the other panelists, as well, if you would.

Yes, Mr. Zarate, please.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, thank you. I would look—to Clint’s point, I would look, not just at risk mapping, but also at intelligence gathering around surveillance of family members and soft targets that are tied to military personnel, because, I think I would not worry so much about the hardened bases and other sites around which we have security that we can flex aggressively if we need to. Those are always targets—but terrorists have a hard time executing attacks against those.

I worry more about the soft targets outside of those rings of security. And, understanding where the terrorists may be surveilling and doing a lot of counterintelligence in some of these locations, I think, is really important in order to understand the specific risks around personnel and family members.

One other note. Keep in mind that, from a cyber perspective, what some of the followers and adherents of ISIS have tried to do is to expose military personnel and their family members with personal data, addresses, etc. And so, there is a very real effort underway to at least threaten, if not put at risk, family members and personnel outside of the bounds of classic security. So, we have to be quite conscious of that and counter it if we can.

Senator ERNST. Very good. Thank you.

Does anyone else wish to respond?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes. I would echo these concerns. And, piggybacking on what Juan said, I think that one of the emerging tactics that ISIS, in particular, is trying to use is stalking and killing its foes—especially those who are affiliated with governments—basically taking them out of the government sphere, making them individuals who can easily be tracked.

And, when I was in Germany, fairly recently, at the base in Stuttgart, I saw servicemembers in contravention to regulations leaving the base still wearing their uniforms. That is a concern.

I think that making family members and members of the military aware of a few things is important. One, is just basic online security, something which is definitely drilled in within these institutions. Making them aware of how much information they are giving off on social media. A lot of the information ISIS had when it put out addresses of the servicemembers on their kill lists was just

easily gleaned, not from hacking, but by going to people's social media accounts and finding out this information about them.

But, ultimately, I think this is a very high-level concern that fits both with what the organization has done and also the direction that it is moving, in terms of its evolving tactics.

Senator ERNST. Well, I appreciate that very much.

I know my time is expiring. When my husband was serving in Saudi Arabia in the late 1990s, he was considered a combatant commander—or, excuse me, part of a combatant command. And, members of those—or those family members could not live in Saudi Arabia at that time. However, he had, next door, in the next set of quarters over, a non-combatant commander. But, those families could live there and it was ironic to us. I do not think terrorists distinguish between who is a combatant and who is a non-combatant in situations like that.

But, I do think this is something the United States needs to take very seriously and we need to make sure that we are protecting our servicemembers as well as our civilians serving overseas. So, thank you very much for being here today.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Senator Peters.

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PETERS**

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, thank you to the panelists. I found, so far—and I am sure I will continue to find—this hearing very interesting and we appreciate your expertise.

I would like to pick up on some questions that Senator Carper relayed, regarding the community. And, what we have seen, certainly, in the attacks in Paris and Brussels, is that the individuals that are involved were homegrown. These folks were radicalized in their own country, went off, in some cases, to be foreign fighters, and came back. You have already talked about some of the conditions in those European neighborhoods that these individuals are exposed to.

Given the fact that we also have very vibrant Muslim-American and Arab-American communities here in the United States—in Michigan, my State, in particular—could you comment on what you see as the differences between the United States and Europe? And, what lessons—because we, thankfully, have not seen those types of incidents here in our country—what lessons can be learned from the United States that may be helpful to the Europeans? What is happening here? Is it different? And, elaborate on why that could be a good lesson for others.

Let us start with Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, thank you. Fortunately, I do think there is a difference. First, there is a difference in numbers. If you look at the per capita number of radicalized individuals, be it cases brought by the FBI or foreign fighters who have gone to fight in a variety of foreign terrorist conflicts, the numbers are quite low per capita, in terms of the United States.

In terms of foreign fighters in the most recent context of Syria and Iraq, we are looking at probably 200 or so. Now, given that we do not have full information about foreign fighters—and, in fact, that American who recently turned himself in to the Kurdish au-

thorities and who was then played on video, I think, was not known to U.S. authorities. And so, I think we do not have a full picture, but the numbers are much smaller than the number that we see in Europe, which is in the thousands.

Second, our Muslim-American communities are incredibly diverse, they are spread geographically, they are well integrated, and, historically, they have done incredibly well socially and economically. If you look at the figures, in terms of per capita income, the numbers are very high. And, in general, the notion of integration has been very natural and organic in the American context.

The last thing I would note is that the very notion of an American identity as a common form of definition of individuals and communities—the fact that anyone from any race, creed, or religion can call themselves an American—be they first generation or 12th generation—that is incredibly powerful. And, the notion, I think—and several social scientists have pointed this out—that there is actually sort of gravity to the idea of the American dream—the American ideal is actually a counterweight to the counter narratives of these terrorist groups and even the dream of the Islamic caliphate, which is animating so many to fight in Iraq and Syria.

And so, the one thing I would argue for America is that we make sure we recognize that—that we embrace our diversity and we tackle the challenges in communities, like the Somali-American community, where you have seen a higher percentage of individuals going to fight. And, we ensure that we do not have the ghettoization—or even the sense of targeting and the ghettoization of the Muslim-American community or any other community. That is a bedrock of American power and identity and, frankly, it will hold us in good stead against this ideology.

Senator PETERS. Thank you. Ms. Smith.

Ms. SMITH. Thank you, Senator, for that very good question. Juan is exactly right. I agree with him 100 percent. Just to stress one point on identity, we benefit here, in the United States, from the fact that it is very easy to have a hyphenated existence. You can be Irish-American, Muslim-American, Scottish-American, whatever it might be.

And in Europe, the problem is that these migrants that have arrived—many from North Africa—feel neither French nor Moroccan, for example. So, they have been in this country—many of them were born there—but they do not feel a part of society and there is no path for them forward to integrate into these societies.

So, it makes them very susceptible to someone who comes along, either over social media or in a coffeehouse, to say, “I have an identity for you. This is where you belong. Come join us in the Islamic State. This will be your home, because France is not your home and you are not going to go to Morocco, either—or Algeria or wherever it might be. And so, let us provide that sense of identity to you.” And, that is an entirely different challenge than what we have here in the United States.

That is not to say that we do not have folks that are susceptible to radicalization, but it is a very different challenge than what we see on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Senator PETERS. Alright. Thank you.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. And, you can see some of this bear out, statistically. It has been a few years since I looked at statistics about demographics within the Muslim-American community, so this might be a little bit dated, but the last time I looked into this, the average Muslim had a higher level of education than the average American. The average Muslim in the United States also had a higher level of employment and socioeconomic status, which speaks to relative levels of integration.

I would also caution—I mean, I think that there are lessons that Europe can learn from the United States, but the United States is fairly unique in its identity as being a nation of immigrants. I mean, I travel the world a lot—as does everyone on this panel—and I cannot think of many other societies—other than Canada, where you do not have integration problems—and I do not mean Muslim integration problems, but from any sort of class. Just, in general, throughout the world, you have a much more rigid set of identity than we have in the United States.

And so, I would not think of it as there being a quick fix, in terms of lessons from America. Rather, I see this as being a systemic problem that will be with us, I think, for decades to come—that most countries do not integrate new populations the way the United States has been successful in doing.

Senator PETERS. Alright. Thank you. Mr. Watts.

Mr. WATTS. I would like to shift just a little bit to show why Europe's problem is now worse than ever and then compare it to us. So, the best recruiter of a foreign fighter is a former foreign fighter. And, that is about the physical relationship—the way you recruit people in your ranks. It is the same in the States. They always say the best recruiter of a Marine is a former Marine. There is that indirect channel that you come through and that is built on physical relationships. That motivates you. That gets you going.

And, right now, Europe has what is called “bleed out,” foreign fighters leaving Syria and Iraq that are “bleeding” back into Europe. At the same time, they have this other problem with the inspired folks, who I call “bottled up.” So, they want to go to Syria and Iraq, but they can no longer do that. And, you have these catalysts—former foreign fighters working with inspired recruits—and we see this in the Paris and Belgium attacks. It is almost half and half. You have some foreign fighter veterans and some inspired recruits that are working together—and that is the worst case scenario. They are in these disenfranchised communities.

We are lucky here in the States. We do not have the foreign fighters coming back the way that we see in Europe, and most of our recruits are virtual recruits. Probably 90 percent of them are online. They do not have a direct connection with it. They work to build a connection with the group. That takes longer, it is more difficult, and you get a different style of recruit. They are more ideological in recruitment, whereas those neighborhoods are more social in terms of their recruitment—and this is a different dynamic that plays out.

So, we are lucky that—with the exception, possibly, of Minneapolis, which was mentioned before—we do not have that same dynamic here. This allows us to detect them online as well as on the ground much faster. They send off signals that are easier to de-

tect in many ways, whereas, in Europe, they have a huge problem. A lot of the recruitment is never seen by law enforcement or intelligence because it is happening face to face on a one-on-one basis.

Senator PETERS. Alright. Well, thank you. I appreciate all of your responses. If I could summarize it, it sounds as if we, certainly, have to be vigilant. We have to have strong intelligence and make sure that we are being offensive in our actions. But, ultimately, the strongest shield we have are our American values and the special place we hold as a nation of immigrants, where everyone can come and have the opportunity to pursue the American dream. If we ever let that slip, then we truly are vulnerable. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Booker.

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOOKER**

Senator BOOKER. Thank you. Again, thank you for this hearing.

Mr. Watts, I am a little—you said something that seemed like you were sort of downplaying the effectiveness of CVE—of efforts to counter the propaganda. Do you think that that is not the most fruitful of pathways?

Mr. WATTS. I do not believe that most of the CVE efforts that I have seen, at least—comparing the States and Europe is a little bit challenging, but, I believe, it is an indirect way to sort of get at the motivations that are driving these young people. Part of the reason, I believe, they can be recruited is because they are living in disenfranchised communities. They are not connected to the community. And, they are not connected socially—or at least not with their parents. They are not listening to what their parents are saying a lot of the time.

We just saw, I think, 2 weeks ago, a situation where a mother in Europe found out that her son was in ISIS because the records were divulged online. She did not know until a newspaper essentially contacted her. So, parents are not really good at knowing what their children are doing. That is just normal.

And also, these communities, they seem to not be aware—or they are not on board—in terms of preventing this. So, I think it is a good effort for a lot of reasons—regarding violent extremism, but also just building relationships with communities to break down those borders between them. But, if you want to get at the problem of radicalization and recruitment right now, you have to change—and this is where we come to the communications part of it—the sort of mindsets and the narratives. You have to change how they view opportunities to become a jihadist. Jihadists are fickle. Foreign fighters are extremely fickle recruits.

We watched al-Qaeda recruits online for years. They heard, “You should go to Yemen.” They would go to Yemen until things were going well in Yemen. Then, we saw Mali. It was, “You should go to Mali.” That lasted about 3 days, until the French invaded. Most recently, it was, “You should go to Syria.” That has gone on for 4 years because ISIS had been successful. That narrative was not propaganda, it was truth. “We are advancing on these cities in the way our strategy said we would. We are achieving success. We are building the State.” As soon as we start to erode that—and I think that is happening now—you start to see fewer recruits and less affinity for it.

But, I think the key is to focus on the individuals and why they want to join, rather than trying to go through the community. I am not sure they are the best lever for it. I would rather change the image than the method.

Senator BOOKER. So, I have a couple of thoughts. So, clearly, we are eroding territory in Syria——

Mr. WATTS. Yes.

Senator BOOKER [continuing]. And, in Iraq right now, which is undermining some recruitment efforts.

You are really taking CVE efforts and separating them into two buckets. The first bucket is this communication with family members, trying to create better networks within Muslim communities—as opposed to just the propaganda that they are feeding these young people—trying to make sure that we are countering that propaganda with our own—exposing them for the frauds and the shams that they are.

Mr. WATTS. Yes.

Senator BOOKER. Is that right?

Mr. WATTS. Yes, I think of it as a funnel. So, usually, we talk about vulnerable, radicalizing, and committed recruits. There are many more at the vulnerable stage. These are the communities we want to reach out to. That is where a community program, like you suggested, might be focused.

There are the radicalizing recruits. These are people we know are already connected to foreign fighters. They look like they are mobilizing. They are taking on the image and the talk of those that they want to join.

And, then, there are the committed recruits. These are guys that are either trying to carry-out an attack at home or are trying to make their way to Syria and Iraq.

I would focus more effort at the bottom of the funnel.

Senator BOOKER. Right. So, that is law enforcement—and I agree that that is where most of our resources are. But, you are telling me that you do not have much confidence in the efforts of former freedom fighters—excuse me, former radicalized folks—who have come back and who have now converted back to sanity—in engaging them to tell the truth to others who are in the second part of that funnel.

Mr. WATTS. I am a big fan of them. And, that is why I would focus those efforts toward the radicalizing members. What I am not so interested in is engaging this massive vulnerable audience, where we try and—I call it pushing the “Let us buy the world a Coke” message—where we try and say, “Let us reach out to you. We will build stronger communities. We can integrate and we can solve some of your problems.” I feel like those are good programs to have regardless, but it is important to focus on defectors, to focus on atrocities, to focus on crimes that are happening in Iraq and Syria, and to focus this toward the radicalizing audience.

Sometimes, we get one part right, but we are not focusing it in the right place. So, I would rather look at those that are closely connected to foreign fighters and their communities. And, that is where I would aim that message.

Senator BOOKER. Ms. Smith, do you want to add to that?



Ms. SMITH. I would just note, I guess, I have a slightly different view. You need multiple lines of effort, obviously. You have the military angle. You have law enforcement. But, I think we do have to invest in some of these CVE measures. Ultimately, the research shows that, to pull someone off of the path of radicalization, you have to give them an alternative path. They have to have a network of individuals that they trust and a mom, a teacher, a parent, or a neighbor that can persuade them to make the right choice. And, they have to, obviously, have some element of doubt about going down this path.

But, I think some of the CVE measures that have been launched to date are trying to do just that—to provide a network of individuals that can lay a hand on someone as they are wavering. Obviously, some folks are too far along to pull back from radicalization. But, for the young kids that are kind of on the brink of packing it in and taking a flight to Turkey that will—and then crossing the border into Syria—I think we have to look at some of these programs.

To be sure, not all of them produce real results and we have to definitely scrub—understand what is working and what is not. But, I think we have to keep trying and working with our allies, whether it is the folks in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—some of the work we have done there on CVE—or our European allies. I think it is an important component of the wider strategy.

Senator BOOKER. And, programs like “Think Again, Turn Away,” were not really successful. So, really finding the ones that are working, investing in those, obviously—not undermining the law enforcement efforts and the like, but finding the ones that are targeted.

And, just out of curiosity, in the few minutes I have left—on National Public Radio (NPR), there was a good article my staff sent me about why some neighborhoods are very radicalized, but some are not. You have a Moroccan neighborhood where they are and then you have a Turkish neighborhood that is not, but yet, they have some of the same characteristics, in terms of challenges to integration. Why would you say that is the case? Mr. Zarate or Ms. Smith, if you have thoughts on that please share them.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, it is a great question and one that actually bears a lot more investigation, because we have had these hot spots of radicalization. We also have the situation, Senator—and this is part of the difficulty of the CVE efforts—and, as one who bears the scars of doing work in this space for a number of years, I can attest to it. But, the reality is, you have family members who, themselves, grew up in the same home and the same neighborhood. One goes off to fight. The other does not and does not fall prey to the ideology. And, the question is: why? And, I think, sociologists, archaeologists, and anthropologists are all looking at this. There is sort of the social scientist surge on this to figure out what the difference is.

And, one of the things, to Clint’s point earlier, is the personal connection between the radicalizers, the ideologues, and the lineage of both ideological and operational networks. I think where you have seen these groups continue to persist and where they continue to produce radicalized individuals and foreign fighters, conflict

after conflict and year after year, is in these communities where there are people who are actively trying to recruit as a part of their mission. You have seen it with Mullah Krekar in Norway. You have seen it with preachers in the U.K. You have seen it, obviously, in France and Belgium, where you have this ideological lineage that embeds in communities. That, then, becomes a hotbed.

So, I think that is one factor, but I think scientists are trying to figure this out, because not even within families themselves can we figure out exactly what radicalized one individual and not another.

Senator BOOKER. And, the external timberline—and I will stop here—of sort of the radical right that is growing in Europe is actually creating more combustible fuel for radicalization. And, does that concern you, in terms of rhetoric here in the United States, which might be, potentially, doing the same?

Ms. SMITH. I am very worried about political developments inside Europe, where we have seen the rise of anti-immigrant and anti-E.U. parties in countless countries across the European continent and what they are doing to then fuel the grievances that these Muslim communities have against the societies in which they live. I think, similarly, we have to be careful here about our own rhetoric, acts of discrimination, and alienation. We want to be as inclusive as possible. We have to recognize that we are also dealing with a very small percentage—even in Europe—of the Muslim community. And, it is not fair to say that all of the Muslims inside of Europe are susceptible to radicalization. We have to keep that type of thinking in check.

So, most importantly, I think, I am watching developments inside of Europe very closely and trying to figure out how this is going to unfold and change their approach in the coming months and years. But, I think we have to watch ourselves, as well, on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, we cannot move to a position where, in this country, we are propagating and echoing the narrative of the other, right? We are Americans—all Americans—Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and agnostic, right? We are all Americans. And to the extent that our political discourse drives a sense of alienation and divide, that is not only destructive, but it is dangerous.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Booker. Senator Portman.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PORTMAN

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Carper, for holding this hearing. Of course, you once again had a great panel. I am sorry we did not have Administration officials here, because, when we have had them before us, we have learned a lot about what is going on—and, frankly, I think, we have been constructive in giving them ideas about what should be happening in addition to what is already happening—both on the international side, on the global threat here at home, in terms of the protection of the homeland, and, certainly, on winning the hearts and minds, which we have had a good conversation about today.

In Ohio, people are worried. I mean, they see what happened in Brussels. They remember Paris. They remember San Bernadino. And, we are told by the national security experts here in Washington that the threat has increased—that here, in the United States, we face an increased threat today.

In listening to the conversations, I wonder whether you agree with that. Some of you seem to be saying that, maybe, recruitment is down and that ISIS is not being as successful because of some of the military victories—by the way, someone said they are victories by us. I mean, a lot of the military victories are by the Syrian Army right now. We have to remember that—and there are some consequences to that that may create even additional refugee flows—if that makes any sense, which I think it does.

So, my question to you, I guess, is, one, do you think that, somehow, the threat has ebbed? I do not sense that.

And, two, I would like to dig a little deeper into this issue of the ideology—and I think there is more consensus—even though it is not a complete consensus—as to what we ought to do globally. There is more consensus about what we ought to do, in terms of protecting the homeland. There is less about how you actually get at the hearts and minds.

One data point that has been reported to us—and maybe you would dispute this—but it is very interesting, as it relates to our conversation about what is happening here in Muslim communities and how we can thwart young people—the recruits—in joining a misguided cause, is that 38 percent of U.S. citizens who have been charged with ISIS-related offenses are converts. So, we sometimes talk about the lone wolf. Sometimes, the lone wolf is a Muslim and sometimes it is a convert, but, often, it is a convert.

So, I mean, I could not agree more that we need to do more in the Muslim community. I understand Mr. Watts's point about priorities. But, I will tell you, the first foreign fighter, I believe, who came back and was arrested here in the United States was from Columbus, Ohio. He was Somali. I have talked to the police officers there. I have talked to the Somali community. Part of the reason that we were able to apprehend him was because of a cooperation between the police and the Somali community. So, that is very important.

But, is this figure accurate—that almost 40 percent of those who have been arrested here, on ISIS-related charges, are converts? And, what does that mean, in terms of dealing with this issue? Is it even broader than the importance of going into these Muslim communities, having that relationship, and having the leadership in those communities provide that alternative path and let people know that—as Mr. Watts said, I thought—these people are villains rather than heroes?

So, those are my two questions, I guess. One, what do you think about the threat, overall, and, second, what do you think about dealing with the challenge we have here in this country with people who are becoming radicalized—and, particularly, those who are converts to Islam becoming radicalized.

And, Juan, I will start with you.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator Portman, thank you. They are great questions, as always.

First, I think the scope, scale, and sophistication of terrorist threats are more significant now than ever before. Part of this has to do with the diversification of the nationalities of individuals involved. Part of it has to do with the expanse of the geographies—with ISIS establishing these provinces—these wilayats—with several of these, geographically, now applying to ISIS to be a part of it. We have seen attacks in Southeast Asia as a part of the application process. And so, the geographic scope, the diversity, and the numbers are still there, while the sophistication of the operations are increasing.

In addition, this is a group that is thinking about the next generation. And so, you have seen the recruitment of women and the attempts to engage in education and schooling—all as a way of breeding a new generation of jihadis and radicals as, perhaps, part of an “ISIS 2.0.”

Finally, the idea of the caliphate—even though it is diminishing in Iraq—the fact that it is beginning to spread in other parts of the world—and the very notion of it being a reality and persisting continues to animate the movement in some very dangerous ways. And so, I mentioned Southeast Asia. You have seen the reanimation of terrorist networks that we had worked so hard with our Southeast Asian partners and the Australians to suppress now resurrecting because the idea and the animation of the caliphate are driving some of these things. So, I think we are in a more dangerous, animated time for global terrorism.

Senator PORTMAN. How about the threat here in the United States? How would you respond to that? Maybe, Mr. Watts, you could take a crack at that.

Mr. WATTS. I would first note that we have a lot more “ones and twos”, rather than community recruitment, here in the States. And, of those “ones and twos”—as you pointed to—many of them have deep psychological issues and were, maybe, not part of this radical ideology for very long. And so, how do you detect them if they are not a part of a community and they are new to this movement?

Many of the converts find Islam, then go to the extreme form of Islam, and then mobilize to support ISIS—that can happen in months or years—and that is a tip-off that there is something else going on there. So, the only real way to do that is online electronic surveillance. That is your best bet to pick those people up. They are self-radicalizing. They are becoming motivated in ways that are very hard to detect. You do not have a community that can help you detect them. You do not have a law enforcement entity, possibly, that can detect them. So, how do you do that? Your best chance is online—and then that comes down to how comfortable Americans are with seeing that.

I am upset that I am no longer in government. I can sit at my house and watch extremists online and know that they are mobilizing toward al-Qaeda, ISIS, or whatever group, but, yet, law enforcement, in many ways, has many more hurdles to hop over in order to monitor that sort of information. Oftentimes, I can provide it to them easier than they can get it themselves.

So, I think it is about how we work through this system. That 40 percent worries me more because I also feel like they have a

propensity to violence that is higher than the rate of many of the others—especially in the homeland.

Senator PORTMAN. Yes, I think those are good points. Our time is expiring here, but one thing that we did not get into earlier, in terms of the CVE issue, is what is going on online. And, our inability to counter that narrative in an effective way is a real concern. Even at our fusion center in Ohio, which I visited recently, we are doing some of this—and that is very important. But, it seems to me we should be increasing our efforts.

As you know, this Committee has talked a lot about this, again, with Administration officials. And, I think we have helped to construct a way to nudge them toward more of this, in a more sophisticated way, to go online, where those individuals—who are, maybe, converts or, maybe, lone wolves—are finding this information. It is not a physical contact. The young man from Cincinnati that intended to come here to this Capitol, for instance—who was a convert—was working online to become not just a convert, but to become radicalized. And, I think this is an area where we have, unfortunately, a real gap, in terms of our ability to project.

Ms. Smith, you have some background in that, I think. Do you have any thoughts on that—on our online messaging and how to countermessage?

Ms. SMITH. Well, I would just note that we have seen different stages of how ISIS has kind of taken the fight away from the region and into Europe—and, now, elsewhere—including the United States. They first wanted to inspire attacks. Then, they tried very hard to enable them. And now, they are working to actually direct the attacks.

And so, our efforts to counter their efforts have to be driven toward every single one of those efforts—through law enforcement, through the use of our military to get them back home, in the place—the safe haven—where they exist, but also through the CVE efforts that we talked about.

But, you are exactly right. The online presence as well as their ability and their sophistication online is something that should worry all of us a great deal.

Senator PORTMAN. Mr. Watts.

Mr. WATTS. If I could add one thing—because I failed to mention it earlier with Senator Booker's question—it is that there are online CVE programs that I have seen, which I do think have merit. One is called "One-to-One Online Interventions." They have done that in the U.K. Moonshot is a group that has done it. It sits outside of the government. I think that is an effective example of how you can have CVE in the online space. What tends to happen with investments, though, is that these are more expensive, because you are talking about using resources for a one-on-one approach. And, we tend to think, "Well, if we do this program with 10 people, it might reach 1,000."

I would rather go heavier—I guess my response is—heavier on those that we know are the closest to getting on that airplane or showing up here with an explosive device—and investing a little heavier in those CVE programs. So, maybe that is a better answer to the question.

Senator PORTMAN. You have to identify those individuals first—

Mr. WATTS. Yes.

Senator PORTMAN [continuing]. You say—and that is one of our challenges—to identify them. I could not agree more about having more of a targeted focus and a more laser-like approach.

Thank you all very much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Portman.

Mr. Watts, I want to quickly go back, because you indicated that as a private citizen, you can do more to identify these individuals than government officials can. Talk about the handcuffs that are actually on government officials and are keeping them from trying to do what we need to do.

Mr. WATTS. I think it is twofold. For example, I teach with the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) a lot and do a lot of programs with intelligence-led policing and counterterrorism. And so, you can show them these accounts that are out there—wide open. It comes down to two issues. What are the rules around collecting this information on private citizens? Law enforcement, intelligence, and the Federal system all have a different level of comfort with it. So, they are not sure whether they should pursue it.

The second part is the capacity to do it. State and local entities could benefit a lot from detecting people online, but they have the least capacity to do so. The Federal Government has the most capacity and the best technology—those sorts of assets—but may have trouble communicating that information down to the State and local levels.

The other part that I would tell you is, if I have to go into a government location and do a briefing, it is almost impossible to use the technology just to access the information. This is all for good reasons—cybersecurity, physical security, and things like that. But, you almost cannot get on the Internet to even observe it. It becomes a barrier and you start to look for other ways to do it. On the other hand, at my house, I can open up my doors. I can just watch what is going on. Or, I can collaborate with people like Daveed and other people online that are watching this and we can set up, basically, our own databases where we tag and track people.

As soon as that gets introduced into the government—whether it is due to bureaucracy, capability, access, or data privacy reasons—everything tends to go sideways. It becomes very archaic or very difficult to do.

Chairman JOHNSON. Do you see a solution to that that still protects American civil liberties?

Mr. WATTS. I do. I think that there just needs to be some sort of legislation or regulation put forth that says, “If I, as a private citizen, can observe this activity online, then, as the Federal Government, we are going to observe that activity online.” The Snowden leaks did nothing for us, in terms of helping the government to access that information. But, I think the more straightforward approach is saying, “Look, the best way we can secure our Nation and safeguard you is if we watch what is going on online.” And, when people are talking about committing violence or mobilizing toward violence, then we need to go out and talk to them.

But, if you cannot see that information or if it is coming to you very delayed, it is really hard to take a preemptive law enforcement approach.

Chairman JOHNSON. Mr. Zarate, you talked a little bit about, really, what the goal is. We held a hearing, really, based on Graeme Wood's article, in the Atlantic, "What ISIS Really Wants." My conclusion is that it is really two things: world domination and to set up this apocalyptic final battle—these are somewhat conflicting goals.

I just want to ask all of the panelists—what is behind this? This is what is just baffling, I think, to Americans. al-Qaeda's narrative was that they just wanted the West out of the Middle East. This is different. So, can you first speak to that? And, I just want to go down the panel. What do you think they are after?

Mr. ZARATE. Chairman, I think it is the next evolution of the violent Sunni extremist ideology. And, they have given life and manifestation to what had once been the mythology of reestablishing the Islamic caliphate. And so, first and foremost, they want to establish, not only this caliphate, but to demonstrate that they can govern and, actually, that this is a place—and this is part of the narrative—that it is the only place where you can practice true Islam. This is part of the attractiveness.

And so, they have morphed the al-Qaeda narrative—which is that the West is at war with Islam and that Muslims have a religious obligation to defend it—into this caliphate and said, "The way we are governing it makes it the only place where you can actually live as a true Muslim." And so, it is that, in and of itself, that is the core of their message. That, then, animates outward, because their job, then, is to kill and convert infidels and to project out. And, they understand that the West—along with our allies and proxies—will not allow them to do this long term.

Chairman JOHNSON. You also talked about how, again, as long as that caliphate exists, it inspires and it actually prompts additional types of action. I was interested in you talking about the application process. It kind of sounds like a gang initiation. Can you just quickly speak to that and give us some examples?

Mr. ZARATE. Well, what you have seen is, different terrorist groups—the moment that the caliphate was announced, there was a moment of strategic decision-making for al-Qaeda as well as the al-Qaeda affiliates and other violent extremist groups. And so, they had to determine, "Are we going to be a part of this? Do we believe in it?" This is part of the strategic renting and division you have seen between the al-Qaeda core and ISIS.

What a number of groups have done—to include Boko Haram, which was long allied with al-Qaeda—was to then send messages to ISIS initiating membership—in essence, pledging allegiance in the first instance, and then, applying to actually be an official province of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. This is a reality for them. They see this as a governing reality.

And so, you have seen this emerge in Libya, in Egypt, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Saudi Arabia, and in Yemen. These are very real individuals thinking that they are part of something bigger than themselves—and that has dangerous implications because they have to prove that they are worthy, which is why you have

seen these attacks in the hinterlands of places, like Jakarta, with people trying to be a part of this broader caliphate. It is animating the movement and it is resurrecting these networks—both funding and operational—that we had long ago suppressed.

Chairman JOHNSON. So, the inescapable conclusion to this, from my standpoint is, if you really want to go on offense as opposed to continue to stay on defense—where defense is incredibly difficult and almost impossible—do you not have to destroy that caliphate? Do you not have to deny them that territory? Mr. Gartenstein-Ross.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes, I agree with that. And, it has been mentioned—including by Clint earlier in the hearing—that messaging that diffuses their image—their image, which I call a winner’s message—is very important. And, the ammunition is there to do that. Absolutely, if they lose their caliphate, they have some explaining to do, as one would say. You have at least a couple of different kinds of people who are recruited to ISIS—those who are heavily ideological and those who are more aligned with the criminal elements, as it was framed before.

But, for both of them, if the caliphate is lost—those who are more ideological will understand that that quick loss of the caliphate really destroys ISIS’s interpretation of Islamic prophecy. Those who are more aligned with the criminal element will just see them as losers. And, ultimately, they have experienced a lot of losses.

Now—right now—they are not weak in terms of messaging. They just carried out a couple of major attacks in 4 months. But, one thing that our messaging apparatus has done poorly is the broadcasting of those losses—losses that they have experienced in the Sahal region, in Afghanistan, and in Algeria, where their entire branch got wiped out—and elsewhere—and a lot of that comes back to the bureaucracy question, which we have raised, which is that, sometimes, when you look at our messaging apparatus—for some parts of the messaging apparatus—it is highly bureaucratized—even how you have a tweet approved. For others, there are theater limitations, where they cannot go—and go beyond their immediate theater, which hinders the strategy of our messaging.

Chairman JOHNSON. But, again, messaging is all about reality. And, the reality is that the caliphate remains. Sure, we have been nibbling away at it. But, as has been described, the network is growing. They have actually gone from inspiring to directing. So, the reality is that they are not losing yet. They have not lost. They have not lost yet.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Oh, absolutely.

Chairman JOHNSON. And, I would argue that, until they are overtly losing, where the reality is such, they are going to continue to inspire, they will continue to direct, and the threat will continue to grow.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Sir, I agree with you entirely, but I would add one thing. Ultimately, ISIS has understood, in particular, the potential of social media to mobilize people to carry out attacks—and part of that is a rooted image of strength. They have, and have had, more of an image of strength in certain theaters than is justified. I mean, if you look back at how they convinced Boko Haram to join their network, a part of that story is con-



vincing people—contrary to the actual facts on the ground—that they controlled the city of Derna in Libya, which they never did.

Ultimately, as they start to lose more, I think it is in our interest to be able to amplify that message of their losses, because that will hit them doubly hard. In addition to losses on the ground, they will have more trouble drawing in recruits—and that is why I think we need to think about getting our messaging right—not because it is a panacea now, but because, as you say, when they do start to lose the caliphate, we want to be able to put that out using a method that is effective.

Chairman JOHNSON. OK. I will give you all a chance to give some final thoughts at the end of this, but I want to be respectful of my Ranking Member's time.

Senator CARPER. I am very much interested in the line of questioning that we just had with the Chairman. I was going to pursue that myself, but I think you have responded to it very well here.

One of the things we have not touched on today is the issue of rail security in this country. I was in China with a bunch of our colleagues in the last week and had an opportunity to ride on some of the most beautiful, comfortable, attractive, and timely trains that I have ridden on in quite a while. I ride the train a lot, as some of you know. And, riding on Amtrak's Northeast Regional coming from New York City down to Washington today was—compared to what I was used to in China—was eye opening and it was not encouraging, let me just say. They are doing a pretty good job over there investing in infrastructure and we are not.

Speaking of rail, though, I want to ask if you all would just help us to rate the security of our rail system, relative to the security of, maybe, our aviation system—and what lessons do you think we might learn from the Brussels attack that might relate to rail security.

Mr. Watts, do you want to go first?

Mr. WATTS. I would say rail, as compared to air, is always going to be far less secure. We have always had a very open system with rail, as do almost all countries. And, I think it is a logical place—and when I say rail, I do not even just mean Amtrak. The subway systems of the United States—the vulnerabilities there are impossible, really, to defend against. And, the best defense is an active defense. It is the offense. It is the investigations. It is running down leads.

I am not sure that, even if we wanted to secure it, there is a good way that we could do it. I think it is a feasibility issue—just in terms of the access that anyone, really, can get to the Amtrak system or the subway systems—whatever rail system that it might be.

Yes. I do not have a good answer for it, but I see it as a vulnerability, worldwide—not just here in the United States.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Mr. Gartenstein-Ross.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. So, I think there are two problems, in terms of trying to put more rail security into place—with one exception and I will talk about that measure at the end. But, the problem is, first, the more you harden it, like with checkpoints and the like, the more you defeat the purpose. The reason why subways are so effective is because you can hop on. It does not take you hours to get across town. You do not have to wait in a Transpor-

tation Security Administration (TSA) line. If you had to, then far fewer people would take the subway.

The second thing is the very problem we saw in the Brussels airport, which is that, even if you have a checkpoint, terrorists can attack right outside of the checkpoint—and that is just an insoluble problem, because, if you move the checkpoint outside, for example, then you just have a line of waiting passengers outside—and that actually puts cars into play. Car bombs can be used.

The one exception is good human policing—and that is what Amtrak tries to do. You have the teams with dogs who will be going around Amtrak trains to try to make sure nothing is amiss. It is far from being as effective as airline security, but that is the last line of defense for our rail security.

Ms. SMITH. I would just note that I was in Brussels 2 days before the attacks. And, in addition to being in Brussels, I took the train over to London. They have hardened their rail security because of the differences that exist between the U.K. and mainland Europe. But, it did create an incredible chokepoint and a level of vulnerability. And, I was aware, as I stood there—not knowing what was coming days later, of course—that you had this huge mass of people waiting to go through security to get on a train to go through the tunnel over to London. So, I agree with the point that, in some ways, some of these fixes can make a bad situation worse.

The only other point I would add is that, in Europe, on the aviation security point, we have a pretty dire situation in that, past the security checkpoint, those areas are regulated and mandated to meet a certain level of aviation security standards. But, before the checkpoint, each individual country can handle security as they wish, which, as you can imagine, creates a whole array of standards and levels of security across European airports. And, I think Europeans are going to have to have some sort of discussion on how they want to, collectively, set standards for how they handle those areas before the checkpoints.

Senator CARPER. OK. Thank you. Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, I wanted to point out just one thing. I think deploying more behavioral analysts is important in an open system. I think TSA and DHS have tried to do that at airports and, certainly, at train stations.

The other thing I would say is that there are new technologies coming online that allow for better detection, to a certain extent, as you mentioned earlier, Senator—even prediction around anomaly and anomaly detection. Some of this is still in formation. DHS has invested in some of this, as you know. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has done so, as well, for DOD. And so, some of these technologies, if applied in addition to these other layers of security and behavioral analysis, could, perhaps, give you a better sense of what the threats may be.

But, the long pole in the tent is intelligence, targeting, and risk mitigation in an open system—and that is what we have in our train system.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. The last thing I want to ask you all is if you could just quickly give me one particularly important issue for our consideration that you think there is near unanimous agreement on—or, maybe, unanimous agreement. Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, I will give two issues, if you will give me the indulgence. One is a point you made earlier, which is that the prediction and prevention paradigm, which has really defined the post-9/11 environment for the United States, really has to be operationally applied in the European context. They talk about it. French President François Hollande has talked about Europe being at war. But, they have to move to an operationally preventative mindset and we have to help them get there.

A second thing, if I could, sir, for DHS's purposes—moving toward systemic defense of key critical infrastructure—you just asked about the train system—water, the electrical grid, and financial systems—we need to build resiliency and redundancy around those systems, because we know that, not only terrorists, but cyber actors—State and non-State actors—are looking for vulnerabilities in those systems. And, I think that is something that only DHS can help to drive in this country.

Senator CARPER. Alright. Thank you.

Ms. Smith, the same question.

Ms. SMITH. Europol recently, in the wake of the Paris attacks, created this new European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC). What happens often with these new initiatives, inside the E.U. or Europol, is that they become largely informational and we have to work with them to ensure that this new counterterrorism center is, in fact, operational.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Same question.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I think there is near unanimous agreement that the sanctity of our intelligence processes is important in the fight against ISIS—and that, as Senator Johnson said, depriving ISIS of territory is the best way to craft a safer future from their mass-casualty attacks.

To that extent, I think that it is extraordinarily disturbing to read the new report in the Daily Beast by Shane Harris and Nancy Youssef. You have, now, not only allegations by numerous analysts—dozens of them—about the politicization of intelligence at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), but also a credible report of retaliation. It is very disturbing to me to see that Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper downplayed the concerns of whistleblowers. And, I think that, if our intelligence processes are falling apart and if you have actual retaliation going on, where the leadership is not acting on it, then we have a tremendous problem in our own system.

Senator CARPER. Alright. Thank you.

Mr. Watts, the last word.

Mr. WATTS. There is more talk than action. We saw Paris. We saw Brussels 4 months later. These were some of the same attackers. It was the same network. Nothing has happened. And, I think anything short of moving forward—not a working group or a committee in Europe—I am talking about putting together actual resources and a plan with stated objectives, in Europe, about how they are going to deal with the threat of ISIS. It has to happen within 30 days—within 2 weeks. It is obvious that this problem is not going to go away. It is going to be around for a while.

Senator CARPER. You have been an exceptional panel. I mentioned to our Chairman that there is going to be another panel, I

think, in a couple of weeks, where we actually will have representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and others in on behalf of the Administration. And, in a way, this panel and each panelist's testimony actually sets up the next panel very well. Thank you so much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper.

And, by the way, I want to clarify what I said at the opening. I did not invite Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson. I guess that has been misreported. We just invited some senior officials from DHS, the FBI, and the National Counterterrorism Center—not Secretary Johnson. Senator Tester.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR TESTER

Senator TESTER. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, thank you—it hurts me to say this—but, thank you, Senator Booker, for allowing me to go.

I would just say that the FBI is not here because they are in the middle of an investigation. And, I think, on the 26th, you are going to have a hearing, which should be a very good hearing—and I think that DHS and the NCTC are not here because the FBI could not be here. But, we will get to that—but I think it is important that they are able to do their jobs.

Look, Secretary Johnson is going to be pushing—and, by the way, thank you all for your testimony. Thank you for being here. Secretary Johnson is going to be pushing for new airport security provisions to be added to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization legislation that is going to be coming to the Senate.

There has been a lot of conversation today about the E.U. and how certain countries are not doing what they need to do, getting the information they need, sharing that information, and all of that, which is a problem that I do not know how to solve, by the way, without writing a big old fat check that is not going to help us out with our debt here. But, security is important—make no mistake about it. But, those folks have to step up in a way.

And, by the way, the visa question that was brought up, about taking potential countries off of that list—Mr. Chairman, you asked that question. I appreciate you asking that question and, maybe, we ought to bring some folks in here who know what is reasonable and what is not—who is not cutting the mustard—and can make some recommendations. I think that is entirely appropriate, when it comes to the security of this country.

But, I want to talk about airport security—and you get to tell me your opinion. Is the security we have in the airports, in this country, where it needs to be? Go ahead, Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, I think it can always be better, but I think our security is better than most places around the world.

Senator TESTER. So, let me ask you this—and I agree with you. We have full body scanners and we have magnetometers. Can any of you tell me why we have full body scanners? Are magnetometers not good enough?

Mr. ZARATE. Well, I think the full body scanners allow you to determine if there are other types of explosives or things on the body of the person—

Senator TESTER. Thank you.

Mr. ZARATE [continuing]. That is trying to evade the magnetometer.

Senator TESTER. Good answer. So, if we have airports that do not have full body scanners in them—if they just have magnetometers—are we opening ourselves up to a security risk?

Mr. ZARATE. Potentially. And, I think what TSA has tried to do under the former Director, and now, under this Director, is to apply a risk-based model and approach, saying, “We have limited resources. Where do we apply them? And, which airports are the most vulnerable.”

Senator TESTER. And so, that risk-based approach, I assume, is based on population—the number of people going through. Do you not think the terrorists would know that?

Mr. ZARATE. They would—and they are constantly probing for vulnerabilities. As Daveed mentioned earlier, they are working outside of the rings of security. They are trying to infiltrate through them. And, they are trying to get access through insiders into the system—as we have seen, in the past, with radicalized individuals who work on the tarmac or within industry layers.

Senator TESTER. That is good. And, that is exactly the point I have made to TSA Administrator Peter Neffinger and others—that they will go to where the weakest link is—and they will find it and, eventually, go there. And so, even though you base it, initially, on volume, the end goal is to make sure we have them there and that we have them there as soon as possible (ASAP). Otherwise, why would we have the scanners?

Let me ask you about perimeter security. What happened in Belgium did not happen on the other side of the TSA checkpoint—if that is what they call them in Belgium. It happened outside, where there are lots of people. Can you see a solution for that, in our system, that would not be cost prohibitive?

Mr. ZARATE. Well, Senator, I was just in Rome and saw post-Brussels—and saw some of the measures that they were employing for the terminals where American carriers are and where Americans are likely to travel—and they had deployed a couple of key checkpoints—in essence, chokepoints for vehicles and passengers moving into the terminal. And then, they had a lot of visible security, both on the ground and overhead.

I can imagine you seeing this, in major U.S. airports, at times of heightened threat—where you can apply vehicular searches and checks at particular sites without causing too much commercial or vehicular disruption—and traffic disruption—more random checks around points of, for example, check-in—and, perhaps, even more behavioral analysis, canines, and others deployed in key airports. But, it is difficult. It is difficult without disrupting traffic and commercial activities.

Senator TESTER. And, look, I think there is some merit to doing that. I guess the question is: does anybody know what kind of appropriation it would take to, maybe, not have it all of the time, but to have it enough of the time, so that you would not know?

Mr. ZARATE. I do not know, Senator. I think part of this has to do with local authorities, port authorities, and others that have to

deploy resources—as well as the Federal Government. So, I do not know what those numbers look like.

Senator TESTER. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I think you could, probably, do it with relatively little appropriation if you took the behavioral detection teams that, right now, are past the checkpoint or at the checkpoint and moved them in front of the checkpoint in some airports. I mean, the fact is, we have these behavioral detection teams—and they are a good idea—but what they do is, by design, pretty limited.

Senator TESTER. OK. OK. That is good.

Mr. WATTS. Senator, I would only add one thing, which is that we go all out on passengers, in terms of screening, but the real vulnerabilities that we have seen, in the last two terrorist attacks involving airport security, are really about whether they can blow up an airplane in flight.

Senator TESTER. Yes.

Mr. WATTS. So, we saw al-Qaeda, in the Sinai, do that through an insider.

Senator TESTER. Yes.

Mr. WATTS. We also saw an explosive device used in Somalia, which seems to—it is not really clear—through an insider. So, I think, if I was going to invest, now, in airport security, I would not look so much at rehardening the passenger security lines, but look at other vantage points that extremists might use.

Senator TESTER. OK. So, that gets to my next question. That is, are we certifying—are we testing—however you want to put it—the folks who work with the baggage, who work for the airlines, and who work in security? Are we doing enough there?

Mr. WATTS. I honestly, sir, have no idea. But, I think that really gets at what our risk portfolio is and, really, the offense part of it, which involves investigations, preemptive intelligence, and that sort of thing.

Senator TESTER. Well, I certainly appreciate your testimonies and I appreciate you being here for the questions. And, thank you very much for what you do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Tester, thank you.

Coming back—I do not know, did you attend the “Dogs of DHS” hearing we had?

Senator TESTER. Which one?

Chairman JOHNSON. “Dogs of DHS.” You might have missed that. It was an excellent hearing. I am a big supporter of having more canine units, in terms of that layer of defense—particularly, for luggage—outside of the perimeter. That would be, I think, money very well spent. Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. I just wanted to drill down one more time, because, obviously, we are attacking al-Qaeda and their affiliates, ISIS, and other terrorist organizations. I am glad in Syria and in Iraq we are sort of shrinking the territory and starting to make some considerable gains. I love that you said it is a matter of when—not if—and I do believe that that is the case. So, that is one level. Obviously, we are looking at places like Libya and Algeria—far flung—where they are starting to set up other outposts.

Then, the second level—equally important—is to start to undermine the terrorist network—and this is a lot of what we talked about today, which to me, clearly—I agree with what, I think, is the sentiment of the panel, which is that we need to be a lot more aggressive and hold to task our European partners. It is outrageous, to me, that they are sharing communication across the Atlantic Ocean, but not within Europe. And, even within their countries, they have sort of pre-9/11-America problems that they have not worked through.

Clearly, there is a lot more work to do and I believe that we are very vulnerable because of the Visa Waiver Program—far more so, I think, than with a refugee program, where the process takes a year to 2 years. The Visa Waiver Program, to me, is something we should be a lot more aggressive with, in terms of our posture with the VWP countries. So, I think that that, obviously, is something we have a lot of work to do on.

But, I just want to get back to, in my final few minutes, the efforts for CVE, which I now realize means so many different things to so many different people. So, let me just say what I think it means. It is not dealing with the work of law enforcement, but, really, the other efforts going on to stop people from falling prey. I am concerned about what is happening in the field of battle. I am concerned about the Visa Waiver Program. I am also concerned, though, about homegrown radicalization right here in the United States.

And, I do agree, again, as was said by the panel, that this is not something that is a matter of when. I think, Mr. Watts, you were saying that this is something we are going to be dealing with for a very long time. So, our ability to prevent the radicalization of people is critical as a tool—in addition to detecting them, thwarting them, and the like—but also as a defensive tool to create stronger ways to counter violent extremism within our communities.

And, I am just curious, if you had to distill—and I open it up to the panel—here, we have the Administration launching their CVE task force and the Global Engagement Center. As these get off of the ground, could you just distill one more time, perhaps, for the panel, what specific recommendations you would have the Administration focus on? What are sort of the top bolded—“you better, you should, you must do this?”

And, we can start with you, Mr. Watts, and go to my left, which is something, as a Democrat, I often do. [Laughter.]

Mr. WATTS. The first thing I would address is where—where to focus it. In my experience, over the past decade, we have done a lot of CVE programs. It has sort of broadly been applied. I would focus on those very few communities—if it is in the United States or in Europe—where we know there are a lot of people being recruited from and where there is strong sentiment.

Then, the next thing I would focus on is where to focus it online. Those two sometimes overlap, but, sometimes, they are divergent. So, can we determine where? So, putting more investment in—pinpointing where we want to focus those programs. Before, we were just applying programs, but they were sort of all over the place.

The next thing is how we are going to apply them—and that really comes down to where on the spectrum of extremists we want

to apply it. I think a better way to bring up what I was talking about earlier is, we have a pyramid—vulnerable, radicalized, and mobilized—but your investment should be in the reverse order. We start to invest more heavily on those one-to-one CVE engagements, which means, maybe, an imam or a cleric that does that, physically, or is online, via Facebook, in a one-to-one program.

Then, the radicalizing population. How do we undermine that message? And, that is that we make villains—not martyrs—and we explain that the leading killer of a foreign fighter is another foreign fighter. And, that is that radicalizing population—and that is where we use defectors and peers sort of to do that.

And, our lowest investment is at the broad, sort of, “winning over the community” focus. And, I feel like, 10 years ago, we were operating in the reverse. We were really focused on getting out into the communities and making people feel good about our counterterrorism approach—more like public affairs. I would rather see better engagement between those programs and those who are mobilized or are radicalizing.

Senator BOOKER. OK. Thank you very much.

Really quickly, the two bold recommendations—and please go as quickly as you can, because Juan over there is hoping he gets off. [Laughter.]

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. So, I have two quick recommendations. The first is for fast and deep, bureaucratized messaging with metrics for success. That means figuring out what is working and what is not.

The second thing—the big idea I will put out is that I would pay attention to self-image and what makes a hero in multiple parts of the world. I was just talking to a colleague in East Africa who said, somewhat hyperbolically, that, “To be a hero here, you can be a rapper, you can be, like, a businessman, and you can be an ISIS fighter. You cannot be a member of the Armed Forces. They are not heroic.”

The thing about the United States—if you think about the way Hollywood shapes all of our images—anyone can be a hero. A soccer coach can be a hero. A Senator can be a hero. A member of the Armed Forces is a hero. A policeman is a hero. A firefighter is a hero. In the rest of the world, that is not, necessarily, the case.

So, I would think about self-image, because ISIS and other extremist groups are definitely tapping into people’s self-image and giving them a route to become a hero. Do other routes exist?

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much. Ms. Smith.

Ms. SMITH. Well, as we all know, DOD has invested in this new office out in California—in Silicon Valley—and the idea is to try and tap existing technology to throw at a lot of conventional military problems and challenges that our servicemen and service-women are facing all over the world.

The State Department is also going to have a very tiny presence in Silicon Valley—and I think they are utilizing this office to do the same thing—but to use existing technology and to challenge all of the amazing “whiz kids” out in California to apply some of this technology and know-how to the challenge of CVE is probably one of the better ways that you can use this little—I think it is a two-man office at this point. But, trying to use that State Department



presence to tap into what already exists and applying it to the sophistication that we are seeing, in terms of encryption, surveillance, and document forgery—I mean, the list goes on and on—I think that would be a very wise investment.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you very much.

Mr. ZARATE. Senator, I am happy to sit on the right for this one. [Laughter.]

I have three things, Senator—and I would just commend the Department for naming George Selim as the head of this CVE task force, because he is a real professional in this space. I have worked with him. A lot of us have. He understands the challenges ahead and I think he is great for this major challenge that we have. But, I have three ideas.

One is that we need a network of networks. This is something that the U.S. Government—and government Agencies unto themselves—cannot do. You need the ex-jihadis. You need the Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE). You need the technology companies. You need the media companies. You need the clerics and the entrepreneurs in Muslim communities all to be a part of, not only creating a sense of heroism, but also a sense of identity, in the 21st Century, for these individuals and communities.

So, we need to figure out how we animate this network of networks—and, it is a huge challenge for the U.S. Government, because we do not like to give up control. It is hard on the funding side. How do you give micro-grants to these one-on-one kind of efforts? And so, that is a challenge, but we have to figure that out, because it is really at the grassroots level that you are going to deal with this.

Two, we have to figure out where the manifestations—the precursors to this ideology—begin to take root. Ultimately, we have to make sure that we have an inhospitable ecosystem for this ideology. We can never find ourselves in a position where, in the United States, you have a Molenbeek, a Luton, or a Birmingham, where these radical ideologues—or these ideologies—take root. It cannot happen. And so, where are the manifestations? How do you counter online recruitment? How do you create off-ramps for susceptible individuals? How do you deradicalize people who have come back, perhaps? And, how do you leverage them?

Third, and finally—and I think this is where the community engagement piece becomes so important—how do you define identity and opportunity in these communities and for individuals—whether they are disaffected or otherwise? The government cannot define that. Families, friends, and communities have to play a role in defining that, because, at the end of the day, the problem of radicalization is often a problem of identity.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for that time.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Booker.

Listen, I want to second what Senator Carper was saying. This has just been an exceptional panel and an exceptional discussion. The goal of every hearing, from my standpoint, is to lay out a reality—defining the problem, so we can take the first step in solving it, which is really that definition of the problem and admitting we have a problem. So, I want to commend my colleagues for asking

very good questions and to thank the staff for assembling the panel. So, this has been, really, I think, an extremely good hearing.

I will give you all a chance to make a concluding comment. Try and keep it brief. One question I did not get answered—I alluded to it, in terms of the concerns about nuclear surveillance—or the surveillance of nuclear facilities. So, if anybody wants to address critical infrastructure, I am highly concerned about it. We saw the cyber attack against Ukraine. We saw the physical terrorist attack against Metcalf, California. I am highly concerned about that. So, by all means, if you have something to add there—but do not feel obligated. But, otherwise, please just give a concluding comment before we close the hearing.

I will start with you, Mr. Zarate.

Mr. ZARATE. Mr. Chairman, again, thank you for the privilege of being here and I am really honored to be with this expert panel.

Let me just reiterate, on the DHS mission, because I think it is more critical, now, than at any time since 9/11—and it has less to do with attacking or dealing with particular groups or individuals—and it is the role of DHS to ensure that our critical national systems and infrastructure are not only secure, but that they are resilient and redundant. I think, again, there is no other agency in government that has that mission—and I think DHS has a critical role—whether it is online or physically—to make sure that our systems are secure and redundant. And, that goes a long way in, frankly, making us strong and in deterring terrorist attacks.

The second point I would make, Senator—which I did not make earlier—which is that I do not think we can downplay the strategic impact of the smaller attacks that ISIS perpetrates. We have seen the effect of this in places like Paris and Brussels and I think we run the risk—if we define the threat through the current lens of whether or not it is existential and directed to the homeland—we run the risk of missing the adaptations in this threat and the strategic impact over time of what these groups can do to our societies, to our laws, and to the functioning of our economies.

Chairman JOHNSON. By the way, I could not agree more. I mean, I do not want to give anybody any ideas, but, certainly, in my mind, a bunch of coordinated smaller attacks could have a devastating impact on our economy, for example. Ms. Smith.

Ms. SMITH. Let me just say, briefly, that these attacks in Europe—in Brussels and in Paris—could not have come at a worse time for Brussels, for the European Union, and for Europe as a whole. Not only are they facing very severe counterterrorism threats, but, as you well know, they are under the weight of a migration crisis. They are facing a resurgent Russia that is actively trying to destabilize the continent. They have weak economies. They have the potential exit of one of their largest members.

And so, I believe that it is in America's interest to help fortify the European project. We are not a member of the European Union. We cannot do everything for them. But, it is in our interest to support the European project that, in many ways, is an American project. We helped provide the foundation upon which they built the European Union. I think, rather than pulling away, we have to invest in this relationship and do what we can to help them with these very real security challenges.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Smith. Mr. Gartenstein-Ross.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Since you specifically raised the issue of nuclear security, I will start there. I think that one area that we should look to, in general, is where, in our security apparatus, are there obvious vulnerabilities? There are at least two, with respect to nuclear security in Europe—and in Belgium, in particular. One is that guards at Belgian nuclear facilities are still, by Belgian law, prohibited from carrying weapons—meaning that these facilities are vulnerable to a coordinated, armed attack.

The second thing is, I think, that there are significant questions about whether they are doing enough to screen their personnel. A man named Ilyass Boughalab, who I highlight in my testimony—my written testimony—went to Syria as a foreign fighter. He died in 2014 and he had been a technician at a nuclear power plant from 2009 to 2012. He had access to sensitive areas of the reactor. This clearly calls into question whether their screening of personnel who have access to sensitive areas is sufficient.

Overall, what this hearing has put its finger on is the question of whether we are well suited to the challenges of the 21st century—and, in particular, I think, I would focus on system design. When you look at the European security apparatus, we have put our fingers, collectively, on a number of problems that occur there. And, the problem is, really, of a patchwork of systems and the lack of a central law enforcement body, as Clint mentioned. And, it means that terrorists who operate transnationally are, inherently, at an advantage.

Overall, the U.S. system is better than the European system, but it also has its problems. And, we put our finger on messaging being one of those problems.

The question, I would say, is whether our bureaucracy—is our internal system designed to keep up with these small nimble foes? Are we, as a legacy industry, ready to keep up with the start-ups that are going to be challenging us and trying to kill our citizens?

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you. Mr. Watts.

Mr. WATTS. My final points would be—what do we want, in terms of counterterrorism? This comes and goes. We had al-Qaeda. Before them—or after them, we now have ISIS. Today, we are talking about Europe. I think we are likely to be talking about North Africa, maybe, 6 months or a year from now. Yemen is definitely on the horizon, I think, as well. And, we go through these accelerated peaks and valleys where we get really mobilized around counterterrorism, we go flush it out, and then, we get upset again a year later when it comes back.

And so, what is our objective? And, what is our tolerance for risk with terrorism? I do not think we have a good handle on that, so we get to these emotional points, like now, where we react strongly and we take aggressive action. But, what are the four or five things we can do in counterterrorism, over the horizon, to sort of get this to a steadier state? I do not think there is any end to ISIS, because, I think, it will just be called something else 5 to 10 years from now—just like we were talking about al-Qaeda 10 years ago.

And so, what do we want to achieve over the horizon? I would love to see the U.S. Government, holistically, come to terms with

that. I feel, at a practitioner level, the NCTC, the FBI, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are all pursuing counterterrorism on a day-to-day basis. But, what sort of steady state do we want to achieve, I think, is the question. And, that is why we are reacting to Europe now and why we will react wherever it happens next.

Chairman JOHNSON. Well, first of all, I could not agree more. We have to have a commitment to offense and to being relentless. We cannot ever back off—and this is going to be a generational problem. But, I think you have to do it step by step. As we were pointing out earlier, the fact that the caliphate exists—the fact that they hold that territory is incredibly dangerous. And, that is, certainly, one of the—among many—first steps. We have to defeat that caliphate. We have to defeat ISIS.

But, I agree with you, it already has metastasized. It already has spread. But, you have to cut it off at the head right now and then, continue to be relentless—not back off—because it is going to be a long-term struggle.

Again, I just want to thank all of you. This has been an extremely good hearing.

The hearing record will remain open for 15 days, until April 20 at 5 p.m., for the submission of statements and questions for the record.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

# A P P E N D I X

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## **Chairman Johnson Opening Statement “Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”**

**Tuesday, April 5, 2016**

*As submitted for the record:*

Good morning. Thank you for joining us today.

The purpose of this hearing is to understand the terrorist threat in Europe and what it means for our security.

On March 22, 2016, ISIS-linked terrorists bombed the airport entry hall and train station in Brussels -- killing 32, including four Americans.

Our hearts go out to the victims and their families.

The attacks in Brussels follow a series of ISIS-linked terrorist attacks, including the November atrocities in Paris, in which hundreds have been killed and many more wounded.

To be clear, ISIS and other terrorist groups are a threat to the United States and the American people.

We saw that in San Bernardino, in Garland, Texas, and elsewhere.

The grave threat against the West, including American interests at home and abroad, requires us to assess the state of our security.

Today, we will ask three questions.

First, what are the root causes of the terrorism threats in Europe?

Second, how is the threat from ISIS and other terrorist organizations changing?

Third, what do the challenges in Europe and the changing terrorism threat mean for our security? And what actions must we now take to protect the American people?

Over the past 15 months, we have passed laws to improve the security of our borders, strengthen the Department of Homeland Security, and protect the American people. But I know there is more that we must do.

We will be holding a follow up hearing later this month where government officials will testify.

I am thankful we have a panel of top experts here today to help us understand these challenges and discuss how we can improve our security.

I look forward to your testimony.

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper**  
**“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”**

**Tuesday, April 5, 2016**

*As prepared for delivery:*

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the horrific attack in Brussels that took place just two weeks ago.

As with the Paris terror attacks, similar attacks in places around the world like Pakistan and Turkey, as well as the Boston Marathon and San Bernardino attacks on our shores, what happened in Brussels exposes once again the vulnerability of public places such as malls, train stations, and airports.

With today’s 24-hour news cycle, Americans are seeing these attacks unfold in real time. From our living rooms, we can see the devastation these attacks caused, and the pain they inflict on the victims and their loved ones.

So Americans are understandably uneasy and concerned for their safety and for the safety of their families, friends, and neighbors. But it’s important to remember that the most potent weapon terrorists like those who committed these recent attacks have is fear. They want to scare us into turning against one another and our neighbors. They want to make us afraid to go about our everyday lives.

We might feel a little bit safer if we saw more obvious security at every public place we visit. But those measures come at a high price, and don’t necessarily deter terrorists who do not value other lives or even their own.

And many would argue – I believe correctly – that turning every public place into a heavily guarded fortress would restrict Americans’ own personal freedoms. Instead, we need to be smart about how we combat these ever-evolving terror threats.

We must continuously sharpen our ability to predict and prevent terrorist plots through the use of our robust intelligence and law enforcement capabilities. Refining these tools and ensuring that we keep pace with the evolving threats we face is an important responsibility of our federal agencies and Congress.

We also have a responsibility, along with our international partners, to continue to take the fight to ISIS in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. ISIS’s recent losses have been severe. It has lost 40 percent of the territory it once held in Iraq.

Coalition forces have also killed more than 10,000 ISIS fighters and 20 key ISIS leaders in recent months, including ISIS’s chief propagandist and executioner. Just over a week ago,

American forces carried out a strike that led to the death of ISIS's finance chief and second-in-command.

Simultaneously, we continue to enhance the capabilities of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism forces. Iraqi forces recaptured Ramadi from ISIS in January, and the battle to seize the ISIS stronghold in Mosul is well underway. And with the ceasefire in Syria holding, more guns are being turned on ISIS.

ISIS is being pushed back on its heels in Iraq and Syria. The consequence may very well be that the group, out of desperation, will seek to project the façade of power and momentum by directing or inspiring terrorist attacks against unprotected targets in Europe, the United States, and around the world.

We must not let these cowardly attacks deter our resolve. To the contrary, we must redouble our efforts to destroy ISIS and take away its safe havens.

But we must also learn from the Brussels terror attack to ensure that our intelligence and law enforcement authorities at all levels of government are ready and able to identify and stop similar attacks here at home well before they are set in motion.

I hope our witnesses today will share some insight on the lessons from the Brussels attack and will help provide guidance on the actions this Committee should take.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.





**Statement before the  
Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs  
Committee**

***“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens  
at Home and Abroad”***

A Testimony by:

**Juan C. Zarate**

Senior Advisor,  
Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Program,  
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

**April 5, 2016**

**342 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, I am honored to be with you today to discuss the current terrorist threat environment in Europe, the challenges facing our European partners, and the security implications for the United States. In the wake of the horrific attacks in Brussels recently and Paris in November 2015, this is a critical moment for the United States to take stock of the quickening terrorist threat and the adaptations spurred by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), along with the continued threat from and intent by Al Qaida and its affiliates to hit the West.

The rise and reach of ISIS has continued to outpace expectations and surprise authorities and terrorism analysts. With the announcement of the caliphate in Iraq and Syria and the taking of Mosul and other major cities, ISIS has sought to redraw the map of the Middle East, threaten the West, establish provinces (“wilayats”) and terrorist alliances, and inspire attacks well beyond the Middle East. ISIS has perpetrated serious attacks not just in Europe but also in Beirut, Istanbul, Egypt, and the Gulf countries, and its affiliates and aspirant supporters have attacked far afield in Nigeria, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and San Bernardino. Likewise, al Qaida affiliates (hereinafter “al Qaida”) have continued to perpetrate terrorist attacks from West Africa to Yemen, with members perpetrating the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris.

All the while, these violent Islamic extremist organizations have occupied territory – creating a terrorist archipelago encompassing not just the deserts, jungles, and mountains of past safe havens but urban and resource-rich environments. This has allowed both ISIS and al Qaida to exploit civilian populations and to develop local and war economies. It has allowed ISIS in particular to leverage the establishment of the caliphate as its demonstration that it can govern an Islamic state and to animate the global terrorist movement in support of its cause.

Dangerously, failing to understand and anticipate ISIS’ intent and capabilities has led to some misguided assumptions that have now been shattered in the wake of the attacks in Paris and Brussels. As part of its broader strategy of confrontation and establishment of the caliphate, ISIS has intended to confront the West. While creating its caliphate and expanding its provinces to places like Libya and Yemen, ISIS has been planning to strike the West, using Western operatives flowing into the conflict zone by the thousands, and has openly attempted to inspire singular attacks by sympathetic radicals in Western societies. It has built these capabilities over time and taken advantage of intelligence and security gaps to implant operatives in Europe. This was a strategy not triggered by provocation or weakness, but is rather a deliberate part of ISIS’ long-term planning. European authorities are coming to grips with the realization that ISIS is targeting the heart of Europe with dozens of operatives. The ongoing raids and manhunts for those involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks and terrorist networks planning additional strikes continue to expand.

This should not have come as a surprise to those watching ISIS erase the border between Iraq and Syria, occupy major cities in the Middle East, and take advantage of the safe haven it has established and the foreign fighters flowing in and out of the region. Almost two years ago, my CSIS colleague, Tom Sanderson, and I wrote an OpEd in the New York Times detailing the story of the sale of Belgian passports on the Syrian-Turkish border:

A few feet from the Bab al-Salam border crossing near the Turkish town of Kilis, there is a shabby cafe where the most interesting items for sale are not found on the menu. The cafe is the final stop for young radicalized men from Europe or North Africa who are planning to slip past the lax Turkish border officers and into Syrian territory. This is where they exchange their passports for cash. When one of us visited the cafe in January [2014], a Belgian passport was for sale for \$8,000. A buyer could have it altered for movement to Europe or visa-free travel to the United States. New passport photos were being snapped in the parking lot.

Indeed, with the thousands of foreign fighters traveling to terrorist-controlled territory and others animated by the allure and narrative of a historic and heroic caliphate battling infidel forces, ISIS and al Qaida can more easily mobilize attacks against the West. France and Belgium have been particularly vulnerable given the role and importance of Francophone terrorist networks embedded in pockets of radicalization like Molenbeek in Brussels. But they are not alone. The rest of Europe is vulnerable, and the United States is at risk for acts of terror resembling what occurred in San Bernardino or from more organized attacks by foreign fighters or sympathizers.

It is important that we examine and understand the threat soberly. ISIS and al Qaida are neither omnipotent nor comprised of ten-foot giants. They have not been able to mobilize large percentages of susceptible Muslims to violence, and its message has been largely rejected by the communities impacted by its brutality. But they have rallied thousands to their cause, perpetrated some of the worst brutalities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and caused major disruptions and dislocation in an arc of instability from Central Asia to West Africa. Their rapid and devious adaptations – in attack methodologies, messaging, recruitment, financing, and governance – are dangerous and cannot be ignored or discounted. Their use of chemical weapons, establishment of a chemical weapons unit, and surveillance of Belgian nuclear infrastructure and personnel raise the specter of a group intent on using weapons of mass destruction. The blind spots in our intelligence only heighten the concerns of what we are not seeing or hearing regarding terrorist plans. And these groups remain intent and capable of striking the West in strategically impactful ways. This is the reality we are facing in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks in Europe.

### **The Terrorist Threat in Europe**

ISIS and al Qaida objectives in Europe are to strike strategically in ways that cause terror, inflict significant human and economic damage, attract recruits, and exacerbate ongoing, internal European pressures. Countries like France and the United Kingdom remain central “far enemy” targets – the focus of extremist propaganda and operational plotting. With French troops deployed to fight al Qaida in the Maghreb, they remain a central focus for North African cells along with radicalized French citizens.

ISIS has decided to use three forms of attacks that make European counterterrorism efforts even more difficult to manage. They have planned and are orchestrating directed attacks from ISIS leadership in Syria, with growing sophistication and reliance on an operational lead (“directed attacks”). They are also framing the broad parameters and timing of plots and enlisting operatives to launch attacks entrepreneurially (“framed attacks”). Finally, ISIS – like al Qaida – is trying to animate radicalized individuals to kill fellow citizens in any way possible where they

live (“inspired to attack in place”). These three forms of terrorist plotting create a tapestry of complicated threats for European authorities.

Europe suffers from three fundamental and inter-related terrorist problems.

1. *Immediate Threat: ISIS European Network.* ISIS has trained and deployed Europeans back into Europe to perpetrate sophisticated attacks. European authorities have disrupted plots and recruitments pipelines and made arrests in the wake of the Paris and Brussels attacks. But European authorities are playing catch-up, with no clear sense of the expanse of the terrorist networks that have emerged. Recent French and Belgian raids and arrests continue to reveal new network members and potential plots, and manhunts are underway.

The concern that ISIS or al Qaida would be able to leverage foreign fighters and embed them back into Western societies has now come to pass. ISIS has had over 5,000 Western foreign fighters, as well as upwards of 40,000 total foreign fighters, from which to choose to leverage for different purposes, including returning to Europe to perpetrate attacks. ISIS organized an external operational unit, and has marked operatives for attacks in Europe, many of which have been thwarted. The ISIS External Operations Unit has been led by Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an ISIS spokesman and one of its most senior leaders, and its European External Operations Branch, led by Abdelhamid Abaaoud, has been responsible for recruitment and mounting attacks in Europe.

Francophone cells – comprised of French, Belgian, and dual nationals – have proven a lethal network for ISIS attack plotting in Europe. These Western operatives have been trained to evade scrutiny, engage in operational security, including the use of encryption technologies, and execute strategic attacks in concert. The sheer volume of potential operatives, along with unknown actors, has overwhelmed even the best European services.

2. *Ongoing Threat: Embedded, Leveraged Networks.* ISIS and al Qaida have taken advantage of long-standing, radicalized networks in Europe as a baseline for recruitment and plotting in the heart of Europe. Many of the transnational networks that have long served violent extremist causes, to include prison and criminal networks, have been coopted or repurposed by ISIS for their European strategy. Embedded recruitment pipelines, often led by charismatic clerics, have supplied hundreds of recruits. Terrorist networks unearthed or involved in recent attacks have tended to have a common ideological and operational lineage with ties back to known radical elements and operatives.

Belgium has been the largest source of European foreign fighters per capita, with an upper estimate of almost six hundred fighters. Many of those recruits have come from known and embedded radical networks already established in Belgium. Shariah4Belgium, an extremist organization formed by radical preachers in 2010 in Antwerp, began to radicalize recruits and eventually became a major source of foreign fighters traveling to Syria. In February 2015, Belgian authorities labeled the group a terrorist organization and tried forty-five members, most in absentia since they had already traveled to Syria.

Another network led by Khalid Zerkani, known as “Papa Noel” because he would hand out gifts to troubled youth in Brussels and encourage shoplifting to raise funds, became a major recruitment ring for foreign fighters. His group is suspected to have sent at least forty-five people to Syria, including Abdelhamid Abaaoud. Abaaoud has claimed to have led ninety trained ISIS fighters back into Europe through refugee routes to set up a vast array of cells to carry out bomb attacks and shooting sprees.

In France, criminal and extremist networks, often reinforced in French prisons, have helped funnel foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq, estimated at approximately 1600 fighters. They have also cemented operational cells, including the terrorists who perpetrated the Charlie Hebdo and Jewish supermarket attacks in Paris on January 7, 2015. The Charlie Hebdo attackers and brothers, Cherif and Said Kouachi, were long known to police for their militant Islamist activities and formed part of the “Buttes-Chaumont network” (named after the neighborhood in northern Paris) that helped send fighters to al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) after the 2003 U.S. invasion. They were both linked to al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which claimed the attack. Both Said and Amedy Coulibaly, who perpetrated the Jewish supermarket attack on the same day, had attempted to free Smain Ait Ali Belkacen, a former militant Islamist fighter, from jail and were known to French authorities.

These networks have also relied on “family and friends” networks to recruit and support operatives, to include the recruitment of women, to serve in various roles for ISIS. This has allowed for more trusted and confidential communications used to ISIS’ operational advantage. These existing and expanding networks have been amplified with newer recruits, some lured by ISIS’ targeted recruitment via social media and the romantic and heroic appeal of the ISIS media campaign, amplified by the “fan boys” accounts on Twitter.

Though these recruitment networks have been most dangerous and manifest in France and Belgium, ISIS has relied on other pre-existing networks of radicals in the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, and the Balkans to move fighters out of and back into Europe, including embedding in refugee flows into Europe. Germany and the United Kingdom – along with other European countries -- remain concerned that Europeans involved in the foreign fighter pipeline may be planning attacks and targeting their interests at home.

3. *Long-Term Threat: Longstanding, Deep Pockets of Radicalization.* A serious, long-term challenge for European authorities lies in the radicalization affecting their nationals and embedded in particular communities and neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods have served as breeding grounds and safe havens for violent Islamic extremists, ideologues, and recruitment. Factors such as economic and social isolation of immigrant communities and failed integration policies, along with festering questions of individual identity, loyalty, and alienation, have fueled these pockets of radicalization. No single factor – political, social, familial, or psychological -- can explain all the “hot spots” of radicalization in Europe or why particular individuals versus others in the same environment decide to join or engage in terrorist activities. Throughout Europe, such nodes of radicalization persist in particular prisons, universities, and apartment blocks.

Neighborhoods in Brussels, like Molenbeek and Schaerbeek, have been the subject of much recent attention, as Belgian security forces executed raids and found wanted terrorists, like the Paris attack operative Salah Abdeslam who had been hiding and evading authorities for weeks. Certain Paris suburbs, such as Grigny, have long been depressed areas where Muslim communities have congregated and violence and extremism have taken hold. In the United Kingdom, the embedding of extremist groups, including al Muhajiroun and radicals like Abu Hamza al Masri and Anjem Choudary, has earned sections of London the label “Londonistan,” with pockets of disaffection in East London, Birmingham, Luton, and other neighborhoods. Yet others, like Mullah Krekar, who has led Ansar al Islam from Norway, have long played the role of extremist ideologue and terrorist recruiters and facilitators.

The disaffected and alienated, often in search of a singular identity and romantic cause, have been drawn to the siren song of radicalizers and on-line recruiters. The al Qaida narrative has become pervasive and impacted the global recruiting environment. It is a simple message: the West is at war with Islam, and every Muslim has a religious obligation to defend Islam and fellow Muslims against such attacks – either by fighting infidels or supporting the militant jihad. ISIS has not only leveraged that message but converted it to their cause and for their purposes, proclaiming that the caliphate is the only place where a Muslim can practice true Islam and that it must be defended and expanded against all who would attack it, including the West.

ISIS messaging has echoed in sophisticated ways via recruiters, the Internet, and targeted social media. On June 29, 2014, al-Adnani declared the caliphate after ISIS’ June offensive in Iraq and the capture of Mosul. In July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed “caliph,” called on Muslims around the world to “rush” to the Islamic State. On September 21, 2014, al-Adnani encouraged followers to carry out lone wolf attacks, especially if they cannot travel to the Islamic State. ISIS has used images of its brutality to cow enemies and fuel the enthusiasm of supporters. It has devoted the majority of its messaging to demonstrating that the caliphate is real and that ISIS can govern justly and well under Islamic law. The ISIS “fan boys” have used thousands of Twitter accounts to echo such messages and send videos around the world.

These messages have resonated in the networks and neighborhoods of Europe and with specific individuals who have been willing to mobilize on behalf of ISIS. The ISIS mythology, amplified by the establishment of the caliphate, piggybacks off the al Qaida narrative and has drawn adherents and converts from around the world.

The problem of disaffected communities and marginalized individuals will only be exacerbated with new refugees flowing into Europe, the difficulty of their economic and social integration across Europe, and the potential for the fueling of right-wing reactionary forces. The refugee crisis offers ISIS strategic advantages of using the flows to infiltrate operatives back into Europe, increase destabilizing pressure on Europe’s economies and structures at time of social and institutional fragility, and the potential of future radicalized refugees if they can be recruited and are not well integrated or insulated from such radical forces. The long-term challenges of radicalization and integration in Europe present a current and long-term challenge for European counter-terrorism efforts.

**The Limitation of European Capabilities**

The challenges to European security include the limitations of European capabilities to disrupt and confront the terrorist and ideological threat within Europe and against ISIS and al Qaida outside of Europe. ISIS has been able to take advantage of weaknesses and seams in the European system, from lax border controls to imperfect information sharing, and longstanding terror networks and pockets of radicalization and recruitment. Many of these are systemic challenges, while others reflect a function of political will and focus.

The first question that remains to be answered is whether Europe as a whole sees the threat from terrorism in the same way and whether all European countries are prepared to commit resources in concert to confront the short and long-term implications of the ISIS and al Qaida-driven threat. After the November 2015 Paris attacks, French President Francois Hollande declared that "France is at war" against terrorism. After the recent Brussels attacks, he declared that Europe was "at war." France certainly has been at war with al Qaida and ISIS abroad, with troops fighting in the Maghreb and West Africa against terrorism groups and partnering in the coalition against ISIS.

Yet, it remains to be seen whether all of Europe is at war and whether there is consensus as to what this means. To be at war requires a fundamental shift in national attention and resources to confront an enemy. In the case of Europe, that enemy is not just ISIS and al Qaida abroad, but the radicalization of its own citizens and the threats of attacks within Europe. Achieving a common political and security agreement across Europe regarding a "war-footing" in this context is difficult and potentially confusing, since it involves both soft and hard power and their associated approaches. This requires a question as to whether ISIS and al Qaida safe havens in places like Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen will be allowed to persist, where Europeans are being recruited and trained. It also involves a question of how best to contest the ISIS and al Qaida narrative and recruitment online. At a minimum, there must be a common understanding of the threat followed by the necessary political attention and requisite resources throughout Europe to confront terrorism and its underlying ideology effectively.

This depends in part on the Europeans moving to an explicit, aggressive prevention mode – to gather intelligence from all sources, analyze information on a real-time basis, uncover terrorist cells, and prevent attacks before they occur. Much of this is reliant on European structures and laws that would allow for more aggressive sharing of information, including information tied to its own citizens, while still preserving the necessary privacy and civil liberties protections. For example, European authorities do not share passenger name records internally to vet passengers on commercial flights in real time. The open borders in Europe hamstring border authorities' abilities to track and monitor suspect individuals, as seen with some of the Paris attackers who traveled in and out of Europe freely without detection.

There have also been limitations on how law enforcement can gather and share information on its own nationals as well as execute lawful search warrants. In permissive environments and micro-safe havens, terrorists have been able to operate relatively freely. The Paris attackers, some of whom were well known ISIS members on watch lists, could mix chemicals, buy illegal

guns and hide in plain sight in Brussels and then easily travel to execute attacks on high profile targets in France.

A successful prevention mode also depends on law enforcement and security forces posturing their collection and cases to allow for disruption of plots and discovery of networks, vice evidence-gathering for the sake of proving past cases. Some of these deficits have been borne out in recent days, with the revelation that certain information about terrorist networks and suspicions about individuals were not shared more broadly and some in the terrorist networks were arrested only to be released before they attacked. According to press reports, the questioning of suspects and those arrested has often been limited, and there has been a failure to acquire information about existing cells and future plots. It is never easy to prevent all terrorist attacks, but Europe's overarching counter-terrorism approach needs to be explicitly focused on disruption and prevention.

Materially, there is a mismatch of resources and capabilities within Europe. Some of Europe's intelligence and counter-terrorism services, like the French and British, are among the best in the world, and many countries, like Spain and Italy, have long dealt with dangerous terrorist and criminal organizations of various stripes. However, Europe's services are uneven in their capabilities and professionalism, and the mismatch of trust and competence has bedeviled a Europe-wide approach. Within countries, like Belgium and Germany, there are political and bureaucratic divisions that have made it harder for internal collaboration and information sharing. Belgium has required assistance from France and others with active raids and investigations stemming from the terrorist networks tied to the Paris and Brussels attacks.

The challenges of preventing terrorist attacks in this environment are enormous. Even the best authorities in Europe are overwhelmed by the number of new and historical terrorist and radicalized individuals for whom they need to account. Known suspects have to be prioritized for surveillance while arrests and disruptions must be balanced against the need to maintain operational security and to build defensible cases. Many of the actors who have perpetrated recent attacks in Europe were known to authorities, came from the same social circles, and touched or were part of historical networks of radicalization. As in the case of the Charlie Hebdo attackers, French authorities knew these were violent radicals but had not focused more attention on them because of the lack of recent, concerning activity.

New networks and suspects are being discovered every day, with questions about how far and deep such individuals reach into existing networks or whether they represent completely new actors on the scene. Authorities are often operating with imperfect information and attempting to prioritize disruptions, arrests, and cases. All Western authorities are playing catch-up to understand the extent of terrorist cells in Europe and ISIS and al Qaida plotting and planning. The dearth of intelligence -- from within ISIS safe havens and deployed networks in Europe -- and the operational security of terrorist cells have compounded the challenge to authorities.

Finally, Europe is dealing with a host of systemic problems that are challenging the very foundation of the European Union. From economic stagnation and high unemployment, to bulging refugee populations and questions about the viability of a common, open border, Europe is under stress. The terrorism threat exacerbates all of these tensions and has the potential to



drive deeper political and social rifts within European societies, including by fueling the rise of reactionary forces. The ability to absorb refugee populations effectively and ensure that Muslim minorities are not marginalized and individuals alienated will become an important element of any European counterterrorism response. The stability, resilience, and strength of European societies are ultimate bulwarks against the dangerous effects of terrorism directed at Europe.

#### **Implications of the European Terrorist Threat to the United States**

The United States does not face the same kind of threats from ISIS and al Qaida that Europe does, but the threat from ISIS and al Qaida remain real – for U.S. citizens and interests abroad and for the Homeland.

Recent terrorist attacks inspired by ISIS and violent Islamic extremism in San Bernardino, California; Garland, Texas; Brooklyn, New York; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reflect an environment in which radicalized or deranged individuals are willing to attack fellow citizens on behalf of a foreign terrorist organization or its brand. Terrorism-related prosecutions brought by the U.S. Department of Justice over the past few years demonstrate a fairly consistent, yet small number of cases of radicalized individuals willing to support ISIS and al Qaida as well as plan attacks.

There have been small pockets of radicalization that have emerged, as in the Somali-American community which has seen young members of its community travel to Somalia to fight with al Shabaab and more recently to fight in Iraq and Syria. ISIS and al Qaida have continued to target Americans specifically for recruitment, including the use of targeted social media and peer-to-peer communications to identify, isolate, and mobilize operatives in the United States, to include young women.

The FBI Director has stated that there are open “homegrown violent extremist investigations” in all fifty states, fueled by the ideology of ISIS and al Qaida. The diversity and volume of cases have challenged U.S. counter-terrorism capabilities to identify, monitor, and determine the seriousness and priority of each case.

In the past, Americans have played important if not prominent roles in the broader violent Sunni extremist movement. The American-Yemini cleric Anwar al Awlaki became a “terrorist icon,” whose extensive corpus (in colloquial English, no less) includes sermons delivered to several 9/11 hijackers and advice to the Ft. Hood shooter, American Nidal Malik Hasan. Even in his death, Awlaki’s sermons have continued to attract Americans and Westerners. Others like Omar Hammami, born and raised in America, found his way to Somalia, where he became a prominent leader of al Shabaab. Adam Gadahn, an American convert to Islam, produced videos and other propaganda for al Qaeda, and Adnan Gulshair Muhammad el Shukrijumah, a South Florida computer programmer, was one of al Qaeda’s most highly trained sleeper agents. Both were killed overseas. Though not common, the al Qaida and ISIS narrative has found root even among some Americans and people raised in America.

Overall, however, the scope and nature of the problem for the United States is different than in Europe. The volume of known foreign fighters from the United States who have traveled to

terrorist conflict zones is minimal compared to Europe – with approximately 200 foreign fighters and a relatively smaller proportion of the overall population mobilized to act against fellow citizens. The distance from the conflict zones has helped shield the United States from the direct effects of uncontrolled refugee flows and migration in and out of the war zones – and the ease of access across borders for groups like ISIS.

Muslim Americans have historically been well integrated into American culture and society and have done well economically, relative to other groups. The notion of a common American identity – regardless of race, ethnicity, or creed – and the ideal of the American dream with equal opportunity for all have served as pillars of strength to forge a common national identity and allegiance.

Since 9/11, the United States has been aggressive about acquiring and analyzing intelligence about terrorist intentions and capabilities; breaking down walls of information sharing within the federal government and key local, state, tribal, and international partners; and has framed and executed a preventative counterterrorism approach. There have been good faith efforts to enlist local communities to counter extremist ideologies and to prevent neighborhoods and individuals from falling prey to the al Qaida and ISIS call to action. Though not perfect and not without controversy, the U.S. approach has been defined by urgency of action and a commitment to prevention of terrorist attacks.

Even so, there are direct and immediate effects and potential threats to the United States of the terrorist threat to Europe. European vulnerabilities create gaps in security for the United States.

- *Attacks on U.S. Interests and Citizens in Europe.* The most immediate threat to the United States are to her citizens and interests in Europe. American military personnel, tourists, businesses, and economic interests are all at risk in a European security environment under threat from terrorists. This is all the more so when ISIS and al Qaida remain intent on attacking Americans wherever they can be found. The security vulnerabilities in Europe directly impact the security of American interests abroad.
- *Visa-Free Travel for Europeans.* The visa-free travel for Europeans and others creates a gap that could allow an ISIS or al Qaida operative into the country unknowingly. Without a visa requirement, there is one less U.S. government vetting mechanism for those seeking to travel to the United States, though there is travel vetting for security purposes. Currently, citizens of thirty-eight countries are eligible to travel to the United States for ninety days or less without a visa.

Congress has attempted to limit these vulnerabilities. Under current restrictions, such citizens cannot be a dual-national of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen. This also excludes those who have traveled to or been present in Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria on or after March 1, 2011, with limited exceptions. This challenge is exacerbated by the ability of ISIS and al Qaida to forge and alter existing travel documents, acquire authentic Western passports, or even print new travel documents.

- *Lack of Information and Real-Time Information Sharing.* The limitations of timely information and intelligence sharing in Europe have direct implications for the United States. In order to vet travelers, uncover terrorist networks, and prevent attacks, the United States must receive relevant information tied to known cells and suspected individuals. Indeed, the United States serves as an intelligence enabler for the international community. Thus, if the United States is not receiving accurate or timely information about terrorist networks and suspects, there will be gaps of understanding and less of an ability for the United States and European allies to track and disrupt terrorist actors, funding, and networks.

Significantly, the lack of specific information about suspect actors and the dearth of information about ISIS-inspired networks of concern and ISIS intentions and capabilities deepen serious concerns over what U.S. authorities do not know and what they are not seeing or hearing. U.S. and Western authorities do not know the identities of all foreign fighters, and do not know all the individuals who may have been deployed back to the West to attack. There are dark alleys of communication between terrorist operatives and from ISIS commanders. Greater terrorist operational security and the use of encryption technologies and secure communications techniques are making it even more difficult to discover terrorist suspects, cells, and plots.

- *Demonstration Effects.* The United States is always concerned about the demonstration effects of successful or attempted terrorist attacks, especially in the West. Radicalized individuals in the United States could always be inspired to attack – to feed off of the attention and momentum of attacks in Europe or to engage in copycat attacks. In a globalized, instantaneous, and fluid information environment, would-be terrorists can learn quickly from those who have executed successful attacks and may understand or study the security protocols employed to attempt to thwart such attacks. The more successful terrorist attacks in Europe, the more concern there will be that radicalized individuals in the United States will be mobilized to attack.
- *New Technologies and Methodologies.* ISIS and its operatives have continued to adapt quickly to their environment – taking advantage of opportunities to radicalize and attack and reacting to pressure. The growing sophistication of the networks in Europe reflects a graduation of capabilities, with operatives able to execute strategic attacks under the noses of European authorities focused on preventing such attacks. These adaptations are likely to continue, and those could ultimately be reflected in the United States, with terrorists sharing methodologies.

Importantly, there could also be adaptations in the use of social media and communications technologies not just to radicalize and animate individuals but also to mobilize and direct them to act in concert for strategic purposes. A key influencer – in the United States or from abroad -- could use peer-to-peer technologies to choreograph disparate, radicalized individuals to attack in the Homeland. Such methodologies might allow terrorists to turn lone wolves into a coordinated pack attacking the West.

- *Weakening of Europe.* The most strategic impact of the European threat environment is whether it ultimately weakens or strengthens European resolve and capabilities to counter the terrorist threat from ISIS and al Qaida and the radicalized citizens and micro-havens in their midst. The United States needs a strong, vibrant, and healthy Europe to be able to confront the growing safe havens around the world, uncover Western plots and networks, and undermine and ultimately discredit the ideology and narrative drawing Muslim men and women to the ISIS cause. Thus, the ultimate vulnerability to American security from the terrorism threat to and in Europe comes in the weakening of our European partners.

### **Moving Forward with Europe**

The United States and Europe are facing a common terrorist enemy, and we are all at war together. The United States must therefore work closely with its European partners – to enable, support, and lead where necessary – to disrupt the short and long-term threats from terrorism. Much of this work is underway, including with the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS, and the U.S. counterterrorism community continues to focus on the emerging threats and disrupting them in concert with European partners.

The United States must apply a sense of urgency and importance to countering ISIS, al Qaida, and the underlying and motivating ideology that animates the global Sunni extremist movement, even if the threats do not appear immediate or as grave to U.S. interests as they do in Europe.

The United States, Europe, regional partners, and the international community must deny physical safe haven and territory to terrorist groups – and ultimately wrest control of territory back from ISIS and al Qaida. It is in these terrorist archipelagos now occupied and governed by terrorist groups that they are able to plot, train, interact, and adapt. With time, space, and leadership, motivated global terrorists will always innovate and surprise. These territories must be disrupted, and the links between various ISIS provinces and al Qaida affiliates must be cut.

In the case of ISIS' proclaimed "caliphate," the denial of this haven is also important to denying ISIS its central narrative and recruiting tool. As long as ISIS appears to be succeeding in establishing and ensconcing an Islamic State in the face of local and global pressure, the more attractive its narrative will be to those in search of meaning and identity in a functioning caliphate. Though difficult to dislodge, it is hard to imagine that the international community would allow a global terrorist organization that has struck so many parts of the world, including the heart of Europe, to occupy and govern urban environments like Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq.

In denying safe haven, we must in the first instance rely on and support legitimate local and regional partners that have a vested interest in ensuring that such zones are not allowed to fester. U.S. counter-terrorism strategy for the past decade has involved relying on and working with regional partners to disrupt and dismantle terrorist networks and safe haven. In Southeast Asia, East Africa, Central Asia, and other regions, this model has helped empower and enable U.S. allies to work together to combat terrorist groups in their midst. This model has yet to prove fully effective in all regions, and the expanding reach of ISIS and continued al Qaida-controlled territory is a challenge to the United States, Europe, and the international community.

The United States should enable European partners by spurring even greater intelligence and information sharing, forcing European partners to sit together to understand the unfolding threat and determine or establish new mechanisms to increase real-time information sharing tied to terrorist suspects and plots. This will involve capacity building with European partners and increased collection and analysis to fill the gaps in knowledge around terrorist intentions and capabilities. This becomes critical as ISIS establishes or expands beachheads in places like Sirte, Libya, and the Sinai, and the West needs to defend against expeditionary terrorism coming from new safe havens. In concert with Europe, the United States should help enable local proxies and allies on the ground to fight ISIS and al Qaida directly.

The United States and Europe also need to work to undermine the ideology that animates the violent Sunni extremist movement. The Islamic State represents the latest manifestation of an ideological movement birthed by al Qaida. The underlying terrorist manifesto and heroic mythology of a religious obligation to fight against an assault on Muslims is heralded through ideological outposts in satellite sermons, garage mosque meetings, and Facebook friends. With a vast recruitment pipeline, slick media products, and targeted use of social media, new recruits and identities are forming.

With 62 percent of 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide under the age of thirty, this is a generational threat. And the terrorists know this – using schools, videos, and terror – to inculcate a new generation with their message.

In concert, ISIS is recruiting young girls and women to drive the spread of the ideology in new families while dispatching women to ISIS outposts well beyond Syria and Iraq to help regenerate radicalization. The radicalization of women and their willingness to become involved in all phases of terrorist operations is worrying security officials and families around the world.

Muslims themselves – to include our allies in Muslim-majority nations, local leaders, and communities – must confront this problem directly, deny it funding, while also defining and respecting modern, diverse Muslim identities. This requires curtailing and challenging the most extreme dimensions of radical Islamic proselytization and recruitment globally.

But we cannot simply assume that our allies – especially in Muslim communities -- can defend against the threat of terror and the allure of the ideology on their own. America and our European partners must lead -- empowering, enabling, and defending networks, communities, and individuals willing to confront the ideology. Some very good work and attention has been drawn to this in Europe over the years, but the scale and pace of work is not fast enough to match the threat.

The world must confront directly the outbreaks and manifestations of this ideology – like it does a pandemic. This requires empowering a new type of coalition – a “network of networks” of non-state and state actors – that not only counters the extremists’ narrative and seeks to intervene and replace it – but also gets ahead of it through inoculation.

We must first directly confront the sources and manifestations of the radical ideology plaguing

the world. America can do this. Successive Administrations – in concert with the private sector – have attempted to galvanize networks of women, ex-“jihadis”, clerics, technologists, Hollywood and Bollywood, and others who have been willing to confront and replace the narrative, identity, and culture of extremism. Groups like GoogleIdeas (now “Jigsaw”), the GenNext Foundation, Sisters Against Violent Extremism, Movements.org, and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue have funded and networked – often with enabling technologies -- disparate groups attempting to fight extremism.

Former extremists have organized to counter the ideology on the streets of radicalized neighborhoods and campuses of extremist universities. Attempts to amplify credible voices and create new platforms for expression have worked on a small scale – local radio programs run by kids in Mali or street theatre in Luton, UK. Initiatives like these to debunk, mock, and criticize extremists – and create a sense of modern identity not dictated by terrorists -- must be scaled up dramatically.

And the new and virulent manifestations of these threats offer opportunities to create new alliances and networks to confront the ideology – from human rights and women’s groups to archaeologists and conservationists. International security forces and private stability operations teams could be enlisted to protect vulnerable populations, sites, and individuals against violent extremists.

This ideological fight is not just about terrorism. These are enemies of humanity – attempting to spread their ideology like a virus while reshaping borders, history, and identity. This demands stopping the manifestations of the ideology itself.

In the United States, the Department of Homeland Security should move even more aggressively toward a model of layered, systemic defense and resilience for critical infrastructure and national systems. This is important as terrorist groups like ISIS begin to flirt with cyber capabilities, and other transnational actors and their state sponsors probe for weaknesses in the American system and economy, in particular in the cyber context.

Finally, we must push government agencies to imagine the unimaginable and not underestimate the will and capacity of global terrorist organizations to strike Europe and the United States. We must continue to invest resources and energy to prevent terrorist groups from developing, acquiring, or using weapons of mass destruction. The recent Nuclear Security Summit is a great example of the United States focusing global attention on the potential of nuclear terrorism and the need to prevent it. The United States has concentrated its strategy, programs, and international engagements on preventing terrorists from acquiring or using biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons.

### **Conclusion**

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Brussels, there is growing anxiety over the reach and capabilities of the Islamic State, well beyond the caliphate it has established in Iraq and Syria. The United States must work closely with her European allies to address the terrorist threats in and to Europe and the vulnerabilities this creates for the United States and her interests. We

should not underestimate the ability of ISIS, al Qaida, or like-minded terrorist groups to innovate, adapt, and ultimately threaten European and U.S. interests and societies.



Center for a  
New American  
Security

April 5, 2016

**Testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad.**

Julianne Smith, Senior Fellow and Director, Strategy and Statecraft Program  
Center for a New American Security

Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Carper, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. It is an honor to join this esteemed panel of experts on an important topic.

As you know, just two short weeks ago, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) carried out two major terrorist attacks in Brussels that killed 35 people and wounded more than 300. The horrifying attacks, which involved bombs at the Brussels airport and inside a local subway station, targeted innocent citizens going about their daily business (much as the attacks last November in Paris did). And for Europe, they could not have come at a worse time. Europe is buckling under the weight of a series of internal and external challenges, ranging from a historic migration crisis to a resurgent Russia to the rise of populism and the potential exit of one of its largest members. The Brussels attacks will therefore serve as a major test not just for Belgium but for Europe as a whole.

The Brussels attacks revealed a number of worrisome trends and glaring policy gaps inside Belgium, across Europe, and among the transatlantic allies. Any successful strategy going forward will require change at every level. First, Belgium is going to have to undertake a number of short- and long-term changes aimed at strengthening its counterterrorism capabilities and integrating its Muslim minorities. Second, Europe, through the European Union, but also in individual member states, will have to marshal the right mix of leadership, innovation, and will to break down the longstanding bureaucratic barriers that have hindered effective counterterrorism cooperation to date. Finally, Europe and the United States will need to capitalize on their individual strengths to form a much tighter ring of counterterrorism cooperation, which will require the two sides of the Atlantic to work through differences over data protection and privacy issues.

**Belgian Shortcomings**

The Brussels attacks confirmed what many terrorism experts have been stating for years, that Belgium has one of the largest homegrown extremist problems in the West. Belgium is home to roughly 11 million Muslims, which represent approximately 6 percent of its population. Many of Belgium's Muslims originally came from Morocco in the 1960s and 1970s to help address its post-war labor shortages. The reluctance of some of these immigrants and their second- and third-generation offspring to embrace the societies in which they live, combined with the negligence of

*Bold.*

*Innovative.*

*Bipartisan.*



the Belgian government to effectively integrate such immigrant communities over several decades, means that a number of Muslims in Belgium have come to live in parallel societies or concentrated ghettos of mixed ethnic groups (a trend that one finds all across Europe). Some Muslim neighborhoods such as Molenbeek are considered “no-go” areas, which are infrequently visited by law enforcement officials.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Brussels has only eight community-relations police officers working the city’s majority Muslim neighborhoods says a lot about the isolation of these communities as well as the personnel shortages inside the Belgian security services.<sup>2</sup>

Over time, a small percentage of these communities have become radicalized due to an array of local and global grievances, often stemming from ongoing alienation, discrimination, and marginalization. Radical Islamist recruiters, such as those affiliated with the terrorist organization Sharia4Belgium, target susceptible young men and women both in person and on the web. Such groups have been especially successful in Belgium although the spread of radical Islam has become a key domestic and foreign policy challenge for European policymakers all across the continent. Approximately 500 Belgians have traveled to Iraq and Syria to join extremist militias, making Belgium the largest contributor of foreign fighters to Syria in proportion to its population.<sup>3</sup> At least initially, Belgian intelligence and law enforcement officials, overwhelmed with cases to track, were hoping that the radicals traveling to Syria might actually reduce the scope of the problem. But roughly 20 percent of those 500 fighters have returned to Belgium often with highly sophisticated training and unknown intentions.

In addition to highlighting Belgium’s failure to integrate its Muslim minorities, both the Brussels and Paris attacks have revealed a litany of intelligence and law enforcement failures.<sup>4</sup> Most notably, after searching for Paris terror suspect Salah Abdeslam for 120 days, Belgian officials found him just a few blocks from his family apartment in Molenbeek and just steps from a police precinct, apparently hiding in plain sight. Since Abdeslam’s capture and the attacks that came days later, press reports have portrayed Belgian intelligence and security officials as alarmingly incompetent and naive. That accusation, while partially rooted in truth, isn’t entirely justified. Belgium is no stranger to terrorism, having dealt with it since the 1970s. For decades, Belgium has engaged in a number of successful counterterrorism operations, and it has shared valuable information with foreign services.<sup>5</sup> That said, the country has suffered from crippling budgetary constraints and personnel shortages among its security services. Belgium also hasn’t had a functioning federal structure for some time thanks to the deep schisms between its Flemish and French speaking citizens. As a result, Belgium’s ability to uncover and dismantle jihadist networks has been severely hampered over the years.

<sup>1</sup> Erik Wemple, “Belgian minister’s statement revives talk of ‘no-go zones,’” *The Washington Post* (November 16, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Howard LaFranchi, “Bolster US-Europe efforts against terror? Not so easy,” *Christian Science Monitor* (March 29, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> Colin Clapson, “Nearly 500 Belgian Jihadis Left for Syria and Iraq,” *Flanders News* (September 12, 2015)

<sup>4</sup> Among the many revelations that surfaced in the wake of the attacks, the fact that Belgium’s 19 communes are divided between 6 police forces that lack the ability to share information is perhaps one of the more troubling.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Renard, “Why Belgium is not Europe’s Jihadi Base,” *Politico* (March 31, 2016)

### European Shortcomings

Belgium is not alone in its struggle to address homegrown terrorists and the roots of radicalization. Europe is home to over 13 million Muslims, many of whom live in parallel societies due to failed integration policies (or none at all). Preventing the radicalization of Muslim minorities has therefore become a priority for several European countries. But the tools with which national capitals can counter radicalization, slow recruitment, and seize and arrest terrorist operatives have suffered from a chronic lack of investment. The lack of security related resources is rooted primarily in the financial crisis and Europe's slow recovery. But it is also linked to the inherent tensions between intelligence services and political elites and their often contrasting views on accountability and transparency.

Europe's most glaring problem, however, lies in its inability to share information. ISIS has proven that it can seamlessly operate across national borders but Europe still lacks a shared list of suspected extremists.<sup>6</sup> The most recent example of an information sharing failure relates to one of the three Belgian attackers, Ibrahim el Bakraoui. Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that last summer, Turkey warned Belgian authorities of Bakraoui's terrorist ties when it deported him to the Netherlands, but this information was never followed up on, let alone, disseminated widely. The reasons behind such gaps are simple: each country in Europe has its own domestic sharing constraints. Therefore, any information sharing agreements that exist are considered voluntary not required. Cultural barriers also exist. Some countries in Western Europe refuse to share sensitive information with newer EU members in Central and Eastern Europe that were once part of the Soviet Union.

The preference for individual European policies doesn't just affect information sharing. It also applies to critical infrastructure such as national airports. For example, the EU has one set of standards and procedures for areas behind security check points. But the areas before security, exactly where the two bombs went off in the Brussels airport, are left to discretion of national governments, creating varying levels of security and an array of security procedures.

### Transatlantic Shortcomings

Challenges in counterterrorism cooperation are not limited to the European continent. There are other hurdles to overcome in regards to cooperation between Europe and the United States. To their credit, Europe and the United States undertook a number of measures aimed at strengthening their counterterrorism cooperation after 9/11. The Madrid 2004 bombings, followed soon after by the London 2005 bombings, further increased Europe's interest in deepening that cooperation. Over the course of a few years, the United States and EU enacted measures that significantly improved their ability to halt terrorism financing, share intelligence, safeguard border controls, and improve transportation security through initiatives such as the passenger name recognition (PNR) system. More recently, the U.S. and EU have worked closely together on countering violent extremism and halting the flow of foreign fighters. Although engagement with international partners, particularly the United States, has been a key tenet of the EU's counterterrorism strategy, serious gaps still remain.

<sup>6</sup> Griff Witte and Loveday Morris, "Failure to stop Paris attacks reveals fatal flaws at the heart of European security," *The Washington Post* (November 28, 2015)

When it comes to the United States, one of the primary obstacles to deepening transatlantic counterterrorism cooperation stems from European distrust on the issues of data sharing and privacy. The EU has long been an advocate of personal data privacy, regularly raising concerns about overreach by U.S. intelligence services. Those concerns grew more pronounced and the transatlantic divide over privacy widened after the 2013 revelations that the National Security Administration (NSA) spied on Europeans, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel. EU leaders, meeting in Brussels right after the news broke that the National Security Agency (NSA) had monitored the phones of 35 world leaders, stated that "a lack of trust could prejudice" intelligence-gathering co-operation.<sup>7</sup> The remnants of that distrust still echo throughout the transatlantic community today and has made information sharing between the EU and the U.S. far less effective than it could or should be.

Most specifically, distrust between the EU and U.S. as well as European concerns about how the United States might use any information that Europe does agree to share have hampered the full and EU-wide implementation of the PNR system. The PNR system allows airlines operating flights to or from the United States to provide U.S. authorities with passenger name record data in their reservations system within 15 minutes of the flight's departure.<sup>8</sup> Currently, PNR data is not regulated at the EU level, rather, individual countries collect their own individual PNR data and can share that information individually. An EU-wide PNR bill would not only regulate information sharing among EU members, but would subsequently increase the level of intelligence sharing between the EU and the United States. But experts believe the European Parliament will not vote on an EU-wide PNR bill until after the U.S. election later this year.<sup>9</sup> This is not only dangerous for Europe. Considering that most of the people responsible for the Paris and Brussels attacks held European passports, granting them visa free travel to the United States, a failure to fully implement the PNR bill would pose a danger for the United States as well.

#### **Making Europe, and America, Safer**

There are a number of steps Europe, and more specifically, Belgium, should take to ensure the continued safety of both Europe and the United States. First, Belgium should undertake a full audit of its security procedures and capabilities. It should also review all security staff at key transportation hubs as Paris did after the November attacks.<sup>10</sup> Second, also mirroring recent French developments, the country is going to have to overhaul its surveillance laws. For example, police and prosecutors need greater access to technology usually reserved for intelligence services. The Belgian government also needs to determine ways to fix its stove-piped police agencies and encourage information sharing among its various forces. In the medium term, Belgium will need to expand its intelligence services, which are simply too small for the nature of the challenge. It may also want to follow the United Kingdom's lead and increase the number of officers with training to

<sup>7</sup> BBC News, "EU says distrust of US on spying may harm terror fight" (October 25, 2013)

<sup>8</sup> Kristin Archick, "U.S.-EU Cooperation Against Terrorism," *Congressional Research Service* (March 2, 2016)

<sup>9</sup> Howard LaFranchi, "Bolster US-Europe efforts against terror? Not so easy," *Christian Science Monitor* (March 29, 2016)

<sup>10</sup> Rory Mulholland, "Seventy Paris airport workers have security passes revoked over extremism fears," *The Telegraph* (December 13, 2015)

carry weapons.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, all of these measures will require Belgium to significantly enhance its small security budget at a time when resources are scarce.

It is important to note, though, that the threat of homegrown terrorism is by no means a strictly Belgian problem. Future attacks in other capitals are considered likely.<sup>12</sup> Inside Europe and in the short to medium term, European capitals will need to strengthen their ability to collect, analyze and share information. And the system shouldn't rely on voluntary contributions; sharing should be obligatory. Europol's new "European Counterterrorism Center," which was created after the 2015 Paris attacks and designed to increase information sharing and operational coordination among 30 European countries, is a good start. But it will not serve as a European Central Intelligence Agency, at least not anytime soon. Too many capitals insist on maintaining national control over their security forces and hesitate to cede control to an EU agency whose loyalties and priorities may or may not align with their own. That is part of the reason the EU's Counterterrorism Coordinator has largely served an informational (vs. operational) role.

In the long term, Europe, especially Belgium, will have to do more to address the grievances and isolation of its Muslim minorities. Complicating matters is the fact that European public opinion of Muslims is worsening just when greater integration is so desperately needed. Right-wing extremists and anti-immigrant political parties that play on xenophobia have gained ground in recent years, and Islamic communities as well as the refugees arriving from the Middle East have become targets of increased hostility. This environment, where European citizens are increasingly worried about rising unemployment, shrinking demographics, national identity, and crime - which is often associated with Muslims - has made it challenging for political leaders to promote multiculturalism, costly integration policies, and interfaith dialogues. In Italy, the anti-immigration Northern League has called for the closure of mosques, and Poland is now stating that it might not be able to take in a mere 400 refugees.<sup>13</sup> Despite such hurdles, however, a number of European governments have experimented with integration initiatives over the years. Not all of them have produced real results but some, like greater literacy and language training for Muslim minorities, have proven useful. While each European country faces unique integration challenges, EU should serve as a clearing house and help countries learn from each other's experiences.

When it comes to protecting their citizens from future attacks, Europeans should be careful not to limit themselves to internal measures. Europe must take a more active role in fighting ISIS and its affiliates well beyond its borders, in North Africa and the Middle East. Some countries like France, the UK, Denmark, and Belgium are already contributing militarily to the anti-ISIS campaign over Iraq and Syria. For those European countries that cannot or will not contribute militarily, they should find other ways to contribute to the region's future either diplomatically or financially. How might they do more to support the countries in the region that are housing millions of Syrian refugees? How might they contribute to the political resolution of the Syrian war? How might they

<sup>11</sup> Alexis Flynn, "U.K. to Increase Ranks of Armed Police by Nearly a Third in Terror Response," *The Wall Street Journal* (April 1, 2016)

<sup>12</sup> Tom McTague, "Paris Attacks: David Cameron warns UK terrorist attack is 'highly likely,'" *Independent* (November 14, 2015)

<sup>13</sup> Norbert Röttgen, "To Unify Europe, Face the Mideast as One," *the Wall Street Journal* (March 31, 2016)

partner with allies in the region to establish humanitarian zones? As Norbert Röttgen noted in his March 31, 2016 piece in the *New York Times*, Europe also need a comprehensive Middle East strategy.

Finally, in the interest of the safety of both the United States and Europe, the two sides of the Atlantic must strengthen and deepen their counterterrorism cooperation much as they did after 9/11. Although difficult, a new transatlantic counterterrorism dialogue must start with the realization that our differences on data sharing and privacy have prevented us from developing a stronger, more effective, and common counterterrorism strategy. Given the wide array of views and policies inside Europe and America's experience in strengthening its own security services after 9/11, Washington may very well need to take the lead in breaking down bureaucratic barriers and charting the path forward. While the ultimate responsibility for European security rests with Europe, the United States can play an important role in fortifying European expertise, intelligence, and analysis of terrorists' motives, cells and activities. Attempts to isolate the United States from the European threat, as some in the United States advocate, would be both futile and unrealistic. They would also weaken our closest allies at a time when they are especially vulnerable. The threat of terrorism threatens both sides of the Atlantic. Our policies will therefore be stronger if they are rooted in transatlantic cooperation.

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## Senate Testimony

### **Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad**

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross  
Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies  
Chief Executive Officer, Valens Global

### **Hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs**

Washington, DC  
April 5, 2016



1800 M Street NW • Suite 800, South Tower • Washington, DC

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

April 5, 2016

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the committee, on behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss the heinous terrorist attacks in Brussels, and their implications for U.S. security.

The Brussels attacks and their aftermath have exposed several key weaknesses in Europe's security infrastructure that leave the continent vulnerable to terrorism and inhibit European states' ability to effectively counter threats posed by the Islamic State (popularly known by the acronym ISIS) and al-Qaeda. These weaknesses also endanger our own homeland security and U.S. interests in Europe. Some of the most significant challenges facing Europe include:

- **European authorities' capacity to manage the dual challenges posed by migrant inflows and foreign fighters.** Europe's migrant crisis has overwhelmed European law enforcement and security agencies, which are struggling to police migrant communities, prevent and contain crime against migrants and other manifestations of a nativist backlash, and gather intelligence on incoming migrants. At the same time, thousands of European nationals have joined ISIS and other jihadist factions in Syria and Iraq, and dozens to hundreds of these foreign fighters have returned to Europe, with some infiltrating migrant inflows to gain entry to the continent. European security agencies are ill equipped to manage these dual challenges.
- **Security coordination in Europe.** Intelligence sharing between European countries continues to be inadequate, as bureaucratic obstacles and turf battles inhibit governments from sharing critical information with one another. Some European governments also struggle to share information even within their own intelligence community. These problems can be exacerbated by the lack of border controls within the Schengen Zone, which has helped jihadist operatives move between countries undetected.
- **Security at civilian nuclear facilities in Belgium.** Though the Belgian government has made progress in recent years in securing its nuclear facilities, concerns remain about the country's ability to protect its nuclear material, as well as personnel who work at these facilities. ISIS has demonstrated an interest in gaining access to Belgian nuclear facilities and acquiring nuclear material.
- **Threats to transportation infrastructure and soft targets.** ISIS has instructed its operatives to carry out mass casualty attacks against civilians in Europe, and the group has sought to cripple the European economy by striking tourist sites and transportation infrastructure.

European states will need to address these issues head-on in order to prevent large-scale attacks in the future. The U.S. government can play an important role in providing a

roadmap for European states to follow, supporting European security reforms, and bolstering European states' ability to combat jihadist threats.

### **Managing the Migrant Crisis and Foreign Fighter Returnees**

ISIS has intensified its operations in Europe at the same time that European law enforcement and intelligence agencies are coping with a different challenge, the migrant crisis. More than a million migrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries poured into Europe in 2015, the largest influx Europe has encountered since World War II.<sup>1</sup> The magnitude of the migrant crisis has overwhelmed European governments, and inhibited intelligence agencies from vetting incoming migrants for ties to violent extremists. One European diplomat explained of the lack of screening measures: "There are no real controls. [The authorities] take fingerprints, accept whatever identification they provide—if they have one—and send them on their way."<sup>2</sup>

As migrants began flooding into Europe in early 2015, it quickly became apparent that Europe's existing asylum mechanisms were inadequate to address the crisis. According to European Union (EU) law, asylum seekers are supposed to register in their country of entry as their asylum applications are processed.<sup>3</sup> But frontline countries such as Italy and Greece lacked the capacity to register all migrants as they arrived, and thousands moved on to wealthier countries such as Germany and Sweden to file for asylum.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the reluctance of European states hesitant to accept migrants has impeded a relocation plan, adopted by the EU in September 2015 to ease the migrant burden borne by Greece and other frontline countries, from being implemented.<sup>5</sup> As the EU struggles to develop a coordinated response, individual states have adopted unilateral measures, including imposing border controls and building fences and barriers along their borders.

With the majority of resources devoted to registering and resettling migrants, efforts to screen migrants for security risks have been lacking, and in some places, non-existent. A report published by the House Homeland Security Committee in November 2015 concluded that European officials rarely cross-checked migrants' personal information against existing terrorism watchlists and databases.<sup>6</sup> Border police in one country visited by researchers explained that they did check suspicious individuals against databases, but by the time they received relevant intelligence information, the individuals in question had already moved

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Kingsley, "Over a Million Migrants and Refugees Have Reached Europe This Year, Says IOM," *Guardian* (U.K.), December 22, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Syrian Refugee Flows: Security Risks and Counterterrorism Challenges* (House Homeland Security Committee, November 2015).

<sup>3</sup> The "Dublin regulation," the law that stipulates that migrants must register in the first European country they arrive in, is currently being debated, as the European Commission seeks to implement reforms that will take pressure off of frontline countries such as Italy and Greece. See "Fresh Battle Awaits Cameron as EU Plans to Scrap 'Dublin Regulation,'" *Press Association*, January 20, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Scherer, "Migrants Race Through Italy to Dodge EU Asylum Rules," *Reuters*, June 10, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> "National Reluctance Sinks EU's Refugee Relocation Plan," *Euractiv and Agence France Presse*, February 9, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> *Syrian Refugee Flows: Security Risks and Counterterrorism Challenges* (House Homeland Security Committee, November 2015).



through the border crossing. Passport fraud has also been prevalent among migrants, as non-Syrians, assuming that they will have a better chance of acquiring asylum if they claim to be from Syria, pay forgers for Syrian passports. Though Germany and Sweden have mechanisms in place to verify passports, Frontex, the EU's border agency, acknowledged in November 2015 that it did not possess the capacity to vet the passports of all migrants arriving in Europe's frontline states.<sup>7</sup>

The chaos resulting from the migrant crisis has created a strategic opportunity for ISIS, which has exploited weak screening and vetting procedures by embedding militants within migrant populations heading for Europe. Phillip Breedlove, the commander of NATO, recently noted in Senate testimony that the migrant crisis is "masking the movement" of terrorists, and that ISIS is "spreading like cancer" within migrant communities.<sup>8</sup> British intelligence officials expressed similar concerns, asserting that jihadists were using fake Syrian and Iraqi passports to gain entry into Europe.<sup>9</sup> Several other countries, including Germany and Bulgaria, have arrested or investigated migrants with suspected links to jihadist groups.<sup>10</sup>

It is believed that at least one of the Paris attackers gained entry into Europe by pretending to be a refugee. Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the local ringleader of the attacks, also told his cousin that as many as 90 ISIS militants had infiltrated Europe through migrant populations.<sup>11</sup> Though Abaaoud may have been exaggerating, there should be no doubt at this point that ISIS has used the migrant crisis to its advantage.

ISIS's efforts to infiltrate via migrant populations are closely related to another challenge facing European governments, the foreign fighter phenomenon. As many as 6,000 residents of Europe have joined jihadist groups fighting in Syria and Iraq, a staggering number that has severely tested the limits and capabilities of European intelligence agencies. European governments openly acknowledge that they are not able to identify all citizens and residents who have become foreign fighters.

Compounding that problem is the fact that intelligence agencies are not capable of monitoring all known foreign fighters upon their return to Europe. Given the magnitude of the foreign fighter phenomenon, European intelligence agencies simply do not have the manpower and resources necessary to keep tabs on every returnee. Some returnees who pose a threat will likely slip under the radar of intelligence agencies, a worrying prospect considering foreign fighters' demonstrated capacity to carry out spectacular attacks. (Both the Brussels and Paris attacks involved foreign fighters, some of whom had received extensive battlefield training and experience in Syria.)

<sup>7</sup> Fazel Hawramy et al., "How Easy is it to Buy a Fake Syrian Passport?" *Guardian* (U.K.), November 17, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Yuhas, "Nato Commander: ISIS 'Spreading Like Cancer' Among Refugees," *Guardian* (U.K.), March 1, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Whitehead and Con Coughlin "ISIL Exploiting Migrant Routes to Smuggle Jihadists Back to Britain Using Fake Documents," *Telegraph* (U.K.), January 6, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> *Syrian Refugee Flows: Security Risks and Counterterrorism Challenges* (House Homeland Security Committee, November 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Lori Hinnant, "Paris Attack Leader Said he Slipped in With 90 Extremists," Associated Press, February 4, 2016.

Several European states are demonstrably overwhelmed by the scope of threats they face. Limited intelligence resources were a factor, for example, in the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks. Said and Chérif Kouachi, the two al-Qaeda-linked gunmen who carried out the massacre at the Paris newspaper, were monitored for years before France halted surveillance on them. Current and former French officials blame a lack of resources for the decision to suspend surveillance on the two attackers. As a former French counterterrorism chief put it: "We have to make choices."<sup>12</sup> Following the November 2015 Paris attacks, France announced that it would spend millions of euros to hire new intelligence officers and to fund counterterrorism and counter-radicalization initiatives.<sup>13</sup>

Belgium's capabilities gap is even more significant than France's. It is believed that over 500 Belgians have gone to Syria and Iraq to join jihadist groups, making Belgium the largest per capita contributor of foreign fighters in Europe.<sup>14</sup> Of that number, it is believed that at least 75 Belgian foreign fighters have returned home.<sup>15</sup> Belgian security officials have stated that they are monitoring around 900 suspected jihadists.<sup>16</sup> The jihadist threat has consumed the full attention of Belgian law enforcement and intelligence agencies: Days before the Brussels attacks, a Belgian security official told *BuzzFeed* that almost every detective and intelligence officer in the country was focusing on investigations related to jihadist activity.<sup>17</sup>

But even with all hands on deck, Belgian security services have been overwhelmed. It is believed that the Belgian intelligence services employ between 500 to 1,500 personnel, though exact figures are not publicly available.<sup>18</sup> Since it takes 15 to 25 intelligence officers to conduct round-the-clock surveillance on a single suspect, Belgium simply doesn't possess the manpower to track the majority of suspects it has identified.<sup>19</sup> This gap between needs and resources helps explain why the cell involved in the Brussels attacks went undetected for so long. As one Belgian intelligence official explained, "We just don't have the people to watch anything else and, frankly, we don't have the infrastructure to properly investigate or monitor hundreds of individuals suspected of terror links, as well as pursue the hundreds of open files and investigations we have. It's literally an impossible situation and, honestly, it's very grave."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Stacy Meichtry, Margaret Corker, and Julian Barnes, "Overburdened French Dropped Surveillance of Brothers," *Wall Street Journal*, January 9, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Liz Alderman, "Terror Threats Thaw Budgets Across Europe," *New York Times*, January 31, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Pieter Van Ostaeyen, "Belgian Fighters in Syria and Iraq—October 2015," October 11, 2015, available at <https://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2015/10/11/belgian-fighters-in-syria-and-iraq-october-2015/>.

<sup>15</sup> Dan de Luce and Elias Groll, "In Brussels Attacks, Chronicle of a Disaster Foretold," *Foreign Policy*, March 22, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Blenkinsop, "'Weak Link' Gets Tough: After Paris, Belgium Raises Spy Game," Reuters, December 6, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Mitch Prothero, "Belgian Authorities Overwhelmed by Terror Investigations," *BuzzFeed*, March 22, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Blenkinsop, "'Weak Link' Gets Tough"; Jamie Dettmer, "Belgian Security Measures Foreshadow New Normal for Europe," *Voice of America*, November 24, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Nic Robertson, "How 'Glorious' Intelligence Failures Allowed a Second Bout of Terror in Paris," CNN, November 18, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Prothero, "Belgian Authorities Overwhelmed by Terror Investigations."

France and Belgium are not the only countries struggling to monitor foreign fighters and domestic cells. The U.K.'s former home secretary predicted after the Brussels attacks that jihadists would "get through" in his country as well, noting that ISIS's focus on soft targets made it difficult to prevent every attack.<sup>21</sup> German officials have said that the country's justice system is "at the limits of [its] capacity," as law enforcement officers struggle to monitor and investigate foreign fighter returnees.<sup>22</sup>

The dual challenges of the migrant crisis and the foreign fighter returnee threat have imposed unprecedented pressures on European governments and intelligence agencies. Neither challenge is likely to dissipate in the near future.

### Challenges in Intelligence Sharing and Security Coordination

European governments' struggles to share intelligence, coordinate security operations, and secure open borders are among Europe's most glaring counterterrorism vulnerabilities. European governments have failed to establish the type of pan-European intelligence apparatus needed to effectively police the Schengen zone's open borders. Bureaucratic obstacles, provincialism, and lack of trust among agencies have resulted in stove-piping and missed opportunities to disrupt jihadist networks. Jihadist groups have exploited Europe's open borders, moving seamlessly between countries and evading detection.

Though Europe has established certain mechanisms for facilitating intelligence sharing and counterterrorism coordination, these mechanisms are often inadequate. For instance, following the 2004 Madrid train bombings, the European Union established the position of counterterrorism coordinator. However, the coordinator possesses few resources and maintains little control over individual countries' intelligence collection and sharing practices. As one former State Department official said, the coordinator "has a grand title and produces wonderful reports," but lacks authority.<sup>23</sup>

European states have also been reluctant to contribute to pan-European databases that are supposed to serve as clearinghouses for intelligence on terrorist groups and other transnational threats. In the last two years, EU states have begun inputting more data into the Schengen Information System (SIS), the primary EU-wide intelligence database, but because there are no requirements on what states must contribute, it is largely up to individual states to decide how much—if any—information they will share.<sup>24</sup> A report published by the French parliament in February 2016 noted that France is the only country that regularly contributes to the SIS database, and observed that the quality of information provided by other states was "very spotty." The report also found that the SIS database could

<sup>21</sup> "Brussels Attacks: Terrorists 'Will Get Through' in UK," BBC, March 23, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> "Foreign Fighter Cases Stretch German Justice to the Limit—Prosecutor," *World Bulletin*, December 11, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Dan De Luce and Elias Groll, "Can Europe Connect the ISIS Dots?" *Foreign Policy*, March 25, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Birnbaum, "A Terror Attack Exposed Belgium's Security Failings. Europe's Problem is Far Bigger," *Washington Post*, March 28, 2016.

not be used to spot-check individuals at borders within the Schengen zone, a restriction that fundamentally undermines the purpose of the database.<sup>25</sup>

The ongoing saga surrounding the establishment of a “passenger name record” (PNR) database is another example of how bureaucracy and disagreements among EU member states have inhibited intelligence sharing and cooperation. The PNR database records and stores information on air travelers flying through the EU, providing intelligence agencies a needed tool to monitor travel in the Schengen zone.<sup>26</sup> Despite a European Commission directive in December 2015 mandating that all EU member states begin sharing and retaining passenger information, several governments have resisted contributing to the PNR, citing concerns, echoed by the European Court of Human Rights, that the database would violate passengers’ privacy.<sup>27</sup> As a result, intelligence agencies have limited visibility on who is transiting through the Schengen zone.

Prior to the most recent attacks in Europe, European governments failed to act on intelligence provided by Turkey, which has collected significant information on European foreign fighters transiting to Syria and Iraq. The Turkish government reportedly provided information to France about Omar Ismail Mostefai almost a year before Mostefai participated in the Paris attacks.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Belgium failed to act after Turkey notified Brussels in June 2015 that it was deporting Ibrahim El Bakraoui, one of the suicide bombers involved in the Brussels attacks, based on suspicions that Bakraoui was affiliated with jihadist groups.<sup>29</sup> Just three days after he arrived in Turkey, Bakraoui was arrested in Gaziantep, a city in southern Turkey that is a common stop for foreign fighters on the way to Syria.<sup>30</sup> The fact that Bakraoui was arrested in Gaziantep should have raised red flags for Belgian intelligence, yet he was able to slip under the radar before carrying out the Brussels attack.

Compounding the challenges of transnational coordination, some states have struggled to coordinate intelligence sharing and counterterrorism operations internally. Belgium is perhaps the most glaring example, with both local and national intelligence and law enforcement agencies plagued by infighting and stove piping. Belgium’s law enforcement community is deeply Balkanized, mirroring the decentralized nature of the Belgian state, with six separate local police forces and a federal police service sharing jurisdiction just in the city of Brussels.<sup>31</sup> Each local police force answers to a separate mayor, and intelligence sharing between agencies is often inadequate. Brussels is also home to both a civilian and military intelligence service, as well as a terrorism threat assessment unit, all

<sup>25</sup> Allison Smale and Melissa Eddie, “As Terrorists Cross Borders, Europe Sees Anew That Its Intelligence Does Not,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Birnbaum, “A Terror Attack Exposed Belgium’s Security Failings.”

<sup>27</sup> Vivienne Walt, “European Officials Struggle With Red Tape and Rules to Protect Against Terrorism,” *Time*, March 22, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Orhan Coskun and Humeysra Pamuk, “Turkey Says Notified France Twice About Paris Attacker: Senior Official,” *Reuters*, November 16, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Jim Brunsten, “Belgian Security Officials Accused of Bungling Key Intelligence,” *Financial Times*, March 25, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Ragıp Soylu, “Turkey Arrested Brussels Suicide Bomber in Border Town Gaziantep, Security Official Says,” *Daily Sabah*, March 23, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Tim King, “Belgium is a Failed State,” *Politico Europe*, December 2, 2015.

of which are similarly reluctant to collaborate with one another.<sup>32</sup> As one former Belgian intelligence official noted: "Everything in Belgium is politicized; you cannot have an administrative function, particularly a senior one, if you don't have a political affiliation."<sup>33</sup>

The Brussels attacks laid bare the internal dysfunctions in Belgium's intelligence services. According to a Belgian news outlet, local police in the town of Mechelen wrote an intelligence report in early December 2015 about Abid Aberkane, a jihadist who was believed to have been in contact with Salah Abdeslam, the lone surviving would-be Paris attacker. Belgian police later learned that Aberkane's mother housed Abdeslam following his escape from Paris. But the intelligence report was never passed on to relevant officials at the regional level, and Belgian authorities only learned of Abdeslam's whereabouts months later.<sup>34</sup> A law prohibiting Belgian police from conducting raids between the hours of 9 PM and 5 AM also inhibited the search for Abdeslam; just two days after the Paris attacks, Belgian security forces believed that they had identified the house where Abdeslam was staying, but they were forced to wait until the morning to conduct a raid. By that time, Abdeslam had fled, slipping into the Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek.<sup>35</sup>

Excessive bureaucracy undermined intelligence collection and analysis at other stages of the investigation into the Brussels cell as well. According to Belgium's interior minister, a Belgian liaison officer based in Istanbul failed to respond in a timely fashion to requests for information from Belgium's "serious and organized crime" division concerning Belgian foreign fighters identified by Turkish intelligence.<sup>36</sup> And a *nom de guerre* used by a militant involved in the Brussels attacks was entered into several police databases, but was not incorporated into a central database used to monitor terrorism suspects.<sup>37</sup>

France suffers from similar challenges. The country's eight intelligence services do not operate under a central coordinating entity, and often struggle to share information. As one analyst noted, "information collected overseas is not transmitted systematically and automatically to the DGSI," France's domestic intelligence agency.<sup>38</sup> After the Paris attacks, the French government committed to improving inter-agency coordination, but it remains unclear what tangible steps have been taken to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles.

Poor intelligence sharing in France and Belgium adds to the challenges of building an effective pan-European intelligence mechanism. The EU relies on individual states to collect and share intelligence. In such an interconnected and integrated system, weak links in the

<sup>32</sup> Milan Schreuer, "Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light," *New York Times*, March 24, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> "Politie van Mechelen Kende Schuiladres van Abdeslam al 4 Maanden," *Knack* (Dutch), March 25, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Samuel and Justin Huggler, "Belgium 'Bungled Abdeslam's Arrest' Two Days After Paris Attacks Due to Law Banning Overnight Raids," *Telegraph* (U.K.), December 16, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Jim Brunson, "Belgian Security Officials Accused of Bungling Key Intelligence," *Financial Times*, March 25, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Ryan Heath, Zoya Sheftalovich and Chris Spillane, "Belgium's 12 Worst Terror Misses, Mistakes and Misunderstandings," *Politico*, March 29, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew Dalton, "France Moves to Better Coordinate Its Antiterrorism Efforts," *Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 2016.

chain can have an outsized impact on the whole system. As Guido Steinberg, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, remarked after the Brussels attacks: “The biggest problem lies in the different levels of professionalism among the security services in Europe.”<sup>39</sup> Even when intelligence is collected by individual states, there are few mechanisms in place to ensure that this information will be passed on to other states within the EU. Until these issues are resolved, and until European countries overcome their concerns about sharing information, jihadists and other malevolent actors will continue to exploit intelligence gaps and maintain freedom of movement throughout the continent.

### ISIS’s European Strategy and Threats to Nuclear Infrastructure

European authorities are overwhelmed and having trouble coordinating at a very dangerous time for the continent. In the last two years, ISIS has sought to strike a variety of targets inside Europe, including transportation infrastructure, tourist sites, and soft targets where large numbers of civilians congregate.

ISIS’s approach is intended to accomplish multiple objectives. For one, the group believes attacks in Europe will project an image of strength, diverting attention from the losses it is experiencing at the hands of the ongoing anti-ISIS military campaign in Syria and Iraq. In the longer term, this approach is intended to exhaust Europe in multiple ways, including economically, and weaken it to the point that it cannot effectively fight ISIS’s self-proclaimed caliphate.<sup>40</sup> The logic behind this approach was explained in *The Management of Savagery*, a book written in 2004 by Abu Bakr Naji, which stated that jihadists should carry out attacks in their adversaries’ home countries in order to exhaust “the forces of the enemy ... [disperse] their efforts, and to make them unable to catch their breath by means of operations in the regions of the choice states.”<sup>41</sup>

ISIS’s strategy has manifested itself in multiple ways in Europe. One way is target selection. ISIS has struck at transportation and conducted high-profile attacks that fuel the perception of insecurity and instability. The reason the jihadist group sees this approach as advantageous was spelled out in an infographic produced by ISIS after the November 2015 Paris attacks, stating that the attacks would create a “general state of unease” that would cost Europe “tens of billions of dollars due to the resulting decrease in tourism, delayed flights, and restrictions on freedom of movement.”<sup>42</sup> Further, in the March 2015 issue of *Dar al-Islam*, ISIS’s French-language online magazine, a French-born operative exhorted his

<sup>39</sup> Allison Smale and Melissa Eddie, “As Terrorists Cross Borders, Europe Sees Anew That Its Intelligence Does Not,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of terrorist attacks and the jihadist economic strategy, see Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “Operation Hemorrhage: The Terror Plans to Wreck the West’s Economy,” *Daily Beast*, March 24, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, trans. Will McCants (2006), available at <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> The graphic was originally posted in the ISIS publication *Al-Naba* in December 2015. For the infographic, see tweets posted by Bridget Moreng (@BridgetMoreng), March 22, 2016.

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compatriots in France to “kill anyone,” and to stop looking for specific (i.e., symbolic) targets, since “all infidels are targets for us.”<sup>43</sup>

ISIS is likely to continue to attempt to strike Europe’s transportation infrastructure, as the group did in the Brussels attacks and as an ISIS-affiliated foot soldier did in an August 2015 attempt, when a Moroccan-born gunman attempted to carry out an attack on a train traveling from Amsterdam to Paris. (The attack was thwarted when several passengers, including two American military personnel, charged and overpowered the gunman.) ISIS may also seek to strike soft targets where security is lacking, such as the restaurants the Paris attackers struck in November 2015. Given the challenges of protecting soft targets and transportation infrastructure, it is essential that European security authorities disrupt and detect plots before they become operational.

In addition to striking soft targets and transportation infrastructure, ISIS has demonstrated its interest in gaining access to nuclear material and facilities in Europe, and news that broke following the Brussels attacks reignited fears about the security of nuclear facilities in Belgium. U.S. officials have long expressed concerns about Belgium’s ability to secure its nuclear infrastructure and materials, and recent security breaches have amplified these concerns.

In 2004, the United States, which ships highly-enriched uranium to Belgium for the processing of medical isotopes, stopped providing nuclear material until Belgium improved security measures at nuclear facilities.<sup>44</sup> It took Belgium several years to implement needed reforms. Only in 2013, for example, did the Belgian government tighten its laws related to the improper handling of nuclear material. In 2014, the Belgian government added new layers of security at nuclear facilities, installing more surveillance cameras, improving cyber defenses, and establishing new personnel security measures.<sup>45</sup> But vulnerabilities remain. For example, Belgian law still prohibits guards at nuclear facilities from carrying weapons, meaning facilities may be vulnerable to a coordinated armed attack.

Several incidents that have occurred in the past five years have prompted renewed fears about security at Belgian nuclear facilities. In 2012, Belgian officials discovered that Ilyass Boughalab, who had worked as a technician at the Doel nuclear power plant from 2009 to 2012 and had access to sensitive areas of the Doel 4 reactor, had left for Syria to join jihadist groups as a fighter.<sup>46</sup> Boughalab, who died in Syria in 2014, was also believed to have been a member of Sharia4Belgium, a salafi jihadist group that helped send dozens of individuals to fight with ISIS in Syria. Though it is not clear when Boughalab joined Sharia4Belgium, his case underscored the seriousness of insider threats, and prompted concerns about the rigor of vetting and background checks.

<sup>43</sup> “Djihad en Tunisie: Interview du Frère Abou Mouqâtil At-Tounsi,” *Dar al-Islam*, Issue 3, March 2015, available at <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/the-islamic-state-22dc481r-al-isl481m-magazine-322.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Patrick Malone and R. Jeffrey Smith, “The Islamic State’s Plot to Build a Radioactive ‘Dirty Bomb,’” *Foreign Policy*, February 29, 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Steven Mufson, “Brussels Attacks Stoke Fears about Security of Belgian Nuclear Facilities,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Other incidents have raised questions about the physical security of facilities where nuclear material and weapons are stored. In 2010, peace activists gained access to the Kleine Brogel air base, a facility in northeastern Belgium that is believed to house 10 to 20 U.S. tactical nuclear weapons, and took videos of the base that were later posted online.<sup>47</sup> This raised obvious concerns that other hostile groups may be able to gain access to such areas. In August 2014, in an incident still being investigated, an unidentified employee accessed the Doel-4 nuclear reactor and drained 65,000 liters of oil used to lubricate the reactor turbine. The incident caused \$100 to \$200 million in damage, and forced the reactor to shut down for over a year.<sup>48</sup>

Issues surrounding insider threats and the physical security of Belgian nuclear facilities appear all the more acute in light of recent revelations about ISIS operatives' surveillance of personnel. In November 2015, Belgian officials discovered that individuals linked to ISIS had been conducting surveillance on a Belgian nuclear researcher, placing a camera in bushes outside the researcher's home and collecting ten hours of video footage on the researcher and his family's comings and goings. The tapes were discovered at the home of Mohammed Bakkali, who was arrested and charged with helping to arrange logistics for the November 2015 Paris attacks. Belgian officials also believe that Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui, the two brothers who carried out the March suicide bombings in Brussels, were involved in the surveillance of the nuclear researcher.<sup>49</sup>

Two days after the Brussels attacks, a security officer at a Belgian nuclear facility was murdered, with some reports indicating that the officer's security pass to the facility was stolen.<sup>50</sup> Though Belgian authorities have said publicly that they do not think the incident was linked to terrorism, the timing of the incident has fueled fears, and added to the perception that nuclear facilities and personnel are vulnerable.

The discovery of the ISIS-linked surveillance plot reinforces the urgency and importance of strengthening security at nuclear facilities in Belgium and across Europe, and raises the worrying possibility that ISIS may have begun putting in place plans to obtain nuclear material. In November 2015, news outlets revealed that ISIS, which has used chemical weapons on multiple occasions against adversaries in Syria and Iraq, has established a unit dedicated to producing chemical weapons.<sup>51</sup> ISIS's efforts to scale up its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities underscore both the need for increased international coordination and cooperation relating to securing sensitive materials and also for depriving ISIS of the territory that it controls in Iraq and Syria.

<sup>47</sup> Malone and Smith, "The Islamic State's Plot to Build a Radioactive 'Dirty Bomb.'"

<sup>48</sup> "Belgium's Neighbours Fret Over Reboot of Ageing Nuclear Reactors," *France 24*, January 28, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Alissa J. Rubin and Milan Schreuer, "Belgium Fears Nuclear Plants Are Vulnerable," *New York Times*, March 25, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Brianna Provenzano, "Security Guard at Belgian Nuclear Plant Found Dead With Pass Stolen," *Mic*, March 26, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> "ISIS Pursuing Production of Chemical Weapons, Officials Say," CBS and Associated Press, November 19, 2015.



## Conclusion

The Brussels attacks provided the starkest example yet of the significant security and intelligence challenges facing Europe, as it was the first time that a cell had succeeded in carrying out two major attacks in Europe. The migrant crisis and the foreign fighter phenomenon have overwhelmed European governments' capabilities, and exposed glaring vulnerabilities. The U.S. government can play a critical role in supporting intelligence and counterterrorism operations, and in helping to address security gaps in Europe. The measures that the U.S. can take include:

- *Supporting pan-EU intelligence coordination.* The U.S. can help support and encourage greater intelligence sharing and counterterrorism coordination between and within EU member states. Drawing on lessons learned from post-9/11 intelligence reforms, U.S. officials can provide guidance to EU members states and EU-wide organizations on eliminating bureaucratic and systemic obstacles to intelligence sharing.
- *Encouraging European states to adopt a more disruptive policing model.* As European security services are massively overstretched, they need to adopt a policing model that can deal with the current elevated threat. The impetus for change should not be delayed until dozens or hundreds more are killed. As I noted in a recent column, the policing model that snared America's first celebrity criminal, Al Capone, is applicable here.<sup>52</sup> Capone was convicted not for murder, bribery, or bootlegging, but income tax evasion. This anti-mob model—prosecuting mobsters for any violations of the law, and not just mob-related activities—was adopted by the U.S. government for a time after the 9/11 attacks, as it was trying to get a handle on the scale of the threat and ensure that other catastrophic acts of terrorism did not claim American lives. Application of the “Al Capone” model could have made a difference in past European plots. The ringleader of the bombers who struck London in July 2005, Mohammed Sidique Khan, had been caught on tape discussing his plans to obtain terrorist training in Pakistan. Authorities seemingly had a way to disrupt his activities at the time by charging him with fraud. Had they done so, 52 innocent lives may have been saved. Adopting the Al Capone anti-terrorism policing model may be a way to tilt the balance in authorities' favor.
- *Enhancing nuclear security in Belgium.* The U.S. government has extensive experience in helping other states secure their nuclear facilities and materiel. The U.S. should draw on that expertise to assist Belgium in improving the security of its nuclear infrastructure. Additionally, as the U.S. improves its ability to identify insider threats—including, for example, through adoption of cutting-edge personality profiling or big data techniques—it should share tools with EU member states to ensure that background checks and security vetting can identify potential threats.

<sup>52</sup> See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “Brussels and the Al Capone Model,” *Mint* (India), March 31, 2016.

- *Examining the strengths and weaknesses of the Schengen agreement:* The foreign fighter and migrant crises have called into question the feasibility of the Schengen Agreement. The U.S. has the opportunity to push for Schengen reform in areas where security is particularly impeded. This topic could be further discussed in hearings, and may be an area for Congressional investigation.

Finally, the United States should continue to work with EU states to reverse ISIS's gains in Iraq and Syria. ISIS has staked its legitimacy to its ability to control territory, with Raqqa and Mosul serving as the group's de facto capitals. By taking back critical areas and containing ISIS's growth (both in Syria/Iraq and globally), the U.S. and its European partners can weaken ISIS militarily and erode its legitimacy. While denying ISIS the ability to hold territory will reduce the group's ability to plan major external operations in the long run, in the short term, it is possible that ISIS will further intensify its efforts to strike at the West as it loses ground in Syria and Iraq. Thus, it is imperative that the U.S. continue to support counterterrorism efforts in Europe as it aggressively pursues ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

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**Statement Prepared for the U.S. Senate Committee On Homeland Security And Governmental Affairs:****“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens At Home And Abroad”  
5 April 2016**

Recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Istanbul and Brussels should not come as a surprise. The Islamic State's rise in Europe has been more than four years in the making. By 2012, casual social media monitoring showed a large wave of young European men migrating through Turkey into Syria. When the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) expanded to become the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), they consolidated these Europeans into the largest foreign fighter force in history as part of the menace known today as the Islamic State.<sup>1</sup> Today, these jihadi combat veterans have logically begun returning home pursuing an unprecedented level of violence in the West on behalf of their Islamic State leaders.

The Islamic State's success arises both from the group's aggressive pursuit of violence via enormous foreign fighter cadres and the West's failures in preparing for the inevitable return of its angry young men. Assessing the risk to U.S. citizens from this current wave of Islamic State violence requires an examination of why the Islamic State has proven to be so effective in Europe and why European countries face such challenges in disrupting Islamic State terrorist networks.

*Why has the Islamic State been so successful in Europe?*

Al Qaeda desperately sought spectacular attacks in the West and in the case of the 7 July 2005 London bombings they achieved their goal. But their terrorist plots over a more than a decade never achieved the level of violence the Islamic State has attained in less than one year. While some have suggested the Islamic State is now pursuing an al Qaeda model in Europe, the Islamic State in many ways pursues an inverse approach to that of al Qaeda. Al Qaeda sought to recruit “Clean Skins” for the execution of their plots – Western passport holders without criminal records able to slip security and avoid detection in the lead up to an attack.<sup>2</sup> Al Qaeda

<sup>1</sup> Clint Watts (22 March 2014) *ISIS Rise After al Qaeda's House of Cards*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Available at: <http://www.fpri.org/2014/03/isiss-rise-after-al-qaedas-house-of-cards-part-4-of-smarter-counterterrorism/>

<sup>2</sup> Con Coughlin (9 April 2009) *The Enemy Within Is Invisible*. The Telegraph. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/concoughlin/5133188/The-new-enemy-within-is-invisible.html>

ultimately recruited few of these “Clean Skin” recruits and even when they did, these operatives were deployed alone or in small groups toward unfamiliar targets. Once sent on missions, their recruits had limited training and combat experience. With the exception of the July 7, 2005 London attacks, their plots were routinely detected and disrupted. As seen in the Najibullah Zazi case in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>, the U.K. transatlantic planes plot of 2006<sup>4</sup> and the failed follow on July 21, 2005 London attack<sup>5</sup>, al Qaeda’s Western plotters struggled to construct explosive devices and their reconnaissance and communications were detected by intelligence and law enforcement.

The Islamic State’s massive cadre of trained European recruits and updated operational approach has sidestepped many of the challenges faced by al Qaeda. Unlike al Qaeda before them, the Islamic State has taken nearly every available European recruit into their ranks regardless of skill or previous criminal record. The Islamic State’s European foreign fighter cadres may certainly be ten times in number of al Qaeda before them. Islamic State recruits arrive to Syria alongside their relatives and friends extending physical relationships cemented in many years before in diaspora neighborhoods. The Islamic State’s recruits are more connected socially than ideologically, and their shared experience on the battlefield improves both their competency individually and their capability as an operational unit. While much has been made of their infiltration into Syrian refugee flows, many have returned home by using their passports and sliding back into neighborhoods filled with sympathetic supporters willing to join their ranks or assist in plots. In total, the scale, experience and cohesion of Islamic State foreign fighters in Europe is unprecedented.

The Islamic State also emits fewer signals by which counter terrorists can disrupt their attacks. Returning Islamic State foreign fighters plan attacks with greater autonomy than those al Qaeda plots from last decade hitting soft targets more than national monuments and government buildings. While al Qaeda micromanaged their Western plots, the Islamic State’s seasoned European cadres operate in areas they know well communicating less frequently and emitting fewer indicators law enforcement can detect. Their gun runs and use of suicide bombings mirror the style of Lashkar-e-Taiba’s 2009 attacks in Mumbai, India.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A.G. Sulzberger and William K. Rashbaum. (22 Feb 2010) *Guilty Plea Made In Plot To Bomb New York Subway*. New York Times. Available at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/23/nyregion/23terror.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/23/nyregion/23terror.html?_r=0)

<sup>4</sup> (10 Aug 2006) *Police: Plot To Blow Up Aircraft Foiled*. CNN. Available at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/08/10/uk.terror/>

<sup>5</sup> (18 July 2015) *July 21 London Bombings Fast Facts*. CNN. Available at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/07/world/europe/july-21-2005-london-bombings-fast-facts/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Riedel (14 Nov 2015) *Modeled On Mumbai? Why The 2008 India Attack is the best way to understand Paris*. Brookings Institute. Available at:

Islamic State operatives' communications back to headquarters are not only less necessary but benefit from a new era of encryption. The Islamic State has embraced social media and mobile applications to secure their communications as well as a range of computer programs that allow them to communicate freely without fear of detection.<sup>7</sup> Counterterrorists have few technical surveillance methods for detecting and disrupting these encrypted communications. The Islamic State's operational approach and European foreign fighter legions are not following the al Qaeda model in Europe. They are instead forging a new playbook for Western terrorism incorporating lessons learned from a variety of terrorist groups around the world.

*Why has Europe struggled in stopping Islamic State terrorism?*

The Islamic State's wide-ranging European network has pushed European counterterrorists far past their capacity. In the Charlie Hebdo attack of January 2015, the Paris attacks of November 2015 and the Brussels attacks of March 2016, authorities knew many of the perpetrators. However, the vast array of investigative leads has clearly overwhelmed their systems.<sup>8</sup> There are far too many foreign fighters returning home requiring observation. Absent corroborating intelligence from signal intercepts and human sources, determining which terrorists to pursue has become a nearly random decision. Turkey, as compared to the rest of Europe, suffers from having both a large number of indigenous recruits and numerous foreign fighters, unable to return to their home countries, now residing inside their borders. Finally, the best recruiter of a future terrorist is a current terrorist. With so many experienced Islamic State members floating in diaspora communities, new local recruits, unable to reach Syria and Iraq, team up with Islamic State returnees. These new members prove harder for law enforcement and intelligence to detect as they lack prior records and have not tipped authorities off by traveling to join the Islamic State.

The European Union's counterterrorism system is not only over capacity, but also of uneven capability. The United Kingdom (U.K.), France and Germany have a rich history of counterterrorism experience from which to draw expertise. The U.K., in particular, has invested sizeable resources over the last decade to improve their counterterrorism approach in the wake of the London bombings. However, many of the Islamic State's foreign fighter legions have arisen from smaller European states, such as Belgium, not historically known for having vast numbers of jihadi volunteers. These smaller states not only lack the capacity to pursue a significant

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<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/11/14-paris-attacks-mumbai-isis-terrorism-riedel>

<sup>7</sup> Rukmini Callimachi ( Mar 2016) *How ISIS Built The Machinery Of Terror Under Europe's Gaze*. New York Times. Available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/29/world/europe/isis-attacks-paris-brussels.html>

<sup>8</sup> Clint Watts (23 Mar 2016) *A Wounded Islamic State Is A Dangerous Islamic State*. Foreign Policy. Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/23/a-wounded-islamic-state-is-a-dangerous-islamic-state-brussels-attacks/>

number of terrorism leads but often lack a dedicated counterterrorism force or robust intelligence services.<sup>9</sup>

Europol and Interpol provide valuable assistance and coordination, but they lack the investigative authority to pursue terrorism investigations across borders. An assortment of agencies across numerous jurisdictions executes Europe's counterterrorism. Frank Cilluffo and Sharon Cardash of the Center for Cyber and Homeland Security at the George Washington University described how, "counterterrorism in Belgium is a highly local enterprise, where the mayor in essence calls the shots; and in Brussels alone there are 19 mayors."<sup>10</sup> This extreme level of compartmentalization across the continent creates nearly endless barriers to information sharing and coordinated investigations. Cilluffo and Cardash go on to point out, "there is still much to be done to fuse relevant E.U. information systems (Schengen, visa, etc.) that were consciously designed and built as independent, largely in the interest of data privacy."<sup>11</sup>

The European Union's current configuration ultimately creates a counterterrorism patchwork. Countries' commitments to counterterrorism on average remain too low. The uneven resource allocation and range of capacity now result in a massive deficit between terrorists and counterterrorists. The Islamic State's terror cells can communicate and coordinate their operations at a rate far faster than European law enforcement and intelligence units can disrupt. Until this gap between terrorists and counterterrorists is closed, the Islamic State and those terrorist offshoots emerging in its wake will find Europe an enticing playground.

*What's the danger to U.S. citizens living and traveling in Europe?*

The Islamic State, from a threat perspective, sees no difference between North America and Europe. They would equally enjoy the opportunity to bloody Westerners on either continent. The distinction between these two regional targets, from an Islamic State perspective, is access more than desire. The most obvious threat to Americans comes during their residence and travel in the European Union. As seen in Brussels, Americans living and traveling abroad died at both the airport suicide attack and in the Maelbeek subway station.

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<sup>9</sup>Clint Watts (29 Mar 2016) *The Islamic State in Europe: Terrorists Without Borders, Counterterrorists With All Borders*. War On The Rocks. Available at: <http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/the-islamic-state-in-europe-terrorists-without-borders-counterterrorists-with-all-borders/>

<sup>10</sup> Frank J. Cilluffo and Sharon L. Cardash (31 Mar 2016) *Beyond Brussels: Turning The Tide Against ISIL In Europe*. War On The Rocks. Available at: <http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/beyond-brussels-turning-the-tide-against-isil-in-europe/>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Islamic State violence and the resulting risk to Americans is two fold. First, Americans routinely traveling through transportation hubs and visiting locations popular with Westerners will, seemingly at random, be at risk. In both Paris and Brussels, the Islamic State hit a soccer stadium and a concert venue and is likely to strike any soft target where they can produce mass casualties. Barring advance warning provided through European intelligence or other sources, protecting Americans traveling through these attack locations will be nearly impossible to anticipate.

Second, American citizens, moving through Europe individually, provide a target of opportunity for Islamic State operatives unable to strike targets as collective cells. Counterterrorism pressure across the continent has increased and Islamic State operatives primed to attack may shift to killing or kidnapping single American citizens. Even before the Islamic State's recent rise, U.S. service members were killed in Germany<sup>12</sup> and U.S. embassies and consulates were repeatedly attacked in Turkey.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. should expect more of these attacks. Issuing post attack travel warnings will prove completely insufficient in protecting American citizens from such events and a more aggressive approach is needed.

*What's the danger to the U.S. homeland from the Islamic State's rise in Europe?*

The U.S. enjoys the protection of two large oceans, which makes travel by Islamic State operatives significantly more challenging. Aside from the sheer distance between the U.S. and the Islamic State, the U.S. has invested heavily in screening programs at transportation hubs and borders since 9/11 strongly challenging terrorist efforts to infiltrate the homeland. However, the U.S. is not immune to Islamic State violence. The sheer volume of European Islamic State operatives and supporters, many of whom are not known to European authorities, make it possible that a determined terrorist could gain access to the U.S. via a tourist or student visa.

Lacking any previous intelligence and placement on a terrorist watch list, a European "Clean Skin" can in all likelihood slip into the U.S. undetected. These lone operatives and any potential partners may find greater challenge preparing and plotting an attack in the U.S. But, we must remember the Islamic State's plots utilize less sophistication. Acquiring weapons in the U.S. is easier than in Europe, and its entirely conceivable an attacker could perpetrate a gun run on an American soft target with ease.

The greater threat to the U.S. from the Islamic State's rise in Europe comes from those inspired by Paris and Brussels type attacks. The U.S. has witnessed only a

<sup>12</sup>(3 Mar 2011) *Two U.S. airmen killed in German airport shooting*. CNN. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/03/02/germany.shooting/>

<sup>13</sup> Yesim Dekmin and Seyhmus Cakan (10 Aug 2015) *U.S. consulate in Turkey targeted as wave of attacks kills 9*. Reuters. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-usa-attack-idUSKCN0QF0DT20150810>

trickle of American foreign fighters heading off to the Islamic State's ranks and even fewer have returned. Rather than a directed plot by the Islamic State, the U.S. suffers from a rash of inspired Islamic State followers radicalized online with seemingly no direct connections to the group. These American online followers witness the success of Islamic State European attacks and feel embolden to duplicate their efforts in the U.S. homeland. Following the successful Paris attacks last November, the U.S. saw a spike in terrorist attacks and foiled plots. The San Bernardino massacre and the shooting of a Philadelphia police officer provide just two examples of how successful Islamic State directed European attacks rapidly cascade into inspired attacks in the U.S. with little or no direct connection back to the terror group.<sup>14</sup> A rash of disrupted inspired plots across the U.S. accompanied these two more notable attacks.<sup>15</sup>

*The Islamic State in Europe: What should the U.S. do to protect its citizens?*

Some might feel the U.S. can ignore Europe's current terrorism crisis. But this would be mistaken, as many of these European partners have been essential allies dating back to the September 11 attacks of 2001. Standing by and watching Europe struggle at the hands of the Islamic State will only put the U.S. further at risk, both at home and abroad. The best defense of American citizens will come by helping Europe regain the counterterrorism initiative through aggressive counterterrorism investigations.

The U.S. should immediately assist the European Union in devising a cohesive strategy and supporting team to pursue Islamic State cells. Europe should convene an Islamic State counterterrorism task force focused on three objectives: stopping any impending Islamic State attack, destroying Islamic State facilitation and support networks, and disrupting Islamic State recruitment of homegrown extremists.<sup>16</sup> The essential ingredient for successful task force implementation will be the rapid increase and synchronization of European intelligence. The U.S. should offer any needed assistance to Europe in creating seamless information sharing across the continent. Over more than a decade, the U.S. has spent billions creating an intelligence sharing architecture and procedures for sharing information with international partners and domestically through the federal, state and local levels. U.S. lessons learned can accelerate E.U. information sharing improvements. The U.S.

<sup>14</sup>Dina Temple-Raston (16 Feb 2016) *Analysts Parse Differences Between San Bernardino, Paris Attacks*. NPR. Available at: <http://www.npr.org/2016/02/16/466898543/analysts-parse-differences-between-san-bernardino-paris-attacks>

<sup>15</sup> Program On Extremism (April 2016) *ISIS In America: From Retweets to Raqqa*. George Washington University. Available at: <https://cchs.gwu.edu/isis-in-america>

<sup>16</sup> Clint Watts (29 Mar 2016) *The Islamic State in Europe: Terrorists Without Borders, Counterterrorists With All Borders*. War On The Rocks. Available at: <http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/the-islamic-state-in-europe-terrorists-without-borders-counterterrorists-with-all-borders/>



can also greatly assist by re-doubling efforts to push intelligence to European partners who likely don't have the sources or capability to quickly regain the initiative against the Islamic State.

The U.S. can also further protect its citizens by improving its risk assessment and warning systems. Currently, there is an unprecedented amount of open source information on foreign fighters from Europe. Foreign fighter records divulged by an Islamic State insider and research center studies of Islamic State recruitment patterns in Europe provide a good picture of European hotspots.<sup>17</sup> This data combined with recent attack patterns and investigative arrests should be utilized to create anticipatory models of potential terrorist activity in Europe. The results of this analysis should inform travel warnings for U.S. citizens prior to, not after, terrorist attacks.

In conclusion, above all else, the U.S. needs to undertake these European initiatives with speed. The Islamic State claims to have hundreds of operatives deployed to Europe. Even if their claims are exaggerated, their terrorist accomplishments in recent months suggest this current wave of terrorism will not end any time soon. The greatest future risk to U.S. citizens, at this point, comes from continued inaction against the Islamic State in Europe. The U.S. will play an essential role in reversing this trend.

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<sup>17</sup> International Center For The Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR) *Western Foreign Fighters In Syria*. Available at: <http://icsr.info/projects/western-foreign-fighters-syria/>

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record  
Submitted to Hon. Juan C. Zarate  
From Senator Rob Portman**

**“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”  
April 5, 2016**

1. Brenda Heck, FBI Deputy Director of the Counterterrorism Division, stated, “This is a world where soft targets are the name of the game.”<sup>1</sup> Regarding our aviation and transportation security posture, in our opinion, is the United States doing everything that it should be doing to protect our soft targets, particularly our rail and underground transit systems?
  - a. If you have any, what recommendations would you make to harden our soft targets’ vulnerabilities that would balance the level of the threat the United States faces balanced with the tolerance and patience of the American people?
2. Among other changes, recent legislation amended the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to require individuals who traveled to particular global hot spots to apply for a traditional visa even if they are a national of a VWP country. Are the recent enhancements to the VWP sufficient when analyzed against the current threat environment?
  - a. Have you identified any more lingering vulnerabilities to the VWP, which were not addressed by the recent legislation?
3. According to a senior Pentagon official, the Department of State employs a counter propaganda team that numbers about twenty (20) individuals.<sup>2</sup> Five (5) of these individuals come from the Department of Defense. How would you rate the effectiveness of this State Department program?
  - a. Are there any current models that the State Department and the Department of Defense not using which, in your opinion, would be appropriate?
4. “The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.”<sup>3</sup> Among other benefits, STEP sends notifications with “important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country.”<sup>4</sup> Are you familiar with the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program?
  - a. If yes, do you or do you not think it is effective?
  - b. Are there components of this program that can be improved in order better protect Americans traveling abroad?

<sup>1</sup> Stew Magnuson, *FBI Anticipates Terrorist Attacks on Soft Targets in the United States*, NATIONAL DEFENSE MAGAZINE (May 2011), <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2011/May/Pages/FBIAnticipatesTerroristAttacksonSoftTargetsintheUnitedStates.aspx> (accessed on 4 April 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Tucker, *Pentagon: State Doesn’t Have Enough People Tweeting At ISIS*, DEFENSE ONE (22 October 2015), [http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/10/pentagon-state-doesnt-have-enough-people-tweeting-isis/123063/?oref=defenseone\\_today\\_nl](http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/10/pentagon-state-doesnt-have-enough-people-tweeting-isis/123063/?oref=defenseone_today_nl) (accessed on 4 April 2016).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program*, <https://step.state.gov/step/> (accessed on 4 April 2016).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

5. There have been numerous accounts in the news concerning the lack of information sharing with other European countries and a lack of interagency cooperation in Belgium in particular. In fact, the panel testified to these very failures. These issues have been likened to the pre-9/11 paradigm when the CIA and FBI were not partnering and sharing information like they do today. Are there any more impediments to strong, productive working partnerships that you see that the United States should address urgently?
  - a. In your opinion, are federal, state, and local agencies communicating threat information effectively and timely?

**Witness responses to questions submitted for the record were not received  
by time of printing.**

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record  
Submitted to the Honorable Juan Zarate  
From Senator Kelly Ayotte**

**“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”  
April 5, 2016**

- (1) Following the Brussels attacks, I called on the administration to immediately lead an effort convening NATO members to provide Belgium all assistance possible and work together to defeat radical Islamist terrorists.

Nearly 75 percent of European foreign fighters come from four countries who are our strong allies in the fight against terrorism: the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Belgium. Belgium, however, has contributed the highest ratio per capita of any Western country. Belgium is a member of the Visa Waiver Program. As you know, the Visa Waiver Program allows citizens from 38 countries to travel to the U.S. for business or tourism purposes for up to 90 days without first obtaining a visa. Member countries must meet and maintain certain basic standards such as information sharing, issue machine-readable passports, enter into an agreement with the U.S. to report on lost and stolen passports, and enter into an agreement with the U.S. to share information regarding whether a national of that country traveling to the U.S. represents a threat to U.S. security. In addition, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State make a determination that the country’s inclusion in the program does not compromise the law enforcement or security interests of the United States. The program also allows for countries to be placed on probationary status if it is determined that the U.S. needs additional time to determine whether the continued participation of the country in the program is in the security interests of the United States.

In 2003, Belgium was placed on probation due to concerns about the integrity of Belgian passports and the reporting of lost or stolen passports. In 2005, DHS completed another review of Belgium and subsequently removed it from probationary status. That was the last time a VWP country was placed on probationary status.

**Thinking about how much the world has changed and the ever-evolving nature of the worldwide terrorism threat environment—especially in Europe, does this sound right to you?**

**Do you think that each of the 38 countries in the program is meeting all requirements and that additional scrutiny is not warranted?**

- (2) In December, Congress passed and the president signed into law additional restrictions for countries participating in the program.

Pursuant to that law, a citizen of a Visa Waiver Program country who has traveled to Iraq, Syria, Sudan, or Iran in the last five years cannot travel visa-free to the United States.

That law also provided the Secretary of Homeland Security with the authority to designate additional countries to that list, or as a “Country of Concern.” Secretary Johnson recently announced that Somalia, Yemen, and Libya have been added to this

list. We know that Al Qaeda continues to operate in large parts of Algeria, Mali, Tunisia, and Niger. Criteria for a "Country of Concern" designation includes "whether a foreign terrorist organization has a significant presence in the country or area" and "whether the country or area is a safe haven for terrorists."

**With this criteria in mind, do you believe that it makes sense to consider designating these countries as "countries of concern" under this law?**

- (3) Similarly, the December law provides the authority for the Homeland Security Secretary, in coordination with the DNI and Secretary of State, to designate "High Risk Program Countries" based on annual reviews of several criteria, including the number of nationals of a country who have been identified in U.S. terrorist databases and the estimated number of nationals who have traveled to Iraq or Syria since 2011 to engage in terrorism. The law further provides for suspension from the program for countries that are designated high risk.

**In your expert opinion and to your knowledge, where do we see the largest numbers of Western nationals going to Syria?  
What vulnerabilities does this present to our homeland security?**

- (4) The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees and has an important role to play in the heartbreaking Syrian refugee crisis, but our first and most important priority must be to ensure that any refugee who comes to the United States does not present a threat to the American people.

I've called on the administration to revisit its refugee policy to ensure that no refugee related to the Syria crisis can be brought to New Hampshire or anywhere in the U.S. unless the government can guarantee with 100 percent certainty that they are not affiliated with ISIS.

FBI Director Comey and the Director of National Intelligence Clapper have previously raised concerns about the ability to properly vet Syrian refugees. We also recently heard concerns from General Breedlove about terrorist infiltrating refugee flows in Europe.

**What do you make of Director Comey's, DNI Clapper's, and General Breedlove's concerns?**

**Do you share those concerns?**

- (5) Last month, the Associated Press reported that ISIS has trained at least 400 fighters to target Europe.

**What do you make of these reports?**

**Will European authorities be able to identify and track all of these people?**

- (6) We've been hearing about technology solutions that can send hyper-local emergency messages to any smart phone worldwide.

**Wouldn't this be critical for public safety during a terrorist attack?**

**Witness responses to questions submitted for the record were not received by time of printing.**

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record  
Submitted to Julie Smith  
From Senator Rob Portman  
“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”  
April 5, 2016**

1. Brenda Heck, FBI Deputy Director of the Counterterrorism Division, stated, “This is a world where soft targets are the name of the game.”<sup>[1]</sup> Regarding our aviation and transportation security posture, in our opinion, is the United States doing everything that it should be doing to protect our soft targets, particularly our rail and underground transit systems?

JS: As Dr. Gartenstein-Ross stated during the hearing our ability to harden soft targets in the United States is limited. By introducing additional ‘choke points’ on public transit systems we most likely introducing other targets for attacks.

a. If you have any, what recommendations would you make to harden our soft targets’ vulnerabilities that would balance the level of the threat the United States faces balanced with the tolerance and patience of the American people?

JS: Not applicable

2. Among other changes, recent legislation amended the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to require individuals who traveled to particular global hot spots to apply for a traditional visa even if they are a national of a VWP country. Are the recent enhancements to the VWP sufficient when analyzed against the current threat environment?

JS: I believe the additional enhancements made to the Visa Waiver Program by Obama administration are for now sufficient.

a. Have you identified any more lingering vulnerabilities to the VWP, which were not addressed by the recent legislation?

JS: I have not.

3. According to a senior Pentagon official, the Department of State employs a counter propaganda team that numbers about twenty (20) individuals. [2] Five (5) of these individuals come from the Department of Defense. How would you rate the effectiveness of this State Department program?

JS: I am not in a position to judge the effectiveness of this program.

a. Are there any current models that the State Department and the Department of Defense not using which, in your opinion, would be appropriate?

JS: Not applicable

4. “The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.” [3] Among other benefits, STEP sends notifications with “important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country.”[4] Are you familiar with the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program?

JS: I am not familiar with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program.

a. If yes, do you or do you not think it is effective?

JS: Not applicable

b. Are there components of this program that can be improved in order better protect Americans traveling abroad?

JS: Not applicable

5. There have been numerous accounts in the news concerning the lack of information sharing with other European countries and a lack of interagency cooperation in Belgium in particular. In fact, the panel testified to these very failures. These issues have been likened to the pre-9/11 paradigm when the CIA and FBI were not partnering and sharing information like they do today. Are there any more impediments to strong, productive working partnerships that you see that the United States should address urgently?

JS: I think the United States should continue to encourage our European partners, and the European Union as an institution to improve intelligence sharing capabilities, both at an institutional level and between member states. Last month the European Union Parliament passed a measure for a EU wide Passenger Names Register bill. This is good news not only for Europe but also for the United States.

a. In your opinion, are federal, state, and local agencies communicating threat information effectively and timely?

JS: I am not in a position to judge threat communication between federal, state, and local agencies.

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[1] Stew Magnuson, *FBI Anticipates Terrorist Attacks on Soft Targets in the United States*, NATIONAL DEFENSE MAGAZINE (May 2011), <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2011/May/Pages/FBIAnticipatesTerroristAttacksonSoftTargetsInTheUnitedStates.aspx> (accessed on 4 April 2016).

[2] Patrick Tucker, *Pentagon: State Doesn't Have Enough People Tweeting At ISIS*, DEFENSE ONE (22 October 2015), [http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/10/pentagon-state-doesnt-have-enough-people-tweeting-isis/123063/?oref=defenseone\\_today\\_nl](http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/10/pentagon-state-doesnt-have-enough-people-tweeting-isis/123063/?oref=defenseone_today_nl) (accessed on 4 April 2016).

[3] U.S. Department of State, *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program*, <https://step.state.gov/step/> (accessed on 4 April 2016).

[4] *Id.*



**Post-Post-Hearing Questions for the Record**  
**Submitted to Julianne Smith**  
**From Senator Kelly Ayotte**  
**“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”**  
**April 5, 2016**

(1) Following the Brussels attacks, I called on the administration to immediately lead an effort convening NATO members to provide Belgium all assistance possible and work together to defeat radical Islamist terrorists.

Nearly 75 percent of European foreign fighters come from four countries who are our strong allies in the fight against terrorism: the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Belgium. Belgium, however, has contributed the highest ratio per capita of any Western country. Belgium is a member of the Visa Waiver Program. As you know, the Visa Waiver Program allows citizens from 38 countries to travel to the U.S. for business or tourism purposes for up to 90 days without first obtaining a visa.

Member countries must meet and maintain certain basic standards such as information sharing, issue machine-readable passports, enter into an agreement with the U.S. to report on lost and stolen passports, and enter into an agreement with the U.S. to share information regarding whether a national of that country traveling to the U.S. represents a threat to U.S. security. In addition, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State make a determination that the country’s inclusion in the program does not compromise the law enforcement or security interests of the United States. The program also allows for countries to be placed on probationary status if it is determined that the U.S. needs additional time to determine whether the continued participation of the country in the program is in the security interests of the United States.

In 2003, Belgium was placed on probation due to concerns about the integrity of Belgian passports and the reporting of lost or stolen passports. In 2005, DHS completed another review of Belgium and subsequently removed it from probationary status. That was the last time a VWP country was placed on probationary status.

**Thinking about how much the world has changed and the ever-evolving nature of the worldwide terrorism threat environment—especially in Europe, does this sound right to you?**

JS: I am not in a position to judge whether Belgium’s status as a VWP country needs to be reviewed.

**Do you think that each of the 38 countries in the program is meeting all requirements and that additional scrutiny is not warranted?**

JS: I believe the additional measures introduced by the Obama administration in January which bar individuals who have traveled to Syria, Iraq, Sudan or Iran from benefiting from the program addresses the VWP’s vulnerabilities.

(2) In December, Congress passed and the president signed into law additional restrictions for countries participating in the program. Pursuant to that law, a citizen of a Visa Waiver Program country who has traveled to Iraq, Syria, Sudan, or Iran in the last five years cannot travel visa-free to the United States. That law also provided the Secretary of Homeland Security with the authority to designate additional countries to that list, or as a “Country of Concern.” Secretary Johnson recently announced that Somalia, Yemen, and Libya have been added to this list. We know that Al Qaeda continues to operate in large parts of Algeria, Mali, Tunisia, and Niger. Criteria for a “Country of Concern” designation includes “whether a foreign terrorist organization has a significant presence in the country or area” and “whether the country or area is a safe haven for terrorists.”

**With this criterion in mind, do you believe that it makes sense to consider designating these countries as “countries of concern” under this law?**

JS: Determinations such as these should be made, and are made after careful consideration of domestic conditions within the aforementioned countries. The situations in Libya, Yemen and Somalia are not easily comparable to those of Algeria, Mali, Tunisia and Niger. However, domestic security conditions within these countries should continue to be carefully monitored.

(3) Similarly, the December law provides the authority for the Homeland Security Secretary, in coordination with the DNI and Secretary of State, to designate “High Risk Program Countries” based on annual reviews of several criteria, including the number of nationals of a country who have been identified in U.S. terrorist databases and the estimated number of nationals who have traveled to Iraq or Syria since 2011 to engage in terrorism. The law further provides for suspension from the program for countries that are designated high risk.

**In your expert opinion and to your knowledge, where do we see the largest numbers of Western nationals going to Syria?**

JS: Belgium currently has the highest per-capita number of citizen foreign fighters, in more aggregate terms France is leading with an estimated 1,500+ citizen foreign fighters. Recent reports suggest that the number of foreign fighters entering the conflict have decreased substantially. Last month the pentagon stated that the number of foreign fighters entering Iraq and Syria had dropped by 90%.

**What vulnerabilities does this present to our homeland security?**

JS: Fortunately, relatively few Americans have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join groups like ISIL and the Syrian al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra. The recent attacks in Europe have indicated that the return of fighters is a threat that should not be taken lightly, particularly as some of these individuals hold European passports enabling them to travel to the United States. The United States and Europe should also continue to strengthen their intelligence sharing in order to monitor, prevent and deter would-be terrorists from carrying out attacks.

(4) The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees and has an important role to play in the heartbreaking Syrian refugee crisis, but our first and most important priority must be to ensure that any refugee who comes to the United States does not present a threat to the American people. I’ve called on the administration to revisit its refugee policy to ensure that no refugee related to the Syria crisis can be brought to New Hampshire or anywhere in the U.S. unless the government can guarantee with 100 percent certainty that they are not affiliated with ISIS. FBI Director Comey and the Director of National Intelligence Clapper have previously raised concerns about the ability to properly vet Syrian refugees. We also recently heard concerns from General Breedlove about terrorist infiltrating refugee flows in Europe.

**What do you make of Director Comey’s, DNI Clapper’s, and General Breedlove’s concerns?**

JS: Director Comey’s, DNI Clapper’s, and General Breedlove’s concerns are warranted, but that does not mean the United States should turn away Syrian Refugees.

**Do you share those concerns?**

JS: The United States process for vetting refugees is extremely thorough, giving me faith that we could accept more refugees while maintaining our high security standards.

(5) Last month, the Associated Press reported that ISIS has trained at least 400 fighters to target Europe. **What do you make of these reports?**

JS: They are troubling, but I think it's important to contextualize these numbers within the situation ISIL finds itself in today. The group is facing significant pressure both in Syria and in Iraq. Territorial degradation as well as the coalition's sustained air campaign has imposed a significant manpower cost on the group. That is not to say we shouldn't expect attacks outside of Iraq and Syria. We should be actively preparing for the return of foreign fighters. But we should also recognize that current pressures on the group may affect its strategic objectives. To limit the threat represented by ISIL in Europe, authorities must remain vigilant for returning foreign fighters.

**Will European authorities be able to identify and track all of these people?**

JS: The European parliament recently passed a EU wide Passenger Name Register bill. This is just one step of many the Europeans must continue to take to tackle the challenge of transnational coordination in dealing with this issue. This is good news not only for Europe but also for the United States. Europe should continue to build its intelligence sharing capabilities to better confront this threat.

(6) We've been hearing about technology solutions that can send hyper-local emergency messages to any smartphone worldwide.

**Wouldn't this be critical for public safety during a terrorist attack?**

JS: information exchange can be critically important during a terrorist attack but we should also be acutely aware of its vulnerabilities. Some have suggested that terrorists in the 2008 Mumbai attacks may have used social media and media coverage to enhance their coordination and targeting during the attack.

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross,  
Foundation for Defense of Democracies

**Responses to Questions for the Record from the Hearing  
“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”  
April 5, 2016**

**Answers to Questions from Senator Rob Portman**

1. *Brenda Heck, FBI Deputy Director of the Counterterrorism Division, stated, “This is a world where soft targets are the name of the game.” Regarding our aviation and transportation security posture, in our opinion, is the United States doing everything that it should be doing to protect our soft targets, particularly our rail and underground transit systems?*
  - a. *If you have any, what recommendations would you make to harden our soft targets’ vulnerabilities that would balance the level of the threat the United States faces balanced with the tolerance and patience of the American people?*

Protecting soft targets is notoriously difficult. The soft targets that you mention—rail and underground transit systems—are particularly difficult to protect because as they are hardened, it cuts against their very purpose: fast, affordable mass transportation. When you look at the various options that the United States has to harden soft targets, one option stands out as maximizing our chances of preventing an attack while remaining consistent with our values and the functions of the targets we are trying to protect (such as convenience and efficiency). That option is having on-site security personnel trained in behavioral detection and other advanced anti-terrorism techniques who are authorized to question individuals at the site of the soft targets or search their bags. Working to incorporate behavioral detection into the U.S.’s anti-terrorism arsenal is important, as the problem of terrorism—not to mention mass shooters who lack political motive—isn’t going away, and this technique has a great deal of promise for containing the threat posed by terrorists and other attackers.

2. *Among other changes, recent legislation amended the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to require individuals who traveled to particular global hot spots to apply for a traditional visa even if they are a national of a VWP country. Are the recent enhancements to the VWP sufficient when analyzed against the current threat environment?*
  - a. *Have you identified any more lingering vulnerabilities to the VWP, which were not addressed by the recent legislation?*

Most experts with whom I have spoken believe that recent amendments to the VWP are not sufficient. Similar to protection of soft targets, this is a somewhat difficult area to legislate on because we want to protect the United States from attackers trying to enter from abroad, but at the same time do not want to overly inconvenience friends of the United States who are trying to visit our country. I suggest that this issue deserves its own hearing.

3. *According to a senior Pentagon official, the Department of State employs a counter propaganda team that numbers about twenty (20) individuals. Five (5) of these individuals*

*come from the Department of Defense. How would you rate the effectiveness of this State Department program?*

*a. Are there any current models that the State Department and the Department of Defense not using which, in your opinion, would be appropriate?*

Thus far, the State Department's program has not been effective. There have been several impediments to its efforts. One problem is over-bureaucratization. According to several sources at the State Department, multiple authorizations must be sought prior to putting a post up on social media, which makes the Department's messaging slow in comparison to the medium. Another problem is risk aversion. Not all of the U.S.'s messaging efforts will be successful, but twenty-first century messaging involves taking chances when attempting to convey messages to relevant populations. If risk aversion keeps us from competing in the way that is required in the current media environment, then we have effectively ceded ground to the adversary.

As to what kind of model is needed, I have argued repeatedly for a small, de-bureaucratized cell charged with a specific strategic aspect of messaging, such as undermining the Islamic State's narrative of strength.<sup>1</sup> A smaller messaging center with a specific goal that does not require the same level of bureaucratic authorization currently required at the State Department's communications cell could serve as a model for future initiatives that function as "start-up" organizations within the government.

4. *"The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate." Among other benefits, STEP sends notifications with "important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country." Are you familiar with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program?*

*a. If yes, do you or do you not think it is effective?*

*b. Are there components of this program that can be improved in order better protect Americans traveling abroad?*

I believe that STEP is effective, and that it can and will be further improved as we continue to experiment with localized messaging efforts designed to keep Americans safe, and innovate in our approach.

5. *There have been numerous accounts in the news concerning the lack of information sharing with other European countries and a lack of interagency cooperation in Belgium in particular. In fact, the panel testified to these very failures. These issues have been likened to the pre-9/11 paradigm when the CIA and FBI were not partnering and sharing information like they do today. Are there any more impediments to strong, productive working partnerships that you see that the United States should address urgently?*

*a. In your opinion, are federal, state, and local agencies communicating threat information effectively and timely?*

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<sup>1</sup> See Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Jihad 2.0: Social Media in the Next Evolution of Terrorist Recruitment," written testimony submitted to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, May 7, 2015, available at [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/Gartenstein\\_Ross\\_HSGAC\\_Testimony\\_Jihad2.0.pdf](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/Gartenstein_Ross_HSGAC_Testimony_Jihad2.0.pdf).

I think the problem in Europe is both structural and also related to lack of trust. Not only is there poor information-sharing between and among European states, but also some states have struggled to coordinate intelligence sharing and counterterrorism operations internally. Belgium is perhaps the most glaring example, with local and national intelligence and law enforcement agencies plagued by infighting and stove piping. Belgium's law enforcement community is deeply Balkanized, mirroring the decentralized nature of the Belgian state, with six separate local police forces and a federal police service sharing jurisdiction just in the city of Brussels.<sup>2</sup> Brussels is also home to both a civilian and military intelligence service, as well as a terrorism threat assessment unit, all of which are similarly reluctant to collaborate with one another.<sup>3</sup>

France suffers from similar challenges. The country's eight intelligence services do not operate under a central coordinating entity, and often struggle to share information. As one analyst noted, "information collected overseas is not transmitted systematically and automatically to the DGSI," France's domestic intelligence agency.<sup>4</sup> After the Paris attacks, the French government committed to improving inter-agency coordination, but it remains unclear what tangible steps have been taken.

Poor intelligence sharing in France and Belgium adds to the challenges of building an effective pan-European intelligence mechanism. The EU relies on individual states to collect and share intelligence. In such an interconnected and integrated system, weak links in the chain can have an outsized impact on the whole system. As Guido Steinberg, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, remarked after the Brussels attacks: "The biggest problem lies in the different levels of professionalism among the security services in Europe."<sup>5</sup> Even when intelligence is collected by individual states, there are few mechanisms in place to ensure that this information will be passed on to other states within the EU. Thus, both the structure of intelligence sharing and problems with trust between and among the relevant players must be addressed.

With respect to domestic intelligence sharing, fortunately the challenges we face are far less severe. State and local law enforcement are consistently discouraged by what they see as a lack of information sharing on the part of federal law enforcement, though it's not clear that this has an impact on overall levels of safety and security.

#### **Answers to Questions from Senator Kelly Ayotte**

1. *Following the Brussels attacks, I called on the administration to immediately lead an effort convening NATO members to provide Belgium all assistance possible and work together to defeat radical Islamist terrorists.*

*Nearly 75 percent of European foreign fighters come from four countries who are our strong allies in the fight against terrorism: the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Belgium. Belgium, however, has contributed the highest ratio per capita of any Western*

<sup>2</sup> Tim King, "Belgium is a Failed State," *Politico Europe*, December 2, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Milan Schreuer, "Terrorism Response Puts Belgium in a Harsh Light," *New York Times*, March 24, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Dalton, "France Moves to Better Coordinate Its Antiterrorism Efforts," *Wall Street Journal*, January 14, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Allison Smale and Melissa Eddie, "As Terrorists Cross Borders, Europe Sees Anew That Its Intelligence Does Not," *New York Times*, March 23, 2016.

country. Belgium is a member of the Visa Waiver Program. As you know, the Visa Waiver Program allows citizens from 38 countries to travel to the U.S. for business or tourism purposes for up to 90 days without first obtaining a visa.

Member countries must meet and maintain certain basic standards such as information sharing, issue machine-readable passports, enter into an agreement with the U.S. to report on lost and stolen passports, and enter into an agreement with the U.S. to share information regarding whether a national of that country traveling to the U.S. represents a threat to U.S. security. In addition, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State make a determination that the country's inclusion in the program does not compromise the law enforcement or security interests of the United States. The program also allows for countries to be placed on probationary status if it is determined that the U.S. needs additional time to determine whether the continued participation of the country in the program is in the security interests of the United States.

In 2003, Belgium was placed on probation due to concerns about the integrity of Belgian passports and the reporting of lost or stolen passports. In 2005, DHS completed another review of Belgium and subsequently removed it from probationary status. That was the last time a VWP country was placed on probationary status.

***Thinking about how much the world has changed and the ever-evolving nature of the worldwide terrorism threat environment—especially in Europe, does this sound right to you? Do you think that each of the 38 countries in the program is meeting all requirements and that additional scrutiny is not warranted?***

I do not think that each of the 38 countries is meeting all requirements. As I suggested above, I think the VWP would be a great issue for this Committee to return to in a future hearing.

2. *In December, Congress passed and the president signed into law additional restrictions for countries participating in the program. Pursuant to that law, a citizen of a Visa Waiver Program country who has traveled to Iraq, Syria, Sudan, or Iran in the last five years cannot travel visa-free to the United States.*

*That law also provided the Secretary of Homeland Security with the authority to designate additional countries to that list, or as a "Country of Concern." Secretary Johnson recently announced that Somalia, Yemen, and Libya have been added to this list. We know that Al Qaeda continues to operate in large parts of Algeria, Mali, Tunisia, and Niger. Criteria for a "Country of Concern" designation includes "whether a foreign terrorist organization has a significant presence in the country or area" and "whether the country or area is a safe haven for terrorists."*

***With this criteria in mind, do you believe that it makes sense to consider designating these countries as "countries of concern" under this law?***

I do not think it makes sense to designate Algeria, Tunisia, or Niger, because the jihadist presence is relatively limited in all three states. They are not safe havens, and the fact that

someone has been to one of these countries does not create the same level of concern as travel to Libya, Somalia, or Yemen. Mali makes more sense. Without taking a closer look at terrorist travel patterns, I could not make a recommendation one way or the other on Mali, but it is at least closer to the relevant criteria than the other three.

3. *Similarly, the December law provides the authority for the Homeland Security Secretary, in coordination with the DNI and Secretary of State, to designate "High Risk Program Countries" based on annual reviews of several criteria, including the number of nationals of a country who have been identified in U.S. terrorist databases and the estimated number of nationals who have traveled to Iraq or Syria since 2011 to engage in terrorism. The law further provides for suspension from the program for countries that are designated high risk.*

***In your expert opinion and to your knowledge, where do we see the largest numbers of Western nationals going to Syria? What vulnerabilities does this present to our homeland security?***

The largest number of Western nationals going to Syria come from France, the U.K., Germany, and Belgium. This presents several challenges to U.S. national security, including the possibility of attacks on U.S. nationals or interests in Europe. For the U.S. homeland specifically, the biggest concern would be a "clean skin" entering the country from abroad.

4. *The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees and has an important role to play in the heartbreaking Syrian refugee crisis, but our first and most important priority must be to ensure that any refugee who comes to the United States does not present a threat to the American people.*

*I've called on the administration to revisit its refugee policy to ensure that no refugee related to the Syria crisis can be brought to New Hampshire or anywhere in the U.S. unless the government can guarantee with 100 percent certainty that they are not affiliated with ISIS.*

*FBI Director Comey and the Director of National Intelligence Clapper have previously raised concerns about the ability to properly vet Syrian refugees. We also recently heard concerns from General Breedlove about terrorist infiltrating refugee flows in Europe.*

***What do you make of Director Comey's, DNI Clapper's, and General Breedlove's concerns? Do you share those concerns?***

The situation that the United States faces with respect to possible dangers emanating from refugee flows is fundamentally different from that of Europe. It would be far easier for the Islamic State or another jihadist group to infiltrate operatives into Europe than the United States, and indeed it appears that a number of operatives have been inserted into Europe that way.

I agree with the concerns expressed by officials who have said that the refugee screening process is unlikely to spot operatives seeking to enter the United States that way. However, the biggest



barrier to terrorist operatives entering the United States through the refugee population is the selection process rather than the screening process. The United States has a set of layered policies in place for selecting and screening refugees. The selection process is rigorous, with many refugees being selected from “most vulnerable” populations, a category that includes children, single mothers, torture victims, and people with special medical needs.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the screening process involves multiple checks across several agencies for security and medical concerns. This multi-stage screening process means that it takes a long time—18 to 24 months—for refugees to enter the United States, and thus any attempt to infiltrate operatives in this way must be undertaken with a fair amount of advance planning, and with the understanding that any operatives planted in the refugee population are unlikely to be selected in the lottery process.

5. *Last month, the Associated Press reported that ISIS has trained at least 400 fighters to target Europe. What do you make of these reports? Will European authorities be able to identify and track all of these people?*

I find these reports credible. Given the depth and breadth of jihadist networks in Europe, my confidence in European authorities being able to identify and track all of these people is low. Indeed, Abdelhamid Abaaoud’s ability to return from Syria to Europe throws an enormous question mark over European efforts as does Salah Abdeslam’s ability to avoid European authorities for months.

6. *We’ve been hearing about technology solutions that can send hyper-local emergency messages to any smart phone worldwide. Wouldn’t this be critical for public safety during a terrorist attack?*

Yes, this a good idea. The United States should develop cutting edge ways to do this as a part of, and also apart from, the STEP program that I addressed above.

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<sup>6</sup> Gardiner Harris, David Sanger and David Herszenhorn, “Obama Increases Number of Syrian Refugees for U.S. Resettlement to 10,000,” *New York Times*, September 10, 2015.

*Response to Post Hearing Questions From Clint Watts, date 16 May 2016*

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record  
Submitted to Clint Watts  
From Senator Rob Portman**

**“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”  
April 5, 2016**

1. Brenda Heck, FBI Deputy Director of the Counterterrorism Division, stated, “This is a world where soft targets are the name of the game.”<sup>1</sup> Regarding our aviation and transportation security posture, in our opinion, is the United States doing everything that it should be doing to protect our soft targets, particularly our rail and underground transit systems?
  - a. If you have any, what recommendations would you make to harden our soft targets’ vulnerabilities that would balance the level of the threat the United States faces balanced with the tolerance and patience of the American people?

*With regards to hardening aviation. I cannot identify any additional measures for screening passengers that could be employed on a sufficient scale to further deter against a terrorist attack. One area of concern, however, is the insider threat to aviation. The last two major terror attacks against aviation, the downing of a Russian airliner by the Islamic State’s Sinai branch and the use of an explosive hidden inside a computer during a Somali airline flight, demonstrate how terrorists have worked with airport employees to bypass traditional security measures. Both of these recent plots suggest the soft spot in airline security is not with passengers but rather the employees that operate airlines.*

*Above and underground rail presents an entirely different and more challenging problem. I know of no additional effective defensive technique for disrupting plots to rail lines. It’s possible that additional explosive detection methods such as bomb sniffing dogs may marginally increase the ability of law enforcement and homeland security to preemptively identify plots against high traffic locations in America’s rail systems. Absent effective technological screening systems in high traffic rail junctions, the best way to prevent a catastrophic terrorist attack against rail will likely come from aggressive investigation of potential terrorist threats. The focus would be training law enforcement to detect terrorist reconnaissance of target locations or preparatory acts leading to an attack on a rail system. This training would need to be supported by lessons learned and implementation of best practices identified in the wake of previous rail attacks such as the July 5 and July 21, 2005 London subway bombing, the March 2004 Madrid train bombing and the most recent Brussels subway bombing of March 2016.*

2. Among other changes, recent legislation amended the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to require individuals who traveled to particular global hot spots to apply for a traditional visa

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<sup>1</sup> Stew Magnuson, *FBI Anticipates Terrorist Attacks on Soft Targets in the United States*, NATIONAL DEFENSE MAGAZINE (May 2011), <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2011/May/Pages/FBIAnticipatesTerroristAttacksonSoftTargetsintheUnitedStates.aspx> (accessed on 4 April 2016).

even if they are a national of a VWP country. Are the recent enhancements to the VWP sufficient when analyzed against the current threat environment?

*I'd begin by noting that I am not an expert on the Visa Waiver Program. However, I believe the measure mentioned here is a good one to take. The obvious challenge of these protocols is "how does the U.S. verify the individual was truthful regarding their travel to terrorist safe havens?" It's likely that a terrorist trying to infiltrate the U.S. via the Visa Waiver Program would not be truthful about their travel to a terrorist hotspot. Additionally, most terrorist hotspots are failed or failing states that offer a limited number of records to which one can corroborate the veracity of a VWP application with known travel patterns. I believe there is a need for those reviewing visa applications to leverage the open source for any incidences of foreign travel by the applicant to a terrorist hot spot or recruiting ground. Often times, the best clues to a person's affinity for a terrorist group surface in social media and online. This may be an additional method for checking the veracity of an application with regard to travel to a terrorist hotspot.*

- a. Have you identified any more lingering vulnerabilities to the VWP, which were not addressed by the recent legislation?

*I'm not aware of any other potential vulnerabilities.*

3. According to a senior Pentagon official, the Department of State employs a counter propaganda team that numbers about twenty (20) individuals.<sup>2</sup> Five (5) of these individuals come from the Department of Defense. How would you rate the effectiveness of this State Department program?

*The counter propaganda effort at the Department of State remains plagued by an overly broad mission and having to please too many stakeholders. The CSCC, now relabeled the GEC, should be narrowly focused on countering terrorist online messaging. But they are hamstrung in many regards. First, aside from the adversarial jihadist audience, the CSCC/GEC must answer to internal stakeholders who are more concerned about acceptability of messaging to other government audiences than effectiveness of messages in undermining jihadi narratives. The CSCC/GEC must also please the media and pundits who scrutinize every counter propaganda effort, often times unfairly casting the program as a failure. Second, the CSCC/GEC do not have the ability to challenge groups like ISIL on an even playing field. CSCC/GEC messaging must pass through numerous reviews up and down the chain of command and cannot respond to ISIL narratives at an effective pace.*

*To be successful in the future, the CSCC/GEC must have a narrower focus audience and supporting campaign, provided autonomy to conduct its efforts and allowed to experiment with different techniques while not being under threat of punishment for less successful efforts. The content of the CSCC/GEC should be promoting U.S. successes on the battlefield while using defectors to undermine the narrative. Three resources I've written discussing how the CSCC and GEC can be found at the following links:*

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Tucker, *Pentagon: State Doesn't Have Enough People Tweeting At ISIS*, DEFENSE ONE (22 October 2015), [http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/10/pentagon-state-doesnt-have-enough-people-tweeting-isis/123063/?oref=defenseone\\_today\\_nl](http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2015/10/pentagon-state-doesnt-have-enough-people-tweeting-isis/123063/?oref=defenseone_today_nl) (accessed on 4 April 2016).

-“*Silicon Valley Meets The Snake Eaters: State Department’s Countermessaging Goes Back To The Future*” FPRI, <http://www.fpri.org/2016/02/silicon-valley-meets-snake-eaters-state-departments-countermessaging-goes-back-future/>

-“*Why the U.S. can’t make a magazine like ISIS*”, Daily Beast, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/01/11/why-the-u-s-can-t-make-a-magazine-like-isis.html>

-“*The White House CVE Summit: What should we expect, more of the same or a new approach?*” FPRI, <http://www.fpri.org/2015/02/the-white-house-cve-summit-what-should-we-expect-more-of-the-same-or-a-new-direction-to-counter-isis/>

-“*Countering ISIL’s Ideology: Keep It Limited, Focused, and In Tune With Lessons Learned*,” The Washington Institute, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/other/WattsStatement20150202.pdf>

- a. Are there any current models that the State Department and the Department of Defense not using which, in your opinion, would be appropriate?

*I’m not aware of a particular model for counter propaganda, but I would note there is a need, even beyond the current fight against ISIL, to bring back the idea of a U.S. Information Agency. The social media landscape is being used as an information weapon against the U.S. in ways never before seen. Terrorists and adversarial nation states, particularly Russia, are using social media to infiltrate and influence allies and even U.S. public opinion. The U.S. needs a mechanism in social media to promote our nation’s successes and values while undermining threat narratives. Currently, no entity has the responsibility or resources to perform this function in the U.S. An implementation plan to shore up this gap is desperately needed.*

4. “The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.”<sup>3</sup> Among other benefits, STEP sends notifications with “important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country.”<sup>4</sup> Are you familiar with the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program?

*I’m aware of this program, but I have never used this service nor investigated its application.*

- a. If yes, do you or do you not think it is effective?
- b. Are there components of this program that can be improved in order better protect Americans traveling abroad?

*The concept seems sound, but I’ve never used the service.*  
*I’m unsure. I’ve not used the program.*

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program*, <https://step.state.gov/step/> (accessed on 4 April 2016).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

5. You testified at the hearing that you believe that many of the individuals who are converts to Islam and who subsequently radicalize suffer from “deep psychological issues.” You continued and indicated that these individuals radicalize in the period of months and years. What should the federal, state, and local authorities be looking for to identify these individuals in particular?

*I'd begin by noting there has been no comprehensive research (that I am aware of) into the connection between converts and psychological issues. That being said, I believe a deep examination of U.S. recruits to ISIL and al Qaeda needs to be done to identify any particular correlations with mental illness. Many recent cases of recruitment and radicalization to jihadist extremism have occurred in a very short time frame. In only a matter of months, some who undertake violence on behalf of the Islamic State or al Qaeda encounter Islam, convert to the faith and then rapidly follow an extremist view. They then often undertake violence in a relatively short time after accepting these violent views.*

*My hypothesis based on years of research and during service with the FBI doing counterterrorism is the following: the faster one moves from undertaking an extremist mindset to pursuing violence on behalf of that ideology, the higher the chance the person suffers from psychological issues. During the 2011-2012 timeframe, I proposed that the FBI do a comprehensive research study of all terrorism investigations since 9/11/2001 to examine the indicators surrounding radicalization. There are now hundreds of case files in the U.S. government detailing Americans who have moved to and through different levels of radicalization. Unlike the Department of Defense, the FBI did not have the manpower nor resources to undertake this research as they are not equipped for such analysis. Their day-to-day investigative operations take precedence for obvious reasons and their current caseloads would not permit such an effort.*

*However, I believe an in depth study is far over due to look at all cases and leads in U.S. counterterrorism, domestically, since 9/11 to examine not only the psychological connections with radicalization but the other indicators the U.S. government can communicate to the public for detecting radicalization to extremist groups. This research would inform not only what techniques the FBI has used most successfully to preempt terrorist acts, but alternative, preemptive measures communities can employ to protect against al Qaeda and ISIL recruitment.*

*Currently, the George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security has created a Program on Extremism that has just begun this very important research. Their examination of Americans joining ISIL is an excellent start. seen here: <https://cchs.gwu.edu/isis-in-america>. I would strongly recommend doubling or tripling this research and ensuring they have the opportunity to blend their examination of open source, unclassified data with classified investigative case files which speak to the entire picture of how extremists in the U.S. are recruited and how the U.S. has been successful at interdicting extremists recruitment while effectively protecting civil liberties. This research would improve not only detection and disruption of extremists in the U.S., but would also inform current and future counterterrorism policy and resource allocation; particularly around the vital need for collection and review of open source information.*

- a. If found, do you believe that your recommendation of having them engage with a former disillusioned fighter would address the problem, or would such a meeting be pointless given the radicalized individual's state of mind?

*I do not believe engagement alone will simply change a potential recruit's mind. However, I do believe it is one of the most effective methods for deescalating one's recruitment to an extremist group. This technique, often referred to as the "use of former", has been successfully used in some North African countries and more recently in the United Kingdom. Moonshot CVE successfully demonstrated how former extremists could successfully engage emerging extremists online and demobilize their affinity for violence. I would recommend implementing a similar pilot program here in the U.S. as that of Ross Frennett's at Moonshot CVE. This method provides a more appropriate fit to the U.S. extremist radicalization and recruitment context.*  
[http://www.academia.edu/16479356/One\\_to\\_One\\_Online\\_Interventions\\_A\\_pilot\\_CVE\\_methodology](http://www.academia.edu/16479356/One_to_One_Online_Interventions_A_pilot_CVE_methodology)

6. There have been numerous accounts in the news concerning the lack of information sharing with other European countries and a lack of interagency cooperation in Belgium in particular. In fact, the panel testified to these very failures. These issues have been likened to the pre-9/11 paradigm when the CIA and FBI were not partnering and sharing information like they do today. Are there any more impediments to strong, productive working partnerships that you see that the United States should address urgently?

*I believe the U.S. should rapidly assist Europe with integrating intelligence sharing in the way that was done with the NCTC. There should be standard protocols across Europe for sharing data in a similar structure, common methods for accessing information and accountability for ensuring those that need to know the information receive the needed information. Those that built and reformed U.S. systems for information sharing across the federal government and with state and local fusion centers are a valuable asset that should be offered to our European counterparts. The U.S. could also design a roadmap for the E.U. to develop such a system, acting as an independent yet invested arbiter for accelerating a desperately needed intelligence sharing method. It would not only benefit the E.U. but the U.S. as well. A clear repercussion of failed European intelligence sharing may eventually be the slippage of a terrorist through Europe permitting the attack of a U.S. target abroad or movement to North America for an attack on the U.S. homeland.*

- a. In your opinion, are federal, state, and local agencies communicating threat information effectively and timely?

*I believe with regards to counterterrorism, information sharing has dramatically improved over the last decade. The information sharing gap and current challenge today does not reside in counterterrorism but instead in cybersecurity.*