

[H.A.S.C. No. 115-5]

**THE EVOLVING THREAT OF TERRORISM
AND EFFECTIVE COUNTERTERRORISM
STRATEGIES**

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD
FEBRUARY 14, 2017



U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

24-677

WASHINGTON : 2017

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ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS	
Smith, Hon. Adam, a Representative from Washington, Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services	2
Thornberry, Hon. William M. “Mac,” a Representative from Texas, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services	1
WITNESSES	
Hoffman, Bruce, Director, Center for Security Studies and Director, Security Program, Georgetown University	3
Jenkins, Brian Michael, Senior Advisor to the President, RAND Corporation ..	5
Sheehan, Ambassador Michael A., Distinguished Chair, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point	6
APPENDIX	
PREPARED STATEMENTS:	
Hoffman, Bruce	55
Jenkins, Brian Michael	89
Sheehan, Ambassador Michael A.	109
DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:	
[There were no Documents submitted.]	
WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING:	
[There were no Questions submitted during the hearing.]	
QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:	
Mr. Franks	121
Mr. Lamborn	122
Mr. Langevin	121
Ms. Speier	123
Dr. Wenstrup	123

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, February 14, 2017.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:04 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William M. “Mac” Thornberry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM M. “MAC” THORNBERRY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM TEXAS, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The meeting will come to order. Following our hearings on the state of the world, security environment, and the state of the military, today we begin to examine some of the specific security challenges facing the United States.

This week the topic is terrorism. In conjunction with the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, there will be a number of classified and unclassified events this week on that topic.

The United States has been explicitly at war with terrorist organizations for close to 18 years. The threat to Americans and to American interests has certainly changed over the course of that time. Today, we all have hopes the Iraqi military will continue to drive ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] out of Iraq, and that a coalition can reduce its presence and ability to operate in Syria.

But we should be under no illusions. Squeezing ISIS out of Iraq and Syria will push some of them into other parts of the world, such as Africa and Southeast Asia.

Al Qaeda has not gone away despite its lower profile in the news, and in fact, some believe that it is rebuilding its capacity for attacking the West. And while terrorists have physically spread out to more geographic locations, some of them have also become quite adept at operating online as well, challenging our intelligence collection and our counterterrorism efforts.

We are privileged today to have three experts to whom this committee has regularly turned for perspective and guidance over the years. They will help us step back from the headlines of the moment to assess the status of the terrorist threat, how it is evolving, and what kind of capability the United States must have to defend our people.

Before turning to them, I would yield to the ranking member for any comments he would like to make.

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

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I largely concur on your opening remarks. I think you can rank the threats in different ways, but I have always, you know, felt that the number one threat was what is presented by Al Qaeda and ISIS and all of the off-shoots.

Because whatever challenges we may have with other countries in the world, this is the one group, Al Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab, et cetera, that wakes up every morning trying to kill as many Westerners as is humanly possible. And the only thing that is stopping them is our ability to stop them. It is not a lack of will.

So trying to combat that ideology and combat those specific groups, I still feel, is the number one security threat that we face in this country. And I think that the chairman outlined it fairly well.

Since 9/11, we definitely had some initial success in going after Al Qaeda, knocking out their leadership, going after their home bases, and disrupting their ability to plot and carry out attacks.

So the good news is we have done a decent job of identifying specific people and specific groups that threaten us, and then weakening them by taking out their leadership and undermining their ability to plan against us.

The bad news is the ideology has spread even further, and you have people picking up the banner of ISIS who may have never had anything to do with ISIS. But nonetheless, they commit terrorist attacks that threaten our security here in the U.S. and amongst our Western allies.

So the real big question is, how do we stop that metastasizing of this ideology that so threatens us? I believe that we have to continue to focus on the specific groups, the threats that they have made.

I think both President Bush and President Obama prioritized that correctly, but how do we stop the spread of the ideology? That is where I feel like we have been going backwards over the course of the last 15 years.

That regrettably more and more people, typically people who have, you know, issues of their own, not happy with their life, have mental instability, pick up the banner and commit attacks in the name of this ideology. So how we combat that, I think, is the most important question going forward.

Certainly, we are also interested in the details of, as the chairman mentioned, is Al Qaeda reconstituting itself? If so, where? What parts of the world present the greatest challenge?

And also, I think, very importantly, who are the partners that we should look to be working with or continue to be working with who can help us with this in those parts of the world where this threat emanates from? And so I look forward to your testimony.

I thank the chairman for the opportunity, and I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. As I say, we appreciate each of the witnesses being here today. We have Professor Bruce

Hoffman, director, Center for Security Studies and director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University.

We have Mr. Brian Michael Jenkins, senior advisor to the president at RAND Corporation. And we have Ambassador Michael Sheehan, who is currently distinguished chair, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

Obviously, more extensive bios are in everybody's information. Thank you all for being here. Without objection, your full written statements will be made part of the record, and we would be delighted to hear any overviews and oral comments you would like to make at this time.

Professor Hoffman, we will start with you.

STATEMENT OF BRUCE HOFFMAN, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES AND DIRECTOR, SECURITY PROGRAM, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Mr. HOFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, for the privilege of testifying before the committee this morning.

While ISIS poses the most serious imminent terrorist threat today, Al Qaeda has been quietly rebuilding and marshalling its resources to reinvigorate its war against the United States. The result is that both groups have enmeshed the U.S. and the West in a debilitating war of attrition with all its deleterious consequences.

ISIS, alas, is here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. Some 2 years before the 2015 Paris attacks, it built an external operations capability and network in Europe that mostly escaped notice. This unit appears to function independently of the group's waning military and territorial fortunes, and thereby ensures that ISIS will retain an effective international terrorist strike capability.

Moreover, there is the further problem of at least some of the estimated 7,000 European foreign fighters returning home. They are only a fraction of the nearly 40,000 terrorists from more than 100 countries throughout the world who have trained in Syria and Iraq.

And unlike the comparatively narrow geographical demographics of prior recruits, the current foreign fighter cadre includes hitherto unrepresented nationalities, such as hundreds of Latin Americans, along with citizens from Mali, Benin, and Bangladesh, among others.

Meanwhile, Al Qaeda's presence in Syria should be regarded as just as dangerous and even more pernicious than that of ISIS. This is the product of Al Zawahiri's strategy of letting ISIS take all the heat and absorb all the blows from the coalition arrayed against it, while Al Qaeda quietly rebuilds its military strength and basks in its paradoxical new cachet as, quote/unquote, "moderate extremists," in contrast to the unconstrained ISIS.

Anyone inclined to be taken in by this ruse would do well to heed the admonition of the American journalist who spent 2 years in Syria as a hostage of Jabhat al-Nusrah. Theo Padnos relates how, "The Nusra Front higher-ups were inviting Westerners to the jihad in Syria not so much because they needed more foot soldiers—they didn't—but because they want to teach the Westerners to take the struggle into every neighborhood and subway [station] back home."

Looking to the immediate future, ISIS' continuing setbacks and serial weakening arguably create the conditions where some reconciliation with Al Qaeda might yet be effected, whether voluntarily or through forced absorption. Regardless of how that might occur, any kind of reamalgamation or cooperation between the two would doubtless produce a significantly escalated global threat.

A quarter of a century ago, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described publicity as the oxygen upon which terrorism depended. Today, however, it is access to sanctuary and safe haven that sustains and nourishes terrorism.

A depressing pattern has established itself whereby we continue to kill terrorist leaders while the organizations they lead nonetheless continue to seize territory.

Indeed, according to the National Counterterrorism Center [NCTC], a year before the U.S. launched the current campaign to defeat ISIS, the group had a presence in only seven countries around the world. By 2015, that number had nearly doubled.

And as recently as this past August, the NCTC reported that ISIS was, quote/unquote, "fully operational" in 18 countries. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda is also present in three times as many countries today as it was 8 years ago.

Sanctuary, it should be noted, also permits more scope for terrorist research and development of various unconventional weapons, as Al Qaeda clearly demonstrated with its pre-9/11 efforts to acquire chemical, biological, radiological, and even nuclear weapons in Afghanistan.

In sum, the U.S. is facing perhaps the most perilous international security environment since the period immediately following the September 11, 2001, attacks, with serious threats now emanating from not one, but two terrorist movements.

Our Salafi-jihadi enemies have locked us into an enervating war of attrition, the preferred strategy of terrorists from time immemorial. They hope to exhaust us and to undermine national political will, corrode internal popular support and demoralize us and our regional partners through a prolonged, generally intensifying and increasingly diffuse campaign of terrorism and violence.

Indeed, the three pillars upon which our counterterrorist strategy has been based, leadership attrition, training of local forces, and countering violent extremism, have thus far all failed to deliver a crushing blow to either ISIS or Al Qaeda. Decisively breaking this stasis and emerging from this war of attrition must now therefore be among the United States' highest counterterrorist priorities.

The current threat environment posed by the emergence and spread of ISIS and the stubborn resilience and long-game approach of Al Qaeda makes a new strategy and new organizational and institutional behaviors necessary.

The effectiveness of the strategy will be based on our capacity to think like a networked enemy in anticipation of how they may act in a variety of situations, aided by different resources.

This goal requires that the United States national security structure organize itself for maximum efficiency, information sharing, and the ability to function quickly and effectively under new operational definitions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hoffman can be found in the Appendix on page 55.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Jenkins.

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

Mr. JENKINS. Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee, thank you for again inviting me to address this important subject.

While perhaps not an existential threat to the republic, I would agree that jihadist terrorism is the most prominent and certainly the most persistent security challenge that we face.

Terrorism has increased dramatically worldwide, although most recent terrorist incidents remain concentrated in the Middle East and adjacent regions of North Africa and West Asia. The Middle East is also the theater of most U.S. military engagements over the past three decades.

Jihadists have established footholds throughout the region. Both Al Qaeda and ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] have sent out missions to establish or acquire affiliates, often by attaching themselves to rebels fighting local governments.

Now, I think it would be wrong to see this spread of jihadist flags as the advance of an occupying army. It is not centrally controlled. Loyalties remain fluid, and we will see how much attraction ISIS or ISIL continues to have when it faces loss of territory in Syria and Iraq.

But it complicates things by turning one war into many wars. The spillover from these contests creates a multileveled terrorist threat. First, strategic strikes from abroad; second, returning foreign fighters; and third, homegrown terrorists inspired by jihadist ideology.

Now, improved intelligence, greater international cooperation, and continuing military operations have made it more difficult, not impossible, to carry out large-scale operations like Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks. ISIL itself clearly has global ambitions and has assisted some terrorist operations abroad, but it has not, at least not yet, attempted to replicate Al Qaeda's campaign.

Instead of escalating vertically, today's jihadists have escalated horizontally by exploiting the internet and social media to inspire distant followers. Their manuals recommend soft targets and simple operations within the limited capabilities of these recruits.

The trend is toward what we might call pure terrorism. That is, truly random attacks on people anywhere, often by a single individual using any available weapon. Now, the small numbers of these attacks suggest that it isn't easy to remotely motivate people to action.

The internet reaches a vast audience, but absent physical connectivity, most online would-be warriors do nothing. Still, we have to keep in mind that as ISIL faces defeat on the ground, it could respond with more ambitious international operations.

Foreign fighters pose another layer of the threat, more so in Europe than the United States. The fact is here, however, that as ISIL is squeezed territorially in Iraq and Syria, that it won't end the fighting.

It will go underground and continue the contest, but the foreign fighters cannot survive an underground struggle. They will scatter to other jihadist fronts. Some will return home, determined to continue the jihad.

The principal threat here comes from homegrown terrorists. Fortunately, they are few despite constant exhortation from abroad. Since 9/11, approximately 150 individuals have been arrested or killed plotting or carrying out terrorist attacks here.

The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and police have uncovered and thwarted more than 80 percent of these plots. That is a remarkable record. As a result, in the past 15 years, jihadist terrorists in the United States have been able to kill fewer than 100 people. Every death is tragic, but certainly it is a far smaller number than we were worried about in the immediate shadow of 9/11.

But although fortunate here, we still have to address the source of the problem, as Professor Hoffman has pointed out. There are no easy solutions here. Attacking root causes while reducing ungoverned spaces requires major investments and will take years.

We could relax the rules of engagement and increase the use of air power, but bombing errors, we see, can create backlash. Partnering with the Russians to destroy ISIL, in my view, comes at a high political cost and offers very little in return operationally. Large-scale interventions by U.S. combat forces are best avoided, and any such operations must be limited in scope and time.

Instead of sending more troops in, can we simply withdraw, leaving local belligerents to sort things out? That has a great deal of appeal. It would get us out of a costly mess and enable the country to focus on rebuilding the American economy.

But the U.S. has achieved a measure of success on several occasions, only to see things fall apart when it turned its attention to other fronts.

Still, Americans are reluctant to accept that this is an open-ended contest. But whether and how the United States might end or substantially reduce its military role remains largely unexplored territory.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jenkins can be found in the Appendix on page 89.]

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Sheehan.

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MICHAEL A. SHEEHAN, DISTINGUISHED CHAIR, COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member. It is a pleasure to testify in front of you both today. By the way, now that I am not in government, I will be able to speak a little more frankly. I want to talk a little bit about the terrorist threat, evaluate some of our counterterrorism measures, and then make a few observations about future policies.

First, let me start off by saying there is good news and bad news to this story, and it is important to understand the good news. The good news is that, since 9/11, our Nation has been very successful in denying Al Qaeda, ISIS, or any of their affiliates from conducting a strategic-level attack against our homeland in 15 years.

The bad news is that over the last 6 years the number of violent jihadis around the world has increased dramatically. In addition, there are a growing number of conflict zones across the Islamic world, from top to bottom, from right to left, from South Asia to the Levant and across all of Africa.

These conflicts have provided opportunities for the expansion of Al Qaeda and ISIS from their traditional strongholds and have exacerbated the anger of homegrown terrorists in Europe and in the United States.

During the past few years, sadly, three armies that we armed and trained to the teeth collapsed in front of lightly armed militia groups, Mali in 2012, Iraq in 2014, and Yemen in 2015, providing our enemies with tons of equipment, ammunition, and vehicles.

Let me expand a little bit on the bad news. I skipped over some of the good news, and there is lot, but it is in my written testimony. Let me focus on the bad news.

Since the Arab Spring, the Islamic world has been beset with these conflicts. Currently, there are four failed states in the Islamic world: Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. There are at least five other states with major areas of ungoverned space, including the FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas] in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and Mali.

In addition, there are several other states with conflicts brewing of varying degrees of violence and ungoverned space, such as Southern Philippines, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and also in the Sinai region of Egypt.

The roots of these conflicts are complex. Many go back decades, but all have been exacerbated by the Arab Spring and the involvement of radical jihadis.

Each of these conflicts has its own unique characteristics, which I, again, is in my written testimony. They are all very, very different, and AQ [Al Qaeda] and ISIS adapt to each one of those to expand their influence and pour gasoline on the fire and extend their own strategic goals.

Before recommending any new actions, let me quickly review what has worked for the past 15 years. It is very important to understand, a lot of what we have done has worked. It is not luck that we haven't been re-attacked since 9/11. It is not luck. It is a lot of hard work.

I describe it in four layers of defense, starting with sanctuary areas, which I will focus mostly on, because this is the Armed Services Committee.

But the second area is the area between the sanctuaries and our border, where most of that action is involved with intelligence sharing.

The third layer of defense is our border. And that is very much related, those watch lists, to the intelligence sharing in the second layer of defense.

The fourth and final defensive area is our homeland, and that primarily is the work of the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force [JTTF] and organizations like NYPD [New York Police Department], that I was proud to be a part of.

Let me talk a little bit about the sanctuaries again and what we have done there and what has worked. In the sanctuary areas, we

have pounded Al Qaeda's leadership in the FATA, Yemen, and Somalia with lethal action from the skies and also from the land and sea. This model has now been expanded to ISIS targets in Iraq, Syria, and Libya.

Some pundits call these programs "whack-a-mole," inferring the terrorists quickly rebound from these attacks. My experience in studying behavior of these groups has been very different.

In those regions where we conduct these operations, not only do we kill off the most experienced, talented, and dangerous terrorists, but those that come after are principally concerned about staying alive.

And they know that it is extremely dangerous for them to talk on the phone, send an email, meet with more than two or three people, travel in a car, set up a safehouse or a small training area. And those that do so, have a very short life expectancy, and they all know it.

And it is difficult to run an international terrorist organization when you are under such pressure and your primary concern is physical survival.

But our most important instrument, in addition to these strikes, is the training, advice, and assistance of our military units in these regions, particularly by the U.S. Army Special Forces.

As advisors, in most of our cases, our soldiers should not be involved with what is referred to as "actions on the objective." That is the shooting part of it. They should be more advisors and allow the host country military forces take actions on the objective. Again, I go through more of that concept in my written remarks.

Let me conclude by saying—with 10 points on how we need to ramp up our policies in order to respond to this increasing threat and some of the problems we have had in the last few years.

First of all, as Mr. Jenkins said, try not to invade countries. That doesn't always work out very well. But at the same time, we have this allergy invading countries.

And secondly, I would say don't allow more of these collapsed armies to happen: Mali, Yemen, and Iraq. It is not necessary. So my second point is if you do have to intervene, look at the French model in Mali where they got in, crushed the rebellion, and got out.

They didn't own the problem. They still have small forces there putting pressure on AQIM [Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb], but they have not owned Mali and they got out after they achieved their objective.

Thirdly we should expand our train, advise, and assist programs across the danger areas that I discussed. Advisors should be able to move forward. But again, as I said, the actual shooting should go to the host country.

Fourth, Afghanistan and Iraq are very, very important, but I caution about creeping troop increases in both countries. Thousands of advisors that are there in advise missions, when it becomes too big, it begins to look and smell like an occupation. And occupations create as many problems as they seek to solve.

When I was a special forces advisor in El Salvador, in a compound, by the way, that was overrun three times in 7 years, there was never more than two or three special forces advisors per bri-

gade. And for 6 months I was there by myself. Sometimes, less is more in this type of operation.

Fifth, aviation is a game changer. Drones collect intelligence and target terrorist leadership. Attack helicopters, AC-130s, A-10s, are the ground pounders' best friend in a firefight. If you want to do more in these combat zones, I would expand aviation. Not only U.S. but host countries, to the extent that you can, and keep the footprint of ground forces to a minimum.

Troop increases should be done in tens and hundreds. I am skeptical about increases in the thousands.

Sixth, keep your sociopolitical objectives humble and limited. These problems are very complex, and even if you solve them in a country like Tunisia, which is stable, has rule of law, some economic development, they export on a per capita basis more jihadis than any other Arab country.

So even where you have solved all the political social problems doesn't guarantee that you are going to eliminate the jihadis.

Seventh, support our key allies in the regions that are in the front lines of this fight, particularly Egypt, Jordan, the UAE [United Arab Emirates], and others like Niger that are hosting our aircraft in Central Africa. They are not perfect partners, but they are our partners and need our support.

Eight, crank up the pressure on Iran. We should no longer accept the Iranian transgressions against our soldiers and sailors. A swift and determined response should be conducted for future transgressions. Failure to do so risks escalation of these attacks from this rogue regime.

Ninth, preserve our troops. Their lives are precious, and there are a growing number of requirements around the world. We have been fighting this war for the last 15 years. We are going to have to do it for the next 15 at least. At the same time, they are being asked to prepare for conflicts in Central Europe and all the way to East Asia.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we are in a long war against a determined enemy. The key to our success is going to be sustained pressure in a targeted fashion across all the four layers that I talked about. If there are weaknesses in any one of those layers, we become vulnerable.

If we keep the pressure on all four, we can prevent strategic attacks, like we have for the 15 years, and try to minimize the lone wolf attacks, while at the same time allowing our soldiers to prepare for the threats that loom on the horizon. Threats that you, Mr. Chairman, are very much aware of. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Sheehan can be found in the Appendix on page 109.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. I guess I am struck by the similarities. Each of you basically see or describe the threat as having evolved in a similar way, spread out more geographically, more groups, but fewer spectacular attacks, more kind of lower level attacks.

I guess I would like to just ask each of you, where do you see the threat going next? There are some people, for example, who argue that as ISIS gets squeezed in Iraq and Syria, the incentive for more spectacular attacks to show that they are still there, they

are still viable, to be an attraction for their followers will grow, and that they will shift, basically, to more spectacular sorts of attacks.

I think a couple of you touched on it. There are continuing—we have seen the use of chemical weapons in the Iraq/Syria theater. There continue to be concerns that chemical, biological, or radiological weapons could be in their hands.

So I would just like to ask each of you briefly, where do you see this going next in terms of the threat? How will it evolve in your judgment?

Professor Hoffman.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Well, I think you are quite correct that as ISIS is continually squeezed, in order to maintain its relevance, burnish its credentials, it is going to have to strike.

And I think over the past 2 or 3 years it has built up a capability in Europe to carry out, on the one hand, Paris-style or Istanbul-style attacks that result in mass casualties, but also, to animate or motivate individuals, such as the truck driver in Nice last July.

For me, the big question is how long Al Qaeda will wait in the wings? I am convinced, although this is just intuition and gut feeling, is that Al Qaeda will absorb ISIS at some point.

That as ISIS is weakened on the battlefield, it will take on those fighters, whether voluntarily or some sort of a hostile takeover. Because, basically, when you compare ISIS and Al Qaeda now, Al Qaeda is way ahead of ISIS in terms of leadership that has largely remained intact and also has been dispersed throughout the world, but particularly to the Levant, in cohesion, in ideology, and I would argue, in support.

The one advantage ISIS clearly has is this external operations capability, which is in part, because Zawahiri has deliberately held back Al Qaeda. So Al Qaeda wants that external operations capability. And as I said in my testimony, that would, I think, escalate this conflict onto a different level.

And this is why Al Qaeda, I think, has been seeding Syria in particular with some of its most valued senior leadership, including Saif al-Adel, amongst others.

In terms of your points about the chemical weapons, I mean, think of what the Tsarnaev brothers did in Boston with a pressure-cooker bomb that they downloaded from the internet. Or think of the considerable alarm that a truck driver caused in Nice.

Even a chemical weapon, some unconventional attack or an attack using an unconventional weapon, in a European city. And here I agree completely with my former boss and mentor, Brian, that the threat is much greater in Europe than it is in the United States.

But an attack with an unconventional weapon like that, I think, would have profound rippling, and second- and third-order effects, that would catapult the fear level that these groups are able to impose, to a much higher level.

And the fact that ISIS has already regularly used chemical weapons, that there has been evidence in the past 3 years of Al Qaeda similarly developing sarin nerve gas, for example, that this is a potentiality we have to consider. And the psychological repercussions that would follow in its wake.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. I do think there will be pressure on ISIL to do something, particularly as it is squeezed in Iraq and Syria. That spectacular doesn't have to ascend up to the level of a 9/11.

I mean, I agree with Bruce, that, you know, if you look at the Paris attacks or the Nice attack, or even something that might be the equivalent of what we saw take place in Mumbai in 2008 or in Nairobi more recent than that. That is a number of shooters, suicide bombers, hostage situations that can basically paralyze a city.

I would also not exclude—because it has been a continuing quest of AQAP [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula], as well as a demonstrated capability of ISIL, and that is, sabotage of aircraft has to be included.

Given the state of the world and the apprehension that has already been created by 9/11 and by the continuing terrorist threat, it doesn't have to ascend to the level of a 9/11 to have this major psychological impact, which is what this is all about.

I would also agree that the foreign fighters themselves, apart from central leadership, they are going to scatter. They either die in Syria and Iraq, or they scatter.

Some of them went to Syria, I am convinced, initially, not to fight and die in Syria, but to gain the contacts and training and experience necessary to bring the violent jihad back home.

So as we make progress, and even evidence of that progress in Syria and Iraq, could see a burst of terrorist activity elsewhere. Europe is more vulnerable to that because of the proximity and the physical connectivity of a number of these fighters and people who stayed back home.

The thing that gave the lethality to the Paris and Brussels attacks was the fact that foreign fighters were able to come back and hook up with people who did not go, but who provided an underground, a logistics infrastructure, weapons, and so on that could make them operate at a much more lethal level.

Finally, completely separate from all of this in terms of the future, in terms of the trajectory of this ideology, this jihadist ideology is becoming a conveyor for individual discontents. That is, for individuals who are unhappy with their lives, who are aggressive, who are suffering from issues of substance abuse, even mental illness.

This ideology resonates with it, and we are increasingly seeing individuals that, you know, if you ask me, are these crazy people or are these terrorists, my answer is yes. And that is going to be just the continuing phenomenon we are going to be dealing with.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Mr. Chairman, sometimes in the U.S. we theorize about strategies and shifts of strategies by terrorists. I actually believe that they have never moved away from their intention to conduct massive attacks within the United States, for both Al Qaeda, and I think ISIS would love to do it as well. It is part of their DNA and what they are all about.

The reason they haven't done it is, quite frankly, because they can't. So I believe that if they could tomorrow, they would organize a complex and sophisticated attack against the United States.

I remember when I was in New York City after 9/11, I used to give speeches around the city, and then people would ask me why haven't they conducted another attack since 9/11? I said, "Frankly, if they could, they would tomorrow. But they can't."

That drove people insane when I said that in 2003 and 2004, but it is a fact. It was the truth. A lot of people said, well, they have changed their strategy. They are waiting for the big one.

The reason is they will conduct a big attack if they can tomorrow. And we have to keep pressure on them, as I said in my remarks, across all those layers, and that will prevent them from doing so.

It is very difficult for them now to stroll 19 people into the U.S., and take flying lessons and conduct four simultaneous cellular planning operations and conduct an attack. That is just impossible for them to do now. Not only in the United States, but even in Europe, even though in Paris you had some dimensions of that.

But again, after Paris and what happened in Brussels, you are seeing a lot of roll-up of those cells, and it is going to become more difficult for them in Europe also to conduct simultaneous, multicell attacks, which really become at the strategic level.

So they have never lost the intention to do so. They would love to do it tomorrow, in my view, either of these organizations. I agree with Bruce; they are probably going to morph together.

I wrote in 2006 that the only way, and Brian talked about whether they represent an existential threat to the U.S., I said then that the only way they could is by creating a WMD [weapon of mass destruction], probably an improvised WMD.

And I do believe they still have that intention, whether it be chemical, biological, radiological. I would suggest, and then when I was in NYPD, what we tried to do about that was number one, always look for the cell.

Always look for the people that want to do that. And that is an offensive strategy of investigations and undercovers and informants to try to break up that cell before they have the capability to conduct a sophisticated attack, like chemical, biological, or radiological.

And then the second thing I would suggest is you try to protect the materials. When I was in New York City, we had 10 hospitals that had pathogens that were very dangerous. We have reduced that to just a few right now and improved the security around them. The radiological materials that you find in hospitals and engineering firms have to be protected.

And so in my view, to prevent a WMD, an improvised WMD attack takes two lines of effort. One, go after the cells. Prevent them from getting any sophistication. And second, make sure you have got the materials protected, whether it is biological pathogens, radiological materials, or dangerous chemicals.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you all.

Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, before I start my questions, we have two new members of our committee. We are still waiting for the third. I apologize. They were both here at the start. But now, well, we only have one.

But we have Tom O'Halleran, who has joined us from Arizona. He has served three terms in the Arizona House of Representatives and one in the Arizona State Senate, former Chicago homicide detective, and a member of the Chicago Board of Trade and small-business owner. Welcome.

And from New York we have Thomas Suozzi, who served for 7 years as county executive of Nassau County, New York, and four terms as mayor of Glen Cove, New York. Welcome to the committee. We appreciate having you aboard.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thanks.

Mr. SMITH. The question I have, and following up a little bit on what Ambassador Sheehan said, I think you accurately described two of the things we have been most successful at. And I remember when people were complaining about the "whack-a-mole" strategy and thinking there are some moles that need to be whacked.

And it also can be effective, in exactly the way that you described, as it disrupts their ability to plan and attack. I also think the second key thing you said was that we need to work with partners. That making it a U.S.-led operation, making it any sort of U.S. invasion, you know, in the Muslim world, that simply reinforces the message of groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS. And we need to do that.

Going forward, the two things that I would like you gentlemen to try—well, you already addressed one. That is the issue that Mr. Jenkins raised.

I don't know what we could do about that is that basically every disaffected person in the world is now clinging to this ideology as an excuse to do the kind of thing that they probably would have done anyway. So trying to track down those dangerous people when there isn't necessarily a direct causal link to ISIS or Al Qaeda is going to be a law enforcement challenge across the Western world.

But the piece of it we haven't really talked about is the religious piece. And the fact that ISIS and Al Qaeda, and this is a very controversial subject, because as I think it was General Petraeus said, our most important allies in combatting groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS are our Muslim friends.

We need them on our side. These people are operating in their world. These people are hijacking their religion. They are the ones that are going to need to lead the fight.

But I guess the biggest question is, well, one last ideological point. There are those, particularly in this current administration, who view Islam itself as illegitimate, that basically Islam is not a religion they have said. It is an ideology of subjugation.

And if you take that approach, basically looking at all Muslims across the world and saying that, until you fundamentally change, we are going to view you all as a threat. That strikes me as a bad approach.

But what I would like to ask is what Muslim allies—well, I am not going to like to ask. I am just going to ask it. What Muslim allies are there that we should work with? And how do we combat Al Qaeda and ISIS' interpretation?

I forget the gentleman who wrote the book, but some years ago, when the chairman and I were on the what was then the Terrorism Subcommittee, we had the author of a book called "The Al Qaeda

Reader” come testify before us and basically say, you know, bin Laden has got an argument about his interpretation of the religion.

Now I don’t agree with that. There are a thousand different ways to interpret just about every religion out there. But what is, who are our best messengers for this? How do we best combat that, that ISIS and these folks are merely taking Islam to its logical conclusion, a view that I totally disagree with?

But who do we look to counter it? What is the best counterargument? And how can we persuade the current White House to not go down that “We are at war with all Muslims” route, because I think that is quite literally a dead end. How would you wrap all of those religious issues together and give us a strategy?

Whoever wants to take a crack at that is welcome. Don’t all leap in.

Mr. JENKINS. We are all going to look at each other to see who is going to go down that path first. Look, first of all, let me address pieces. You raised several issues, so let me try disaggregate those and address a couple of them separately.

With regard to local allies, I think we all agree here that this is key. This is not something that the United States can do without allies in the world, in the Arab world, in the Muslim world to do this. And these allies in almost every single case are going to be imperfect allies.

And so to put this into an operational question, they are not going to necessarily live up to our standards of democracy, of social agendas, and so on.

And while we stand for those things, we want to be careful that we don’t set an unreasonable bar that prevents us from working with locals, as imperfect as they are.

And so that means in some sense we are going to be looking for a way we can work with every single Muslim state, Arab state that is willing to work with us on this. There are some obvious key ones, the Gulf States to be sure.

Americans have, especially in recent years, a lot of trouble with Saudi Arabia, with the Saudis. But in fact they remain a key player, and we are going to be working with them.

The Egyptians, again, in recent years, that has raised a number of problems. We are going to be working with them——

Mr. SMITH. I am sorry. We could go down the road of all these.

Mr. JENKINS. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. I am really interested in the religious aspect of this——

Mr. JENKINS. All right.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. And how you think we should approach it?

Mr. JENKINS. There, just to touch that one, I am not sure we can effectively persuade people to alter their views about religion. And I am not sure that that is necessarily a productive path. Patrolling ideologies or religious interpretations of the Koran or any other religious book is not something that we can easily do.

I guess I am more in the realm of I don’t care what they believe. What I care about is what they do. So they can believe all of these things that may create certain societal problems in various soci-

eties. My principal concern is operationalizing that into violent attacks.

So just as we are in a court of law, I don't care what the motives behind a murder or something else. I am concerned with the action, and I am going to go after this organization to ensure that these individuals do not have the physical capabilities to implement whatever is their vision for the world.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Ambassador Sheehan.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Let me jump straight to one of the issues that is related, Congressman Smith, and that is the issue of whether we should designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization.

First of all, when I was an ambassador for counterterrorism at the State Department, I was in charge of the designation process of an FTO [foreign terrorist organization]. It is a legal process. After it goes from State it goes to Justice. It is a legal process and a complicated one and a specific one.

Muslim Brotherhood is an ideology. And there are groups in various countries across the world. If you were to go about designating them, you would have to do it by organization, which is what we do already.

To try to do a sweeping designation, I think, would be problematic. And before we were to do that, I would suggest that we talk to our key allies, like President Sisi in Egypt, and ask him what the implications would be to designating an ideology like that as a terrorist when about half of the country voted for Muslim Brotherhood in their elections a few years ago. I am not sure that would help him.

Mr. SMITH. Yes.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. And so what we want to do is help our allies. So I think that the notion of trying to broadly brush the religion of Islam as the problem is not productive.

As I mentioned in my testimony, the fact of the matter is that across the Islamic world, they are plagued with about 10 or 12 violent situations, wars, conflicts. In Afghanistan it is modernity against a Taliban-esque version, all the way to tribal issues in Africa, and different types of problems that they have.

And on top of those, you have basically a civil war between the Sunni and Shia sects being waged right now, which is sort of you could look at it as an Arab/Persian struggle or you could look at it as a Sunni/Shia struggle. But either way, that struggle is exacerbating the problems across the Islamic world.

There is not a lot we can do about that except try not to make it worse and probably try to stand with our partners in the Gulf, in Egypt, Jordan, the UAE.

And then deal with two of the most problematic of our allies, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which are at the root of the problem in many areas, historically, both of them, and fundamental to the solution. So we are just going to have to work with those two countries through these issues.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Hoffman, you need to be very quick. I have taken too much time already.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Sure. Actually, even though since 1989 I have written about how religion has motivated and inspired and changed terrorism, I don't think it is about religion anymore. I think it has much more to do with the very simple message that was articulated 60 years ago by Frantz Fanon in Algeria.

It is about the catharsis of violence, the self-satisfaction of violence against what is seen as an oppressive, subjugative system. It is really South against North, the undeveloped world or the developing world against the developed world. And this is why I think our counter-messaging has been failing because we have been treating it as a theological problem and it has gone beyond it.

That is what I think accounts for the lone wolves, as Brian and Mike have described, but also, too, for these 40,000 foreign fighters that have gravitated to the movement.

I would agree completely with Mike that designating the Muslim Brotherhood would be counterproductive. This is exactly the strategy that terrorists want us to embrace. Terrorism, fundamentally, is a strategy of provocation where you provoke your enemy to undertake actions that will burnish the terrorist credentials, that will support their propaganda.

In my view, firstly, we should only designate groups that are terrorists, ones that are, in fact, terrorist groups. Secondly, the Muslim Brotherhood is not a cohesive entity. There are elements of it that are violent. We should be tough on those individuals and sanction those individuals.

But at the same time, there are Muslim Brotherhoods represented in the Jordanian parliament, in Tunisia, and other places. We should be seeking to encourage those moderates and those who believe in democracy in the Brotherhood to embrace it more, not painting them with a broad brush.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, that is a very helpful answer. And I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am very grateful that Congresswoman Elise Stefanik is going to be the new chair of the Emerging Threats Subcommittee. And so she will be taking a lead on the issues we are discussing today.

Over the weekend, I visited the World Trade Center in New York. It is always going to be a tragic reminder to me of the attacks of 9/11 as the Islamic terrorists initiated the global war on terrorism.

Sadly, the largest number of deaths in the war, by the terrorists, have been people of Islamic faith. And I agree with Mr. Hoffman that we must be ever vigilant to eliminate safe havens of terrorists wherever they are.

I am also grateful for the line of questioning by Ranking Member Smith. In a recent hearing from General David Petraeus to this committee, he emphasized on the importance of discrediting, quote, "the ideology of Islamic extremism."

Taking that statement in consideration, each of you, could you describe the importance of counter-propaganda efforts and what role it may play in discrediting the ideology of extremism?

Mr. Hoffman.

Mr. HOFFMAN. I think discrediting the ideology of terrorism or violence, firstly, I think you have to deprive them of their allure. And I think the allure isn't so much their religion. It is that they are able to seize and hold territory and to exercise sovereignty over populations.

I mean, ISIS has emerged very suddenly as this mercurial threat precisely because of its military capabilities. So I think first and foremost there has to be a military answer to taking down the state. Once that state is destroyed and once that allure is removed, then I think, counter-propaganda messages and counter-messaging can be helpful.

Until then, though, I would emphasize less the message and more the technological solutions of depriving the terrorists of the platforms that they use to communicate those messages. I think that is actually, at least in the current situation, would be preferable to the counter-messaging. The counter-messaging should prevent the resurgence of these groups, not attempt to address them right now.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you.

Mr. JENKINS. I would agree. The counter-messaging is not the leading issue here. The leading issue is dealing with the actual threat that they pose. And that means going after the asylums. It means dismantling the organizations.

In terms of counter-messaging, that is extremely, extremely difficult to do. We are trying to change people's world views. Tough to do. I think our most effective counter-messaging is, in fact, not messaging.

It is what we stand for, ourselves. That is, this country has always stood for certain values. These values have attracted people from around the world, admiration from around the world. And that is what we believe in.

It is far more effective for us to project our own beliefs and to live by those beliefs than it is for me to try to discredit how someone else views God and their position in relationship to that God.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

And Ambassador.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Yes, Congressman, I actually believe we are winning the war of narratives, and we are winning by a huge margin. And you can see that every day as people stream out of the Middle East and risk mountains and seas to come to the West and to the U.S.A. when they could go to countries that have their own religious faith and language that are much closer.

We are winning in narrative. Unfortunately, there is a small percentage of people that are attracted to this other nihilistic, violent narrative. And I, like my two predecessors, I think there is not a whole lot we are going to do about those.

To the extent that we are involved in narratives, I believe that we could help our partners strengthen their alternative narrative. Instead of them trying to get slick talking points, or with glossy documents countering Koranic interpretations, I think what we—we could help our allies build up their narrative, what they stand for.

And so if their young moderate people are willing to pick up a gun to fight for what they believe in, not just the jihadis that are

streaming in to pick up a gun. And I think they are going to have to fight it out at the grassroots level.

And they do, Congressman, in the villages in Afghanistan or in Yemen where the villagers there are opposed, or in Syria opposed to the radical views of the Taliban or Salafist-type ideologies and will pick up the gun and defend themselves.

So I think that ideologically we are not doing too bad. The fact of the matter is there are a number of these people that we just have to get them. I don't think we are going to change their minds.

Mr. WILSON. And, Ambassador and Mr. Jenkins, thank you both.

And in this regard, I have had the opportunity in visiting the Middle East, to visit kingdoms like Bahrain, where they cite how grateful they are in 1895 that it was the Americans who built their first hospital.

And then we are all familiar with the American University system from Sofia, Bulgaria, to Alexandria in Egypt, and, obviously, Beirut, that has been positive. And so I hope we keep citing that.

Also I am really grateful when constituents express concern to me that people in their region want to live in the 14th century. I say, "No, you need to visit the countries of the Persian Gulf. They all look like Hilton Head on steroids." And so it is much more positive.

Mr. Hoffman, in your statement, you discussed Al Qaeda as "rebuilding and marshalling its resources to reinvigorate the war against the American people and American families." Can you tell us about the long-term threat?

Mr. HOFFMAN. I think Al Qaeda has never changed, and it still sees itself in what it conceives as an existential struggle against the West and against the United States in particular.

I think that it has taken advantage of our preoccupation with ISIS to rebuild its strength, particularly in South Asia, where, again, almost completely escaped notice when they created Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent which was designed simultaneously to reinvigorate its presence in Afghanistan.

And a year ago October, one of the largest arms dumps since 9/11 was discovered in Afghanistan that Al Qaeda had been preparing to spread its ideology to India which is, of course, the world's second largest Muslim population. And we already see its effectiveness in Bangladesh and in Burma.

But I think elements like the Khorasan group are an elite forward-deployed special operations unit that is waiting for the proper time to take the struggle to the West and to the United States.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Larsen.

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a reminder to the panel, we are now in a 5-minute rule, total, questions and answers. So I will try to be brief with questions and you try to be succinct with your answers. Appreciate that.

Mr. Hoffman, you noted in your testimony, talking about chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear, that we should be looking out for that. What is new that is happening?

We have been discussing this and acting on this since 2001. So what now in 2017 should we be thinking about that is different

than what we have been doing consistently through the DOE [Department of Energy] and the DOD [Department of Defense]?

Mr. HOFFMAN. The threat, I think, is mostly in the realms where these groups can develop their own weapons or seize battlefield weapons and then deploy themselves. So certainly the frequency with which chemical weapons have been used by both sides in Syria, by groups like ISIS but also by the Assad government, I think, has loosened the restrictions or at least the moral restrictions on using these types of weapons.

The fact that—

Mr. LARSEN. Does that change what we need to do within the DOD or DOE to operationalize a response?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Well, at least from my perspective, since Iraq in 2003, there has been less and less attention paid on the terrorist threat using these weapons. And I think it has grown appreciably.

So I think, first and foremost, it is to review what is in place now and what is being done and to be confident that it is designed to meet this burgeoning number of sanctuaries and safe havens which gives more scope for the research and development of these weapons.

Mr. LARSEN. Mr. Sheehan, would you agree with that assessment?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Yes. I would just add that it is very difficult to develop these type of weapons. Even an organization like an Aum Shinrikyo, which had tremendous amount of scientists, unlimited money, et cetera, you know, tried to do a chemical weapon attack in the subway system in Tokyo, killed seven people. They could have done better with two 9 millimeters; very, very difficult to do.

I believe that the biggest threat, as I said in my remarks, would be less concern about them building a WMD overseas than I am about an individual within the United States that becomes radicalized, so has access to the materials. And I think that is where the focus should be.

Mr. LARSEN. Okay.

Back to Mr. Hoffman. In your testimony, written testimony, on page 9, I think I counted five steps or five actions we ought to take. But one of those has to do with your suggestion that we have strict 90-day rotations of division-size regular military in some of these countries.

It is called boots on the ground. That is what we call that. And what I have found here in 16-plus years in Congress is that strict 90-day rotations become unrestricted, unlimited rotations.

So are you, in fact, advocating as part of a proposal for U.S. boots on the ground beyond special operations forces which you also support?

Mr. HOFFMAN. I am, sir. And actually you know, Mike Sheehan also talked about this in the context of the French intervention in Mali. I think the problem is, you know, we have tried invading countries, and that obviously doesn't work.

I would argue, for the past decade or so, we have tried the indirect approach, leadership attrition, building up post-nation forces, counter-messaging. It is not working. The spread of ISIS and, I think, the resilience of Al Qaeda has demonstrated that.

So I was trying to identify the sweet spot in the middle where, if our enemies, as I believe, have enmeshed us in this war of attrition or this war of exhaustion where they are trying to provoke our liberal societies to become more illiberal to target these groups that will burnish their propaganda and their recruitment, I think it is important to try to break that cycle, to break that war of attrition.

And in that sense, I think, having taken down, for instance, Mosul sooner than 2 years would have dealt more of a blow to ISIS' allure and would have probably had a greater impact on dissuading the 40,000-plus foreign fighters that have gravitated to the caliphate from over a hundred countries than the efforts we have undertaken thus far, which aren't working.

Mr. LARSEN. Okay.

Mr. Jenkins, do you have a response to boots on the ground and how that plays into a change in operations and tactics?

Mr. JENKINS. You know, you have two former infantry officers here. And the right answer in infantry school is it depends on the situation and the terrain.

Clearly, we do want to avoid large-scale commitments of U.S. forces on the ground. It changes the dynamics. It changes the narrative. It is unproductive and should only be done in circumstances where it appears there are no other options, it is the right thing to do.

And but here I would agree with both Professor Hoffman and Ambassador Sheehan. If we are going to go in with anything larger than a special operations or small teams of advisors, then it has to be a precise mission, achievable within a limited amount of time.

And you go in and you get out fast. Whether that is 60 days, 90 days or 97 days, that will depend on the nature of the mission.

Mr. LARSEN. Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Sheehan, I want to go to the points that you brought up. You listed the 10 points that you believe that we need to continue in order to defeat, through counterterrorist mechanisms, these terrorist organizations' effort.

And it sounds like much of that are existing policies and you are only wanting to make sure that we intensify and maintain the rigor and vigor of effort in those areas. I guess you would call it war of full-court press.

And I understand your vision within that is to deny the ability for these organizations to operate at the strategic level. And a secondary effect is to limit the number of lone wolf attacks and them being able to organize.

What I noticed, though, is missing in what you lay out there is the endpoint at which you believe we would be able to demonstrate either some kind of success or some diminution of the ability for those groups to operate, fewer terrorist attacks.

Give me your perspective. Is this something that we are going to have to continue in the way you describe it and at the intensity that you describe it ad infinitum? Or is it something that, at some point, we are going to achieve some level of success? Give me your perspective, too, on what the path is with this effort.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Thank you, sir, and for better articulating my own remarks. I appreciate that and the basketball analogy which I used on the full-court press.

I never use the term defeat because I think, even if we could, it would require such a commitment of resources that is not commensurate with the level of the threat. We have a lot of big issues out here that this committee is dealing with.

And the U.S. military, I just spent the last few weeks in the Pentagon talking to the Army about how they are trying to prepare for this wide range of threats from cyber to East Europe, East Asia, different types of irregular warfare.

We can't expend all our national resources on this threat. I believe that what we are doing has worked. That is why I spent time on that in my remarks. For the last 15 or 16 years it has been working.

We shouldn't demoralize ourselves. It is so easy to sit back and criticize everything. Around the world, things are falling apart. But here in the U.S. we have had success.

I believe, particularly from my experience at NYPD where I studied deeply these disaffected, the investigations that we had, hundreds of them within the metropolitan area and, across the country, the FBI's cases and knowing about the international.

I don't think there is any way that we are going to stop these jihadis from attacking us over the next 20 to 40 years. It is impossible. So the notion of defeat which somehow means we are going to eliminate this threat, in my view, is wishful thinking.

So what I always talk about is preventing the strategic attack and minimizing the lone wolves. Over time, this nihilist ideology, which does have an appeal—the narrative works—but over time, it will wind up on the ash heap of history with the other isms of the 20th century: authoritarianism, Naziism, communism, and others.

But it is going to take some time, and it is going to burn out from within itself, with its own contradictions. And but that is going to take some time. As I say, this is at least a generational fight.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you, Ambassador Sheehan.

Mr. Hoffman, in your testimony, you spoke about our counterterrorism actions as it relates to ISIS saying, though, that there is a re-emergence of Al Qaeda. And you talk about what we would need to do there with both air operations, ground operations, special operators on the ground, a division-level effort there on the ground to be able to do that.

Give me your perspective on why you, first of all, believe that Al Qaeda is in this state of resurgence. And is it based on Al Qaeda's fighters and their vision? Or is it based on their financial resources and their media networking?

Give me your perspective about why you think Al Qaeda has re-emerged and what you think their effectiveness is in that re-emergence.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Well, I think the first reason I would argue that they have re-emerged is that, I mean, they certainly have the global presence. That hasn't contracted. They are very quietly—groups have gone over to ISIS but they have cultivated new partners and new safe havens.

Secondly, the appearance of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, that I think they have pursued a dual geographic strategy. On the one hand, they sent some of their most senior leaders, Saif al-Adel, Muhsin al-Fadhli, Haydar Kirkan. Fortunately, two of the three we have killed, in fact, which is certainly an important plus.

But on the one hand, as I said earlier, to create the Khorasan group or to have this forward presence and, I think, to groom and cultivate Jabhat al-Nusrah, now Jabhat Fatah al Sham, as their Middle Eastern operation.

At the same time, which to me was astonishing, in January 2014, while everybody was looking at developments in Syria, for example, Al Qaeda announced the creation of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, seeking to deepen its roots there and to use that, similarly, its presence in Pakistan as a launch pad to radicalize the region.

So the movement of its top personnel to Syria who have not really engaged in the fighting, that have been hanging back, suggests to me not that they have embraced a new approach to their ideology that is peaceful coexistence to the West. In my view, I hope I am wrong but I don't suspect I am, is that they are girding their loins for the next battle.

They are waiting, again, precisely what concerns me the most is that the terrorists, in a sense, are engaging in their strategy of provocation. And to some extent, it is succeeding. It is causing profound divisions in societies. It is leading to nativism and populism.

This is the best propaganda that they can seize upon. And unfortunately, we are falling into the trap. And that is why my argument is, like all adversaries, guerillas, and terrorists, they seek to enmesh their stronger opponents in these prolonged wars of attrition and enervation.

We have to break that—I don't think—it is a generational fight, just as Ambassador Sheehan described. But we can't really survive this more than a few generations. So we have to start ending it now.

Mr. WITTMAN. Got you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Garamendi.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank you very much for your testimony and causing us to think seriously about how to proceed. There seems to be a common trend of thought through all of your testimony. And I would like you to expand on this, and that is that our actions cause a counterreaction.

And that counterreaction might be to more advance the cause of radical jihadism. There are some recent examples, and I don't want to get too political here, one of which is the immigration ban. But there are others that have taken place, and particularly military actions.

And I just want to be quite clear in my mind that we should—do I understand you to tell us that we should always be mindful of the reaction that our actions will cause, and that we ought to avoid actions that would give the ISIS or Al Qaeda a propaganda and recruiting and more radical attacks?

Is that the case? And I just want to be quite clear so that we understand that reaction is going to happen.

So let us just start—so Mr. Sheehan and we would come on down from—I mean, Ambassador, if you will, we will just hear from all of you on this.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Look, if this is not an existential fight, that is, if our survival is not at stake, obviously at this moment, that means we get to make choices about what we do. In making those choices there are tradeoffs. There are benefits that might be achieved, but there are costs that come with those, making those choices. That is on our side.

On the other side, we are dealing, as Professor Hoffman has underscored several times, we are dealing with an adversary that seeks to provoke us to doing counterproductive things. And even without that provocation, simply by our massive military power, by our size, we can end up doing things that will create backlashes.

So that is the equation that we are always looking at. There are a lot of things we can do. One has to look at each one of those things and say what is this going to get me? What cost am I going to pay, and what risks I am taking?

If this were existential, we don't get to make that choice. But here, especially since this is a long fight, we have to be very, very careful about how we make those choices.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I have a feeling that I am going to get the same answer from the remaining two of you.

Quickly, and then we are out of time in 2 minutes, so I guess I just want to make my own comment here and then I will let it go, is that it seems to me this is the principal point and the principal issue that we ought to be looking at as we develop policy and the procedures as well as funding for the various activities that are going forward and that we ought to be very mindful, in every step we take, that there will be a reaction.

And that reaction might actually be negative to us and this cost benefit, I think that was about the words you were using, Mr. Jenkins. And I will let it go at that. And hopefully we will keep that in mind, both here within Congress as well as within the administration, and avoid those things that are going to be counterproductive. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jenkins, you mentioned two countries in your opening paragraph. You mentioned Russia and China. And I wonder while we don't share the values with those countries, or they don't share our values of human rights and personal freedoms, with regard to terrorism, don't we have a shared interest?

Don't they see this issue of terrorism as a threat in their country as well?

Mr. JENKINS. In the broader sense, we do share an interest, more so probably with the Russians than with the Chinese, although the Chinese have tried to enlist us in their efforts against dealing with Muslim separatists in Western China.

In the case of Russia, there are very real concerns about the threat of Muslims. I mean, in Russia, this goes back centuries in their history.

Having said that, though, having a generalized sense of common concern, I was part of an effort in the late 1980s, a team that went

to Moscow and conducted a series of meetings to see if, at that time, the Soviet Union could cooperate with the United States in combatting terrorism.

And getting beyond the general statements, that we agree that we are both concerned about this and really getting it down to sharing intelligence, to coordinating operations, that is difficult because here at the operational level, there are serious differences in how we view the world, serious differences in how we do things, and a significant level of mistrust.

And it is just very, very difficult what you can achieve within that context.

Mr. SCOTT. All of you, in your testimonies agree that the chaos in the countries in the Middle East, various countries, is what creates the ability for terrorists to not only exist but to grow and to, in many cases, create their own economies.

I just wonder if, when we see an area where we know that there are, say, 20 to 50 members of ISIS or Al Qaeda, if we shouldn't be more aggressive in taking action to eliminate them when it is 20 or 50, before it is 200 or 500 and they have the ability to take a country or to take a city.

Would you care to comment on that?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I—

Mr. SCOTT. How would you handle it?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I agree, Congressman. In fact, that situation happened in Yemen a couple years back. We had narrowed our policy in Yemen as to striking only those that had an immediate direct threat to U.S. safety and security, which narrowed some of our targets.

But a couple months later, there were a few hundred Al Qaeda guys doing a dance in a village in central Yemen and later Al Qaeda took over cities and port cities in Yemen. And there was some more flexibility in going after, broadening that, the aperture of those strikes.

And I would certainly believe that there are conditions wherein that we need to pick up military action to prevent the massing of Al Qaeda or ISIS forces when that happens to prevent what could come forward.

Mr. SCOTT. If I could ask one final question? Obviously, the refugee situation that has been created with the war in Syria, a lot of humanitarian crimes there. It is creating a tremendous amount of pressure on people who do share our values and who do share our interests, countries like Jordan, countries like Israel.

Is there a solution in Syria that does not include the United States working with the Russians?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I believe there is no solution in any country where there is conflict without an agreement with the major stakeholders that are willing to put people on the ground and fight over it unless you want to take it over and dominate every inch of the security equation in that country.

And if you are short of that interest, which I believe no one has the interest in doing that in Syria, means you have to sit at the table with those that are going to have that type of power. That means Russia, Iran, and all the other actors that have a stake in

Syria have to be agreed with the solution or you are going to continue fighting for it.

Mr. SCOTT. My time has expired. But I agree with you 100 percent. If you have to walk through a pit of rattlesnakes, put on your snake chaps and let's get it over with. And the sooner we do it, the sooner some people will start to feel some relief in that part of the country.

Thank you, gentlemen.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Courtney.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the witnesses for your thoughtful testimony this morning.

Ambassador Sheehan, I want to go to your 10-point plan and particularly the fifth point which is a pretty forceful statement that, if we are talking about using military force, as you just mentioned in the prior question, that it is a pretty strong statement that air power should be the, you know, the vehicle and also a pretty strong statement that we should be extremely frugal about the uses of ground forces.

I am reminded of Secretary Gates' departing statement that any future Secretary of Defense who recommends a large ground war to a President ought to have their head examined. And I was wondering if you could, again, just sort of embellish a little bit that bit of advice.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Thank you. Thank you, sir. On the issue of air power—air power doesn't solve everyone's problems. It is not a panacea. However, since about 1944, we have dominated the airs of the world in most of our combat situations, although in Vietnam it was tricky sometimes for some of our pilots fighting against those air defense and jets. Generally, we have controlled the sky.

And when you can control the sky, it gives you an enormous advantage physically, on the ground, if the condition exists when there is massing of the enemy. You can diminish that and then give your ground forces a much better chance.

So I think that aviation gives us a technological advantage that can turn a situation. But never kid yourself that it is going to be the solution.

So I believe that, for instance, in Afghanistan, when General Campbell was asking for more authority to use combat aviation support, the operations there, I think that was an important step forward in order to try to keep the Taliban at bay. Because the Taliban are expanding in areas. They are threatening the stability of that country.

Yet I would be very, very careful about pouring too many troops in there. It is very expensive. It creates its own problems. And one way to try to push back the Taliban would be by having more liberal use of combat aviation to pound them.

When I was in El Salvador in the early 1980s, the FMLN [Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front] was able to have columns of several hundred people. And when they had that capability, they threatened the stability of the whole country. By the time we brought in helicopters by the Salvadorans—and this is the problem in Afghanistan. We need an Afghan aviation solution there. And that has been a mess for 10 years.

When they brought in the helicopters, it forced the guerrillas to dissipate, and they could never mass in more than a group of 10. And that was so debilitating to them, that it was very difficult for them to strategically threaten the government anymore, because of that ability from the air.

It didn't eliminate them, not in any case. That has to be done on the ground. But it can be used as a way to at least hold people off.

When the AQIM was coming south and threatening Bamako, it was French attack helicopters that came from Burkina Faso, and stopped them dead in their tracks.

It was really just two French attack helicopters. One of the pilots was shot and wounded and died later. Two helicopters stopped that entire column. And then they pushed them back across the river and scattered up in the north.

And so the judicious use of air power can turn a situation. But again, certainly not going to answer all of your problems, but it can be a major force multiplier.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Stefanik.

Ms. STEFANIK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question this morning deals with the increased use of online propaganda and social media by terrorist organizations. Whether we are talking about formal magazines like Dabiq or Inspire, published by Al Qaeda and ISIL, which have millions of readers across the globe. How do we effectively counter this propaganda?

Do you believe we have a strategy to counter this propaganda? What have we gotten right, and what do we need to do better?

I will start with Mr. Hoffman.

Mr. HOFFMAN. I think we have had a strategy, but it is almost like the Dutch boy trying to put his fingers in the dike that is burgeoning in on him. They are communicating on multiple levels. It is not just theological.

It is as I described earlier, this appeal to a very classic Frantz Fanon wretched of the earth ideology that glorifies violence, that sees violence as a catharsis.

But actually, I have to say, I don't think Dabiq and Inspire are the main problems. I mean, those appeal to the peripheral, the hangers-on like the Tsarnaev brothers, who tragically are capable of killing handfuls of people. What worries me is that groups like ISIS in particular, Al Qaeda as well, are using the dark web.

They are using highly secure apps like Tor, for instance, to get into the dark web. That is where all of their activity that is the most consequential, that is radicalizing individuals that best suit their skill sets, not just the hangers-on, the losers, the malcontents who are attracted to their kind of violence, but people that have skills in the computational sciences, that are engineers.

It is through the dark web. And that is, I think, the dimension of the struggle that is really gathering momentum now. And we are just coming to grips with understanding the Dabiqs and Inspire, and they have already moved on.

And I think this was demonstrated over the past few years where social apps like, you know, Twitter and that type of thing, you know, I am not sure about really the impact that that has.

It is more the encrypted communications from WhatsApp or Telegram that is facilitating their, both their recruitment and their terrorist operations, or at least the most consequential forms of recruitment, and the most serious types of terrorist operations.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. The issue here is not—I would agree with Professor Hoffman. The issue here is not the propaganda and, you know, that comes along with how to dismantle and clean an AK-47 in one of these magazines that is the problem. That is going to take place.

In terms of much of the open web communications and social media communications, that has given them some advantages, but it has given our intelligence and law enforcement operations also a great deal of insights and ability to identify people and open investigations. A lot of the success we have had in uncovering plots has been because people have been communicating on the internet.

From the standpoint of the most, or the greatest danger, operationally, I would agree with Professor Hoffman, it is skilled people communicating in a clandestine environment, and being able to do that, that is a great concern. And from the standpoint of crime other than terrorism, as well as in terrorism, that is going to be a future battlefield.

Ms. STEFANIK. And Ambassador Sheehan, I am going to ask a follow-up to you. Given your time as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, what role does the Department of Defense play in this area of countering propaganda, and what more does the State Department need to be doing? And is the Global Engagement Center the most appropriate place to deal with this issue?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Thank you, Congresswoman, and congratulations on a new chairmanship. That is a great committee, by the way.

Look, I have to admit, I am a skeptic on these efforts for counter-messaging. We have been at this for 20 years. There have been volumes. They are stacked up in all the think tanks and universities around the town. It is not a new thing. We have a big effort at State Department, run by one of my predecessors at SO/LIC [Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict].

Yes, that is important, but I think the effort has to be in helping the host nations deal with their problems, as I mentioned before. Inspire is a problematic magazine, that you brought out.

And as Mr. Jenkins said, they do assembly, disassembly. They encourage people to attack, and once in a while they will put a bomb-type instruction on there, which you can get other places on the internet.

So I think that yes, we need to do this at the State Department and DOD and my office at SO/LIC. I had a small office that was also engaged in that. But I find that, I think the most important thing that we can do, in terms of counter-messaging, is help give political support to our key allies in the region.

That, I think, is more important to help them establish some legitimacy within their countries, and try to roll back the movements that are festering within their country. If we could focus on helping them, rather than trying to come up with some snazzy talking points, I think our effort would be better spent.

Ms. STEFANIK. Thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Veasey.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to ask, and anyone on the panel can answer this, what lessons can be drawn from the merger of ISIL and Boko Haram in Sub-Saharan Africa, and applied to the potential merger of ISIL and Al Qaeda in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula.

And I wanted you to kind of expand on what you touched on, which one of you touched on a little bit earlier, about what do these terrorist organization mergers mean for U.S. counterterror strategy, moving forward.

Mr. JENKINS. Let me just say briefly, I would be a little bit cautious about the use of the term merger, because we are not really talking about mergers here. We are talking about affiliations, which can take place on multiple levels. There are shared concerns, there is, to a certain degree, in a broader sense, a shared sense of ideology.

But these on the receiving end of these, or let's say, on the Boko Haram side, and the other local sides, being a part of either an Al Qaeda network, or an ISIL network, provides prestige.

It elevates you among your local rivals. It may bring some modest amount of resources, so it has some advantages in terms of affiliation. It makes you more important than you are.

On the other side, it gives the advantage of you don't control this entity yet, but you may be able to influence it. It gives you a new base of operations. It gives you access to potential recruits down the road. And left alone, over time, you may be able to increase that degree of management and control over these things.

But they are at all different levels. They complicate things for our side, but they have these narrow advantages. I still think that, in many of these cases, we can look at the local groups who are attracted to this and make progress with them, both a combination of pressure, and in some cases there may be some incentives and tempt them to peel them away from these parent organizations.

But they are not really mergers. Each side sees a tactical advantage in these connections.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Right now I would say that the biggest danger is that these alliances or marriages of convenience or affiliations with one another are played out in ISIS' strategy.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has already said to would-be foreign fighters, if you can't come to the caliphate any longer, if you can't come to Syria or Iraq, go to our wilayets, go to our provinces, our branches. So it becomes escape valve, a sanctuary, an alternative venue to reengage the battle. So I think that is the first thing.

Secondly, I think all terrorist groups are like the archetypal shark in the water; they have to constantly move forward to survive. And in that sense, they become opportunists.

And smaller groups seek to hitch their stars to the fortunes of what they see are rising stars. And this is a constant process. And in that case, usually when a smaller group does affiliate or associate itself with a larger group, it brings in more recruits.

It gives them greater access to expertise, which enhances their own violent capabilities, and it enables them to engage in the stock-in-trade of terrorists, which is even higher levels of violence, such as we have seen in Nigeria from Boko Haram, where even the

most egregious successes of the past are now surpassed by this new association, by this new support, by the new expertise and new recruits they are able to attract.

Mr. VEASEY. In all of Sub-Saharan Africa, which of the newly emergent terrorist organizations do you think pose the greatest threat to the U.S., based on scope and influence?

Mr. HOFFMAN. I am going to give a counterintuitive answer, and say Al-Shabaab in Somalia. And the reason I say that is sort of the dominant paradigm of counterterrorism for the past decade plus has been that we have done a good job of hardening aviation security against terrorist threats.

But last February, in Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab operatives affiliated with Al Qaeda, exactly underscoring my point about this exchange of technology and expertise, were able to smuggle a bomb inside a computer laptop, and detonate it. Fortunately, it was not at cruising altitude, so the plane—it wasn't an in-flight tragedy.

But nonetheless, admittedly, the security in Mogadishu, I suspect, is not as good as at other airports. But nonetheless, I think that was an important incident for several reasons.

Firstly, it showed these groups, and Al Qaeda in particular, still has an interest in targeting commercial aviation; secondly, that their ongoing efforts to effectively develop the technology to do so, proceeds; and thirdly, that they are willing to use affiliates or associates in far-flung places, to potentially to be their foot soldiers in a new campaign against commercial aviation.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. If I could add, Congressman, I agree with Professor Hoffman that currently, right now, Al-Shabaab would be the biggest threat.

Although over the horizon I would take a very close look at the North African groups in Libya. And a lot of those folks are Algerians that are veterans of some brutal wars over there. These are some really violent and skilled terrorists.

So I think that we have to keep a very close eye on Libya and the spillover from Algeria. That they are still operating in parts of Algeria and in south of Libya, into Niger and over to Mali, as well as through the region. Those are some tough geography there, and there are some really, some tough customers in that vicinity that could pose a big problem in the future.

Mr. VEASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. McSally.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your insights.

Ambassador Sheehan, I appreciate your thoughts on the asymmetric advantage we have with air power, as an airman myself. And I agree, we have got to take advantage of where we have those asymmetries.

And as we are looking at that, all of you have mentioned this is a long-term fight. How does that translate to your thoughts on force structure? This committee has pushed back pretty strongly on keeping the A-10 flying for its unique capabilities. It is kicking butt right now, over in this fight against ISIS, setting records of munitions expended against the enemy.

We need fifth generation fighters. But if we are asking a fifth generation fighter to do all of what we need for air superiority in

places of denied access, plus all of this, on the other end of the intensity of conflict, does that make sense?

You know, you don't need a Ferrari to try and do what a pickup truck does. Maybe you need a Ferrari and a pickup truck. So what are your thoughts on force structure for this long-term fight?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Well, since I am no longer in government, I can say, if the Air Force wants to get rid of the A-10, then I think the Army should pick it up, in addition to the AC-130 gunship as well. The Army, of course, has its own aviation assets, helicopters, and those are fantastic.

But I do desperately believe, as a former infantryman and special operator, that we need those fixed-wing assets that can hang up. You know, drones can fill a lot of the gaps, but there is nothing like a 105, or the mini-guns of an AC-130 that change the battlefield.

Or even a C-47 with a machine gun hanging out of the door can change the battlefield, in a scenario, in conflicts like this, where you are fighting irregulars that have AKs and technicals, you know, Toyota trucks with machine guns in the back of it.

So I believe that these aviation assets are a tremendous game changer. We should hopefully keep them within our inventory and also look to provide these type of assets to our partners. I think that the biggest failure, and I put myself in the box of failing, is our Afghan aviation program. It is a complete debacle.

And we have gotten arguments here in the Congress and in Washington about whether we should provide Russian-made helicopters to them, or Sikorskys, and it just constipated the whole issue. No one is in charge of that program over there, and it is unfortunate. The Afghan air force is so far behind the army in the development over the last 15 years.

And I think we need to look at that across the board, Congresswoman McSally, in terms of looking for security assistance for aviation for some of our partners, not the really expensive stuff. Old Hueys with M-60 machine guns hanging out of the side of them, C-47s with mini-guns, these are game changers. And these countries can use those type of systems.

We might have to provide the maintenance for them, and pilot training, but they can fly them, and they can shoot out of the side of them.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thanks, Ambassador Sheehan.

I want to shift focus. I am on the Homeland Security Committee, and one thing that we have been looking at is jihadists, this new phenomena of young women and girls becoming foreign fighters and becoming recruited to be radical.

Their average age of the Western foreign fighters is 21, versus average age overall is 24. The Americans, one in six are women. And a very small number of them, who have traveled, get out, versus about 30 percent of the men are able to get out. So it is a very different phenomena.

We have been taking a deep dive on this in Homeland Security. So they are not just victims. They are hardened jihadists recruiting others to come join the fight.

Do you have any perspectives on that and how we specifically target the narrative and the approach to stop the propaganda to young women and girls? Any of you?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I can take a quick shot at it.

Ms. MCSALLY. Yes, sure.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I do believe there is a small percentage of women that have become jihadis, and that is a problem. The bigger problem is that, and I hate to sound chauvinistic here or whatever, but generally speaking, males between about 18 and 30, sex is on their mind.

And one of the great recruitment vehicles of ISIS was, come to ISIS, we will get you a wife and a girlfriend if you pick up an AK and fight for us. That was a huge incentive for some of these folks.

And if you look at Boko Haram, that disgusting nihilist organization, a lot of their most egregious acts were in kidnapping women and forcing them into these raping relationships that they call wives.

And so the bigger problem, in my view, is the issue of sex as a motivator for these young jihadis to join these groups in order to get a wife, which they consider a wife, but we know is an absolute aberration.

And I think that area needs a lot more work. It became obvious with Boko Haram. It was a big news issue for about a week here in the United States, and it has kind of drifted away.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great, thanks. I am over my time.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the witnesses for their testimony today.

Mr. Hoffman, I really appreciate your point about one of the goals of terrorism being to provoke a response from the larger force of a larger country.

And I think we can all think of ways in which we may have been provoked into expected and desired responses by terrorist organizations. Can you point out some ways in which we have confounded terrorist's expectations, where we have done the thing that they didn't expect and where that has been successful and how we might capitalize on that?

And if you can't, can you suggest one?

Mr. HOFFMAN. I think where we have confounded terrorism expectations is especially Joint Special Operations Command, I think is the—I mean I don't have the military credentials that my two colleagues do, but from my observations as an academician, the operation of the Joint Special Operations Command [JSOC], especially in Iraq.

But in the year since, the way that they have closed the operational loop in terms of getting timely intelligence through interrogators that are forward deployed on the battlefield to get that to the operators, the innovation that they have been able to—I mean, JSOC is almost unique in terms of the authorities that it has, the ability to fire people, for example.

So they have been on the cutting edge, I think precisely because they have been the most innovative and in terms of finding solu-

tions and learning the lessons of the past, both what worked and what hadn't worked. That to me is I think, you know, been the most stellar weapon we have used against terrorists, amongst many. But in terms of a force structure group.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thanks.

Question for Mr. Jenkins. We had a few years ago the leader of one of our allied countries in the Middle East say something to the effect of, you know, you, the United States, shouldn't be leading this fight.

We should. Muslim majority countries, Arab countries in this case, and we certainly want your support and your help, but we need to be the ones leading on the battlefield. And of course, everyone applauded. It is exactly what we wanted to hear. It never came to pass in any real way.

What are your thoughts on the potential or reality of the United States creating a moral hazard in the region? Our allies know we will always be there. And there really are no conditions that I have seen us effectively set on our help and our ability to intervene militarily in that region.

Is there any way to change that calculus for our allies or their perception of our willingness to intervene militarily?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, you know, your observation that many of these high-flown statements when we then leave them to their own devices they sort of dissipate. However at the same time, we have also had a tendency to stiff-arm some of our allies.

I mean, they are not going to operate at our level of military. I don't mean this to sound like some sort of an imperialist statement, but they are not going to operate necessarily at the levels of the U.S. Armed Forces in terms of their capabilities.

And I think sometimes, our impatience to get the job done fast, our determination that we are going to do this right, has caused us to have our allies—in a sense, we have pushed some of them aside needlessly, and that hasn't been helpful. I think there is a way in some cases where some of these offers have been made.

We know if we just leave them completely alone they won't do anything. So the challenge for us is can we work with them to put together what they have stated they are willing to do without coming in and taking over management of the store? Americans are not good at doing that.

We are pretty good at taking over management. And we have got to learn that we have to back off. And we are going to accept something less than necessarily our standards, but it is going to be more than adequate.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Yes, and recognizing that we are in the Armed Services Committee room right now and appropriately talking about military strategy, I can't help think about the fact that this is the fifth successive administration that has used military force in Iraq specifically and in many other areas.

That we have an Authorization for Use of Military Force 16 years in that we have used in six countries including most recently Somalia. And that we have got to do a better job of defining our political goals and aims.

And perhaps just an appeal to the chairman and the ranking member, there is a way to meet with the Foreign Affairs Com-

mittee, as well, on some of these issues to have a comprehensive whole-of-government conversation on this.

So I yield back to the chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Abraham.

Dr. ABRAHAM. Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank the witnesses for very compelling testimony and answers to the questions.

Mr. Hoffman, I will start with you, but I want input from the entire panel. When the Syrian conflict eventually ends, you are going to have all of these fighters from Hezbollah, this evil terrorist organization, return to Lebanon.

They will have increased skills, increased experience. If there is nobody left to fight in Syria, what happens to all those fighters in Lebanon? Mr. Hoffman.

Mr. HOFFMAN. We will probably have the third Israel-Lebanon war, would be I think one immediate effect. But this goes back to an earlier question. I think one of the most appealing reasons to cooperate with Russia in Syria is if it succeeds in isolating and marginalizing Iran more and weakening Hezbollah's military status and forward military position in the country.

But this is going to be an enormous problem. I would say the only sort of positive aspects of that, that Hezbollah fighters have been getting now, I think acquiring greater expertise in urban warfare on a level that they lacked in the past, is that it is controversial amongst the Lebanese Shia.

And that increasingly it is not the elite Hezbollah forces that are going, but more the equivalent of conscripts, in essence, young, poor Shia that have no other economical alternative and that that is eroding some Hezbollah support. But of course Hezbollah also controls the government in Lebanon right now.

Dr. ABRAHAM. Right. Mr. Jenkins, your thoughts?

Mr. JENKINS. It is Hezbollah is a problem. It is particularly a problem, and I agree with Professor Hoffman, for the Israelis, as well as for us. But it is part of a larger problem in Syria and that is there are lots of armed groups now in Syria. And they are not under the control of the central government, any central government.

That is, there has been power shift from a central military force to a group of militias, some militias controlled by Iran, some of them controlled by the Syrian government, some of them autonomous, in addition to the various rebel formations and Sunni formations and other formations.

As a consequence, central government authority in any future Syria is going to be significantly diminished, and I think we are looking at, realistically, a de facto partition of the country in which chunks of the country are going to be controlled by autonomous military formations, not under the control of anybody.

I don't think we are going to get—I know that we have to cooperate with the Russians. I don't think we are going to get a national solution. I think we are in effect going to get a series of—a partitioned country and at most some local accommodations that hopefully lower the level of violence.

But there is no government that can come in, in Damascus now that is going to be able to restore authority throughout the national territory of Syria.

Dr. ABRAHAM. Ambassador.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Congressman, this is a problem of enormous depth in the region and as Mr. Jenkins said, there are different types of groups. The ones that worry me the most though, are the ones that have been inspired, funded, trained, and even in some cases, led by the Iranian IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] and the Quds force.

The Iranians have systematically, deliberately have expanded the militia-ization of the Levant and spreading back into Lebanon as well, that threatens the security of the entire region. We are going to have big, big problems and increasing problems there over the years ahead unless the Iranians are directly confronted on this issue.

And there is where there may be potential to work with the Russians on this. I don't know. It is something I think that can be explored. I don't have great confidence in it. But it is something that we might want to explore if they are willing to put some pressure on the Iranians to calm down some of these activities, which are inflaming the entire region.

Dr. ABRAHAM. Thank you, General.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Carbajal.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all our witnesses for coming today. Professor Hoffman, you talk about the possibility of terrorist organizations developing and using weapons of mass destruction, WMDs.

The proliferation of WMDs or materials to develop these weapons would be catastrophic and certainly a game changer. I believe funding of nonproliferation programs are integral to any counterterrorism strategy.

To all our witnesses, how can we further proactively deter the spread of CBRNs, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons, to terrorist organizations?

Dr. Hoffman, if we could start with you.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Well, first and foremost, one of the most straightforward means is to ensure that all those countries that have these materials undertake the proper safeguards.

I am not entirely convinced that that is necessarily the case now with certain countries throughout the world in terms of safepiling the stockpiles, particularly of strategic nuclear material.

Secondly, I think it is paying close attention to the remedial measures that are going to be necessary should any of these attacks occur in an urban center. I don't think the likelihood is very high in the United States itself.

I would put it higher in Europe, just because there have been instances, for instance in Turkey where Al Qaeda in particular has been operating laboratories to manufacture and produce sarin nerve gas for example. So while I don't think this is necessarily an imminent threat, it is clearly on the minds of our adversaries.

And I think dealing with the psychological consequences of such an attack, I mean, Ambassador Sheehan made the point with the Aum Shinrikyo attack in Tokyo, had they set fire on the subway, for example, and caused smoke inhalation or had they used handguns, they would have killed far more people than the sarin did.

But nonetheless, the psychological impact of that use of an unconventional weapon back in the mid-1990s was extremely profound. And I would argue that those repercussions are going to be even greater now.

And therefore, not just preventing it from happening, but being able to very quickly remediate any sort of incident will go a long way to restoring public confidence and depriving the terrorists of the fear and alarm that they hope to generate from using an unconventional weapon that even might have a very modest casualty rate.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. We are doing a number of things for obvious reasons that addresses nuclear. It is more difficult to address smaller scale chemical, biological, or radiological attacks and for precisely the reasons that Professor Hoffman has pointed out.

And that is that it is difficult for them to scale up an attack to really get into casualty levels that we are looking at, at the level of, say, 9/11 or an order of magnitude greater than that.

But the nature of these weapons is such that even a small-scale attack is going to set off the alarms and reactions that are really going to cause us the difficulty.

Can we stop them from producing very tiny quantities of anthrax or low-quality ricin or some of these things? Very hard to do. Certainly we should try to do it. But there it is going to be a matter of really how fast can we respond effectively to these events that occur.

With biological, fortunately, there is a way we can spend money and get a dual effect on this and that is, we have to look to our public health systems and our response systems, and say whether this is a man-made event or not, what is our capacity for rapid response to save lives?

And above all to show competence in these events, rather than allow a small-scale event to become the one that propels the public into a panic.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Ambassador Sheehan.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Congressman, I think I divide the problem in two areas. One is weaponized WMD, nuclear, radiological, biological, or chemical, or an improvised. And I think that there are two different approaches.

For weaponized, which are generally done by a nation-state, you might want to look at the Nunn-Lugar process, where we have tried to safeguard former Soviet Union nuclear weapons. I think that was a very successful program, obviously a big and expensive one.

Maybe on a smaller level we can use those types of programs to make sure that weaponized systems by any country that has any of these types of systems are controlled. My biggest fear, quite frankly, nuclear, is Pakistan. And we can get into that and spend hours wringing my hands about that fear.

But on the improvised side, that is more difficult. There you are looking at I think the best way to defend against an improvised

WMD is to crush those organizations so that they are unable to develop the type of sophistication to develop these type of weapons.

If you allow them to sit in sanctuary and give them the time in order to develop these things, I think they will. But if you keep them on the run, if you keep the pressure on them, it becomes very, very difficult to do that. That is why for the 15 years, they haven't been able to, because of the enormous pressure on them.

So I think the greatest fear I have is if we ever take our foot off the neck of some of these organizations to allow them, to give them the space to recruit the types of people and develop those type of weapons, we will be in trouble. So my answer is keep the heat on them.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you very much. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Gallagher.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Professor Hoffman and Ambassador Sheehan, I would like to dig a little bit deeper on your comments regarding the Muslim Brotherhood. And Ambassador Sheehan, I take your point that the group is not a monolithic organization.

There are, for example, two factions in Jordan, one closer to Hamas, that I am sure the king would like to see less of, the other that is less difficult to deal with. But you both made the argument that we need to find a way of undermining the ideology.

And this is a group whose ideology celebrates violence. It celebrates martyrdom. It has as its highest aspiration the establishment of a global Islamic caliphate. The end of its credo says, "Jihad is our way, death in the form of Allah is our highest aspiration."

So if indeed the violent act is downstream from the ideology, how do we get at groups that are espousing the ideology short of designation? In other words, is there a smarter, more effective way of countering it that you would recommend if you are recommending against designation?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Again, I worry that this is, you know, precisely one of those moves that plays exactly into our enemies' desires, that by painting with a broad brush the Muslim—I don't disagree with anything that you have described about the ideology.

But again, I think the fact that it isn't a monolithic entity means that the repercussions of designating it as a terrorist group are going to be difficult to enforce. And I think the gains on our side aren't going to be tangible, whereas for our opponents I think the gains will be significant. It will furnish them with greater propaganda.

It will, I think, or I fear, have marginalized those members of the Muslim Brotherhoods that participate in parliamentary democracies that may have extreme views but don't share that same embrace of violence as a means to an end, and that we will succeed almost in creating the Muslim Brotherhood into more of a terrorist group than it is now.

I mean, admittedly it is a group that is very much in the gray area, but we should be focusing on the individuals who are advocating violence and not driving everyone else into their arms.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I think that I have said this before in this testimony. I am very skeptical that American voices condemning the Muslim Brotherhood have much traction where it matters. And you wind up pissing off more people than turning away some from

joining the violent groups. I just don't think it is a very productive enterprise.

So in terms of designation, you have to define the group. And if you can define a group that calls itself the Muslim Brotherhood, and it is a defined organization that has conducted terrorist attacks and killed or harmed American citizens, then we have an obligation to designate it as FTO. But to broad-brush it, it just doesn't work, first of all.

And second of all, I don't think it is very productive. I do believe that the best thing that we can do in terms of supporting counter-narratives to the Muslim Brotherhood is to support the local nations that have to deal with that. They will have the better voice. They will understand the dynamics in their particular country and how to face that.

So for President Sisi, who may perhaps—or King Abdullah that have these real problems with the Muslim Brotherhood, they have to figure out a way to deal with the political realities of their countries and try to focus on identifying the violent folks that are adherent to that and deal with them individually.

And they have the best sense of how to deal with that. Back here in the U.S., our pronouncements about that I don't think are very productive.

Mr. GALLAGHER. And just a quick follow-up for Professor Hoffman, because I have a minute. So it seems like your concern would be that the designation would drive that sort of elements of the Brotherhood that are currently participating in the political process away from it.

But wouldn't our experience in Egypt suggest that the Brotherhood when allowed to fully participate in the political process only uses it to expand power and act in authoritarian ways against our interests? I would just be interested in your thoughts.

Mr. HOFFMAN. That is the problem is that the Muslim Brotherhood isn't a monolith and doesn't have a centralized command. So yes, you are absolutely right in Egypt. But in Jordan, I think you could make another argument and that is what concerns me.

I think groups like Hamas, that are part of the Muslim Brotherhood and that are clearly terrorist, that is what you be much more specific, I believe than holistic.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you gentlemen. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Brown.

Mr. BROWN. Am I on? I apologize. My first question I have asked in a full committee hearing. So this is a readiness question and each of you seem to agree that there might not be an end to our fight against terrorism.

But rather that the United States will continue to be involved in an ongoing effort, perhaps generational effort, to reduce the successful, strategic feats of our continuing terrorist threat.

If this is the case, could each of you comment on our military readiness from your vantage point and your experience, our sustained ability to reduce these terrorist threats.

And I am particularly interested in your thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of our personnel capabilities, both the strength size and the skill sets of the men and women in uniform

and also the level and engagement of U.S. and non-U.S. human assets, intelligence assets abroad.

Mr. JENKINS. Let me comment quickly. First of all, I do think—we have mentioned various figures here, 20 to 40 years, two generations. It is going to be very, very long. And the end is not clear.

And as military operations against terrorism become routinized then traditional concepts of victory begin to fade away. Americans traditionally have looked at warfare as a finite undertaking with a clear beginning and clear end.

We are not going to get that. This goes on indefinitely, and upping the investment or resources doesn't necessarily shorten the time horizon. But it shortens our time horizon in terms of our ability to sustain it, politically and in terms of cost.

As a consequence we have learned that if we try to do things with major investments, as we have in Afghanistan and Iraq, that this can have a major impact on our military readiness.

I mean we have imposed huge burdens on our military personnel. We have deferred decisions about acquisitions, about maintenance, about training.

And as a consequence I am not the one to be able to give the precise answer to this as to how many of our brigades are really up to strength and combat ready to go at the moment. But I suspect that we have paid a heavy, heavy price in terms of our overall readiness to deal with other contingencies.

So we are going to have to conceptually change our model to say we have to figure out a way to manage this. And I am using the word manage to avoid the word win or victory. That is not defined well.

But to manage this for the long term in a way that we can sustain it in terms of readiness and in terms of political will and not exhaust ourselves, which is precisely what our opponents are trying to make us do.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I agree completely with Mr. Jenkins. I will just add that since we have reduced from the big efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, although we are increasing again, it going to take us years to recoup, to get those brigades combat ready again. But we will get there with the proper investments, and if we pace ourselves.

The biggest concern is going to be in the special operations forces, about 70,000 of those folks out there, men and women in all of the services. They are going to be asked to do a lot of the heavy lifting in these fights. So we are going to have to—I don't think we can expand much beyond that.

And I have had a lot conversations with Admiral McRaven about that, and other leaders within the special operations forces community. It takes a long time to build these folks, 10 years to really get them ready. You can't just create them overnight.

So I think that we have to be careful in husbanding those resources and carefully deciding where we are going to put them because we have to spread them out.

And I don't think—we may be able to increase force structure a little bit, but I think in those areas it is very difficult. So it is a matter of setting priorities, and again, as Mr. Jenkins said, is designing a strategy that you can sustain for another 20 years.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Can I squeeze in a comment? We have been talking about terrorists and terrorism most of this hearing. What concerns me in terms of our military is what we are seeing with our adversaries is they are going beyond terrorism. We face hybrid adversaries now, whether it is ISIS, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, certainly Hezbollah.

Where these groups have conventional capabilities they are able to seize territory. They are able to, even in Al Qaeda's case, something that they didn't want to do in the past, but they are able to now, provide some form of governance, however rudimentary.

They are able to take on even the established militaries of our local partners. And this is a trend line that concerns me, is that in the future, we are not going to be talking strictly about counterterrorism or counterinsurgency or even about countering conventional warfare.

We are going to see adversaries that are non-state entities, that get into this whole definitional question that Representative Gallagher raised about the Muslim Brotherhood where they become very difficult to define, even in this military context.

And we are going to have to have a military, I would argue, but I have none of the credentials of my two colleagues, but that goes beyond the sort of capabilities of the smaller special forces as they exist today, and that have to involve a different mix of forces perhaps than we have seen in the past in a different model, and sort of the innovation and the different kind of thinking I talked about in my written testimony.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Banks.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you Mr. Chairman. And gentlemen, thank you for sharing your vast experience with the committee today. As a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, I can't help but to start there and consider our mission in Afghanistan first when discussing the global war on terror.

Mr. Jenkins, in your testimony, you described the military's success that has come from working with locals, including irregular forces. My experience in Afghanistan gives me grim hope that we will find a long-term success in our Afghan partners, given the significant headwinds that prevail there.

Whether their corruption, antiquated systems, or misplaced loyalty, it is clear that our work in Afghanistan from an advise and assist mission perspective is far from over.

Ambassador, you described in your testimony the war raging between the forces of modernity and the radical Taliban in the mountainous regions in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

And since all three of you described the devastating terror attacks of 9/11, I would like to explore with you how to prevent the Af-Pak region from returning to a region where terrorists can move, organize, and plan devastating attacks on the West with relative ease.

So Ambassador, in your testimony, you expressed the need to expand our train, advise, and assist programs, while also expressing caution about too many advisors looking like an occupying force. This sounds a lot to me like advocating for the status quo.

Yet last week General Nicholson testified in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee that we may need a few thousand more troops in the train, advise, and assist category. Do you agree with the general's assessment in that role?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Thank you, sir. I don't know about the exact numbers. I am skeptical about bigger numbers. I think the real question is you have to go back and define what the task is.

If he considers his task that he has to pacify vast regions of Afghanistan, then certainly he is going to need more soldiers to do that. The question is, is that really what the task is?

Is it necessary to pacify all those regions? Is it necessary to spend the resources, have the body bags come back up to Andrews, fighting over territory that might not be existential to our national security?

What we really need to do in Afghanistan is make sure that we have enough capability there to find and kill those terrorists that threaten our homeland. To do that is going to require a long-term commitment in Afghanistan to stabilize that country.

But in terms of pacifying the whole country, I am not sure that is worth the lives of more of our men and women that are dying and being maimed over there. And I don't want to get emotional about this, but this is what we are really talking about.

So we have to be very focused on what we are doing. And so actually, by the way, this is a separate subject. I am very skeptical about having field commanders come back to Washington and make pronouncements about troop levels. I have never met a field commander that didn't want more troops.

You don't have, Patton didn't come back to Washington and advocating he wanted more troops, gasoline, and bullets to move forward. Of course he did. But so did MacArthur in Asia. Those decisions are not made by the field commanders. They are made by people who have the broader perspective.

Anything that he wants in Afghanistan in a zero-sum world which we have in the Pentagon, takes forces and funding away from other areas that directly threaten us in terms of terrorism and these other emerging threats that you have been dealing with in this and the other subcommittees. So there are costs and benefits that Mr. Jenkins articulated beautifully.

So I don't know whether General Nicholson should or should not get more forces. I think that we have to ask first, what are you trying to achieve here and try to keep our objectives fairly narrow so that we don't exhaust ourselves. So that is my answer.

Mr. BANKS. So with that, aside from the train, advise, and assist mission, how should the international community combat issues in the Af-Pak FATA region with a limited troop presence on the ground?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Well, what is ironic is that the FATA is the home of Al Qaeda central, which traditionally is being our biggest strategic threat. They are the ones that blew up our embassies in Africa, at least an African arm of that; blew up the *Cole* in Yemen, an arm of Al Qaeda central; and are the people that are responsible for 9/11.

They reside in Pakistan. Some of them are floating back into Afghanistan, but it is difficult for them to operate in Afghanistan be-

cause we own the terrain around Afghanistan. Not necessarily every mountainside, but we can reach out and touch them in Afghanistan.

In Pakistan, in Western Pakistan, it is interesting. We haven't had soldiers there in over 10 years, yet we continue to diminish and degrade the capability of Al Qaeda central to reach us strategically.

I worry about this all the time, that without that presence there—and the Pakistani army isn't in there very often either. Once in a while they come rumbling through, but that is not really that effective.

They are there in those mountainous regions and we—what is interesting is we need Afghanistan almost as much as a base to attack the FATA than we need Afghanistan itself.

Afghanistan has no strategic importance to the United States. However, the importance is that Al Qaeda is there and blew up the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. We can't allow that to come back again.

And they are in Western Pakistan, and for a variety of political reasons we can't put troops on the ground there so we have had to come up with a solution to diminish AQ in Pakistan without one soldier on the ground.

So sometimes you have to come up with solutions with no troops on the ground. Other times if you have the ability to send 100,000 there it doesn't mean you should. So it is a matter of finding the right solution commensurate with the threat.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Murphy.

Mrs. MURPHY. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony. I represent a district in central Florida that was significantly impacted by terrorism in this last June, a gunman who swore allegiance to ISIL walked into the Pulse Nightclub and killed and wounded over 100 people.

This is the deadliest terrorist attack in the United States since September 11. It is also the deadliest instance of violence against the LGBTQ community in our Nation's history.

Unfortunately, this event serves as a tragic reminder that violence motivated by ideological extremism is an enduring threat to our security at home and abroad.

We have seen that ISIL and other groups have been able to successfully recruit and inspire adherence through the internet, and recently I read an Associated Press investigation into CENTCOM's [U.S. Central Command's] program to counter ISIL's online propaganda.

The investigation found that specialists hired to work on counter-propaganda efforts had little prior experience and did not have sufficient Arabic language skills or an adequate understanding of Islam to be effective against ISIL's online recruitment efforts.

What is your assessment of our cultural and linguistic capabilities? And how do we ensure that the resources that we invest in efforts to counter online propaganda are effective?

Mr. JENKINS. You know, first of all, it is striking to me that in a nation of 320 million people with as many immigrants that we

have that we have problems in recruiting people with appropriate language skills to run programs like this.

And I cannot—I find it difficult to believe is that we don't have those resources, so I think there may be bureaucratic things that prevent us from utilizing these people.

In fact, if you take something, and I will trespass in Ambassador Sheehan's territory, if you take something like the NYPD, the NYPD probably have language capabilities in Arabic that rival those of the Federal Government.

That reflected the diverse population of New York, but it also reflected a determination to utilize those resources in a very, very effective way. That is one city.

We have a lot of cities with a lot of communities where they speak a lot of different languages and so this is something. It is not a resource problem. It is how we are putting this together.

Now, I don't know that everyone that is in one of these programs has to necessarily be cleared to a top secret clearance and go through all of these things which we have a tendency to do. But I would look for myself, and I don't know the details of this program—I read the same article—I would look for what are the bureaucratic obstacles, the organizational obstacles to getting qualified people into this as opposed to, gee, we can't find enough Arabic speakers in the United States.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Mr. Jenkins is right, Congresswoman. The NYPD program had no security classifications for most of its Arabic speakers, Urdu speakers, Farsi speakers, et cetera. They didn't need it.

What they did do is they are creative enough to put those people operationally in a box so that they did not have access to classified information so that they were never a threat to the security of NYPD or the city or any of the FBI's programs.

So we were able to use the linguists that we had with NYPD to do all kinds of things, not only on the internet, where we were able to establish chat rooms far faster than the Federal Government was able to do after 9/11.

Because quite frankly, the FBI and the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] have a very long and in-depth process of making people have top secret highly classified classification qualifications in order for them to operate in some of these programs.

What I have long believed that you could put those people, and to include undercovers and other folks, you box them off from your secure programs, and they are able to operate. And I think that we should—other jurisdictions can look to the NYPD model and duplicate those, but on a much smaller scale.

Of course they have much smaller cities as well, but I think there are ways that they can get into the communities, get into the chat rooms, get into the internet and help find those problems.

One other issue on Tampa, San Bernardino, Boston, and others. One of the things that has happened in those cases is the FBI when it opens up a case on an individual it will follow them for a long time, but after that person isn't really active they are going to drop the case.

And normally, the local jurisdiction is not notified about that unless they have an office within the JTTF. I would advocate, like

NYPD does, if a case is dropped like the two brothers in Boston, the local police should have picked that up.

And they won't conduct that operation exactly like the FBI will. They may go knock on the door of the house of the neighbor, but at least they will know that people are looking at them. And that might deter them from acting.

Those are things that could be done tomorrow in other jurisdictions that I believe can be a great deterrent to some of these home-grown folks. So a little bit of creativity with the local law enforcement.

And by the way, I have been down to Broward County talking to the JTF down there and some of the police forces. More can be done.

Mrs. MURPHY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Gaetz.

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank the chairman for really the entire hearing schedule we have had in this committee. All of the material seems to build on what we have learned in our prior discussions, and it seems to be drawing into very sharp relief the need to enhance our readiness to deal with these very complex challenges.

Ambassador, you testified earlier that one of the things we could do to be most effective in counterterrorism is to support those who have more inclusive values at the local level, perhaps even at the tribal and community level in some of these places of concern.

Yet in Mr. Jenkins' testimony we seem to have the identification of at least five functional failed states in Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, and Libya, and so in these failed states, what are the effective tools in the toolbox that we can use to support, generate, facilitate some of the civic institutions that can be the most effective counterterrorism tools?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Thank you, sir. I think even in failed states we can work with local militia forces to fight the terrorist militia forces. And we are trying to do that in varying degrees in varying levels in places like Somalia, Yemen, and Libya.

I think we need to—we can step up that activity because really it is a local fight. And I think if I can share this with you in Yemen, I think in Yemen we put too many resources in their traditional military structures, some of which had very dubious allegiances to the government that we supported. And that came back to bite us.

If you really look at who was actually fighting AQAP in the mountainsides of central Yemen, it was some of these tribal groups that were actually first organized by the Soviet Union back in the 1970s in the civil war there.

But basically what they were were tribal organizations like in Afghanistan like our ALP program, the [Afghan] local police, where it goes back to the Vietnam models and the 1960s models about organizing local militia to defend their villages.

And sometimes in failed states that is where you have to start to work, at the local level working with people that are willing to fight for their side and work with them as opposed to perhaps trying to stop from the top where a government is either broken or falling apart.

Mr. GAETZ. And Ambassador, there is increasing concern in Congress that our work with those local militias can lead to perhaps a lack of fidelity with them to our values and to our objectives in the region. What are the things that can be done to ensure that if we engage some of these local militia forces we, you know, our warfighters don't end up fighting against our own material?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Yes. It is a very difficult question. The first time I ever trained and armed a local militia, a month later the guerillas came and shot a few of them and took away 40 weapons. So it is a risky proposition because—

Mr. GAETZ. Is it only case-by-case that we can determine where there is this loyalty or are there some best practices we have used in other parts of the world, South America—

Ambassador SHEEHAN. There are—

Mr. GAETZ [continuing]. You know, other places that we could use in the Middle East?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. There are plenty of best practices dating back decades and—but ultimately what you have to do is decentralize your decision making and allow the operators on the ground to make decisions about who actually they are going to spend resources on to train and assist. What are the units?

What are the—whether it be militia or certain of the governments, which are the ones that really actually are willing to fight and put your resources there. There is no, I don't think, a cookie-cutter solution. I think it has to be determined at the local level.

Mr. GAETZ. Are you confident that within our current force structure and chain of command that there is sufficient devolution on those questions?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. I think that we have some really smart folks out there working these issues. I do believe, and I alluded to this in my testimony, that we are fairly thin in some countries that are very problematic. Although we are increasing fairly dramatically in Africa the size of our forces, the 10th Special Forces Group over there, I think that we need to establish a more robust presence in some of these smaller countries. And I am talking again in dozens or 50, hundreds of people, not thousands to—and they have to stay there for a while, at least on repeat assignments.

And we were talking about this in the anteroom about creating cadres that can develop real expertise in the region so that they can know the language, know the people, know what units to support.

I am not sure our Army has the proper management systems in place to develop, train, deploy, and nurture those types of folks and their careers in those faraway places that were really at the tip of the spear.

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr., is it Suozzi—

Mr. SUOZZI. Suozzi.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Suozzi. All right. Thank you. It will take me a while to get it right. Welcome the gentleman to the committee and he is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for keeping the hearing open. I think we are some of the last ones here, so thank you for sticking around for the whole time. I appreciate it very much. And

thank you to each of the speakers for a fantastic education that you gave us all today.

I am going to follow up on something that Mr. Gaetz was starting to probe there, and Ambassador, you were talking about, or maybe it was Mr. Jenkins, you were talking about failed states and ungoverned areas, and, you know, not so much about the ideology, just this concept that Tom Friedman has used in his book recently of control versus chaos.

The idea of, you know, places that are stable in the world versus places that are becoming chaotic because of climate change, because of civil war, because of corruption, because of incompetence. It is really a battle in the world of control versus chaos.

And I want you to suggest to us where we need to prioritize which places that are failed or are ungoverned that we should be focusing on trying to get them more stabilized, and where should we be concerned are the next places that could become failed states or as you said before, you know, armies that have gone out of control because there was an army in place and now.

So what places should we prioritize that we need to—you know, you talked about these small states in Sub-Saharan Africa. Where should we be focusing on trying to stabilize existing places that are unstable and where are the places that we have to worry are going to fall next?

And I will ask you first, Ambassador.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Well, thank you. I ticked them off in my testimony there, and I think that in the failed states, the four that I mentioned in Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya, we have to put a high priority on activity in those four countries.

Mr. SUOZZI. Which has the best opportunity of getting stabilized of those four?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Oh, I don't think any of them have very good prospects at all for years. I was in Somalia in 1994, so how many years ago was that, and it was a mess then and it still is now.

Yemen is a disaster, as is Libya. These are going to be broken states for a long time. And even when you do get governments that are stable, the countryside is going to be out of control for decades.

So I think in those four countries we have to put a major effort. In Yemen you have AQAP, which has demonstrated in the past its ability. In Libya I am very concerned about it. Professor Hoffman talked about Somalia and its challenges.

So, and Syria is obviously—

Mr. SUOZZI. So there is no argument you would prioritize those four?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Those four.

Mr. SUOZZI. Okay. So like, for example, I was speaking to some Europeans the other day. They are most concerned about Libya because that is the—

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Yes. It is close.

Mr. SUOZZI. It's the closest one. So should we prioritize that first before going to others or?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Look, right now our priority is in Afghanistan if you look at the force levels. And in Iraq of course because we are trying to roll ISIS out of Mosul and then eventually kick

them out of Raqqa. And then we are going to have to have pretty substantial forces in both of those places.

However, I would say some of these others are just as problematic.

Mr. SUOZZI. Any place you are worried, the next place that could fall that is not on the list now but the next place that could go—

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Oh, I would—

Mr. SUOZZI [continuing]. If we don't pay attention?

Mr. SHEEHAN [continuing]. I would worry about the Central African areas like parts of Nigeria. The Nigerian state is not going to fall, but areas of the country that could come out of control and that would be very problematic.

But I think North Africa is probably because of its proximity to Europe, and once you are in Europe it is easy to get to the U.S.—

Mr. SUOZZI. Right.

Mr. SHEEHAN [continuing]. Is really somewhere I would focus on.

Mr. SUOZZI. I only have a minute 4 seconds left.

Ambassador SHEEHAN. Or Jordan, by the way, I would throw in there.

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. You know, the patterns have been pretty stable in terms of the real hardcore areas. And even before we get to anticipating which ones we should be anticipating, we have a long enough list of ones that are on the—

Mr. SUOZZI. To focus on now, right.

Mr. JENKINS [continuing]. Critical list already—

Mr. SUOZZI. Right, yes.

Mr. JENKINS [continuing]. That we don't necessarily have the resources to be ambitious, although it would be nice to anticipate all of these things. So I would certainly share with the focus being on these.

I think the real issue is that when we pay attention to one of these, we have to be realistic about what we can do with our resources. And therefore are going to have to rely more on Arab allies that can field forces and on dealing with local militias and not necessarily taking the course that the prerequisite has to be we have to restore a functioning central government, which gets us into the nation building business—

Mr. SUOZZI. Right.

Mr. JENKINS [continuing]. Before we take these measures. So we may end up working with local irregular forces before there is anything called a government or looks like a government.

And we may end up leaning on some of our Arab state allies who have expressed a willingness to do some of these things and saying yes, you can put some people on the ground there more easily than we can. Because we don't have enough expertise and forces and also we are Americans here to deal with all of these.

So it doesn't mean not engagement, but it means a very effective management. It does mean getting into the very ambitious task, as I think we have in Afghanistan, of, well, first we are going to have a big Afghan government, then we are going to have an Afghan national army, and we are saying, well, we—you know, good luck—that is two, three generations away.

Mr. SUOZZI. Right.

Mr. HOFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, could I add very quickly? I will answer your questions in reverse order. For me, my biggest concern is Yemen because I think Yemen is going to split into two and we are going to have a Houthi Shia-based country influenced by Iran with now a significant Iranian foothold on the western part of the bottom of the Arabian Peninsula.

And then we are going to have a Salafi-jihadi state, or statelet, on the eastern side, and that is going to, I think, have profound geopolitical and strategic repercussions up the Arabian Peninsula. And Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States must be very concerned about that.

Very briefly, I think the bigger question is that the simplest answer is, you know, where are our interests most important and where are the best local allies to work with? And when those two things converge, I think that gives us an indication where the greatest benefit of our attention and efforts might be.

But in one sentence, I think the biggest problem is that in some of these regions the World War II borders are being reshaped, whether we or anybody else likes it. And going in and sort of buttressing borders that have outlived their relevance is going to be a fool's errand.

So we have to think, in this upheaval that has become very localized, where we can't put the toothpaste back in the tube or we can't turn back the clock, where again between the confluence of our interests and local allies is that combination best served?

So just for example, I am not advocating this, but with the Kurds in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, I mean, that is where you have something of this convergence. So it may be thinking less in stereotypical nation-state terms and more in the new constellations of power, local power that are going to emerge.

Mr. SUOZZI. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Last but certainly not least on this topic, the gentleman from Rhode Island.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank our panel for your testimony today. It has been an interesting discussion.

I know that we have had several questions on counter-messaging this morning, and I know that some of the witnesses have stated that we are doing okay on the narrative, for example, how we are dealing with refugees, but it is not going to convince people to change their ideology.

So I believe it was Mr. Hoffman that indicated that we should do more to disable cyber capabilities. So on that topic I would like to explore that a little more and what can we do? What more can we do on the cyber front?

Mr. HOFFMAN. It may be akin to our leadership attrition strategy that we use now where it doesn't provide necessarily an ultimate answer or deliver the crushing blow that I talk about, but it keeps our adversaries sufficiently off balance and disrupts their message to an extent that it has just much greater difficulty reaching their intended audiences.

I mean, this is an ongoing problem because of course as technology improves, what we have seen is that terrorists are able

often to seize on that technology faster than governments can adjust to it, so that is one of the challenges.

But, I mean, in my testimony I described 40,000 fighters from more than 100 different countries. What common message could we possibly direct that is going to push back on whatever individualistic or idiosyncratic reason they have been recruited? I mean, that is why I think that it is important to do these things, but we can't see it as an end in itself.

And that relying on what we are really good at—we are not good at counter-messaging. We were during the Cold War; we had the United States Information Service and Information Agency to do it, but that is in the past.

What we are good at now is utilizing technology. And harnessing technological disruption I think would be a much—in terms of cost effective and beneficial, would be an improvement over what we are doing now.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Anybody else want to offer anything else? No? Okay. So one of you in relation to a question that Ms. Stefanik had with respect to—the answer was to working more closely with the countries in the region in the Middle East. Could you expand on that? In exactly what way are you suggesting we work more closely?

Mr. Jenkins, was that you I think?

Mr. JENKINS. Yes. I mean first of all, we can do more with regard to just military operations and this is not a matter of attempting to create, you know, the anti-jihadist equivalent of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] or something like that. We are not at that formal level.

But we certainly can try to more effectively enlist and assist these local states that do have resources, and I am talking about both military resources as well as political and propaganda resources to make that work.

Now, again, we have to be realistic. They are not necessarily going to get great report cards on every aspect of something we would look for in a NATO ally.

But we are going to have to be able to do that simply because we are the inappropriate instrument. We are the instrument of last resort in these things. We cannot be the lead instrument in every one of these.

Second, in terms of our expectations of these, in some cases—they don't have to be good enough to match the American Armed Forces. They have to be good enough to deal with the Al Qaeda or to deal with whatever the local branches of ISIL or other jihadist groups.

In some cases we may be recruiting locally for militias for the sole purpose of out-recruiting the other side. In other words, not even thinking about them as a fighting force.

Where simply we have unemployed young men and if we don't do something they will end up fighting for the other side because they will pay them. And in that sense it is a lot cheaper to say, okay, they will be in our militia, and we can have them do something useful.

But at the very least it is far more costly and dangerous to take them out when they join ISIL. And ISIL is an example. Not every

fighter, not every Syrian in the ranks of ISIL is a dedicated hardcore jihadist.

There are a lot of them that have joined this because it was there were no other options. So for survival, for economic survival, they did this. So we can look for opportunities to do that.

In other words, we are moving away from—I think if there is one common message we are sending here is, one, it is a long time. We can't shorten that.

Two, we have to be careful about the kind of things we do because they can be costly and counterproductive.

Three, this is not a war in a sense it is not like we are going to land on the beaches of Normandy and liberate France and cross the Rhine and head for Berlin.

This is going to be much more in the realm of managing. It is closer to dealing with a law enforcement problem in a certain sense with military force than it is waging a war, although military force is going to be used.

And therefore we are going to be lowering expectations, in some cases going for the long run, not doing counterproductive things, managing costs, making careful judgments. That is conceptually so different from the traditional way we have looked at warfare and military operations.

I don't want to use the wrong term, but that is paradigm-changing. That is a conceptual change. And our military institutions, as splendid as they are, that is a difficult change for them to do. And maybe they are not even the right instrument.

Maybe we create a number of ad hoc things that realize, look, this is not what you guys do best. And we have to figure out other ways of getting this done. And we are going to use some military assets, but it is going to be a very different way of conducting operations.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you. Thank you.

I know my time has expired. You know, I would be interested in knowing if you could respond for the record, and in your assessment if it is a way that you can quantify it, the degree to which the fighters involved in this are doing it because of ideology and which are doing it because there were no other options? And which is the bigger, too; and I had some other questions that I would like to submit for the record.

But thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

I think that was very interesting, lots of interesting conversations. The last one was particularly interesting to me. We face a similar kind of situation when we look at the hybrid threat that Russia poses. It is not strictly tanks coming across the plains of northern Europe. It is much subtle.

Do we have the right military or other instruments of national power to deal with that, not just the Russians, the Chinese, the Iranians, as you talked about Hezbollah a little while ago, and terrorism has some elements of that where just our traditional notions of military power may not be the right way to deal with it.

We will have a lot more conversation about that, but a lot of that is the job of Congress to make the reforms sometimes that the mili-

tary has a hard time doing itself. And—but to do that in a prudent way.

That is why we are particularly grateful to have you-alls' guidance in thinking about these issues and we will continue to rely on you in the future.

Thank you all again for being here. The hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:45 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

FEBRUARY 14, 2017

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

FEBRUARY 14, 2017

**THE EVOLVING THREAT OF TERRORISM AND EFFECTIVE
COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES**

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
February 14, 2017**

Professor Bruce Hoffman
Center for Security Studies
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

While ISIS¹ poses the most serious, imminent terrorist threat today, al-Qa`ida has been quietly rebuilding and marshaling its resources to reinvigorate the war against the United States declared 20 years ago by its founder and leader, Osama bin Laden.² The result is that both groups have enmeshed the U.S. and the West in a debilitating war of attrition, with all its deleterious consequences. ISIS has built external operations capability that will likely survive its loss of territory in Libya, Iraq, and Syria. Meanwhile, the threat from al-Qa`ida persists and may become more serious as it attempts to capitalize on ISIS's falling star alongside the enhancement of its own terrorist strike capabilities.

In order to better understand the background and dynamics of these developments, this testimony will discuss five key potentialities arising from these current threats:

- First, the resilience of ISIS's external operations arm in a post-caliphate environment;
- Second, the likely enduring threat posed by the tens of thousands of foreign fighters who have answered both ISIS's and al-Qa`ida's respective calls to battle;
- Third, the prospect of al-Qa`ida absorbing—whether amenably or forcibly—ISIS's surviving cadre;

- Fourth, the possibility of terrorist development and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) re-appearing as a salient threat consideration; and,
- Fifth, what the new administration should do about it.

THE RESILIENCE OF ISIS'S EXTERNAL OPERATIONS ARM IN A POST-CALIPHATE ENVIRONMENT

ISIS, alas, is here to stay—at least for the foreseeable future. Some two years before the 2015 Paris attacks, ISIS had built an external operations network in Europe that mostly escaped notice. Known as the Amn al-Kharji or simply as “Enmi” or “Anmi” (the respective Turkish and Arabic rendering of the word, “Amniyat,” or security service), this unit appears to function independently of the group’s waning military and territorial fortunes. For instance, U.S. intelligence and defense officials quoted by Rukmini Callimachi in her revealing August 2016 *New York Times* article believe that ISIS has already sent “hundreds of operatives” into the European Union with “hundreds more” having been dispatched to Turkey as well.³ If accurate, this investment of operational personnel ensures that ISIS will retain an effective international terrorist strike capability in Europe irrespective of its battlefield reverses in Syria and Iraq. Indeed, ISIS’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has already instructed potential foreign fighters who are unable to travel to the caliphate to instead emigrate to other wilayets (where ISIS branches are located).⁴ This suggests that these other branches could develop their own external operations capabilities independent of the parent organization and present significant future threat(s)—much as al-Qa`ida’s franchises have over the past decade in Yemen, North Africa, and South Asia, among other places.

THE LIKELY ENDURING THREAT POSED BY THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS WHO HAVE ANSWERED BOTH ISIS'S AND AL-QA`IDA'S RESPECTIVE CALLS TO BATTLE

Moreover, in addition to the presumed sleeper cells that ISIS has seeded throughout Europe, there is the further problem of at least some of the estimated 7,000 European foreign fighters returning home.⁵ They are only a fraction of the nearly 40,000 persons⁶ from more than 100

countries throughout the world⁷ who have trained in Syria and Iraq. What this means is that in little more than four years ISIS's international cadre has surpassed even the most liberal estimates of the number of foreign fighters that the U.S. Intelligence Community believes journeyed to Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s in order to join al-Qa`ida.<sup>8</sup> In other words, far more foreign nationals have been trained by ISIS in Syria and Iraq during the past couple of years than were by al-Qa`ida in the dozen or so years leading up to the September 11th 2001 attacks.⁹ This recreates the same constellation of organizational capabilities and trained operatives that made al-Qa`ida so dangerous sixteen years ago.

And, unlike the comparatively narrow geographical demographics of prior al-Qa`ida recruits, ISIS's foreign fighters cadre includes hitherto unrepresented nationalities, such as hundreds of Latin Americans along with citizens from Mali, Benin, and Bangladesh, among other atypical jihadi recruiting grounds.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the danger from so-called lone wolf attacks also remains. The late ISIS commander Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's famous September 2014 summons to battle has hitherto proven far more compelling than al-Qa`ida's longstanding efforts similarly to animate, motivate, and inspire individuals to engage in violence in support of its aims.

**THE PROSPECT OF AL-QA`IDA ABSORBING—WHETHER AMENABLY OR FORCIBLY—
ISIS'S SURVIVING CADRE**

While ISIS has dominated the headlines and preoccupied the U.S. government's attention for the past four years, al-Qa`ida has been quietly rebuilding and marshaling its resources for the continuation of its twenty year long struggle against the U.S. Indeed, its presence in Syria should be regarded as just as dangerous and even more pernicious than that of ISIS. Evidence of the high priority that the al-Qa`ida Senior Leadership (AQSL) attaches to Syria may be seen in the special messages conveyed in February and June 2012 respectively by Ayman al-Zawahiri and the late Abu Yahya al-Libi in support of the uprising against the Assad regime—calling upon Muslims in Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon to do everything within their power to assist in the overthrow of the apostate Alawites.

The fact that Jabhat al-Nusra or Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, regardless of what it calls itself, is even more capable than ISIS and a more dangerous long-term threat seems almost immaterial to many across the region who not only actively support and assist it, but actively seek to partner with what they perversely regard as a more moderate and reasonable rival to ISIS.

This development may be seen as fitting neatly into al-Zawahiri's broader strategy of letting ISIS take all the heat and absorb all the blows from the coalition arrayed against it while al-Qa`ida quietly rebuilds its military strength and basks in its paradoxical new cachet as "moderate extremists" in contrast to the unconstrained ISIS.

Anyone inclined to be taken in by this ruse would do well to heed the admonition of Theo Padnos (Peter Theo Curtis), the American journalist who spent two years in Syria as a hostage of Jabhat al-Nusra. Padnos relates how, "The Nusra Front higher-ups were inviting Westerners to the jihad in Syria not so much because they needed more foot soldiers—they didn't—but because they want to teach the Westerners to take the struggle into every neighborhood and subway back home."¹¹

Finally, the importance of Syria to al-Qa`ida's plans may be seen in the number of AQSL personages who have re-located there. Mushin al-Fadhli, a bin Laden intimate who, until his death from a U.S. airstrike in 2015, had commanded the Khorasan Group—al-Qa`ida's elite, forward-based operational arm in Syria. Haydar Kirkan, a Turkish national and longstanding, senior al-Qa`ida commander, had been sent back to his homeland in 2010—presumably by bin Laden himself. Kirkan's orders were to build an infrastructure in the region to facilitate the movement of key al-Qa`ida personnel hiding in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area in order to escape the escalation of drone strikes ordered by President Obama. Kirkan was recently killed as a result of a U.S. bombing raid in Idlib, Syria.

And, in late 2015, al-Zawahiri dispatched Saif al-Adl, al-Qa`ida's most experienced and battle-hardened senior commander, to Syria in order to oversee the group's interests there. With this senior command structure in place, al-Qa`ida is thus well positioned to exploit ISIS's

weakening military position and territorial losses and once again regain its pre-eminent position at the vanguard of the Salafi-Jihadi movement. ISIS in any event can no longer compete with al-Qa`ida in terms of influence, reach, manpower, and cohesion. In only one domain is ISIS currently stronger than its rival: the ability to mount spectacular terrorist strikes in Europe—and this is only because al-Qa`ida has decided for the time being to restrain this type of operation.

Looking to the immediate future, ISIS's continuing setbacks and serial weakening arguably create the conditions where some reconciliation with al-Qa`ida might yet be effected. Efforts to reunite have in fact been continuous from both sides virtually from the time of ISIS's expulsion from the al-Qa`ida fold in 2014. Regardless of how it might occur, any kind of reconciliation between ISIS and al-Qa`ida or re-amalgamation or co-operation between the two groups would profoundly change the current conflict and result in a significantly escalated threat of foreign fighter terrorist operations in the West.

THE POSSIBILITY OF TERRORIST DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD) RE-APPEARING AS A SALIENT THREAT CONSIDERATION

A quarter of a century ago, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described publicity as the oxygen upon which terrorism depended. Today, however, it is access to sanctuary and safe haven that sustains and nourishes terrorism. A depressing pattern has established itself whereby we continue to kill terrorist leaders while the organizations they lead nonetheless continue to seize more territory. Indeed, according to the National Counterterrorism Center, a year before the U.S. launched the current campaign to defeat ISIS, the group had a presence in only seven countries around the world. By 2015, the same year that the Obama administration's latest counterterrorism strategy had been enunciated, that number had nearly doubled. And, as recently as this past August, the NCTC reported that ISIS was "fully operational" in eighteen countries.¹² Meanwhile, Qa`ida is also present in more countries today (nearly two dozen by my count) than it was in 2001—and in three times as many as when the Obama administration took office in 2009. Today, foreign volunteers are fighting in Yemen,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Libya, and Mali as well as in Syria and Iraq, among other places.

Sanctuary also permits more scope for terrorist research and development efforts to produce various weapons of destruction (WMD—more accurately CBRN weapons: chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons). In the case of al-Qa`ida's presence in Afghanistan before the September 11th 2001 attacks, these fears were more than amply justified. The group's interest in acquiring a nuclear weapon had reportedly commenced as far back as 1992—a mere four years after its creation. Indeed, bin Laden's continued interest in nuclear weaponry was also on display at the time of the September 11th, 2001 attacks. Two Pakistani nuclear scientists, identified as Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majeed, spent three days that August at a secret al-Qa`ida facility outside Kabul. Although their discussions with bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and other senior Qa`ida commanders also focused the development and employment of chemical and biological weapons, Mahmood—the former director for nuclear power at Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission—claimed that bin Laden's foremost interest was in developing a nuclear weapon. Nor is there any reason to suspect that al-Qa`ida's general fascination with either nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction or mass disruption has ever completely abated or disappeared.

Al-Qa`ida's research and development of biological warfare agents, for instance, were not only actively pursued but were also far more advanced than its nuclear ambitions. They appear to have begun in earnest with a memo written by al-Zawahiri on April 15, 1999 to Muhammad Atef, then-deputy commander of al-Qa`ida's military committee. Citing articles from leading scholarly publications such as *Science*, the *Journal of Immunology*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*, as well as information gleaned from authoritative books such as *Tomorrow's Weapons* (1964), *Peace or Pestilence* (1949), and *Chemical Warfare* (1924), al-Zawahiri outlined in detail his thoughts on the priority that needed to be given to developing a biological weapons capability. At least two separate teams of al-Qa`ida operatives were subsequently tasked to undertake parallel R&D efforts to produce anthrax, ricin, and

chemical warfare agents at the movement's facilities in Kandahar and Derunta. Bio-warfare experts believe that on the eve of the September 11, 2001 attacks, al-Qa`ida was at least two to three years away from producing a sufficient quantity of anthrax to use as a weapon.

More recently, credible intelligence surfaced in 2010 that al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—widely considered the movement's most dangerous and capable affiliate—was deeply involved in the development of ricin, a bio-weapon made from castor beans that the FBI has termed the third most toxic substance known to mankind—behind only plutonium and botulism. Then, in May 2013, Turkish authorities seized two kilos of sarin nerve gas—the same weapon used in the 1995 attack on the Tokyo subway system—and arrested twelve men linked to Qa`ida's Syrian affiliate. Days later, another set of sarin-related arrests was made in Iraq of terrorist belonging to ISIS's immediate predecessor, who were reportedly respectively overseeing the production of sarin and mustard blistering agents in at least two different locations. ISIS, of course, has also repeatedly employed chemical weapons, including against civilians, in Syria. It is doubtful whether they would feel constrained from deploying these weapons elsewhere.

WHAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION SHOULD DO ABOUT IT ALL

In sum, the Trump administration is facing perhaps the most parlous international security environment since the period immediately following the September 11th 2001 attacks—with serious threats now emanating from not one but two terrorist movements and a previous counterterrorism strategy and approach that has failed. Indeed, the three pillars upon which that strategy was based—leadership attrition, training of local forces, and countering violent extremism—have thus failed to deliver a crushing blow to ISIS and al-Qa`ida.¹³

The U.S.-led war on terrorism has now lasted longer than our participation in both world wars. It has surpassed even our active military involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s. Like the Viet Cong guerrillas and People's Army of Vietnam main force units, our Salafi-Jihadi enemies have locked us into an enervating war of attrition—the preferred strategy of terrorists and guerrillas from

time immemorial. They hope to undermine national political will, corrode internal popular support, and demoralize us and our regional partners through a prolonged, generally intensifying and increasingly diffuse campaign of terrorism and violence.

In his last publicly released, videotaped statement bin Laden revealed precisely this strategy on the eve of the 2004 presidential election. "So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy," he declared.

Allah willing, and nothing is too great for Allah. . . . This is in addition to our having experience in using guerrilla warfare and the war of attrition to fight tyrannical superpowers, as we, alongside the mujahidin, bled Russia for 10 years, until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat.¹⁴

Decisively breaking this stasis and emerging from this war of attrition must therefore be among the Trump administration's highest priorities. Simply killing a small number of leaders in terrorist groups, whose ranks in any event are continually replenished, will not end the threats posed by ISIS and al-Qa`ida nor dislodge them from their bases of operation in the Levant and Iraq, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia. The slow and fractured process of training indigenous government security forces in those regions will not do so either. The inadequacy of these training activities and efforts to build partner capacity are evidenced by the mostly unimpeded escalation of terrorist activities in all those places. Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia, and especially in Yemen, our efforts to build partner capacity have all foundered. In each, Islamist terrorist numbers grew faster than we were able to train indigenous security forces effectively; terrorist control over territory and the creation of new sanctuaries and safe havens expanded while governmental sovereignty contracted; and, the terrorists' operational effectiveness appreciably outpaced that of their government opponents. While there has been some recent progress in Mali, Nigeria, Syria, and Iraq, it is not clear whether the past problems that undermined the performance of indigenous militaries have been adequately addressed and reversed. Accordingly, the Trump administration should conduct a complete

reevaluation and systemic overhaul of our training and resourcing of foreign partners if we are to prevent the further spread of ISIS and al-Qa`ida branches and counter their entrenchment across the multiple regions in which they have already embedded themselves.

While continued and increased U.S. combat air support is also required—especially in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and in support of French forces in Mali—that alone is not the answer. American and allied air strikes in coordination with local ground forces have not brought any of these counterterrorist campaigns to rapid conclusion. Therefore, in tandem with both the continued use of air power and deployment of supporting American special operations forces personnel, division-size conventional U.S. military forces might be usefully deployed on a strict 90-day rotation into violence-plagued rural areas and urban trouble spots. They have the necessary combat experience and skill-sets to sequentially eliminate terrorist strength in each of these areas and thereby enable indigenous security forces to follow in their wake to stabilize and police newly liberated places. By providing more effective governance and core services—with sustained U.S. and European support—host nations could thus better prevent the recurrence of terrorism and return of terrorist forces.

CONCLUSION

The current threat environment posed by the emergence and spread of ISIS and the stubborn resilience and long-game approach of al-Qa`ida makes a new strategy and new organizational and institutional behaviors necessary. The non-traditional challenges to U.S. national security and foreign policy imperatives posed by elusive and deadly irregular adversaries emphasizes the need to anchor changes that will more effectively close the gap between detecting irregular adversarial activity and rapidly defeating it. The effectiveness of this strategy will be based on our capacity to think like a networked enemy, in anticipation of how they may act in a variety of situations, aided by different resources. This goal requires that the U.S. national security structure organize itself for maximum efficiency, information sharing,

and the ability to function quickly and effectively under new operational definitions.

¹ The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham—also known as ISIL, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant; by its pejorative Arabic acronym, Daesh; and, simply as the Islamic State.

² This presentation is adopted from the author's "Terrorism Challenges for the Trump Administration," *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 9, issue 11 (November/December 2016), at: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/CTC-Sentinel_Vol9Iss1113.pdf.

³ Rukmini Callimachi, "How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers," *New York Times*, August 3, 2016. See also, idem, "How ISIS Built the Machinery of Terror Under Europe's Gaze," *New York Times*, March 29, 2016.

⁴ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "This is what Allah and His Messenger had Promised Us," *Islamic State Fuqran Media Foundation*, November 2, 2016.

⁵ See John Gatt-Rutter, director of counterterrorism division, European External Action Service (EEAS) quoted in Martin Banks, "Returning foreign fighters are biggest threat to EU, Parliament warned," *The Parliament: Politics, Policy And People Magazine*, October 12, 2016.

⁶ James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, "Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community," Senate Armed Services Committee, 9 February 2016, pp. 4-6; and, U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2015: Special Briefing by Justin Siberell, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism," June 2, 2016.

⁷ Clapper, p. 4; and, Matt Bradley, "Rift Grows in Islamic State Between Foreign, Local Fighters," *Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2016.

⁸ "Estimates of the number of non-Afghan volunteers range from 4,000 to 25,000, with Arab fighters making up the majority." Gina Bennett, 'The Wandering Mujahidin: Armed and Dangerous,' *Weekend Edition: United States Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and*

Research, August 21-22, 1993, pp. 1-2,
<http://www.nationalsecuritymom.com/3/WanderingMujahidin.pdf>.

⁹ "U.S. intelligence estimates the total number of fighters who underwent instruction in Bin Laden-supported camps in Afghanistan from 1996 through 9/11 at 10,000 to 20,000." National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States: Authorized Version* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 2004), p. 67.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Professor Jytte Klausen of Brandeis University for her thoughts on this issue. E-mail correspondence, October 21, 2016. See also, Brian Dodwell, Daniel Milton, and Don Rassler, *The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look At the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, April 2016), p. 9.

¹¹ Theo Padnos, "My Captivity," New York Times Magazine, October 29, 2014.

¹² William Arkin, et al., "New Counterterrorism 'Heat Map' Shows ISIS Branches Spreading Worldwide," NBC News, August 23, 2016, accessed at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/new-counterterrorism-heat-map-shows-isis-branches-spreading-worldwide-n621866>.

¹³ The most recent official elucidation of this approach is the 2015 National Security Strategy document. It explains how the U.S. "shifted away from a model of fighting costly, large-scale ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in which the United States—particularly our military—bore an enormous burden. Instead, we are now pursuing a more sustainable approach that prioritizes targeted counterterrorism operations, collective action with responsible partners, and increased efforts to prevent the growth of violent extremism and radicalization that drives increased threats."

See *National Security Strategy*, February 2015, p. 9,
https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf

¹⁴ "Full transcript of bin Laden's speech," aljazeera.com, November 1, 2004, accessed at:
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February 2017

BRUCE HOFFMAN

**Georgetown University
Security Studies Program
Mortara Building
3600 N Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007**

**brh6@georgetown.edu
(571) 277 6659**

EDUCATION

D.Phil., International Relations, 1986, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, England.

B.Phil. (now M.Phil.), International Relations, 1978, New College, University of Oxford, England.

A.B. (Honors), Government, History, 1976, Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut, U.S.A.

CAREER

Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California

2016–Present — William F. Podlich Distinguished Fellow and Visiting Professor of Government, fall semester, 2016.

Georgetown University, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Washington, D.C.

2010–Present — Director, Center for Security Studies, and Director, Security Studies Program; 2006–Present — Professor (with tenure), School of Foreign Service (on leave fall semester 2016).

RAND Corporation, Washington, D.C.

2005–2006 — Corporate Chair in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency; 1998–2006 — Director, Washington Office, and Senior International Policy Analyst, Senior Research Staff; 2004 — Acting Director, Center for Middle East Public Policy; 2001–2004 — Vice President for External Affairs.

University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland

2014–Present — Professor of Terrorism Studies (part-time), School of International Relations; 1996–1998 — Reader in International Relations; 1994–1998 — Founding Director, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV); 1994–1998 — Chairman of the Department of International Relations; 1994–1996 — Senior Lecturer, Department of International Relations.

RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California

1993–1994 — Director, Strategy and Doctrine Research Program (Associate Director, 1992–1993), Army Research Division, and Senior Social Scientist, Senior Research Staff,

International Policy Department; 1990–1992 — Associate Director, International Security and Defense Strategy Program, National Security Research Division; and Social Scientist, Senior Research Staff, International Policy Department; 1986–1990 — Associate Social Scientist, Political Science Department; 1983–1986 — Assistant Social Scientist, Behavioral Sciences Department; and, 1981–1983 — Consultant, Social Sciences Department.

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Right-Wing Terrorism in Europe, N-1856-AF, March 1982, pp. 31.

AWARDS, ACADEMIC HONORS, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Provost's Extraordinary Merit Award for Excellent in Scholarship, Teaching, and Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

William F. Podlich Distinguished Fellowship, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California, 2016.

Harriet Buescher Lawrence '34 Prize to Connecticut College Alumni for Leadership or Inspiring Others for Good Through Direct Service, Connecticut College Alumni Association, New London, CT, June 2016.

Presented 4th Annual Vincent Briscoe Security Sciences Lecture, Imperial College, London, England, November 2013.

Presented 1st Annual Paul Wilkinson Memorial Lecture, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, St Andrews University, St Andrews, Scotland, April 2013.

Distinguished Scholar, International Security Studies, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., 2012.

Public Policy Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., 2010.

Visiting Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford University, Oxford, England, 2009.

S. Rajaratnam Visiting Professor of Strategic Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 2009.

Visiting Fellow, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, Australia, 2007.

Fellow and C. V. Starr Distinguished Visitor, American Academy of Berlin, Germany, 2006.

Honorary Degree recipient, Garfield Society, Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio, 2006.

Fellow, World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland, 2003–2005.

Santiago Grisolia Chair and Prize for Excellence in the Study of Violence, Queen Sofia Centre for the Study of Violence, Valencia, Spain, 1998 (first recipient of the prize and first holder of the chair).

U.S. Intelligence Community Award Medallion (highest level of award presented to a non-government employee), 1994.

Senior Visiting Associate Member, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1987.

Visiting Scholar, Oxford Centre for Hebrew Studies, 1987.

National Foundation for Jewish Culture Doctoral Research Fellowship, 1982.

Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture Doctoral Scholarship, 1981.

Conder Junior Research Fellowship in Anglo-Zionist History, University of Oxford, 1980.

Government of Israel Scholarship for Doctoral Research, 1979.

Member, Council on Foreign Relations (New York).

MAJOR RESEARCH GRANTS

The Flora Foundation, Washington, D.C., "Primer for Law Enforcement Responses to Suicide Terrorism," (2003).

The W. Alton Jones Foundation, Charlottesville, VA, "Major Enhancement to the Program of Work Carried Out by the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence," (1997).

The Airey Neave Foundation Trust, London, England, "Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction," (1996).

National Institute of Justice, Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., "Domestic Terrorism: A National Assessment of State and Local Preparedness," (1992).

The Ford Foundation, New York, N.Y., "The Impact of Terrorism on Public Opinion," (1988).

APPOINTMENTS and CONSULTING

2014–2015 — Commissioner (appointed by the U.S. Congress), Independent Commission to Review the FBI's Post-9/11 Response to Terrorism and Radicalization, Washington, D.C.

2013–present — Wilson Center Global Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

2011 — Member, Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel On Airport Security at Los Angeles International Airport (appointed by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa).

2011 – 2014 — Adviser, Palantir Technologies, Inc., Palo Alto, CA.

2009 – Present — Adviser, National September 11 Memorial & Museum, New York, NY.

2009 – Present — Member, Advisory Board, FBI Intelligence Analysts Association, Washington, DC.

2009 – 2012 — Member, Advisory Board, Biteback Publishing (political and current affairs), London, England.

2008 – Present — Member, Homeland Security Program (formerly National Security Preparedness Group), Washington, D.C. (successor to the 9/11 Commission and chaired again by Governor Thomas H. Kean and Congressman Lee H. Hamilton).

2008 – Present — Series Editor, Columbia University Press Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, New York, NY.

2008 – Present — Contributing Editor, *The National Interest*, Washington, D.C.

2008 – Present — Member, Board of Directors, Jamestown Foundation, Washington, D.C.

2007 – 2013 — Member, Advisory Board, Home Team Academy, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Singapore, Singapore.

2007 – Present — Member, Advisory Board, "Our Voices Together: September 11 friends and families to help build a safer, more compassionate world," Washington, D.C.

2007 – Present — Member, Advisory Board, Arms Sales Monitoring Project, Federation of American Scientists, Washington, D.C.

2007 – 2010 — Member, Editorial Board, *Review of International Studies* (Journal of the British International Studies Association), St Andrews, Scotland, UK.

2007 – 2009 — Distinguished Fellow and Senior Advisor on International Security Programs, Institute of Public and International Affairs, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2006 – 2012 — Member, Advisory Committee of the Terrorism and Counterterrorism Program, Human Rights Watch, New York, NY.

2006 — Iraq Experts Working Group (providing analytical support to the U.S. Congressionally appointed Iraq Study Group), U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, DC.

2006 – 2007 — Visiting Professor at the University of Sergio Arboleda, Bogota, Colombia.

2006 – Present — Visiting Professor at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism, Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel.

2005 – 2013 — Senior Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.

2005 – Present — Visiting Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

2005 – 2007 — Senior Fellow, National Security Studies Center, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel.

2004 – Present – Senior Fellow, Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York.

2004 – 2006 — Scholar in Residence for Counterterrorism, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.

2004 – 2005 — Adviser on Counterinsurgency, Office of Strategy, Plans and Analysis, Multinational Force Headquarters, Baghdad Iraq.

2004 — Adviser on Counterterrorism, Office of National Security Affairs, Coalition Provisional Authority, Baghdad, Iraq.

2003 – 2006 — Adjunct Professor, Security Studies Program, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

January 2002 – Present — Adjunct Instructor, U.S. State Department Foreign Service Institute, Arlington, VA.

2000 – Present — Member, Editorial Board, *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* (Blackwell, Ltd., Publishers).

1999 – 2002 — Chairman, International Research Group on Political Violence, Washington, D.C. and London, England.

1998 – 2000 — Executive Director, Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Preparedness for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (Gilmore Commission), Washington, D.C.

1998 — Member, Panel of Experts Convened by the Argentina National Congress, Special Bichamber Investigation Follow-Up Commission of the Attacks Against the Israeli Embassy and the A.M.I.A. Building, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

1997 – Present — Editor-in-Chief (Associate Editor, 1991–1996), *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Taylor and Francis, Ltd., publishers).

1994 – Present — Member, Editorial Board, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Frank Cass, Ltd., publishers).

1994 – 2000 -- Member, Advisory Board, International Group for Research and Information on Security, Brussels, Belgium.

1994 – 1998 — Consultant, International Policy Department, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California.

1994 – 1996 — Member, Committee on Assessing the Feasibility of Applying Military Blast Mitigation Technologies to Civilian Buildings, National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, Washington, D.C.

1994 — Consultant, World Cup '94, The Office of the Vice President for Security, Los Angeles, California.

1993 — Member, U.S. Department of Defense International Counterterrorism Advisory Board.

1988 – 1990 — Advisory Board, The Fundamentalism Project, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Chicago, Illinois.

1987 – 1988 — Consultant, U.S. General Accounting Office, Project Evaluation, Methodology and Assessment Division.

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Brian Michael Jenkins

CT-462

Testimony presented before the House Committee on Armed Services on February 14, 2017.



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Middle East Turmoil and the Continuing Terrorist Threat—Still No Easy Solutions

Testimony of Brian Michael Jenkins¹
The RAND Corporation²

Before the Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives

February 14, 2017

The United States continues to face an array of armed threats to its national security: a revanchist Russia determined to recover its superpower status and restore its influence worldwide; an increasingly assertive China pushing its claim over the South China Sea; and in the Middle East, a hostile Iran and continuing jihadist terrorist threats.

Jihadist terrorism is the most prominent and persistent threat to U.S. security.

Military confrontation with Russia seems unlikely, although miscalculations remain possible, but Russia poses more than a military threat. Maintaining a strong North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will, it is hoped, deter Moscow from potentially dangerous courses and allow the United States to play a greater role in checking the growth of Russian influence, which it is presently achieving through measures other than war.³ China's assertions can be best handled diplomatically while maintaining strong regional alliances. This was underscored by James Mattis, who made his first foreign trip as Secretary of Defense to South Korea and Japan, two countries with which the United States has bilateral defense agreements.

The United States has managed a difficult and, at times, dangerous relationship with Iran since 1979. Those in Washington who may have expected the 2015 nuclear weapons deal to presage diplomatic rapprochement with Tehran were disappointed; that seems a long way off. At

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

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

³ Brian Michael Jenkins, *A Revanchist Russia Versus an Uncertain West: An Appreciation of the Situation Since the 2014 Ukrainian Crisis*, Sofia, Bulgaria: Center for the Study of Democracy, December 2016b. As of February 13, 2017: <http://www.csd.bg/artShow.php?id=17877>

the same time, there appears to be little domestic and even less international support for upsetting the deal. Meanwhile, I believe that it is not in the interest of the United States that Iran become the dominant power in the region, which it seeks to do; preventing that will shape American actions.

While not the most dangerous threat to the United States, jihadist or Islamist terrorism is the most prominent issue. Other terrorist threats to U.S. citizens and interests abroad have receded, although conflict with Iran or North Korea could provoke state-sponsored terrorist incidents.

Of current threats to U.S. national security, jihadist terrorism is also the least amenable to any obvious or immediate diplomatic or military solution, although military force will remain an important part—but only one part—of U.S. counterterrorist efforts. Other counterterrorism activities must include programs aimed at changing the narrative and reducing the attractiveness of the ideology fueling the violence. And while the danger posed by jihadist terrorists would be quickly surpassed if there were war with any state adversary, jihadist terrorism is a threat the United States is going to be dealing with for the foreseeable future. That is the focus of my testimony today.

Terrorism has increased dramatically worldwide, but the increase is misleading.

Terrorism worldwide has increased in recent years, but we should not overestimate the terrorist threat to the United States. In the 15-year period from 2001 to 2015, the Global Terrorism Database maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism recorded more than 85,000 incidents of terrorism worldwide, with more than 200,000 fatalities. That amounts to an average of more than 5,000 incidents a year, including almost 15,000 incidents for 2015 alone. This is a dramatic increase from the averages of fewer than 1,000 incidents a year in the 1970s, slightly more than 3,000 incidents a year in the 1980s and 1990s, and about 2,500 a year between 2000 and 2009.⁴ However, the dramatic rise in global terrorism is misleading. The increase in recent years reflects both better reporting of terrorist events in remote parts of the world and the fact that terrorism is now counted as a separate category of violence, even in the midst of war. Most of the recent terrorist incidents have occurred in war zones.

Terrorism remains concentrated in a handful of countries.

Between 2001 and 2015, 73 percent of all recorded terrorist attacks and 78 percent of all fatalities from terrorism occurred in just ten countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, India, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. The centers of the problem are obvious. Forty-six percent of the incidents, accounting for more than 50 percent of the fatalities, took

⁴ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, Global Terrorism Database, College Park, Md.: University of Maryland, undated. As of February 13, 2017: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

place in just three countries—Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan—all of which were engulfed in intense, ongoing armed conflicts.⁵ Outside of these countries, terrorist attacks occur only occasionally. Although jihadist terrorists have recently carried out some spectacular attacks in Europe, total deaths caused by terrorists in Europe actually have declined during the decades since the 1970s, although there was an increase in 2015 and 2016.

During the same two years, the United States also saw several spectacular attacks. While these attacks had a significant psychological impact, the total number of U.S. casualties caused by jihadist terrorists here since the attacks on September 11, 2001, comes to about 100.⁶ Given its current levels in the United States, terrorism cannot be considered an existential threat. Rather, it is a persistent threat requiring our constant attention to ensure that it does not gain momentum in the United States.

Although terrorism is increasing, the number of wars and the number of casualties in wars are declining.

The increase in terrorism appears all the more dramatic because the incidence of warfare itself and the casualties produced by war have declined during the same period. There are fewer wars and fewer casualties today than there were 50 years ago, and far fewer than there were in the bloody first half of the 20th century.⁷ Terrorism looms larger, in part, because warfare has diminished and because terrorists have carried out more-spectacular attacks.

Terrorist organizations have evolved into global enterprises.

So-called international terrorism—the globalization of terrorist campaigns—is not new. Terrorist organizations have operated internationally for decades, sending their own operatives to carry out attacks abroad and creating alliances with other terrorist organizations to extend their reach. More recently, terrorist organizations have exploited the Internet and social media to inspire and instruct distant followers to carry out attacks on their behalf.

A few groups—notably, al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—operating from sanctuaries in ungoverned spaces, have sent out missions to establish or acquire affiliates. They often do so by attaching themselves to rebels fighting against local governments for local causes. The arrangement may heighten the global profile and increase the prestige of the

⁵ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, undated.

⁶ The author's own figures put the total at 89, not counting the perpetrators, but various counts are available. For example, Charles Kurzman reports a higher number of 123, but that includes the deaths of perpetrators, as well as 17 murders attributed to the 2002 "Beltway Sniper" and a few other incidents that I do not see as jihadist terrorism. Admittedly, motives are sometimes murky. See Charles Kurzman, *Muslim-American Involvement with Violent Extremism*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, January 26, 2017. As of February 13, 2017: https://sites.duke.edu/tcths/files/2017/01/Kurzman_Muslim-American_Involvement_in_Violent_Extremism_2016.pdf

⁷ Several studies indicate a decline in war. See, for example, Max Roser, "War and Peace," *Our World in Data*, University of Oxford, 2016. As of February 13, 2017: <https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace/>

local fighters and potentially gain them limited material support and assistance. For the outsiders, these footholds create the impression of new fronts in a vast enterprise, offer new operating bases, and provide potential recruits for the global effort. The footholds eventually may become formal affiliates of the group or “provinces” of a terrorist state, although some of them are mere assertions.

Some of these alliances are strategic; others are purely tactical. And affiliations change. ISIL broke with al Qaeda. Jabhat al Nusra, al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria, changed its name and announced that it had severed its ties with al Qaeda.

The competition for colonies has resulted in a proliferation of al Qaeda and ISIL entities across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. While linked by common, or at least compatible, ideologies and personal oaths of allegiance, the actual connectivity varies. With a weak center, al Qaeda’s affiliates operate with virtual autonomy. ISIL has attempted to impose a more formal structure on its acquisitions, but most of these remain focused on their local struggles. The reduction of ISIL’s Islamic state in Iraq and Syria—its presumptive caliphate—will reduce its attractiveness and erode the bonds.

These developments complicate counterterrorism. While it would be inappropriate to see the spread of al Qaeda or ISIL flags as the advance of an occupying army or evidence of a centrally directed campaign, the terrorist colonizers over time may be able to gradually increase their control over their local allies. The colonies also may harbor fleeing central commanders, guaranteeing the survival of their effort. They cannot be ignored, but each must be addressed within the context of the local situation. Instead of one war, countering the enterprise becomes many wars.

The organizational developments described here reflect the evolution of al Qaeda and ISIL, which have global, even celestial ambitions. Organizations pursuing political ends in other parts of the world and future terrorist organizations may not necessarily follow the jihadist trajectory.

Inspiring attacks via the Internet pushes terrorists toward soft targets and “pure terrorism.”

Although the distance recruiting of homegrown terrorists does not preclude centrally directed terrorist operations or strategic strikes directed by affiliates, central capabilities have declined, and distance recruiting has become more important. Afghanistan provides a useful example.

The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan scattered al Qaeda’s central command. Continued international pressure on the organization made central planning more difficult. Nonetheless, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula attempted to carry on the campaign against the United States by sabotaging U.S.-bound airliners and inspiring homegrown terrorists.

ISIL has recruited tens of thousands of foreign fighters to come to Syria and Iraq and clearly has global ambitions, but it has not attempted to replicate anything on the scale of al Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks. Instead, ISIL has supported operations by terrorist leaders among its foreign fighters. The precise relationship between these foreign organizers and ISIL’s central command is not clear, nor is it consistent across the various attacks. Are they mere lieutenants carrying out orders, or are they independent entrepreneurs?

ISIL is under heavy pressure and has lost territory and fighters. As it faces defeat on the ground, it could attempt to launch large-scale international terrorist attacks. Terrorist operations are intended not just to harm the enemy but also to recruit and compete for followers. ISIL and al Qaeda, although at war with each other, compete for the same constituents.

ISIL has effectively used social media to reach a broader audience of potential recruits. However, the operational capabilities of these volunteers are not likely to match their ideological fervor, so ISIL, through its online publications and contact via the Internet, recommends simple operations that are within these volunteers' range. This means going after soft targets—that is, venues that are usually unprotected.

Terrorists have traditionally concentrated their attacks on unprotected targets that still provided some political symbolism. The political content has faded. For today's terrorists, death, destruction, and notoriety seem to be the paramount goals. We now see truly random attacks on people at restaurants, shopping malls, subway stations, busy streets—virtually anywhere. Random attacks send the message that nothing is safe.⁸ Often, these are low-level attacks by a single individual using readily available “weapons”—guns when they can get them, but also knives, axes, trucks, and cars.

Terrorism is violence calculated to create fear and alarm—and it often works. The terrorist organization has come to realize that even small-scale attacks can create extreme alarm and oblige governments to take extraordinary security measures.

However, the small number of attacks and attackers suggest that it is not easy to remotely motivate people to take action. The Internet reaches a vast audience, but it also allows vicarious participation—fervent followers can boast and threaten online but then go on with their ordinary lives. Absent physical connectivity, most online, would-be warriors will do nothing. For those charged with security, however, ascertaining who among the radicals will cross the line into violence is challenging.

The current terrorist threat remains inextricably intertwined with events in the Middle East.

It is understandable that Americans see the Middle East through the lens of terrorism. Indeed, most of the terrorist-created crises involving the United States since the late 1960s have related to the Middle East and the adjacent regions of North Africa and Southwest Asia. In the 1970s, hijackings, incidents of airline sabotage, hostage seizures, bombings, and other attacks by Palestinian terrorist groups posed the greatest threat. In the 1980s, Iranian-backed groups in Lebanon added another dimension to the problem. Since the mid-1990s, groups inspired by al Qaeda and its offshoots have become the principal concern. ISIL is only the latest incarnation of the continuing jihadist threat.

⁸ Brian Michael Jenkins, *The Challenge of Protecting Transit and Passenger Rail: How Security Works Against Terrorism*, San Jose, Calif.: Mineta Transportation Institute, forthcoming.

The Middle East also has been the predominant theater of U.S. military operations.

Most of the U.S. military engagements over the past 30 years have been in the Middle East, in North Africa, and in western parts of Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The United States supported the Afghan rebels fighting against Soviet invaders in the 1980s, sent troops into Lebanon in 1982 and 1983, bombed Libya in 1986, deployed American naval forces and took military action against Iran in 1987, drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in 1991 and imposed no-fly zones on Iraq, deployed American forces to Somalia in 1992 and 1993, bombed Iraq in 1993 and Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998, invaded Afghanistan in 2001, invaded Iraq in 2003, participated in the bombing of Libya in 2011, initiated a bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria in 2014, and joined military efforts in Yemen in 2015. About half of these engagements were in response to terrorism. The conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen continue. In addition, the United States has conducted special operations and, since 2002, has carried out manned and unmanned air strikes and special operations to kill terrorist leaders and operatives throughout the region.

The above chronology is instructive: There are few years in which the United States has not been directly or indirectly involved in the Middle East's conflicts. And for the past 15 years, American military engagement has been continuous. The high cost of these continuing military operations adversely affects U.S. military forces and readiness.

Middle East turmoil will continue.

The United States and its allies are currently dealing with terrorist spillover from ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, North Africa, and western Asia. The turmoil in these regions seems likely to continue. Afghanistan has been in a state of war since the late 1970s—some would say throughout much of the nation's history. Al Qaeda found sanctuary in this environment and declared war on the West more than 20 years ago. Somalia has been a theater of conflict since the early 1990s. Iraq has had few years without armed hostilities since the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s. Yemen's civil wars reach back to the 1960s. The current conflicts in Syria and Iraq have exacerbated sectarian and ethnic conflicts, which will persist into the future.

Progress is being made in reducing ISIL forces and recapturing some of the urban centers and towns the group held, but the reduction of ISIL-controlled territory will not end its campaign, nor will the end of ISIL's open control of territory end its armed struggle. Its leaders will likely go underground, but its foreign fighters cannot so easily survive an underground war. They will scatter to other jihadist fronts in the region or return home, some with intentions to carry on the armed struggle.

No government in Syria will be able to restore central authority throughout its territory. Iraq appears on a path to remain divided. Yemen will not easily be unified. Somalia will not easily be subdued. The violence has increased in Afghanistan. Libya remains in a chaotic state. The terrorist threat made possible by this regional chaos will continue to fuel terrorist threats around the world.

The United States faces a multilayered terrorist threat.

Jihadist terrorists pose a multilayered threat. For the United States and its partners, improved intelligence, greater international cooperation, and continuing military operations have made it more difficult for terrorists to carry out ambitious, centrally directed strategic strikes like the 9/11 attacks—which have been our greatest concern. But jihadist terrorist organizations have demonstrated their continued determination to attack commercial airliners on their way to the United States.

As we have seen in France and Belgium, terrorist volunteers who have joined the ranks of al Qaeda's affiliates or ISIL may receive assistance in returning to their homelands to link up with local jihadists and carry out attacks. With thousands of nationals who have gone to fight in Syria and Iraq, Europe and even countries like Tunisia face a much greater threat from returning fighters than the United States does; according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), about 200 U.S. citizens have joined or tried to join jihadist fronts abroad.⁹

The final layer of the threat comprises those already in the United States who find resonance and reinforcement in jihadist ideology and radicalize themselves.

Homegrown terrorists are America's principal concern; fortunately, jihadist ideology has gained little traction.

The principal terrorist threat faced by the United States comes overwhelmingly from homegrown terrorists—citizens and residents who radicalize themselves and plot to carry out local attacks. Fortunately, there are relatively few of them. Despite constant exhortations from jihadist organizations abroad, their violent extremist ideology has gained little traction among Americans, in sharp contrast to the situation in Europe.

Since 9/11, several hundred individuals have been arrested for providing material support to jihadist groups or attempting to join terrorist fronts abroad. In addition to these, approximately 150 have been arrested for plotting terrorist attacks in this country.¹⁰ The FBI and local police have uncovered and thwarted more than 80 percent of the jihadist terrorist plots in the United States since 9/11.¹¹ It is a remarkable record. Some of these cases have resulted from investigations initiated by tips from Muslim communities.

As of this writing, only 16 jihadist terrorist plots have succeeded in launching an attack. All but one resulted in injuries, including seven that resulted in fatalities. In the remaining case—the attempted Times Square bombing—the device failed to work. In 15 years, jihadist terrorists in the United States have been able to kill about 100 people—and 49 of those were killed in a single

⁹ Julian Hattem, "FBI: More Than 200 Americans Have Tried to Fight for ISIS," *The Hill*, July 8, 2015. As of February 13, 2017: <http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/247256-more-than-200-americans-tried-to-fight-for-isis-fbi-says>

¹⁰ Brian Michael Jenkins, *Fifteen Years After 9/11: A Preliminary Balance Sheet*, testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives, September 21, 2016, *Addendum*, January 11, 2017. As of February 13, 2017: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT458z1.html>

¹¹ Jenkins, 2017.

incident, the 2016 Orlando attack on a nightclub. Owing to different interpretations of motives, which are often murky, other analyses may add some incidents, but not many.

The past two years have seen an increase in the number of attacks. This could be a spike, or it may indicate a longer-term trend. But the increase suggests that the United States, despite its enviable record, must maintain its vigilance and continually review its efforts to control its borders and know who is coming and going.

Europe faces a different, more difficult threat than the United States does.

Europe has suffered a much sharper increase in terrorist activity than the United States has, which some see as presaging a growing volume of terrorism in this country. That may be, but it is important to keep in mind that the situation in Europe differs significantly from that in the United States.

European security services are being overwhelmed by volume. More than 5,000 volunteers went from Europe to Syria to serve in the ranks of the jihadist groups, mainly ISIL. About a third of them have since returned. Thousands more are suspected of trying to travel to Syria or of plotting terrorist attacks at home. The numbers exceed the capacity of the intelligence services and police to monitor.¹² This problem is being addressed, but it will take time to build the necessary strength and skills. Information-sharing among European services is not optimal.

In France and Belgium, the high numbers of travelers to Syria come from subcultures that transcend the criminal underworld and radical underground and which are deeply embedded in some immigrant communities. Returning foreign fighters can hook up with radical jihadists who stayed home and who can provide them with hideouts, weapons, and logistics support, thereby increasing their lethality and ability to evade authorities. These are the personal connections that enable terrorists to operate at a higher level of violence. The network responsible for the deadly 2014–2016 terrorist campaign in Belgium and France provides the best example.¹³

In contrast, the numbers of potential recruits in the United States are significantly lower, and there is no evidence here of an organized terrorist underground. Most terrorist plots have involved a single individual or a tiny conspiracy. While a few of the plotters may have received remote encouragement and guidance from contacts in al Qaeda or ISIL, there is not much connectivity with handlers abroad or with those involved in other terrorist plots. The current jihadist threat also contrasts with the situation in the United States during the 1970s, when there were organized terrorist groups conducting long-term bombing campaigns that lasted years.

¹² Brian Michael Jenkins and Jean-François Clair, *Trains, Concert Halls, Airports, and Restaurants—All Soft Targets: What the Terrorist Campaign in France and Belgium Tells Us About the Future of Jihadist Terrorism in Europe*, San Jose, Calif.: Mineta Transportation Institute, 2016. As of February 13, 2017: <http://transweb.sjsu.edu/project/1532.html>

¹³ The January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris and the authorities' response were examined in a three-part series by Brian Michael Jenkins and Jean-François Clair, "Attempting to Understand the Paris Attacks," *The Hill*, February 25, 2015; "Predicting the 'Dangerousness' of Potential Terrorists," *The Hill*, February 26, 2015; and "Different Countries, Different Ways of Counting," *The Hill*, February 27, 2015.

The lack of organizational continuity also keeps America's jihadists operating at a low level of competency. It is not that today's jihadists are less intelligent than their 1970s counterparts, who also started their campaigns at a low level of competency, but rather that, over time, the 1970s terrorists had the opportunity to improve their skills by learning from each other and the experience of repeated attacks. The post-9/11 attacks have been one-offs. There is no learning.

Europe also has to deal with hundreds of thousands of political and economic refugees and immigrants pouring in from conflict zones and impoverished areas in Africa and the Middle East; Germany registered more than 1 million asylum seekers in 2015. Refugees land on Europe's shores or cross its land borders and then authorities determine who may be eligible for asylum and who will be deported. In contrast, the United States is able to vet refugees before approving their transfer into the country. Most European countries lack the capacity to handle large numbers of immigrants.

Many of those entering Europe are single, military-age males, and many of these young men have very limited education. They will not easily find work or easily assimilate. Instead, they will spend months in refugee centers. Some will drift into crime. They already are the targets of radical recruiters. In contrast, only a tiny fraction of the refugees entering the United States are young, unattached males.

While we should not overestimate the threat these developments pose to the United States, what is happening in Europe does raise security concerns here. It is certainly not in America's interest to see Europe destabilized by terrorism. The continuing terrorist threat to the West in general underscores current efforts to defeat the jihadist terrorist enterprises, particularly al Qaeda and ISIL. Until these organizations are destroyed, the jihadist terrorist threat will continue.

Military force will remain a component of U.S. counterterrorist efforts abroad.

Critics of American efforts often remind us that military measures alone will not defeat terrorism. We know that. At home, we have successfully employed law enforcement and have worked through our courts. Terrorists arrested in the United States come to trial. But dealing with terrorists operating in conflict zones or ungoverned spaces thousands of miles away where law enforcement regimes do not prevail and where effective government does not exist poses different challenges.

The United States has greatly improved its intelligence collection and analysis, forged new alliances, and fostered international cooperation among security services and law enforcement organizations—which, since 9/11, is unprecedented. As a result, today's terrorists face a more hostile operating environment, which impedes (not prevents) their ability to carry out large-scale terrorist operations abroad.

The United States can rely on law enforcement only where the law rules. Where it does not, military operations, in cooperation with local and allied governments—unilateral when absolutely necessary—will remain a component of America's arsenal. It is an enduring task that could exist for years, if not generations.

There are no easy options.

There are no easy options. None offers a clear solution. All entail risks. Here are some of the approaches that have been suggested and the questions they raise, above all, about defining U.S. national interests and objectives.

Can attacking root causes reduce jihadist terrorism?

One favored option is to attack the root causes driving the terrorist campaigns while reducing the ungoverned spaces where terrorists find sanctuary. This requires addressing chronic grievances, resolving ongoing conflicts, creating stability, ensuring better governance (if not democracy), and providing security, which, in turn, will permit social and economic development. These are laudable goals to be pursued even if there were no terrorists. But they are difficult to do, require major investments, and take years to achieve. And in just about all cases, the United States is at the margin of its influence. Meanwhile, the terrorist threat continues.

Can the United States negotiate an end to the threat?

Negotiations, even with those we label terrorists, should never be off the table. The United States, for example, was deeply involved in negotiations to end the Irish Republican Army's long-running terrorist campaign and has supported negotiations between the Colombian government and Marxist guerrillas that routinely used terrorist tactics. But negotiating an end to the jihadist campaign seems unrealistic. America's jihadist adversaries see this as a struggle to the death mandated by God. The goal is the triumph of their beliefs over the unbelievers.

The jihadists' view of war is process-oriented, not progress-oriented; that is, they derive benefit from mere participation in the armed struggle. God determines the outcome. Their time horizons are long. The war is perpetual and will continue until judgment day. They are not easily discouraged.

Jihadist strategic thinking permits tactical truces if they see these as advantageous. Conceivably, negotiations with a more pragmatic Taliban might be possible. Negotiations with al Qaeda or ISIL are hard to envision, although some lower-level commanders may be persuaded to cut a deal. And not all of the groups currently allied with al Qaeda or ISIL may share their partner's determination to fight to the death.

It may be more productive to think in terms of interim arrangements aimed merely at lowering the level of violence—seeking local accommodations rather than war-ending agreements. A recent RAND Corporation report argues that the cessation of hostilities in Syria sponsored by Russia, Iran, and Turkey could open the way for a more national ceasefire “based upon agreed zones of control”—essentially the partition of Syria with an international administration of Raqqa Province, otherwise known as the Islamic State.¹⁴ The proposal,

¹⁴ James Dobbins, Philip Gordon, and Jeffrey Martini, *A Peace Plan for Syria III: Agreed Zones of Control, Decentralization, and International Administration*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-233-RC, 2017. As of February 13, 2017: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE233.html>

however, is predicated on the defeat of ISIL and other jihadists in Syria—they are not seen as participants in the discussion. Essentially, it is an agreement to unite the jihadists' enemies.

Can the United States shorten the time line and defeat the jihadists more quickly through escalation?

Escalation is possible. Suggestions include increasing the presence of U.S. service personnel working with the Iraqi army and irregular forces in Syria to increase their effectiveness. Without personnel on the ground to target and coordinate operations, airpower is largely ineffective over the long run. Some have also argued for relaxing the rules of engagement in order to increase the use of airpower. This can be done, but targets are limited, and bombing errors can lead to backlash and erode international support, not just of the current alliance of nations participating in the air campaign but for overall cooperation against terrorism. The cost may be deemed acceptable, but it is a cost.

Some in Washington have argued for American combat forces to be redeployed in the region. That runs the risk of changing the dynamics of the contest while fueling the jihadist narrative and thereby assisting jihadist recruiting. Putting American boots on the ground might be popular in the immediate wake of a major terrorist incident in the United States, but it raises the questions of what exactly would they do, how would they affect the war, and what would success look like. Whatever initial domestic political support exists for redeployment could quickly evaporate and is probably not sustainable for the long run.

Should the United States cooperate more closely with the Russians?

Partnering with the Russians to destroy ISIL also has been mentioned as an option, but in my view, it comes with a high cost and offers very little in return. Russia's and Syria's siege and ruthless bombing campaign succeeded in driving the rebels out of their stronghold in Aleppo, but it appears that civilian buildings and groups, including hospitals and humanitarian aid, were deliberately targeted, in contravention of the rules of war, and civilian casualties reportedly were high.¹⁵ Among others, the United Nations' Human Rights director called the campaign a war crime.¹⁶

However effective or satisfying it may be to pound ISIL, associating the United States with military operations of that type would have long-term consequences. I suspect it would cause deep concern in the American military. It would damage America's reputation and repel allies in the Arab world and beyond. It could erode U.S. counterterrorist efforts for years to come.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Russia/Syria: War Crimes in Month of Bombing Aleppo," December 1, 2016. As of February 13, 2017: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/01/russia/syria-war-crimes-month-bombing-aleppo>

¹⁶ Laura Smith-Spark, "UN Human Rights Chief Warns of War Crimes in Aleppo," CNN, October 21, 2016. As of February 13, 2017: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/21/middleeast/syria-aleppo-un/>

Should the United States be doing more with local allies?

U.S. military successes have come from working with locals, including irregular forces. This was the case in Afghanistan in 2001, with the Sunni tribes in Anbar Province in 2006–2007, and most notably with the Kurds in the current conflict in Syria and Iraq.

Supporting local fighters proved less successful with the Free Syrian Army and in the early attempts to field carefully vetted, U.S.-trained rebel formations in Syria. Those failures, which merit more analysis, suggest that it is not enough to train guerrillas and insert them into the battlefield. Their reliability and effectiveness depend on continued engagement—having Americans with them and direct combat support.

The United States may be able to do more than it has done with state partners in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia formed an alliance of Muslim states to fight Islamic extremists.¹⁷ The initiative was dismissed in Washington as unrealistic; Saudi forces are not seen to be effective in suppressing Houthi rebels in neighboring Yemen, even though the United States participates in efforts on behalf of the Yemeni government.

The United States is uncomfortable with the Saudis. Many Americans see Saudi financial support for the spread of Wahhabism as a major source of jihadist radicalization worldwide and suspect the Saudis of duplicity in dealing with al Qaeda and other jihadists in Syria and elsewhere. Others are critical of Saudi Arabia's record on human rights, rigid adherence to Sharia law, and not-always-precise bombing in Yemen. Some in the Barack Obama administration saw a close relationship with Saudi Arabia as an obstacle to what they hoped would be a more friendly relationship with Iran.

These objections notwithstanding, pursuing local alliances makes sense. Politically, local forces are more effective than American combat units. They also have certain operational advantages. They do not necessarily have to be the most-advanced combat units. In some cases, they need only to out-recruit the jihadists—that is, offer higher pay. This will not attract the religious fanatics, but ISIL's ranks contain many who have joined simply in order to survive.

Finally, we may consider the idea of an international force recruited, trained, paid, and led by experienced military commanders from the region and beyond. This option may work where no government or government forces exist. All of these ideas require further exploration. The objective here is to get us out of the mindset that the United States must always be—or even should be—on the front line.

Can the United States walk away?

Should the United States avoid the costs and tribulations of further military involvement by withdrawing from the region, leaving local belligerents to sort things out by themselves? Doing so seemingly would get the United States out of a costly mess and would enable the country to focus on rebuilding the American economy, which is far more important to the country's long-

¹⁷ Brian Michael Jenkins, *A Saudi-Led Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism: Welcome Muscle in the Fight Against Terrorism, Desert Mirage, or Bad Idea*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-189-RC, 2016a. As of February 13, 2017: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE189.html>

term strategic goals. It would also enable the armed forces to rebuild to meet threats that endanger the republic more than errant jihadists, which law enforcement has mostly contained.

This course of action has great appeal, but few have defined precisely what “getting out” means—withdrawing all American forces from Afghanistan? Ending military support for Iraq’s forces? Halting the bombing in Syria? Ending American support for the Kurds and allied Arab formations? Does the United States continue drone strikes? Does the United States continue to support the Saudi-led fight in Yemen? Should it continue to provide training and other forms of military assistance to willing allies in the region? How can the state institutions—law enforcement, intelligence, and societal programs—be established that will underpin the development required for building and maintaining functional governments that provide security for their populations? And is it the responsibility or in the national interest of the United States to assume this mission?

Withdrawal also comes with risks. In Afghanistan, the Taliban could take control over larger swaths of the country and ultimately defeat the government’s forces if the American forces were completely withdrawn. The U.S. commander in Afghanistan has testified before the Senate that the situation in Afghanistan is at a stalemate and more forces are needed to break it.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Lieutenant General Townsend, who heads the U.S.-led coalition against ISIL, said recently that ISIL’s strongholds in Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria could be recaptured in the next six months, but he counsels that another complete U.S. withdrawal is too risky.¹⁹ The United States has achieved a measure of success on several occasions—in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Yemen—only to see things fall apart when it turned its attention to other fronts.

Many in the United States would say, “That’s their problem.” What are the downsides of withdrawal to the United States? Withdrawal would be perceived as another demonstration that the United States is an unreliable ally. That would have strategic implications beyond the Middle East—in Europe and East Asia, where there are concerns about American commitment to its allies. A U.S. withdrawal could result in further destabilizing surrounding countries. It would leave ungoverned spaces not unlike those in pre-9/11 Afghanistan, which allowed al Qaeda to flourish. It would alter political calculations in Baghdad. It would leave Iran in a commanding position in the region. It could prompt further and more-significant military action against the Kurds by Turkey. The withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq in 2011 is sometimes cited as a contributing factor to the rise of ISIL, although it was technically necessary under the 2008 Status of Forces Agreement.

Withdrawal could also cause the United States to lose any ability to shape outcomes in the region. Significantly, the recent Syrian ceasefire follow-up meeting in Astana with Turkey, Russia, Iran, and the United Nations did not include the United States. This is unexplored territory.

¹⁸ Rebecca Kheel, “Top US Commander Says He’s Short ‘a Few Thousand’ Troops in Afghanistan,” *The Hill*, February 9, 2017.

¹⁹ Ali Abdul-Hassan, Zeina Karam, and Robert Burns, “U.S. Commander: Mosul, Raqqa Should be Retaken from Islamic State in Six Months,” *New York Times*, February 8, 2017. As of February 13, 2017: https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2017/02/08/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html?_r=0

The principal reason for U.S. military involvement in these conflicts is that it is seen as necessary to prevent terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland. Has that risk sufficiently diminished, or is the situation worse? Would withdrawal reduce or increase the risk? Although it encourages homegrown terrorist attacks, ISIL thus far has not followed al Qaeda's earlier pattern of launching large-scale attacks on the United States, although both groups continue to call for attacks here. Al Qaeda's original objective was to drive the United States—the "far enemy"—out of the Middle East, although some analysts argue that the purpose of the 9/11 attacks was to draw the United States into the fight. How would al Qaeda now react to American withdrawal? If the United States were to withdraw, how would ISIL see launching attacks on the United States as being in its strategic interest?

Would any administration that ordered a withdrawal be able to politically withstand a subsequent terrorist attack? And if one were to occur, what options would the United States have?

As indicated by these questions, whether and how the United States ends—or substantially reduces—its military role remains unexplored territory. Yet Americans must accept that this is an open-ended contest, with no easy off-ramps, or we must devote as much strategic thinking about how this war might end as we have (or have not) devoted to going in.

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

Education

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

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

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

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

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**Congressional Testimony
House Armed Services Committee
2118 Rayburn House Office Building
14 February 2017**

Ambassador Michael A. Sheehan

The Evolving Threat and Effective Counter Terrorism Strategies

Introduction

Thank you Mr. Chairman, it is my pleasure to testify again before you today, but as a civilian, not a government employee. And BTW, that gives me a bit more leeway in what I have to say. And it is humbling to be here with these two giants of counter terrorism and personal heroes of mine – both of whom I have known and worked with for years – before and after 9-11.

This morning I will discuss the trends in the terrorist threat, evaluate our counter measures and make a few observations about future policies.

Good News - Bad News

Let me start by saying there is good news and bad news.

The good news is that since 9-11, our nation has been successful in denying AQ, ISIS or any of their affiliates from conducting a strategic level attack against our homeland.

The bad news is that over the past six years the number of violent jihadis around the world has increased dramatically. In addition, there are a growing number of conflict zones across the Islamic world -- from South Asia to the Levant and across all of Africa. These conflicts have provided opportunities for the expansion of AQ and ISIS from their traditional strong holds and have exacerbated the anger of homegrown terrorists in Europe and in the United States.

During the past few years, three armies that we armed and trained collapsed in front of lightly armed militia groups -- in Mali in 2012, Iraq in 2014 and Yemen in 2015 – providing our enemy tons of weapons, ammunition and vehicles.

In addition, Iran has increased its malevolent behavior in the past several years, training and arming violent militia groups, stoking sectarian tensions and exacerbating conflicts in a brazen attempt to expand their influence in the region.

These setbacks overseas coincided with a burst of terror attacks in France and Belgium – as well as in Boston, San Bernardino and Tampa.

Things have improved lately -- and we need not panic -- nor expend the lives of our troops or our national treasure needlessly. But, additional action is needed to respond to this troubling turn of events in the past three years.

The Evolving Threat

First, let me expand upon the nature of the threat.

AQ conducted three strategic attacks from August 1998 to Sept 11 2001 -- and none since 9-11 -- a remarkable record of success on our part -- and what can only be described as a massive strategic failure on the part of AQ.

Post 9-11 Success

There have been between 12 and 15 terrorist attacks in the USA since 9-11 -- and about 100 deaths -- depending on how you count them. These are tragedies for the victims and their families -- but have not had a strategic impact on our country.

Additionally, contrary to what many pundits have predicted in the aftermath of 9-11, Americans, from Boston to New York, from Tampa to San Bernadino -- have not overreacted or cowered in the face of terrorist attacks -- but instead they have been resilient and gone about living their lives without fear.

Bad News: Deteriorating Conditions Across the Globe

Since the Arab Spring, the Islamic world has been beset with ever-expanding conflicts from east to west.

Currently, in the Islamic world there are at least four failed states: Syria, Yemen, Somalia and Libya. There are at least five states with major areas of ungoverned space including Pakistan (the FATA), Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and Mali. In addition there are several other states with conflicts of varying degrees of violence and ungoverned space such as the southern Philippines, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and the Sinai region of Egypt. The roots of many of these conflicts are complex and go back many years -- but most have been exacerbated since the Arab Spring and the involvement of radical jihadis.

Each of these conflicts has its own unique characteristics -- it is impossible to generalize about them -- or underestimate the difficulty of unwinding them -- but each of them -- unfortunately -- provides space for the jihadi movements to grow and expand.

Af-Pak: In the FATA and parts of Afghanistan -- there is a war raging between the forces of modernity centered in the major cities of Pakistan and Afghanistan and the radical, hyper-salafist model of the Taliban in the rural mountainous regions.

The Levant: In the Levant, the once powerful and now crumbling ISIS caliphate must be understood as a Sunni insurgency fighting against the Shia domination of both the Syrian and Iraqi governments. AQI and then ISIS mobilized this resentment and put a radical, apocalyptic sharia version of a caliphate on top of a largely sectarian movement.

Yemen: In Yemen, a decades old civil war between the north and south has been reignited – unfortunately – with an increasingly sectarian dimension and Iranian involvement – and sadly is increasingly a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Egypt: In the Egyptian Sinai, resistance by Bedouin tribes to control from Cairo has been exploited by al Qaeda affiliates – and although this is a relatively small group -- its terrorists attacks against civil aviation and hotels has ravaged the Egyptian tourist industry – and has destabilized the economy one of our most important allies.

North and West Africa: In the North African Magreb, a Taureg rebellion by the northern desert tribes against the sub-Saharan tribes in Bamako was hijacked by AQIM in 2011 – and thanks to the French intervention – and some important and timely support by the US and other allies -- we avoided another completely failed state. And in northwest Nigeria (and its bordering states), the nihilist Boko Haram is fighting a brutal war against Christianity and modern civilization.

Tunisia: And although I hate to further provide more depressing news, even where there is no conflict raging – such as in Tunisia – where there is a moderate Islamic tradition and a fledgling democracy, rule of law and economic opportunity (albeit with un-employment numbers of youth similar to Greece and Spain) – even there -- a model of what we hope other countries can aspire – Tunisia exports, on a per capita basis, *more jihadis to ISIS than any other Arab nation*. This is extremely troubling, as it defies the conventional wisdom that the jihadi threat can only be limited with political and social modernization – apparently that does not work very well either in deterring a certain number of folks from radicalizing.

The West: In Europe, and to a lesser extent the US and Canada -- there is a growing number of radicals that aspire to conduct violence – and much of that hatred is generated by social media that focuses primarily violence in the Islamic world – much of what is blamed on the west – rather than on any “social marginalization” in their adopted countries.

Narratives and Counter Narratives

The facts are clear; the radical Islamist-jihadi narrative has been a powerful motivator for thousands of young men over the past two decades.

Efforts to counter this narrative have not had lots of success over the years – many volumes have been written in universities and think tanks about how miserable our efforts have been for the past 20 years. I would offer that the problem is not necessarily the lack of an effective *counter* narrative to the jihadi violence – that often falls on deaf ears anyway. What is needed is a demonstrable *alternative* narrative – and more than just words or slogans – but a *living model of a modern state* that young Sunni men would be willing to fight for against the fanatical and murderous jihadis. And we must encourage our friends to live those models now, in their homelands.

But even with the best of counter or alternative narratives – there are too many young men resistant to this message and will be trying to kill us for many years to come. There is a high likelihood that there will continue to be “one-off” attacks in the US and Western Europe in the years ahead – but it is NOT inevitable that they reconstitute strategic capability if we respond properly to the threat.

Before recommending new actions – let me do a short review on what has worked for the past 15 years – as it is important first to recognize what has worked – before contemplating new steps.

Four Layers of Defense:

Since 9-11 we have bolstered our previously non-existent defenses – with what I describe as four overlapping layers of defense.

It starts with our policies and programs in these ten or twelve sanctuary areas of conflict – those ungoverned spaces where jihadis thrive and threaten our homeland from afar. The second layer is from those sanctuary areas to our border – and all the nations and oceans in between. The third layer of protection is at our border itself – and the fourth within our homeland.

Re: Sanctuaries:

In the principal terrorist sanctuaries we have pounded AQ’s leadership in the FATA, Yemen and Somalia with lethal action from the skies -- and from the land and sea. This model has now been expanded to ISIS targets in Iraq, Syria and Libya. Some pundits call these programs “wack-a-mole” – inferring that the terrorists quickly rebound from these strikes.

My experience in studying the behavior of these groups has been different. In those regions where we conduct these operations – not only do we kill-off the most experienced, talented and dangerous terrorists – but those that come after them are principally concerned about staying alive – and they know it is extremely dangerous for them to talk on a phone, send an email, meet with more than two or three people, travel in a car, set up a safe house or small training area. Those who do –

have a very short life expectancy – and they know it. And it is hard to run an international terrorist organization when your primary task is physical survival.

But our most important long-term instrument in these sanctuary countries is in working with the host country to assist them to control their own security problems. This requires work on the diplomatic front, intelligence sharing and perhaps most important – the training, advise and assistance missions of our military units – particularly the US Army Special Forces. As advisors, in most cases, our soldiers should not be involved in what is known as “actions on the objective” – but leave the fighting to the host country. We should trust our “Green Berets” to use good judgment – but insist that they push the host country soldiers up to the front of the battle. We are their partners – but it is their country and their war. Unilateral US action should be used only for rare and special circumstances.

Pressure on Terrorist Travel:

Since 9-11 when 19 terrorists literally strolled into our country to attack us – we have established an extremely effective network of information sharing with virtually every intelligence service in the world, at some level, some obviously much more than others. Many of most important partners have also suffered attacks from these groups and are eager to share – actually trade-- intelligence on terrorist suspects. We must keep this up; expand these intelligence relationships – providing training and assistance as well -- even with some countries that do not share our values. We can work on those shortcomings --- but in the interim we need to work with them to us safe. CIA, DIA and several DHS agencies can play a role in this regard.

Controlling the Border

At the border – our most important effort is at our airports and is directly related to the watch lists created by the intelligence sharing in the second layer of defense. But we must also be smarter at these checkpoints – and if necessary increase “secondary inspections” of suspicious people – using trained intelligence professionals to pull suspects from airport lines -- which also provides opportunities for intelligence collection and the development of assets. This can be done with respect and dignity – but must be understood as a key means of protecting our border.

In regards to an expanded wall on our southern border – from my counter-narcotics experience that should help stem the flow of drugs – and as a Cold War Army veteran I was familiar with the old Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe – and I served for several years on the DMZ in South Korea – walls do work – as they are primarily used to stem immigration flows -- and certainly can only help our counter terrorism efforts. However, right now, I am more concerned about terrorist movements in our airports and just as concerned about the Canadian border than the one to the south.

Homeland Investigations and Defense

On the domestic front, I will be brief. The FBI should be commended for keeping our nation safe. I know them well – having worked within their JTTF structure in NYC. I can assure you that in my experience, I never saw FBI agents abuse the Patriot Act or any other authorities to do anything other than look for terrorists seeking to conduct violent harm to our nation. And the same was for my detectives at NYPD, they were aggressive -- but always well within the law. They had neither the inclination nor time to waste on those that were not real threats to our immediate safety – and there were plenty of them to worry about. I firmly believe these investigations act as a deterrent as well and have helped keep the City safe for the past 15 years.

Full Court Pressure

It is vitally important that pressure be kept across all four of these layers – like full court pressure in a basketball game –please excuse my basketball analogy. Weakness in one area weakens the entire defense. And no one “layer” can hope to protect the nation by itself. It is too late to pick them up terrorists at mid court – pressure must start at the source – and be sustained all the way to the streets of our cities and towns.

But the effort must be relentless – the traps of the “full court pressure” must be continually increased and adjusted to the evolving threat. Although we can never guarantee a perfect record against small one-off attacks – these efforts are essential for keeping our nation from a strategic attack for another 15 years.

And it is now time to Ramp Up the Pressure

I will conclude with ten points in summary:

- First: On what NOT to do – try to avoid invading countries – that has not worked out too well for us in the past. But at the same time don't let nations or armies we trained fall to the enemy as occurred in Mali, Iraq and Yemen – the clean up after a collapse is much more difficult.
- Second: If we must intervene to prevent a collapse -- look at the French model in Mali – get in and get out – leave a small footprint – turn it over to the UN and local government as soon as possible. Don't try to reinvent the country – just crush the rebellion and leave a very small footprint behind.
- Third: Expand our “train, advise and assist” programs across the danger zones I discussed. Advisors should be able to move forward with their

counterparts to be effective – but actions at the objective – the actual combat operation – should be left to the host country soldiers. Occasionally, we may need to conduct unilateral direct action missions – but rarely and only when absolutely necessary.

- Fourth: Afghanistan and Iraq are important – but I caution about creeping troop increases. Thousands of advisors begin to “look and smell” like an occupation – and that creates many of the problems that you seek to solve. When I was an advisor in El Salvador – on a compound over-run by guerrillas three times in seven years – there were never more than two or three Special Forces advisors per Brigade – and for six months I was by myself. Sometimes less is more.
- Fifth: Aviation is a game changer; drones collect intelligence and target terror leadership. Attack helicopters, C-130s and A-10s are a “ground pounders” best friend in a firefight. If you want to do more in tough combat zones – expand aviation – but be careful about the footprint of ground forces. Troop increases should be in the tens – not thousands.
- Sixth: Keep your socio-political objectives and spending in these countries humble and limited. These internal problems are very complex – and even if you solve them (like in Tunisia) it does not guarantee that you will solve the jihadi export program. American support for these international programs is waning – don’t lose their support by over extending or overspending scarce resources.
- Seventh: Support our allies in the region that are on the front lines of this fight, particularly Egypt, Jordan, the UAE and others like Niger that are hosting our aircraft in Africa. They are not perfect – but they are our friends and need our support – we are fighting against the same threat – this is not charity – it is partnership. Sometimes just some political support at a crucial moment is needed.
- Eighth: Crank up the pressure on Iran. No longer accept Iranian transgressions against our soldiers or sailors. A swift and determined response should be conducted for any future transgressions. Failure to do so risks further escalation from this rogue regime.
- Ninth: Preserve our troops – their lives are precious – and there are a growing number of requirements around the world. As they continue to fight terrorist threat for another 15 years -- they are also being asked to prepare for a wide range of missions from Central Europe to East Asia.
- Finally, we are in a long war against a determined enemy. The key to success is sustained pressure, in a targeted fashion across the entire “court” – with a

policy that can be sustained perhaps for decades – to prevent strategic attacks and minimize the lone wolf attacks -- while at the same time preparing for other threats that loom on the horizon – threats that with you, Mr. Chairman, are also very familiar.

Thank you

Michael A. Sheehan is a former officer in the US Army Special Forces. He has served at the White House on the NSC staff while on active duty. He was previously Ambassador at Large for Counter Terrorism at State, Deputy Commissioner for Counter Terrorism at NYPD and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict at Defense. He is currently the Distinguished Chair of the Combating Terrorism Center at his alma mater, the United States Military Academy.

Michael A. Sheehan was the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC). In this capacity he served as the Secretary of Defense's principal civilian adviser on programs, policies, and resources for special operations. In addition, the office oversees Defense Department policies and programs regarding counternarcotics, humanitarian assistance, security force assistance programs for building partner capacity, and stability operations. Mr. Sheehan has over thirty-years in public service; much of it involved in counter terrorism, counter insurgency, peacekeeping, and law enforcement operations.

Mr. Sheehan is a 1977 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He served in a variety of infantry and special forces assignments. In the infantry, he commanded a mechanized company in an armored brigade in Korea with multiple tours on the Demilitarized Zone (1983-85). As a special forces officer, Mr. Sheehan served in a variety of counter terrorism and counter insurgency capacities. He commanded an Operational Detachment -Alpha in a hostage rescue unit in Panama (Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne)) and participated in numerous training and advisory deployments in Latin America including Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. In addition, Mr. Sheehan graduated from the Colombian Commando course, Lancero. He is Airborne, Ranger, Special Forces, Jungle Warfare, and Jumpmaster qualified, and is a recipient of the Combat Infantry Badge. In 1985 and 1986, Mr. Sheehan was the brigade counter insurgency advisor for the Fourth Brigade in Chalatenango, El Salvador, one of the most combative regions in the country.

While on active duty, Mr. Sheehan served in the field on peacekeeping missions in Somalia (1993-94) and Haiti (1995). In both cases, he was Special Advisor to the head of the United Nations (U.N.) mission and engaged in the integration of U.N. military and civilian police programs. Mr. Sheehan served on the National Security Council staff for both President George H.W. Bush (1989-92) and President William Jefferson Clinton (1995-97).

After retiring from the Army in 1997, Mr. Sheehan served at the State Department in the Bureau of International Organizations. After the bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa, Mr. Sheehan was appointed by President Clinton as Ambassador-at-Large for Counter Terrorism (1998-2000) and was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 1999. During his tenure Mr. Sheehan establish bi-lateral counter terrorism working groups with India and Russia (both of which are still operating). From 2001 to 2003, Sheehan went back to peacekeeping duty as the Assistant Secretary General of Mission Support in the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, where he was responsible for supporting 16 missions around the world and over 40,000 military and police peacekeepers.

From 2003 to 2006, Mr. Sheehan served as the New York Police Department (NYPD) Deputy Commissioner for Counter Terrorism. In this position he was instrumental in reshaping the NYPD into what is widely regarded as one of the most effective counter terrorism organizations in the world.

Mr. Sheehan has master degrees from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service (1988) and the US Army Command and Staff College (1991). In both programs his dissertations concerned irregular warfare theory and practice. Mr. Sheehan spoke and lectured on counter terrorism and counter-insurgency policy and was a distinguished fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and the Center for Law and Security at NYU. In addition, he was the on-air counter terrorism analyst for NBC News from 2006-11.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

FEBRUARY 14, 2017

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LANGEVIN

Mr. LANGEVIN. Lessons learned from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other engagements around the world have demonstrated the importance of minimizing civilian casualties towards winning the “hearts and minds” of locals and ultimately decreasing animosity towards the U.S. Civilian casualties aid in propaganda and recruitment efforts, as demonstrated by Al Qaeda’s social media use of the inadvertent death of an 8-year-old girl in the recent raid in Yemen. I believe precise and quality policies, procedures, and guidelines are essential to minimizing civilian casualties—both inside and outside areas of active hostilities. They are also critical to our broader strategy and must remain in place under the current administration. In your opinion:

How does the loss of civilian life in operations undermine our counterterrorism efforts? How does it aid propaganda and recruitment efforts?

How do we strike a balance of effective kinetic and non-kinetic activities against terrorists that accounts for the deleterious effects of civilian casualties?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Minimizing civilian casualties must be an absolute critical priority in the fight against terrorism: not because of the adverse propaganda it generates, but because it is morally right. Success in striking a balance between effective kinetic and non-kinetic activities will be predicated upon the best possible intelligence being provided to the warfighter, clearly articulated rules of engagement, and active and ongoing efforts in planning and operations to prevent harm coming to civilians to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Lessons learned from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other engagements around the world have demonstrated the importance of minimizing civilian casualties towards winning the “hearts and minds” of locals and ultimately decreasing animosity towards the U.S. Civilian casualties aid in propaganda and recruitment efforts, as demonstrated by Al Qaeda’s social media use of the inadvertent death of an 8-year-old girl in the recent raid in Yemen. I believe precise and quality policies, procedures, and guidelines are essential to minimizing civilian casualties—both inside and outside areas of active hostilities. They are also critical to our broader strategy and must remain in place under the current administration. In your opinion:

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Lessons learned from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other engagements around the world have demonstrated the importance of minimizing civilian casualties towards winning the “hearts and minds” of locals and ultimately decreasing animosity towards the U.S. Civilian casualties aid in propaganda and recruitment efforts, as demonstrated by Al Qaeda’s social media use of the inadvertent death of an 8-year-old girl in the recent raid in Yemen. I believe precise and quality policies, procedures, and guidelines are essential to minimizing civilian casualties—both inside and outside areas of active hostilities. They are also critical to our broader strategy and must remain in place under the current administration. In your opinion:

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Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. FRANKS

Mr. FRANKS. Do you believe we need a 21st century NSC-68 for our fight against radical Islam?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Yes, absolutely. As I stated in my written testimony, the war on terrorism has now lasted longer than our involvement in both world wars and has exceeded even our melancholy intervention in Indochina. By prolonging this struggle, our enemies have enmeshed us in a war of attrition: the age-old strategy of terrorists and guerrillas everywhere that seeks to undermine confidence in our demo-

cratically elected leadership, create deep fissures in our polity, polarize political opinion and push the liberal democratic state towards increasingly illiberal security measures. In order to break this stasis, a new strategy and new approach is needed that harnesses all of our instruments of national power in a manner that is coherent, cohesive, systematic and sustained.

Mr. FRANKS. What happens in the coming months and years as we diminish the territorial holdings of ISIS in the Middle East? What will happen as we squeeze ISIS and take away their territory? Will there be an increase in small-scale terror attacks in Europe and the U.S.? How do we combat this?

Mr. HOFFMAN. This was explained in my written testimony. In summary, ISIS will revert to being a terrorist organization. It will opportunistically seek to inspire, motivate, and animate individuals (“lone wolves”) in the U.S. and Europe to carry out attacks on their own; it will also attempt to activate in-place operatives, mainly already in Europe, to carry out opportunistic attacks; and, finally, it will likely deploy operatives from overseas on directed missions to strike at targets in Europe and elsewhere throughout the world. A new additional category is that of the “enabled” attack: where groups like ISIS provide individuals with suggestions of potential targets along with detailed targeting information—including names of person to be targeted, home and work addresses, e-mail addresses. ISIS’s recent publication of some 8,000 U.S. citizens and their addresses is a case in point.

There is also a danger of al Qaeda absorbing whether coercively or voluntarily the rump of remaining ISIS fighters once their leaders are killed and their command structures collapse. Combatting this threat requires a systematic, simultaneous and unrelenting campaign waged against ISIS sanctuaries and safe havens everywhere (according to the National Counter-Terrorism Center, there are ISIS branches in some 18 countries across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia).

Mr. FRANKS. What is your definition of victory against the Islamic State? Is complete defeat plausible?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Yes, it is plausible. Victory is when ISIS is reduced to an inconsequential number of survivors, is shorn of its territory and pretensions of governance, and when its message, appeal and ability to attract recruits no longer has the allure and drawing power that it once had.

Mr. FRANKS. Do you believe we need a 21st century NSC–68 for our fight against radical Islam?

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

Mr. FRANKS. What happens in the coming months and years as we diminish the territorial holdings of ISIS in the Middle East? What will happen as we squeeze ISIS and take away their territory? Will there be an increase in small-scale terror attacks in Europe and the U.S.? How do we combat this?

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

Mr. FRANKS. What is your definition of victory against the Islamic State? Is complete defeat plausible?

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

Mr. FRANKS. Do you believe we need a 21st century NSC–68 for our fight against radical Islam?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. FRANKS. What happens in the coming months and years as we diminish the territorial holdings of ISIS in the Middle East? What will happen as we squeeze ISIS and take away their territory? Will there be an increase in small-scale terror attacks in Europe and the U.S.? How do we combat this?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. FRANKS. What is your definition of victory against the Islamic State? Is complete defeat plausible?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LAMBORN

Mr. LAMBORN. Clausewitz said: “The political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires.” (On War, p. 80)

What does winning look like against this threat? What should our political, strategic, and military objectives be? How optimistic or pessimistic are you that these objectives are achievable?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Winning is when a terrorist group is deprived its ability to have strategic consequences: when its capacity for violence is diminished, when its power is reduced to miniscule numbers of fighters, and when its geographic operational locus is constrained, and when their messages fall flat, their narratives are shown

to be empty and they are no longer able to recruit new fighters and attract new supporters. Winning is when terrorists lose access to sanctuary and safe haven and are deprived of the opportunity to re-group and re-organize: that is, when they are kept on the run and too preoccupied about their own security so that they cannot plan and plot new terrorist operations. Our objectives should be: the elimination of terrorist access to sanctuary and safe haven along the systematic weakening and dismantling of their organizational infrastructure and far-flung networks, and effective countering of both their message and narrative. If and when we are prepared to use all aspects of our national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, finance, and communications—in a coherent, cohesive, holistic and sustained and systematic way, all the above objectives will be achieved.

Mr. LAMBORN. Clausewitz said: “The political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires.” (On War, p. 80)

What does winning look like against this threat? What should our political, strategic, and military objectives be? How optimistic or pessimistic are you that these objectives are achievable?

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

Mr. LAMBORN. Clausewitz said: “The political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires.” (On War, p. 80)

What does winning look like against this threat? What should our political, strategic, and military objectives be? How optimistic or pessimistic are you that these objectives are achievable?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. SPEIER

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Jenkins, I read with great interest your commentary from last September, “Fifteen Years on, Where Are We in the ‘War on Terror’?” This point in particular caught my attention: “The United States’ frightened, angry, and divided society remains the country’s biggest vulnerability. Progress in degrading Al Qaeda’s capabilities or dismantling the Islamic State is almost completely divorced from popular perceptions. Rather than appeal to traditional American values . . . our current political system incentivizes the creation of fear.” Unfortunately, our society isn’t less frightened, angry, or divided now than it was in September. Can you elaborate a bit further on why you think this is the nation’s biggest vulnerability? What would be your advice to our political leadership for how to address this vulnerability?

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

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Jenkins, you provided some valuable context in an interview last month with the Cipher Brief. After tallying 89 people who have been killed as a result of fatal jihadist-driven terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11, you asked “How many of those lives would have been saved had [Trump’s Executive Order] been put into effect after 9/11 and applied for the entire 15-year period? The answer is zero.” You further noted that none of the 19 attackers on 9/11 were from the countries named in Trump’s order. Regardless of what ends up happening in the courts, have you seen evidence that Trump’s Executive Order is being used as a rallying cry and recruitment tool for jihadists? Has the damage already been done, and is it irreparable?

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

Ms. SPEIER. The events of September 11 led to a massive overhaul and restructuring of the Federal Government. We stood up new agencies, consolidated old ones, and reorganized the intelligence community . . . all with the intent of promoting better information sharing and improving our ability to connect the dots to prevent the next terrorist attack. Did we get it right? What more needs to be done on the organizational front?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY DR. WENSTRUP

Dr. WENSTRUP. In February 2015, you signed a letter organized by the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress supporting the passage of a Congressional Authorization for the Use of Military Force directed at ISIL. The letter notes that, in formulating a long-term strategy for the region, “a key first step is to indicate U.S. political resolve and strategic aims through the passage of an authorization for the use of military force to combat—and ultimately destroy—ISIL and to facilitate

U.S. assistance to the Syrian opposition.” It goes on to say, “A bipartisan AUMF can serve as a valuable tool for demonstrating U.S. willingness to confront ISIL, and will establish a broader strategic framework for this campaign.” Do you still believe the passage of an AUMF is an important component of the U.S. effort against ISIL?

Mr. HOFFMAN. Yes. Only when the will of the Congress is made clear to both the president and the American people, will we have the resolve and the resources to prosecute the war on terrorism to the fullest extent in a manner that will truly assure victory.

Dr. WENSTRUP. What constraints do the current legal authorities for the counter-ISIL mission—primarily the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force, in addition to the President’s Article II authority—impose on our counterterrorism operations? Do you believe these limitations are appropriate?

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

Dr. WENSTRUP. Back in May 2013, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, you said, “At this point, we are comfortable with the AUMF as it is currently structured. Right now, it does not inhibit us from prosecuting the war against Al Qaeda and its affiliates. If we were to find a group or organization that was targeting the United States, first of all, we would have other authorities to deal with that situation.” Are you still comfortable with the existing authorization, or have the rise of ISIL, its split with Al Qaeda, and other recent developments changed your conclusion?

Ambassador SHEEHAN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

