

referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as

Daesh. President Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference in Belek, Turkey November 16, 2015

The President. Good afternoon. Let me begin by thanking President Erdogan and the people of Antalya and Turkey for their outstanding work in hosting this G–20 Summit. Antalya is beautiful. The hospitality of the Turkish people is legendary. To our Turkish friends, *çok teşekkürler*. [Laughter] I had been practicing that.

At the G–20, our focus was on how to get the global economy growing faster and creating more jobs for our people. And I'm pleased that we agreed that growth has to be inclusive to address the rising inequality around the world.

Given growing cyber threats, we committed to a set of norms, drafted by the United States, for how governments should conduct themselves in cyberspace, including a commitment not to engage in the cyber theft of intellectual property for commercial gain. And as we head into global climate talks, all G–20 countries have submitted our targets, and we've pledged to work together for a successful outcome in Paris.

Of course, much of our attention has focused on the heinous attacks that took place in Paris. Across the world, in the United States, American flags are at half-staff in solidarity with our French allies. We're working closely with our French partners as they pursue their investigations and track down suspects.

France is already a strong counterterrorism partner, and today we're announcing a new agreement. We're streamlining the process by which we share intelligence and operational military information with France. This will allow our personnel to pass threat information, including on ISIL, to our French partners even more quickly and more often, because we need to be doing everything we can to protect more attacks—protect against more attacks and protect our citizens.

Now, tragically, Paris is not alone. We've seen outrageous attacks by ISIL in Beirut, last month in Ankara, routinely in Iraq. Here at the G–20, our nations have sent an unmistakable message that we are united against this threat. ISIL is the face of evil. Our goal, as I've said many times, is to degrade and ultimately destroy this barbaric terrorist organization.

As I outlined this fall at the United Nations, we have a comprehensive strategy using all elements of our power: military, intelligence, economic, development, and the strength of our communities. We have always understood that this would be a long-term campaign. There will be setbacks, and there will be successes. The terrible events in Paris were obviously a terrible and sickening setback. Even as we grieve with our French friends, however, we can't lose sight that there has been progress being made.

On the military front, our coalition is intensifying our airstrikes, more than 8,000 to date. We're taking out ISIL leaders, commanders, their killers. We've seen that when we have an effective partner on the ground, ISIL can and is pushed back. So local forces in Iraq, backed by coalition airpower, recently liberated Sinjar. Iraqi forces are fighting to take back Ramadi. In Syria, ISIL has been pushed back from much of the border region with Turkey. We've stepped up our support of opposition forces who are working to cut off supply lines to ISIL's strongholds in and around Raqqa. So, in short, both in Iraq and Syria, ISIL controls less territory than it did before.

I made the point to my fellow leaders that if we want this progress to be sustained, more nations need to step up with the resources that this fight demands.

Of course, the attacks in Paris remind us that it will not be enough to defeat ISIL in Syria and Iraq alone. Here in Antalya, our nations, therefore, committed to strengthening border

controls, sharing more information, and stepping up our efforts to prevent the flow of foreign fighters in and out of Syria and Iraq. As the United States just showed in Libya, ISIL leaders will have no safe haven anywhere. And we'll continue to stand with leaders in Muslim communities, including faith leaders, who are the best voices to discredit ISIL's warped ideology.

On the humanitarian front, our nations agreed that we have to do even more, individually and collectively, to address the agony of the Syrian people. The United States is already the largest donor of humanitarian aid to the Syrian people, some \$4.5 billion in aid so far. As winter approaches, we're donating additional supplies, including clothing and generators, through the United Nations. But the U.N. appeal for Syria still has less than half the funds needed. Today I'm again calling on more nations to contribute the resources that this crisis demands.

In terms of refugees, it's clear that countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, which are already bearing an extraordinary burden, cannot be expected to do so alone. At the same time, all of our countries have to ensure our security. And as President, my first priority is the safety of the American people. And that's why, even as we accept more refugees—including Syrians—we do so only after subjecting them to rigorous screening and security checks.

We also have to remember that many of these refugees are the victims of terrorism themselves. That's what they're fleeing. Slamming the door in their faces would be a betrayal of our values. Our nations can welcome refugees who are desperately seeking safety and ensure our own security. We can and must do both.

Finally, we've begun to see some modest progress on the diplomatic front, which is critical because a political solution is the only way to end the war in Syria and unite the Syrian people and the world against ISIL. The Vienna talks mark the first time that all the key countries have come together—as a result, I would add, of American leadership—and reached a common understanding. With this weekend's

talks, there's a path forward: negotiations between the Syrian opposition and the Syrian regime under the auspices of the United Nations; a transition toward a more inclusive, representative Government; a new Constitution, followed by free elections; and alongside this political process, a cease-fire in the civil war, even as we continue to fight against ISIL.

Now, these are obviously ambitious goals. Hopes for diplomacy in Syria have been dashed before. There are any number of ways that this latest diplomatic push could falter. And there are still disagreements between the parties, including, most critically, over the fate of Bashar Asad, who we do not believe has a role in Syria's future because of his brutal rule. His war against the Syrian people is the primary root cause of this crisis.

What is different this time, and what gives us some degree of hope, is that, as I said, for the first time, all the major countries on all sides of the Syrian conflict agree on a process that is needed to end this war. And so, while we are very clear eyed about the very, very difficult road still ahead, the United States, in partnership with our coalition, is going to remain relentless on all fronts: military, humanitarian, and diplomatic. We have the right strategy, and we're going to see it through.

So, with that, I'm going to take some questions. And I will begin with Jerome Cartillier of AFP [Agence France-Presse].

The President's Strategy To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One hundred and twenty-nine people were killed in Paris on Friday night.

The President. Yes.

Q. ISIL claimed responsibility for the massacre, sending the message that they could now target civilians all over the world. The equation has clearly changed. Isn't it time for your strategy to change?

The President. Well, keep in mind what we have been doing. We have a military strategy that involves putting enormous pressure on ISIL through airstrikes, that has put assistance

and training on the ground with Iraqi forces. We're now working with Syrian forces as well to squeeze ISIL, cut off their supply lines. We've been coordinating internationally to reduce their financing capabilities, the oil that they're trying to ship outside. We are taking strikes against high-value targets, including, most recently, against the individual who was on the video executing civilians who had already been captured, as well as the head of ISIL in Libya. So it's not just in Iraq and Syria.

And so, on the military front, we are continuing to accelerate what we do. As we find additional partners on the ground that are effective, we work with them more closely. I've already authorized additional special forces on the ground who are going to be able to improve that coordination.

On the counterterrorism front, keep in mind that since I came into office, we have been worried about these kinds of attacks. The vigilance that the United States Government maintains and the cooperation that we're consistently expanding with our European and other partners in going after every single terrorist network is robust and constant. And every few weeks, I meet with my entire national security team, and we go over every single threat stream that is presented, and where we have relevant information, we share it immediately with our counterparts around the world, including our European partners.

On aviation security, we have, over the last several years, been working so that at various airports sites—not just in the United States, but overseas—we are strengthening our mechanisms to screen and discover passengers who should not be boarding flights and improving the manners in which we are screening luggage that is going onboard.

And on the diplomatic front, we've been consistently working to try to get all the parties together to recognize that there is a moderate opposition inside of Syria that can form the basis for a transition government and to reach out not only to our friends, but also to the Russians and the Iranians who are on the other side of this equation to explain to them that ultimately

an organization like ISIL is the greatest danger to them, as well as to us.

So there will be an intensification of the strategy that we put forward, but the strategy that we are putting forward is the strategy that ultimately is going to work. But as I said from the start, it's going to take time.

And what's been interesting is, in the aftermath of Paris, as I listen to those who suggest something else needs to be done, typically, the things they suggest need to be done are things we are already doing. The one exception is that there have been a few who have suggested that we should put large numbers of U.S. troops on the ground.

And keep in mind that we have the finest military in the world and we have the finest military minds in the world, and I've been meeting with them intensively for years now, discussing these various options, and it is not just my view, but the view of my closest military and civilian advisers that that would be a mistake, not because our military could not march into Mosul or Raqqa or Ramadi and temporarily clear out ISIL, but because we would see a repetition of what we've seen before, which is, if you do not have local populations that are committed to inclusive governance and who are pushing back against ideological extremes, that they resurface, unless we're prepared to have a permanent occupation of these countries.

And let's assume that we were to send 50,000 troops into Syria. What happens when there's a terrorist attack generated from Yemen? Do we then send more troops into there? Or Libya, perhaps? Or if there's a terrorist network that's operating anywhere else in North Africa or in Southeast Asia?

So a strategy has to be one that can be sustained. And the strategy that we're pursuing, which focuses on going after targets, limiting wherever possible the capabilities of ISIL on the ground, systematically going after their leadership, their infrastructure, strengthening Shia—or strengthening Syrian and Iraqi forces that are—and Kurdish forces that are prepared to fight them, cutting off their borders and squeezing the space in which they can operate

until ultimately we're able to defeat them—that's the strategy we're going to have to pursue.

And we will continue to generate more partners for that strategy. And there are going to be some things that we try that don't work; there will be some strategies we try that do work. And when we find strategies that work, we will double down on those. Okay?

Margaret Brennan, CBS.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/Al Qaida Terrorist Organization/U.S. Counterterrorism Efforts/Syria/Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. A more than year-long bombing campaign in Iraq and in Syria has failed to contain the ambition and the ability of ISIS to launch attacks in the West. Have you underestimated their abilities? And will you widen the rules of engagement for U.S. forces to take more aggressive action?

The President. No, we haven't underestimated our abilities. This is precisely why we're in Iraq as we speak, and why we're operating in Syria as we speak. And it's precisely why we have mobilized 65 countries to go after ISIL and why I hosted at the United Nations an entire discussion of counterterrorism strategies and curbing the flow of foreign fighters and why we've been putting pressure on those countries that have not been as robust as they need to in tracking the flow of foreign fighters in and out of Syria and Iraq.

And so there has been an acute awareness on the part of my administration from the start that it is possible for an organization like ISIL that has such a twisted ideology and has shown such extraordinary brutality and complete disregard for innocent lives, that they would have the capabilities to potentially strike in the West. And because thousands of fighters have flowed from the West and are European citizens—a few hundred from the United States, but far more from Europe—that when those foreign fighters returned, it posed a significant danger. And we have consistently worked with our European partners, disrupting plots in some cases. Sadly, this one was not disrupted in time.

But understand that one of the challenges we have in this situation is, is that if you have a handful of people who don't mind dying, they can kill a lot of people. That's one of the challenges of terrorism. It's not their sophistication or the particular weaponry that they possess, but it is the ideology that they carry with them and their willingness to die. And in those circumstances, tracking each individual, making sure that we are disrupting and preventing these attacks is a constant effort at vigilance and requires extraordinary coordination.

Now, part of the reason that it is important what we do in Iraq and Syria is that the narrative that ISIL developed of creating this caliphate makes it more attractive to potential recruits. So when I said that we are containing their spread in Iraq and Syria, in fact, they control less territory than they did last year. And the more we shrink that territory, the less they can pretend that they are somehow a functioning state and the more it becomes apparent that they are simply a network of killers who are brutalizing local populations. That allows us to reduce the flow of foreign fighters, which then, over time, will lessen the numbers of terrorists who can potentially carry out terrible acts like they did in Paris.

And that's what we did with Al Qaida. That doesn't mean, by the way, that Al Qaida no longer possess the capabilities of potentially striking the West. Al Qaida in the Peninsula, that operates primarily in Yemen, we know has consistently tried to target the West. And we are consistently working to disrupt those acts. But despite the fact that they have not gotten as much attention as ISIL, they still pose a danger as well.

And so our goals here consistently have to be to be aggressive and to leave no stone unturned, but also recognize, this is not conventional warfare. We play into the ISIL narrative when we act as if they're a state and we use routine military tactics that are designed to fight a state that is attacking another state. That's not what's going on here.

These are killers with fantasies of glory who are very savvy when it comes to social media and are able to infiltrate the minds of not just

Iraqis or Syrians, but disaffected individuals around the world. And when they activate those individuals, those individuals can do a lot of damage. And so we have to take the approach of being rigorous on our counterterrorism efforts and consistently improve and figure out how we can get more information, how we can infiltrate these networks, how we can reduce their operational space, even as we also try to shrink the amount of territory they control to defeat their narrative.

Ultimately, to reclaim territory from them is going to require, however, an ending of the Syrian civil war, which is why the diplomatic efforts are so important. And it's going to require an effective Iraqi effort that bridges Shia and Sunni differences, which is why our diplomatic efforts inside of Iraq are so important as well.

Jim Avila [ABC News].

U.S. Intelligence Reports Prior to the Terrorist Attacks in Paris, France/The President's Strategy To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In the days and weeks before the Paris attacks, did you receive a warning in your daily intelligence briefing that an attack was imminent? If not, does that not call into question the current assessment that there is no immediate, specific, credible threat to the United States today?

And secondly, if I could ask you to address your critics who say that your reluctance to enter another Middle East war and your preference of diplomacy over using the military makes the United States weaker and emboldens our enemies.

The President. Jim, every day, we have threat streams coming through the intelligence transom. And as I said, every several weeks, we sit down with all my national security, intelligence, and military teams to discuss various threat streams that may be generated. And the concerns about potential ISIL attacks in the West have been there for over a year now, and they come through periodically. There were no specific mentions of this particular attack that would give us a sense of something that we

need—that we could provide French authorities, for example, or act on ourselves.

But typically, the way the intelligence works is, there will be a threat stream that is from one source. How reliable is that source? Perhaps some signal intelligence gets picked up, it's evaluated. Some of it is extraordinarily vague and unspecific, and there's no clear timetable. Some of it may be more specific, and then folks chase down that thread to see what happens.

I am not aware of anything that was specific in the sense that would have given a premonition about a particular action in Paris that would allow for law enforcement or military actions to disrupt it.

With respect to the broader issue of my critics, to some degree, I answered the question earlier. I think that when you listen to what they actually have to say, what they're proposing, most of the time, when pressed, they describe things that we're already doing. Maybe they're not aware that we're already doing them. Some of them seem to think that if I were just more bellicose in expressing what we're doing, that that would make a difference. Because that seems to be the only thing that they're doing, is talking as if they're tough. But I haven't seen particular strategies that they would suggest that would make a real difference.

Now, there are a few exceptions. And as I said, the primary exception is those who would deploy U.S. troops on a large scale to retake territory either in Iraq or now in Syria. And at least, they have the honesty to go ahead and say that's what they would do. I just addressed why I think they're wrong. There have been some who are well meaning, and I don't doubt their sincerity when it comes to the issue of the dire humanitarian situation in Syria, who, for example, call for a no-fly zone or a safe zone of some sort.

And this is an example of the kind of issue where I will sit down with our top military and intelligence advisers, and we will painstakingly go through what does something like that look like. And typically, after we've gone through a lot of planning and a lot of discussion and really working it through, it is determined that it

would be counterproductive to take those steps, in part because ISIL does not have planes, so the attacks are on the ground. A true safe zone requires us to set up ground operations. And the bulk of the deaths that have occurred in Syria, for example, have come about not because of regime bombing, but because of on-the-ground casualties. Who would come in, who could come out of that safe zone? How would it work? Would it become a magnet for further terrorist attacks? And how many personnel would be required, and how would it end? Right? There's a whole set of questions that have to be answered there.

I guess my point is this, Jim: My only interest is to end suffering and to keep the American people safe. And if there's a good idea out there, then we're going to do it. I don't think I've shown hesitation to act—whether it's with respect to bin Laden or with respect to sending additional troops in Afghanistan or keeping them there—if it is determined that it's actually going to work.

But what we do not do—what I do not do—is to take actions either because it is going to work politically or it is going to somehow, in the abstract, make America look tough or make me look tough. And maybe part of the reason is because every few months, I go to Walter Reed, and I see a 25-year-old kid who is paralyzed or has lost his limbs, and some of those are people I've ordered into battle. And so I can't afford to play some of the political games that others may.

We'll do what's required to keep the American people safe. And I think it's entirely appropriate in a democracy to have a serious debate about these issues. If folks want to pop off and have opinions about what they think they would do, present a specific plan. If they think that somehow their advisers are better than the Chairman of my Joint Chiefs of Staff and the folks who are actually on the ground, I want to meet them. And we can have that debate. But what I'm not interested in doing is posing or pursuing some notion of American leadership or America winning or whatever other slogans are—they come up with, that has no relationship to what is actually going to work to protect

the American people and to protect people in the region who are getting killed and to protect our allies and people like France. I'm too busy for that.

Jim Acosta [CNN].

The President's Strategy To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I wanted to go back to something that you said to Margaret earlier when you said that you have not underestimated ISIS's abilities. This is an organization that you once described as a JV team that evolved into a force that has now occupied territory in Iraq and Syria and is now able to use that safe haven to launch attacks in other parts of the world. How is that not underestimating their capabilities? And how is that contained, quite frankly? And I think a lot of Americans have this frustration that they see that the United States has the greatest military in the world, it has the backing of nearly every other country in the world when it comes to taking on ISIS. And I guess the question is—and if you'll forgive the language—is why can't we take out these bastards?

The President. [Laughter] Well, Jim, I just spent the last three questions answering that very question, so I don't know what more you want me to add. I think I've described very specifically what our strategy is, and I've described very specifically why we do not pursue some of the other strategies that have been suggested.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. The—this is not, as I said, a traditional military opponent. We can retake territory. And as long as we leave our troops there, we can hold it, but that does not solve the underlying problem of eliminating the dynamics that are producing these kinds of violent extremist groups.

And so we are going to continue to pursue the strategy that has the best chance of working, even though it does not offer the satisfaction, I guess, of a neat headline or an immediate resolution. And part of the reason, as I said, Jim, is because there are costs to the other

side. I just want to remind people—this is not an abstraction—when we send troops in, those troops get injured, they get killed. They're away from their families. Our country spends hundreds of billions of dollars. And so, given the fact that there are enormous sacrifices involved in any military action, it's best that we don't shoot first and aim later. It's important for us to get the strategy right. And the strategy that we are pursuing is the right one.

Ron Allen [NBC News].

The President's Strategy To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization/U.S. Counterterrorism Efforts

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I think a lot of people around the world and in America are concerned because, given the strategy that you're pursuing—and it's been more than a year now—ISIS's capabilities seem to be expanding. Were you aware that they had the capability of pulling off the kind of attack that they did in Paris? Are you concerned, and do you think they have that same capability to strike in the United States?

And do you think that, given all you've learned about ISIS over the past year or so and given all the criticism about your underestimating them, do you think you really understand this enemy well enough to defeat them and to protect the homeland?

The President. All right, so this is another variation on the same question. [Laughter] And I guess, let me try it one last time. [Laughter]

The—we have been fully aware of the potential capabilities of them carrying out a terrorist attack. That's precisely why we have been mounting a very aggressive strategy to go after them. As I said before, it—when you're talking about the ability of a handful of people with not wildly sophisticated military equipment, weapons, who are willing to die, they can kill a lot of people. And preventing them from doing so is challenging for every country. And if there was a swift and quick solution to this, I assure you that not just the United States, but France and Turkey and others who have been

subject to these terrorist attacks would have implemented those strategies.

There are certain advantages that the United States has in preventing these kinds of attacks. Obviously, after 9/11, we hardened the homeland, set up a whole series of additional steps to protect aviation, to apply lessons learned. We've seen much better cooperation between the FBI, State governments, local governments. There is some advantages to geography with respect to the United States.

But having said that, we've seen the possibility of terrorist attacks on our soil. There was the Boston Marathon bombers. Obviously, it did not result in the scale of death that we saw in Paris, but that was a serious attempt at killing a lot of people by two brothers and a crockpot. And it gives you some sense of, I think, the kinds of challenges that are going to be involved in this going forward.

So again, ISIL has serious capabilities. Its capabilities are not unique. They are capabilities that other terrorist organizations that we track and are paying attention to possess as well. We are going after all of them.

I—what is unique about ISIL is the degree to which it has been able to control territory that then allows them to attract additional recruits and the greater effectiveness that they have on social media and their ability to use that to not only attract recruits to fight in Syria, but also potentially to carry out attacks in the homeland and in Europe and in other parts of the world.

And so our ability to shrink the space in which they can operate, combined with a resolution to the Syria situation, which will reduce the freedom with which they feel that they can operate, and getting local forces who are able to hold and keep them out over the long term, that ultimately is going to be what's going to make a difference. And it's going to take some time, but it's not something that at any stage in this process have we not been aware needs to be done.

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Okay, go ahead.

Q. Shall I wait for the microphone? No?

The President. No, I can hear you.

Islam/Efforts Within the Muslim Community To Counter Extremism/Syrian Refugees

Q. Okay, thank you so much. [*Inaudible*] My name is—[*inaudible*]. I'd like to ask a question—[*inaudible*]. These terrorist attacks we've seen allegedly happened—have been attacks under the name of Islam. But this really takes—or upsets the peaceful people like countries like Turkey. So how can we give off that—[*inaudible*—this is not really representative of Muslims? Thank you.

The President. Yes. Well, this is something that we spoke a lot about at the G-20. The overwhelming majority of victims of terrorism over the last several years, and certainly the overwhelming majority of victims of ISIL, are themselves Muslims. ISIL does not represent Islam. It is not representative in any way of the attitudes of the overwhelming majority of Muslims. This is something that's been emphasized by Muslim leaders, whether it's President Erdogan or the President of Indonesia or the President of Malaysia, countries that are majority Muslim, but have shown themselves to be tolerant and to work to be inclusive in their political process.

And so, to the degree that anyone would equate the terrible actions that took place in Paris with the views of Islam, those kinds of stereotypes are counterproductive. They're wrong. They will lead, I think, to greater recruitment into terrorist organizations over time if this becomes somehow defined as a Muslim problem as opposed to a terrorist problem.

Now, what is also true is, is that the most vicious terrorist organizations at the moment are ones that claim to be speaking on behalf of true Muslims. And I do think that Muslims around the world—religious leaders, political leaders, ordinary people—have to ask very serious questions about how did these extremist ideologies take root, even if it's only affecting a very small fraction of the population. It is real, and it is dangerous. And it has built up over time, and with social media, it is now accelerating.

And so I think, on the one hand, non-Muslims cannot stereotype, but I also think the Muslim community has to think about how we

make sure that children are not being infected with this twisted notion that somehow they can kill innocent people and that that is justified by religion. And to some degree, that is something that has to come from within the Muslim community itself. And I think there have been times where there has not been enough push-back against extremism. There's been push-back. There are some who say, "Well, we don't believe in violence," but are not as willing to challenge some of the extremist thoughts or rationales for why Muslims feel oppressed. And I think those ideas have to be challenged.

Let me make one last point about this, and then unfortunately, I have to take a flight to Manila. I'm looking forward to seeing Manila, but I hope I can come back to Turkey when I'm not so busy.

One of the places that you're seeing this debate play itself out is on the refugee issue both in Europe and—I gather it started popping up while I was gone—back in the United States. The people who are fleeing Syria are the most harmed by terrorism, they are the most vulnerable as a consequence of civil war and strife. They are parents, they are children, they are orphans. And it is very important—and I was glad to see that this was affirmed again and again by the G-20—that we do not close our hearts to these victims of such violence and somehow start equating the issue of refugees with the issue of terrorism.

In Europe, I think people like Chancellor Merkel have taken a very courageous stance in saying it is our moral obligation, as fellow human beings, to help people who are in such vulnerable situations. And I know that it is putting enormous strains on the resources of the people of Europe. Nobody has been carrying a bigger burden than the people here in Turkey, with 2½ million refugees, and the people of Jordan and Lebanon, who are also admitting refugees. The fact that they've kept their borders open to these refugees is a signal of their belief in a common humanity.

And so we have to, each of us, do our part. And the United States has to step up and do its part. And when I hear folks say that, well, maybe we should just admit the Christians, but not

the Muslims; when I hear political leaders suggesting that there would be a religious test for which person who's fleeing from a war-torn country is admitted; when some of those folks themselves come from families who benefited from protection when they were fleeing political persecution—that's shameful. That's not American. That's not who we are. We don't have religious tests to our compassion.

When Pope Francis came to visit the United States and gave a speech before Congress, he didn't just speak about Christians who were being persecuted. He didn't call on Catholic parishes just to admit to those who were of the same religious faith. He said, protect people who are vulnerable.

And so I think it is very important for us right now—particularly those who are in leadership, particularly those who have a platform and can be heard—not to fall into that trap, not to feed that dark impulse inside of us.

I had a lot of disagreements with George W. Bush on policy, but I was very proud after 9/11 when he was adamant and clear about the fact that this is not a war on Islam. And the notion that some of those who have taken on leadership in his party would ignore all of that, that's not who we are. On this, they should follow his example. It was the right one. It was the right impulse. It's our better impulse. And whether you are European or American, the values that we are defending, the values that we're fighting against ISIL for, are precisely that we don't discriminate against people because of their faith. We don't kill people because they're different than us. That's what separates us from them. And we don't feed that kind of notion

that somehow Christians and Muslims are at war.

And if we want to be successful defeating ISIL, that's a good place to start: by not promoting that kind of ideology, that kind of attitude. In the same way that the Muslim community has an obligation not to in any way excuse anti-Western or anti-Christian sentiment, we have the same obligation as Christians. And we are—it is good to remember that the United States does not have a religious test and we are a nation of many peoples of different faiths, which means that we show compassion to everybody. Those are the universal values we stand for. And that's what my administration intends to stand for.

All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:42 p.m. in the San Marco 2 Press Briefing Room at the Hotel Riu Kaya Palazzo 5 resort. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; Mohammed Emwazi, an ISIL operative known as "Jihadi John," who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Raqqa, Syria, on November 12; Abu Nabil, an ISIL leader known as "Wissam Najm Abd Zayd al-Zubaydi," who was killed in a U.S. airstrike in Derna, Libya, on November 13; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC; Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was convicted for his role in the Boston Marathon terrorist attacks of April 15, 2013; President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo of Indonesia; Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; former Gov. John E. "Jeb" Bush of Florida; and Sens. R. Edward "Ted" Cruz and Marco A. Rubio.

Remarks Following a Tour of the Philippine Navy Frigate BRP *Gregorio del Pilar* in Manila, Philippines November 17, 2015

Good afternoon, everybody. It is wonderful to be back in the Philippines. And I want to thank Secretary Gazmin, General Iriberri, Rear Admiral Alano and Melad, Captain Sibala, and the members of the Filipino Armed Forces for welcoming me here today. I want to

acknowledge the American servicemembers who are here and who are part of our unbreakable alliance.

The United States has been committed to the security of this region for more than 70 years. We have a treaty obligation, an ironclad