

The President's Weekly Address *February 27, 2016*

Hi, everybody. This week, we continued our mission to destroy ISIL. This remains a difficult fight, and the situation in Syria and Iraq is incredibly complex. ISIL is entrenched, including in urban areas. It uses innocent civilians as human shields. Despite these challenges though, I can report that we're making progress. And this week, I directed my team to continue accelerating our campaign on all fronts.

Our 66-member coalition, including Arab partners, continues to grow stronger. More nations are making more contributions. Every day, our air campaign—more than 10,000 strikes so far—continues to destroy ISIL forces. And we continue to go after ISIL leaders and commanders, taking them out, day in, day out, one after another after another.

In Iraq, ISIL has now lost more than 40 percent of the areas it once controlled. In Syria, a coalition of local forces is tightening the squeeze on ISIL's stronghold of Raqqa. As we bomb its oil infrastructure, ISIL's been forced to slash salaries of its fighters. Thanks to the work of many nations, the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into Syria finally appears to be slowing. In short, in Syria and Iraq, ISIL's territory is shrinking, there are fewer ISIL fighters on the battlefield, and it's harder for them to recruit and replenish their ranks.

Still, the only way to deal ISIL a lasting defeat is to end the civil war and chaos in Syria upon which ISIL thrives. A cessation of hostilities in the civil war is scheduled to take effect this weekend. Now, we're not under any illusions. There are plenty of reasons for skepticism. And even under the best of circumstances, the violence will not end right away. But everyone knows what needs to happen. All parties must end attacks, including aerial bombardment. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach areas under siege. And a lot of this is going to depend on whether the Syrian regime, Russia, and their allies live up to their commitments. The coming hours and days will be critical, and the world is watching.

That said, there will be absolutely no cease-fire in our fight against ISIL. We'll remain relentless. Beyond Syria and Iraq, we continue to use the full range of our tools to go after ISIL wherever it tries to take root, as we showed with our recent strike on an ISIL training camp in Libya. With partners around the world, we'll continue discrediting the ideology that ISIL uses to radicalize and recruit and inspire people to violence, especially online.

Finally, we'll continue to stay vigilant here at home, including trying to identify lone actors or small groups of terrorists like those in San Bernardino, which are harder to detect. Our homeland security and law enforcement professionals are hard at work, 24/7. At the same time, we'll keep working to build partnerships of trust and respect with communities to help them stay strong and resilient. And all of this includes upholding our values—including freedom of religion—so that we stay united as one American family.

This fight against ISIL will remain difficult. But we will continue to draw on all elements of our national power, including the strength of our communities and our values as Americans. And I am absolutely confident that we will prevail. We will destroy this barbaric terrorist organization and continue to stand with those around the world who seek a better, safer future.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:30 p.m. on February 26 in the Container Storage Area at the Saft America, Inc., advanced batteries plant in Jacksonville, FL, for broadcast on February 27. In the address, the President referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 26, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 27. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.