

STATEMENT OF LTG, USA (RET) MICHAEL FLYNN

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015

“What is the state of Islamic extremism: Key Trends, Challenges, and Implications for US Policy?”

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today.

Thank you for inviting me.

You have asked me to comment on the state of Islamic extremism.

Today, I have the unhappy task of informing you that according to every metric of significance, Islamic extremism has grown over the last year. Whether it be:

- The scale and scope of ISIS and its associated movements,
- The number of violent Islamist groups,
- The territory which these groups control,
- The number of terrorist attacks these groups perpetrate,
- The massive numbers and suffering of refugees and displaced persons due to these Islamist groups,
- The amount of kidnapping and rape of women and children by these Islamist groups,
- The numbers of casualties they inflict,
- Their broad expansion and use of the internet, or,
- Just their sheer barbarism that we’ve witnessed

I can draw no other conclusion than to say that the threat of Islamic extremism has reached an unacceptable level and that it is growing.

We are at war with *violent and extreme Islamists (both Sunni and Shia) and we must accept and face this reality.*

This enemy has an ingrained and unshakable vision of how the world and society should be ordered and they believe violence is a legitimate means of bringing about this ideal state.

The *violent Islamist* is serious, devout, committed and dangerous. His ideology justifies the most heinous, inhumane actions imaginable and he will not be reasoned with nor will he relent.

This enemy must be opposed. They must be killed. They must be destroyed and the associated extremist form of the Islamic ideology must be defeated wherever it rears its ugly head.

There are some who counsel patience, arguing violent Islamists are not an existential threat and therefore can simply be managed as criminals. I respectfully and strongly disagree. I

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have been in the theaters of war of Iraq and Afghanistan for many years, faced this enemy up close and personal, and I have seen first hand the unrestrained cruelty of our enemy.

They may be animated by a medieval ideology, but they are thoroughly modern in their capacity to kill and maim as well as precisely and very smartly message their ideas, intentions and actions via the internet.

In fact, they are increasingly capable of threatening our Nation's interests and those of our Allies.

Furthermore, it would be foolish for us to wait until our enemies pose an existential threat before taking decisive action. Doing so would only increase the cost in blood and treasure *later* for what we know must be done *now*.

Our violent and extremely radical Islamist enemies must be stopped. To that end, I offer the following three strategic objectives:

First, we have to energize every element of National Power—similar to the effort during WWII or during the Cold War—to effectively resource what will likely be a multi-generational struggle. There is no cheap way to win this fight.

Second, we must engage the violent Islamists wherever they are, drive them from their safe havens and kill them. There can be no quarter and no accommodation. Any nation-state that offers safe haven to our enemies must be given one choice—to eliminate them or be prepared for those contributing partners involved in this endeavor to do so.

We do need to recognize there are nations who lack the capability to defeat this threat and will likely require help to do so inside of their own internationally recognized boundaries. We must be prepared to assist those nations.

Third, we must decisively confront the state and non-state supporters and enablers of the *violent Islamist* ideology and compel them to end their support to our enemies or be prepared to remove their capacity to do so. Many of these are currently considered “partners” of the United States.

This must change. If our so-called partners do not act in accordance with internationally accepted norms and behaviors or international law, the United States must be prepared to cut off or severely curtail economic, military and diplomatic ties.

We cannot be seen as being hypocritical to those we are partnering with to defeat radical Islam.

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Finally, in pursuit of these objectives, I fully support Congress' constitutional role in providing an Authorization for the Use of Military Force. This authorization should be broad and agile—but unconstrained by unnecessary restrictions, restrictions that today cause not only frustration in our military, intelligence and diplomatic communities, but also significantly slow down the decision making process for numerous fleeting opportunities.

It is important, however, to realize that such an authorization is neither a comprehensive strategy nor a war winning one.

If there is not a clear, coherent and comprehensive strategy forthcoming from the administration, there should be no authorization.

With that, I'm happy to take your questions.