

Testimony

**United States House of Representatives
House Armed Services Committee**

By

General John M. Keane, USA (Ret)

on

**Outside Perspectives on the President's Proposed
Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against the Islamic
State of Iraq and the Levant**

1000 hours, 26 February 2015

Rayburn House Office Building

Room 2118

Mr. Chairman, ranking minority, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today on the President's request for the authorization of the use of military force (AUMF). I am honored to be here again and to share the panel with my distinguished colleagues. Please reference the map provided at the end of my testimony, when I discuss the enemy and its geography, prepared by the Institute for the Study of War. This was a part of a recent intelligence summary and is useful to understand how ISIS looks at the world.

In principle I agree with a President who, desires to use military force beyond a short term contingency, requests an AUMF from the Congress. The current AUMF's, 2001 and 2002, which are obviously still in use are in their design, good documents, in that it is clear why military force is being authorized and provides latitude for the President to determine how to use that force. Indeed an argument could be made that the President's current AUMF request is unnecessary in that the previous AUMF's provide sufficient authorization for the use of force against ISIS. Nonetheless, I do believe it is better public policy for a new AUMF based on the reality that

ISIS is a different threat in terms of its scale, mode of operation, location and near term intent.

As to the President's current AUMF request I would like to make a few brief observations:

- The Strategy – Strategy is how the military force is used. This is the President's lane along with his senior military commanders. As much as I and some members of Congress are critical of the administration for not having a comprehensive strategy to defeat radical Islam nor an adequate strategy to defeat ISIS, the AUMF is not the appropriate document for that expression. A President needs maximum flexibility to adapt to the enemy and the battlefield environment which at times may demand a change in strategy. The truth is our military history reflects a rather consistent theme, that many times we started out with the wrong strategy and reflecting American adaptability and flexibility it was changed. President Bush changed a 3 year failing strategy in Iraq which ultimately succeeded. I do believe it is essential that the administration brief the Congress in detail on their strategy to defeat ISIS prior to voting on the proposal.

- The Enemy – The enemy is ISIS and the proposed AUMF describes it as “ISIS and associates.” ISIS has claimed contractual agreements and a written plan approved by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to form satellites in Libya, Egyptian Sinai, Afghanistan, and also Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Some of these affiliations are likely aspirational, but ISIS is exporting military capability to make affiliates in the Sinai and Libya stronger, and this is likely the list of places where ISIS means to expand activities next. All that said defeating ISIS does not mean that US forces are needed to defeat ISIS's satellites.

- The Geography – Core ISIS is principally located in Iraq and Syria but it covets territory in a broader region, including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and lands that are part of historic caliphates, like the Caucasus. The extent of their aspirations is likely greater than that. As such there should be no geographical limitation in the AUMF.

- The Time Constraint – Makes no sense to tell our allies and the enemy that we are uncertain of this commitment of force by our unwillingness to extend it beyond 3 years. Congress has the authority to

provide continuous assessments through its oversight committees which is far more appropriate than a 3 year sunset.

- The Ground Force Constraint – ISIS cannot be defeated in Iraq and Syria without a decisive ground force victory. There is no ground force in Syria and no one knows if the Iraq ground force can defeat ISIS. Why put limits on the use of a ground force when it is widely recognized as the only means to defeat ISIS? Indeed it may be necessary for a coalition ground force with the US likely in the lead to ultimately defeat ISIS. The ground force constraint should be removed from the AUMF, if the true goal is to defeat ISIS.

In conclusion the proposed AUMF is not an acceptable document. The time and ground force constraint must be removed. This President as well as the next President deserve latitude in the use of military force. Additionally, how to use the military force, or strategy is not an appropriate topic for this document, as I previously stated, but it is essential for the Congress to provide oversight and in so doing understand the feasibility of the strategy actually working. I believe it is a matter of conscience to only support an

AUMF if there is confidence the strategy our troops execute will indeed succeed in defeating ISIS. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

ISIS GLOBAL INTSUM

The purpose of this intelligence summary is to document and assess the significance of open source reports regarding ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) activity *outside* of Iraq and Syria. This estimate will organize ISIS abroad activity into concentric rings, including the ISIS “Interior Ring” comprised of Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon as well as Iraq and Syria; the “Near Abroad Ring” comprised of former Arab Caliphate lands; and the “Far Abroad Ring” comprised of Europe, the United States, Southeast Asia, and the Cyber domain.

ISIS GLOBAL ACTIVITY, JANUARY 7- FEBRUARY 18, 2015

