

Joint Statement by  
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and  
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House Armed Services Committee  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Thornberry, for the privilege of testifying before the committee this morning. The counterterrorism fight continues to evolve. I want to take this opportunity to highlight where we have been and where I think we are headed.

I will start with our counter-ISIS campaign. Our coalition has liberated the vast majority of ISIS' so-called physical caliphate. By this, I mean ISIS no longer governs a pseudo state in Syria that at its height attracted tens of thousands of recruits from around the world who easily slipped across the borders, took up arms, and shared in ISIS illicit revenue streams, that at one time topped \$250M per month. The human toll had a much higher price.

The so-called ISIS caliphate has been systematically destroyed in one of the most lethal offensive surrogate operations in history. Using an approach of "by, with, and through" our local partners, supported by a robust Coalition partnership, we were able to achieve a victory over ISIS in Syria. U.S. special operations forces partnered with and mentored the Syrian Democratic Forces, which grew from a few hundred to tens of thousands of Kurds and Arabs, all supported by the U.S. Marines, Army, Air Force and international partners. The SDF, fighting for their homeland, suffered thousands of casualties. ISIS suffered the most. While still dangerous and operating as insurgents, ISIS no longer has a sanctuary to swiftly lure thousands of terrorists to operate freely and in the open. This achievement should not be discounted, and the model should remain an enduring lesson.

Terrorism remains a persistent condition driven by political, religious and socio-economic trends. While we assess that both ISIS and al Qaeda are degraded, they remain threats that can regenerate capability if pressure is reduced. So, we must simultaneously acknowledge that we are close to a tremendous battlefield victory and yet still face a resilient

enemy. At the height of its power, ISIS once held an area slightly smaller than the State of Maine. At its peak, some 10 million people were living in territory under ISIS control, yet now the number is counted in the hundreds. Millions of people have been liberated from ISIS control.

The end of the so-called physical caliphate heralds a new phase to the long term fight. ISIS has morphed from a fake caliphate to an insurgency. This form of ISIS will continue to pose a threat while being less susceptible to kinetic attack. To defeat this global network and others like it, including al Qa'ida and its affiliates, requires a coalition of allies applying pressure at the local level. The National Defense Strategy emphasizes such coalitions as we are required to increase our focus on near-peer competitors such as China and Russia, necessitating a resource-adjusted CT fight. The United States will maintain sufficient capabilities in the region to collect intelligence and prevent any ISIS resurgence.

The long-term nature of the counter-terrorism fight means we must make cost-informed decisions in the future. Operation Inherent Resolve provides an excellent template for such future operations. The United States must scope and resource operations for threats to our country and interests. By prioritizing our threats and applying resources appropriately, we can sustain this long fight through preserved resources and will.

A disciplined approach to this long fight will also enable our Department's pivot towards great power competition, and the renewed importance of irregular warfare in this space. The Department continues to broaden its focus to the rising challenges of great power competition with near-peer adversaries in line with the National Defense Strategy.

Lessons learned from our "by with and through" model of counterterrorism, and the increased focus on the importance of partnerships in this approach, will pay dividends as we refine our approach to irregular warfare in this competitive environment. The Department will

focus on rebuilding and preserving our unmatched military strength and lethality while bolstering the United States' diplomatic, economic, and other security-related activities to ensure that we can deter, compete, and win against any threat, nation state or other.

DoD will continue to execute counter-terror operations globally in order to prevent an attack on America and her interests. Congress has been a stalwart partner in helping to ensure that we have the necessary resources and authorities to continue to achieve this overriding goal.

I look forward to our continuing dialogue and welcome your questions.