

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on
“The ISIL Threat: Weighing the Obama Administration’s Response”
September 18, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

This hearing will come to order. This morning we welcome Secretary Kerry back to the Committee to weigh the Obama Administration’s response to the ISIL threat.

And a threat it certainly is. Never has a terrorist organization occupied such a sanctuary. Never has one had the access to such abundant natural resources. Never has a terrorist organization possessed the heavy weaponry, cash and personnel that ISIL does today. Its brutality is unmatched.

This Committee – on a bipartisan basis – has been pushing the Administration to confront this threat. For months, I pressed the Administration for drone strikes as the terrorist columns advanced on Iraqi cities. That’s what the Iraqis wanted; and that’s what many in our Embassy in Baghdad wanted. Ranking Member Engel has been pushing to arm the rebels for *years* – that’s what the President’s entire national security team wanted, including General David Petraeus when he headed the CIA. Frankly, the White House’s hesitancy has put us in a deeper hole. But here we are.

We agree on the steps that will turn the tables on ISIL: pushing Maliki to the side to give Iraqis a chance at representative government; aid our allies from the air – giving the Kurdish peshmerga and many Iraqi units the backing they need to confront ISIL; and using the other elements against this wretched terrorist group.

And it is good that we have finally acknowledged that we *do* have a partner on the ground in Aleppo, Syria, just not one that is adequately trained and supplied to take on a formidable ISIL and the Hezbollah-backed regime in Damascus. ISIL has to be attacked in Syria. Yesterday’s House vote was a first step, and we trust that you will be in close touch with the Committee as you get this training program off the ground. So it’s us in the air, and local Kurdish and Arab units providing the combat troops on the ground.

And the Administration is right to get as many others in the region and from around the world to step up. This isn’t just our fight. The Secretary is just returning from a trip to the region and has been talking with many nations. Some will contribute cash, others intelligence or military support. But we’d like to hear more about these pledges of

support. Just who will be bringing what to the table? How firm is their resolve? And while we are aware of the plight of the Turkish diplomats being held in Mosul - Turkey, a *NATO ally*, isn't pulling its weight.

Of course not all in the region will play a constructive role – Qatar comes to mind. And the Committee certainly doesn't see Iran doing anything other than what it has always done – bring destruction to the region. We look forward to meeting with General Allen, who you just appointed as the Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, to discuss these and other issues.

The ISIL threat is a dramatic wake-up call. While some claimed that the threats to the United States were receding, the reality is that a tidal wave of militancy has been cresting.

The good news is that the President has now acknowledged that this threat must be confronted. We must have a sustained commitment that only the commander-in-chief can marshal. This hearing will be one of many to evaluate the Administration's resolve and strategy to defeat this threat.

I'll now turn to the ranking member for his opening comments.