

Testimony

United States House of Representatives

Joint Hearing of the

House Committee on Foreign Affairs

House Committee on Homeland Security

By

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on

**The Rise of Radicalism: Growing Terrorist Sanctuaries and
the Threat to the U.S. Homeland**

1000 hours, 18 November 2015

House Visitors Center

Room 210

Chairman McCaul, Chairman Royce, ranking members Thompson and Engel, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. Am honored to be here with such a distinguished panel. Please refer to the map provided by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) which I will reference in my remarks.

ISIS is part of the multi-generational struggle against radical Islam which will likely dominate the first half of the 21st century similar to the fight against communism, which dominated the second half of the 20th century. Fourteen years after 9/11 the U.S. has no comprehensive strategy or a global alliance to defeat radical Islam. ISIS is the most successful terrorist organization in modern history. It is driven by a religious-based ideology with significant geopolitical objectives to establish an extensive caliphate that touches the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe, by dominating all Muslim lands and an apocalyptic event in Europe that carves out an ISIS enclave.

ISIS has 3 major thrusts:

The first is to defend Syria and Iraq. While ISIS has lost some territory, it views operations in Syria and Iraq as largely successful, because it still controls large swaths of territory, is recruiting at the same rate, maintaining tactical and operational initiative, and is able to logistically sustain its forces.

The second thrust is to use its headquarters in Syria to expand in the "near abroad" (on your map see areas with black crosses) by establishing affiliate organizations (Wilayats), which is a formal relationship in 9 countries and regions: Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Nigeria, North Caucasus, and Algeria. ISIS provides guidance and resources to these affiliates. The affiliates are attempting to control a swath of territory inside these countries and regions while undermining the local government. As we know, Wilayat Sinai is suspected of downing a Russian aircraft.

The third major thrust is to influence the "far abroad," (on your map see areas in yellow) which are Muslim lands and countries that are supporting the coalition against ISIS (U.S., Europe, and Australia) by inspiring and motivating radicals, by averaging thousands of social media posts per day, and by returning fighters from Syria who are trained and motivated to attack their own citizens at home. Obviously the recent attacks in France and Lebanon are examples. ISIS attempts to divide and polarize these societies by weakening the people's resolve to support their government's efforts against ISIS and to fragment and polarize the non-Muslim and Muslim populations.

What ISIS has accomplished in the last few weeks is unprecedented. While conducting a conventional war in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has staged terrorist attacks on a global scale against the people from the countries who are fighting ISIS. The result is almost 900 casualties in 12 days, both killed and wounded, who are Russian, Lebanese, and mostly French in Paris. Can you imagine the impact if the Nazis were conducting terrorist activities in major American cities while the U.S. was fighting the Nazis in Europe ?

WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT ISIS:

Clearly ISIS is not contained and is far from defeated. The United States and our allied partners need to wake up. ISIS is at war with us and civilization, but America is not truly at war with ISIS – not the President, nor the Congress and certainly not the American people. Throw out the policy of "strategic patience" which is an excuse for a lack of an aggressive, coherent strategy. Recognize that dragging out the war provides ISIS with a degree of invincibility, a sense of destiny, shrouded in the aura of success. The security of the American people at home is directly related to ISIS' success and their ability to motivate and inspire their followers to kill fellow Americans.

1. Step up U.S. military activities in Iraq and Syria:

--Once and for all send the required advisors, trainers, air controllers that are truly needed to dramatically increase IA, Sunni tribal force and Kurdish Peshmerga combat effectiveness. The output should be at least three times greater.

--Recognize the criticality of Sunni opposition forces to depose ISIS who is largely occupying Sunni lands. Also be realistic about the Kurds who are proven fighters but are interested only in their territory and not reclaiming lost Sunni territory.

--Mission SOF not just to target leaders or conduct hostage rescue but to conduct large scale in/out raids to target ISIS critical nodes and functions.

- Dramatically increase UAVs, mine clearance vehicles and Apache helicopters.
- Troops required is a minimum of 10K.
- Identify combat brigades for potential deployment but held in reserve and only committed if all else fails.
- Unleash a devastating air campaign without the imposed restrictions of the last 15 months which has been disproportionate to all previous air campaigns in the extreme concern for civilian casualties. The result: multiple general officer layers clearing fires, targets lost, enemy taking advantage of the rules of engagement (ROE).
- Establish Safe Zones in NW Syria along the Turkish border and in SW Syria along the Jordanian border for refugees. Protect on the ground with an international force. Protect from the air using coalition air power and with Jordanian and Turkish missile defense on their side of the border.

2. Step up Politically:

SYRIA:

- Recognize that ISIS will never be defeated till the Syrian civil war ends.
- The objective is not simply a cease fire but elimination of Assad and the Alawite regime. U.S. should not give in to Russian/Iranian demands to keep an Alawite regime. Move to a transition regime representing major power players and then a

general election.

--Only when there is a genuine cease fire can the Sunni Arabs turn their attention on ISIS.

--Move to marginalize Russia in Syria and then encourage a face savings exit.

IRAQ:

--ISIS with the exception of some Kurdish land that it surrendered, controls largely Sunni land. Obviously to retake and hold this territory will require a significant Sunni force commitment.

--Currently PM Abadi has not been successful in creating political unity in Iraq among Sunni, Kurds and Shia.

--Moving PM Abadi toward political unity is key to the survival of Iraq and the defeat of ISIS. The status quo is not working.

--Dispatch retired Ambassador Crocker, America's preeminent ME diplomat to Baghdad as the POTUS' personal envoy to move the GOI toward political unification.

3. Don't over react or get defensive:

--ISIS is seeking fragmentation and polarization of European Muslim and non Muslim communities. They want a crackdown and further isolation of Muslim

communities to move Europe toward their idea of an "apocalyptic war" resulting in expansion of their caliphate to a Muslim enclave in Europe. These drums are already beating in European countries as resentment grows to the Muslim migration and the huge refugee challenges. Reactionary, revisionist voices are getting louder and gaining influence.

--Now is not the time to commit U.S. combat brigades to Iraq or Syria. But if necessary, at some future date, it should be a part of a regional Arab and NATO coalition.

--We need to avoid over policing at home or curtailing American liberties. We need good counter intelligence from government agencies, police departments and a sense of public awareness about security.

--As to taking in Middle East refugees the Congress should ask the administration to prepare a Refugee Crisis Plan for Congressional approval by their oversight committees. As you know the Congress and the executive branch set the ceiling for refugees, currently at 70K in 2015, with 69K already in the U.S., with a White House request for an additional 10K Middle East refugees. While we stand up for America's values and what makes the U.S. a great nation, the Congress should be reasonably convinced that the American people are protected by the Refugee Crisis Plan.

In conclusion, ISIS is fundamentally evil; brutal, barbaric killing every day while systematically enslaving and raping women. It is indisputable that ISIS is succeeding in executing a global strategy from their caliphate in the Islamic State. As part of that strategy, they are planning to kill Americans. They have repeatedly said so and they have proven, they do what they say. Having the best security defensive system in America is not sufficient, we must have as good an offense to stop and defeat ISIS. We do not. We are not even close. I can say with certainty that the current U.S. driven coalition strategy with its modest improvements will fail. I believe the Congress should provide the President a bipartisan “sense of the Congress”, that we are failing to protect the American people, and that much more must be done with urgency and resolve to defeat ISIS. The Congress should also pass the AUMF or the Authorization for the Use of Military Force.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.