

Congressional Testimony
A False Narrative Endangers the Homeland

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by

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Mr. Chairman, ranking minority, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today on such an important subject concerning the security of the American people. I am honored to share this panel with my distinguished colleagues and friends Senator Joe Lieberman and Congresswoman Jane Harman. They are both great American patriots and thank you so much for your many years of devoted and selfless service to the nation.

You have asked us to consider the President's speech in May at NDU as a basis for our commentary on the security of the US and the American people. It is true, that Bin Laden is dead, there have been no major attacks on the homeland and fewer troops are in harm's way. But it is not true that our alliances are stronger, indeed, they are weaker because our allies are fundamentally questioning the "will" of the United States; many allies believe the US will not be there for them in a time of peril and, sadly, US standing in the world is at its lowest since prior to WWII. How could this happen? Is this because of the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US backing of Israel and our inability to resolve the Israeli / Palestinian dispute? Absolutely not. This is because of American leadership. When American leadership is strong in the world, the world is a safer place. And when American leadership is inconsistent, indecisive, and we are willing to permit others to lead who do not have the capacity or when we are paralyzed by the fear of adverse consequence, then American leadership is weak and the world is a more dangerous place. As such, our adversaries are emboldened, they become more aggressive, they take more risks and the results are more death, more casualties and the security of the American people is threatened. Tragically, this is where we are today.

It is undeniable that since 9/11 the U.S. has been at war with Radical Islam and, specifically, the Al Qaeda and its affiliates. This is a very ambitious political movement designed to control territory and people by first establishing a caliphate in Muslim lands and eventually seeking world domination. It is an ideology drawing extremist ideas from radical theologians and philosophers from the 14th century on, yet grounded in Islam, which is its belief system. Jihad is the means to gain control using death and fear to force capitulation.

Despite our success in denying sanctuary and driving the Al Qaeda from Afghanistan to Pakistan, defeating the Al Qaeda in Iraq (which they openly admitted), while also killing UBL and many Al Qaeda leaders, the harsh reality is that Radical Islam and the Al Qaeda affiliates are on the rise and the evidence is overwhelming.

--After the strategic blunder of leaving no residual force in Iraq (and immunity for US troops was a false issue) equally damaging, was distancing ourselves from a long term strategic partnership between the U.S. and Iraq, leaving the Al Qaeda to have re-emerged and the level of violence today is as high as it was in 2008 and destined to get higher. The Al Qaeda are quickly taking control of western Iraq while they have seized control of northern Syria. The border between Syria and Iraq from a Radical Islamist perspective is non-existent and today there is a bona fide sanctuary from where operations can be conducted against our allies in the region, specifically, Jordan and other U.S. interests in the region.

--The radical Islamists were not the catalyst for the revolutionary change that swept over the Middle East three plus years ago, but they see geo-political change as an opportunity to gain influence and, as such, control territory and people. This is happening in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Tunisia and Mali, while Al Qaeda affiliates are exerting pressure in Somalia and Kenya. In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood won an election but failed their people when they attempted to impose an Islamist state on a secular nation.

--If we make the same mistakes in Afghanistan that we did in Iraq and pull the plug on support for the Afghans then the Taliban will truly threaten the regime and the Al Qaeda leadership will return to their most desirable sanctuary, the mountains of Afghanistan.

Because of the failure of American leadership the term Radical Islam or Islamic extremism is not mentioned in US policy which is quite astounding. The great military strategists, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, indicated that a major tenet in defeating an adversary is to define that enemy and equally important the nature and character of the kind of war they are waging. Furthermore, after 12 years of war, we have no comprehensive strategy to defeat Radical Islam or the Al Qaeda. We do not even have a military strategy other than counter insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. We use drones to kill Al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan and Yemen, but that is not a military strategy it is a tactic and an instrument of war. And it has limitations because leaders are replaced quickly in an ideological movement and the mission goes on. Contrast this current reality with our strategy and policies in the 20th century when the U.S. was involved in another ideological struggle, Communism. We fashioned a grand strategy, we organized major alliances in Europe and Southeast Asia in NATO and SEATO to contain it by agreeing on a common political goal as well as sharing intelligence, training, doctrine, equipment and tactics. We encouraged some of our best universities to study the subject and think tanks like Rand and others were initiated because of the challenge of Communism. After all, ideas in an ideological struggle truly matter -- to understand our adversaries' ideas, their history of development, their weaknesses and strengths and to challenge our own ideas against them is fundamental to defining and understanding our enemy.

As stated, we have no strategy to defeat Radical Islam, we have no formal alliances to partner politically and militarily against them. This is not about our troops fighting against the radicals worldwide but assisting our allies so their troops can do it effectively, only, when

necessary. I have been speaking on college campuses every year since 9/11 and I can assure you there are no departments at our great universities devoted to understanding this ideological struggle with Radical Islam, quite the contrary, if an academic pursues this line of scholarship it is often denigrated as not worthy of serious study.

The radical islamists understand us better than we do them. To illustrate, their initial strategic goal is to dominate and control Muslim lands. To accomplish this, their stated objective is to drive the US out of this land, which is what 9/11 was about. But the reason is not the obvious one, US military presence, which they do not fear and know they can harm but cannot defeat. Instead they do fear our ideas, democracy and capitalism. The advancement of these ideas in the region is a major threat to the Radical Islamists because it makes it all the more difficult to bend the people's will and force surrender. This is why the so called Arab Spring is such a threat to them. No one was demonstrating in the streets for Radical Islam and Jihad to help them achieve a better life. The drivers of the instability in this revolutionary change is political and social injustice and the lack of economic opportunity. The people in the streets are looking at what the US and the West has to change their lives, democracy and capitalism. Therefore, the radicals are "all in" to influence the outcome that is so uncertain and unpredictable. On the contrary, ask any of our friends in the region about US policy in the Middle East and the two most stated descriptions are "disengagement" and "retreat". The so called "pivot" to the East with the emergence of China is camouflage for an unstated policy to disengage from the Middle East and, at all costs, to avoid the potential of another Middle East war. No one can say with certainty, depending on open sources, that any one of these Al Qaeda hot spots in the world is a direct threat against the people of the U.S. But this much we can say, that when we permit sanctuary and uninterrupted recruiting, training, planning, and equipping as the Al Qaeda was able to do for almost ten years prior to 9/11, then the risk to regional US interests and the security of the American people is exponentially higher. After all, what makes this movement the most threatening we have ever faced is their stated objectives to use WMD against the people of the US.

Unchecked, Radical Islam is an ideological struggle with the US and its allies that will dominate most of the 21st century. We lost three thousand American citizens on our land and almost seven thousand troops in foreign lands as we attempt to defeat it and protect our people and our way of life.

We desperately need strong American leadership to define Radical Islam for what it is, to fashion a comprehensive strategy, and to partner effectively with our allies to defeat it. We have a long way to go.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.