

**BATTLEFIELD SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES—  
RECENT EFFORTS TO WIN THE WAR AGAINST ISIS**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **BATTLEFIELD SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES— RECENT EFFORTS TO WIN THE WAR AGAINST ISIS**

**Wednesday, January 17, 2018**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
*Washington, DC*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:08 a.m., in Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ron DeSantis [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives DeSantis, Russell, Duncan, Amash, Hice, Comer, Lynch, Welch, and DeSaulnier.

Also Present: Representatives Jordan, Meadows, and Krishnamoorthi.

Mr. DESANTIS. The Subcommittee on National Security will come to order.

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

We are here today to learn more about the Trump Administration's battlefield successes against the Islamic State. Since coming into office almost a year ago, President Trump has made great strides in the war against ISIS. At the time of his inauguration, the Islamic State controlled major cities in Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State's black flag flew over Raqqa in Syria and over Mosul in Iraq. Today, both cities are liberated. ISIS lost thousands of square miles in territory at an astonishing rate.

Unfortunately, the American people are not seeing this good news story. Instead, they see nightly stories in the mainstream press about Russian interference and other issues. The American people deserve to know the facts about what changed between administrations and how President Trump is keeping us safe. We are here, then, to talk about real, concrete successes and what the United States Government can do to build on these wins to ensure the safety of the American people.

We have before us a distinguished panel of experts with deep national security experience.

Dr. Sebastian Gorka served as Special Assistant to President Trump and advised the President on the existential threat posed by radical Islamic terrorism. He has a distinguished career of service in counterterrorism, is on the advisory board of the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs. We look forward to his testimony and thank you for coming.

We will also hear from Mr. Michael Pregent, an Adjunct Fellow from the Hudson Institute. He is a former intelligence officer with nearly 30 years of experience and is an expert on the Middle East and North Africa. We hope he can shed light on the future challenges we face against ISIS and what we can expect moving forward.

We are also joined by Philip Lohaus, a research fellow in the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. He is an expert on unconventional and emerging national security challenges. He served as an embedded analyst with the Department of Defense and the Multinational Force-Iraq, and also embedded with the U.S. Army in eastern Afghanistan. We thank him for coming and for his testimony.

We also have Dr. Robert Pape, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago. He has studied this subject in detail and written numerous books on the topic. We look forward to his perspective on this matter and thank him for coming.

I am confident we can do more in this battle against radical Islamic terrorism. I am heartened by the President's dedication to our military and his emphasis on defeating, not simply deterring, ISIS. The days of feckless leadership, of underestimating our foe, those days need to be over. The naive declarations that ISIS is simply a JV squad, those days are over. We have an administration that appreciates the danger posed by the Islamic State and I think critically is actually playing to win against the Islamic State.

I hope the witnesses can shed light on what the administration has gotten right, but also what we can improve on, and where we go from here, because the successes, while real, are not the end of the ballgame.

So, thank you, and I will yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Lynch, for his opening statement.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to join you in this hearing to examine the progress of efforts to combat the terrorist group known as the Islamic State, or ISIS. I would also like to thank today's witnesses for their willingness to help this subcommittee with its work.

As reported last month by the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve, ISIS has no capital, no physical caliphate, and across Iraq and Syria has lost nearly all of its territory that they once held. Since the establishment of the U.S.-led coalition to combat ISIS by President Obama back in 2014, the terrorist group has lost nearly 40,000 square miles of its claimed territory and currently holds approximately 2,000 square miles.

ISIS has also been reduced in deployed force strength from peak estimates of tens of thousands of insurgent fighters to less than a thousand. The liberated territory includes the former ISIS stronghold of Mosul, Iraq, recaptured by U.S.-backed Iraqi security and Kurdish Peshmerga forces last July following a nine-month effort that began in October of 2016. The self-declared ISIS capital of Raqqa, Syria also fell in October of 2017 to the U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces.

However, the decimation of ISIS territorial control does not signify the outright defeat of a terrorist organization whose motto is remaining and expanding. In a statement submitted for the record,

former Acting Director of the CIA, Michael Morell, who served under both George W. Bush and the Obama Administration, notes that the elimination of the so-called caliphate cannot be confused with the elimination of ISIS itself. In the wake of surmounting battlefield losses, insurgent fighters have moved underground to perpetrate traditional and destabilizing terrorist attacks in the region while continuing to rely on affiliate organizations and social media to direct or inspire terrorist attacks globally.

I ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record Director Morell's statement into the official hearing record.

Mr. DESANTIS. Without objection.

Mr. LYNCH. The Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point similarly reports that following the fall of Mosul, ISIS leadership made a calculated decision to withdraw its fighters from further sustained clashes with regional security and coalition forces in the city of Tal Afar in the town of Hawija in Iraq, in contested areas along the Euphrates River Valley, and even in the battle for Raqqa. Their sole purpose was to preserve manpower for a pivot to an all-out insurgency and the use of guerilla tactics, including hit-and-run attacks on secure areas by small units, the assassination of security personnel, and the recruitment of new members among displaced civilians for suicide bombings.

We have continued to witness this marked shift to guerilla warfare in the form of a coordinated terrorist attack committed by ISIS operatives in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and other regional countries. Just this week, two suicide bombers reportedly associated with ISIS sleeper cells killed nearly 40 people at an open-air market located in Baghdad's Tayran Square, marking the first major attack in the Iraqi capital since Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared the victory over ISIS. This attack came on the heels of an ISIS suicide bombing detonated at a market in Kabul, Afghanistan on January 4th that killed at least 20 people, and another at a Shia cultural center in Kabul on December 28th that killed more than 40 people.

The persistent threat of ISIS-directed or inspired attacks in the West also remains. Last week the Department of Justice announced the indictment of Akayed Ullah on terrorism and explosives charges for his detonation of a bomb in a subway station near the Port Authority bus terminal in New York City in December of 2017. Ullah stated in his initial law enforcement interview that, quote, "I did it for the Islamic State." This attack followed an ISIS-inspired truck attack in November of 2017 along the Hudson River bike path in New York that killed eight people.

Clearly, our national security strategy must adapt to combatting a terrorism group that the commander of the U.S. Central Command, Joseph Votel, recently deemed a different kind of organization that has been very adaptive. We should all be concerned that at this point we lack a fully articulated and detailed plan to address the remaining pockets of the ISIS insurgency in Iraq and Syria, or implement a full-spectrum response to combat the rise of affiliate organizations in Libya, the Philippines, the Sinai, and other areas, which will require close collaboration with our international partners.

President Trump has proposed a 32 percent cut, or a nearly \$19 billion cut, from the State Department budget and has left vacant the U.S. ambassadorships in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other key nations in the fight against ISIS. We simply cannot combat ISIS by neglecting the long-term security and political stability of the region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to discussing these and other issues with today's witnesses, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DESANTIS. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts.

The Chair notes the presence of our colleague, the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Jordan, and I ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to fully participate in today's hearing.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

With that, I am pleased to introduce our witnesses. We have already mentioned in my opening statement Dr. Gorka, Mr. Pregent, Mr. Lohaus, and Dr. Pape. Welcome to you all.

Pursuant to committee rules, all witnesses will be sworn in before they testify. So if you can all please rise, raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

All witnesses answered in the affirmative.

You can be seated.

In order to allow time for discussion, please limit your testimony to 5 minutes. You will note the clock in front of you shows your remaining time. The light will turn yellow when you have 30 seconds left, and red when your time is up. Your entire written statement will be made part of the record, and in the question and answer period you will obviously be able to hit on points that you may not be able to reach in your opening statement. So please abide by that time limit, and remember to turn the microphone on before speaking.

With that, I will recognize Dr. Gorka for 5 minutes.

## **WITNESS STATEMENTS**

### **STATEMENT OF SEBASTIAN GORKA**

Mr. GORKA. Thank you, Chairman DeSantis. Thank you, Vice Chair Russell and Ranking Member Lynch, for this opportunity to address the subcommittee today.

To begin, I would like to reiterate what the Chairman has already stated. This is perhaps one of the greatest untold stories of the last 11 months, meaning this administration's success against ISIS, along with the untold story or the story which isn't getting enough attention with regards to the rebounding U.S. economy.

My message is a very simple one. The victory or victories against ISIS are a function of the first rule of war. One must not only have the capabilities to win, but one must have the will to win. What happened at 12:01 on January the 20th last year is that we have a new commander in chief who had the will to win and to devolve the decision-making, the military decision-making to the right commands and the right commanders in the field so that will could be translated into successes on the battlefield.

We had been told by the last president that ISIS represents a generational threat to the United States. It seems as if President Trump has crunched a generation down to just a few months. How do we know this? ISIS, less than three years ago, held territory in more than three countries of the Middle East and had 18—according to the NTCT, the National Counterterrorism Center, had 18 fully functional affiliates in 18 different countries around the world. It was making, according to the Financial Times, \$2 million every 24 hours in illicit oil sales, racketeering hostage-taking, and even through its local taxation system. And most important of all, ISIS was the first jihadi organization in almost 100 years to successfully reestablish a theocratic caliphate.

The Trump Administration, which I had the honor of serving, we made the destruction of the physical caliphate our number-one priority, and as the Vice Chairman has already noted, we have already succeeded thanks to our military forces in the field. None of the above attributes of ISIS is true today. It is not a caliphate, it does not hold significant amounts of territory, and it no longer has more than 6 million people living on the territory of that so-called caliphate.

Why is this? Because of the D-ISIS strategy, the defeat ISIS strategy that was implemented by the President and by Secretary Mattis. What is the most simple summary of the D-ISIS strategy? Very simply, we went from a war of a thousand cuts, the so-called attrition strategy that was nibbling at the edge of a global problem, to a strategy of annihilation under Secretary Mattis, and it has worked. A very clear metric of this, on one day recently more than 1,000 ISIS jihadists surrendered. We have never, ever seen this before in modern jihadist history. Why? Because the jihadist believes if he dies in a war to defeat the infidel, then he will go straight to heaven. They don't usually surrender. Now they do.

In addition to the strategy changing from attrition to annihilation, we have also seen a far more intangible change, which is the morale of our armed forces. The decision-making authorities have been divested to the commanders in the field. Under the last administration, even tactical targeting decisions were taken inside the NSC. The NSC should be the place for policy and strategy, not tactical or even operational decisions. That was changed under the new administration.

As one tier, one operator told me when I was very fresh to the White House, we understand now the commander trusts us and has our back, and that has an unprecedented effect on the morale of our forces and their capacity to execute their mission.

Lastly, there is the aspect of the morale amongst our partners and allies. With the President's Riyadh speech, he took them to task as a friend to say they must clear their houses, they must target and isolate the extremists in their places of worship and in their communities, and they have done so, especially with the GCCC taking on Qatar as its prime role as a funder of extremism throughout the world.

In sum, we have gone from a generational threat being crushed in just a matter of months. But the war is not won. As we look forward, the Trump Administration must focus on its counter-ideological policies. We must make the black flag of jihad as reviled as the

Nazi swastika. That will take a full-throated counter-ideological push. I have recommended in my summary the Active Measures Working Group from the Cold War and the closer cooperation with our partners in the field, our Muslim allies, to delegitimize the ideology of all groups that share the jihadi creed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Gorka follows:]

### **Battlefield Successes and Challenges: Recent Efforts to Win the War Against ISIS**

- Less than 3 years ago ISIS was the most powerful jihadist organization in the world, having eclipsed Al Qaeda.
- ISIS controlled vast areas in more than 3 nations, with operational affiliates in 15 more. It was making \$2 million a day, had 6 million humans on its territory, and had re-established the physical theocratic Caliphate, the first ever group to do so since the last Caliphate was dissolved in 1924.
- Today, none of the above is true, with the physical caliphate functionally destroyed. This is a direct result of the new *Defeat ISIS* (D-ISIS) strategy put in place by the Trump Administration.
- Crucially, under President Trump and Defense Secretary Mattis, America has moved from a strategy of "attrition" to a strategy of "annihilation." This has led to unprecedented events such as the surrender of more than 1,000 ISIS jihadis in one day.
- In addition to a new strategy, the new Administration has most importantly devolved military decisionmaking to the appropriate levels. Grand Strategy and policy has remained at the NSC and DoD, with theater and operational decisions left to the relevant commanders in the field and at the respective commands. This has redressed an imbalance which previously saw Washington taking even tactical decisions and removing decisionmaking authorities from those best able to take sub-strategic military decisions.
- Additionally, the Trump White House has retaken the regional initiative with our allies and partners, the most important event being the President's Riyadh speech which openly called for our Muslim/Arab partners to directly tackle the extremists in their countries.
- In sum: the Trump Administration has taken what the Obama White House called a "generational threat" and made it strategically irrelevant in the space of just a few months. But the war is not over.

### **Finishing the War**

The Physical Caliphate is no more, but Rump-ISIS still functions in numerous nations and still inspires attacks in Europe and the US. In order to suppress the Global Jihadist Threat, the Trump Administration needs to incorporate the following measures into a broader D-ISIS strategy:

1. The political integrity of Iraq is vital in preventing a re-emergence of ISIS or similar actors in the future. At the same time, our battlefield victories against Sunni extremists such as ISIS or Al Qaeda, must not occur in ways that strengthen Iran and the Iranian regime's Shia version of jihadi extremism. Subsequently all our regional diplomatic efforts must be aimed at having our Sunni Muslim partners become the stabilizing force in Iraq (and the Sinai).
2. America is peerless in the application of military force. No one comes close. Nevertheless, the ultimate victory in this type of irregular war does not come in the counting of enemy body bags. Killing terrorists is not a good metric given the size of the jihadist recruiting pool and the Enemy's belief that death in jihad leads to instant salvation. Thus, we will only have won when young men and women no longer wish to become jihadists and when the black flag of jihad is as globally reviled as the Nazi swastika is today. This will take a much larger counter-propaganda effort than we currently conduct. The effort should be executed in the overt and covert domain and focus on how best we can help credible voices in countries such as Jordan and Egypt delegitimize the message of the extremists. Most importantly this initiative will have to be driven out of the White House. (An excellent model for such a measure is the Cold War's interagency *Active Measure Working Group*).

Sebastian L. Gorka Ph.D. served most recently as Strategist and Deputy Assistant to President Donald J. Trump and is now Chairman and CEO of the Threat Knowledge Group. Previously he was the Major General Matthew C. Horner Distinguished Chair of Military Theory at Marine Corps University and Associate Dean of Congressional Affairs and Relations to the Special Operations Community at National Defense University. A graduate of the University of London and former Kokkalis Fellow at Harvard's J. F. Kennedy School of Government, he



was an Adjunct Professor with Georgetown University. Dr. Gorka is a regular instructor with the Special Warfare Center and School in Fort Bragg and recipient of the DoD's Joint Service Civilian Commendation awarded to him by USSOCOM. Dr. Gorka has testified before Congress and briefed the CIA, ODNI, FBI, NCTC, the NIC, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the SEALS, and also served the Department of Justice as an expert during the Boston Bombing Trial.

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement — "Truth in Testimony"**

Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5) and Committee Rule 16(a), non-governmental witnesses are required to provide the Committee with the information requested below in advance of testifying before the Committee. You may attach additional sheets if you need more space.

Name: SEBASTIAN GORKA

1. Please list any entity you are representing in your testimony before the Committee and briefly describe your relationship with each entity.					
<b>Name of Entity</b>	<b>Your relationship with the entity</b>				
THREAT KNOWLEDGE GROUP LLC	CEO				
INSTITUTE OF WORLD POLITICS	NON-RESIDENT SCHOLAR				
2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
<b>Recipient of the grant or contact (you or entity above)</b>	<b>Grant or Contract Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
N/A					
3. Please list any payments or contracts (including subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015 from a foreign government, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
<b>Recipient of the grant or contact (you or entity above)</b>	<b>Grant or Contract Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
N/A					

I certify that the information above and attached is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature 

Date: 1/15/18

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Sebastian L. Gorka, Ph.D. is the Chairman and CEO of the Threat Knowledge Group and Non-Resident Scholar with the Institute of World Politics in Washington D.C.

Until August on 2017 he served as Strategist and Deputy Assistant to President Donald J. Trump.

Before serving in the White House, Dr. Gorka held the Major General Matthew C. Horner Distinguished Chair of Military Theory at Marine Corps University where he taught courses on Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism. Previously he was Associate Dean of Congressional Affairs and Relations to the Special Operations Community at National Defense University.

He is an internationally recognized authority on issues of national security, irregular warfare, terrorism and democratization and has testified before Congress and briefed the CIA, ODNI, NCTC, the NIC, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the SEALs. He also served as a subject matter expert for the Office of the US Attorney for the Boston Bombing trial.

During his time with the Defense Department, Dr. Gorka was an Adjunct Professor with USSOCOM's Joint Special Operations University where he served as Lead Instructor for the Special Operations Combating Terrorism course, as well as the interagency and Senior/Executive Counterterrorism courses. He has also been an Adjunct Professor in National Security and US Foreign Policy at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy and remains to this day a regular instructor with the US Army's JFK Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg.

Dr. Gorka has advised the Office of the Secretary of Defense regarding the draft guidance for US Strategic Communications and was consulted by USSOCOM during the drafting of the new Joint Operating Concept for Irregular Warfare. Dr. Gorka is a recipient of the Department of Defense Joint Civilian Service Commendation, awarded by US Special Operation Command.

Dr. Gorka has published in excess of 140 monographs, book chapters and articles, many for the JANES Group of the UK, and along with Dr. Chris Harmon and the late COL Nick Pratt (USMC), he was contributor and co-editor of *Toward a Grand Strategy Against Terrorism* (McGraw Hill). His latest book, *Defeating Jihad – the Winnable War*, was a New York Times best-seller. He is the co-author of two reports, *ISIS: The Threat to the United States*, and *The Islamic State and Information Warfare: Defeating ISIS and the Broader Global Jihadist Movement* which are widely used by the FBI, the Intelligence and Special Operations communities

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# How America Will Be Attacked

## Irregular Warfare, the Islamic State, Russia, and China

Dr. Sebastian Gorka

*[The Future Operating Environment] “will feature the erosion of sovereignty, weakened developing states, the empowerment of small groups or individuals, and an increasingly contested narrative environment favoring agile nonstate actors and state actors demonstrating persistent proficiency in the irregular domain.”*

—ARSOF Operating Concept: Future Operating Environment, U.S. Army Special Operations Command

*You may not be interested in War but War is interested in you.*  
—Apocryphally attributed to Leon Trotsky

As this paper is being written, the U.S. national security establishment is under significant internal and external pressures: internally from the consequences of prosecuting the longest war in the Republic's history, which has seen unprecedented post-Cold War operational tempos, matched by constant downsizing of our forces and sustainment budgets; externally from the events occurring in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and Africa, which has included the rise of the Islamic State (IS), the most powerful jihadist organization of the modern age, and the concurrent displacement of more than sixty-five million refugees, a historic world record surpassing even World War II.

These pressures are not going to abate, which will most probably lead to the reality of our armed forces having to accomplish more missions with less resources. At the same time, both nonstate and nation-state adversaries of the United States who have become supremely

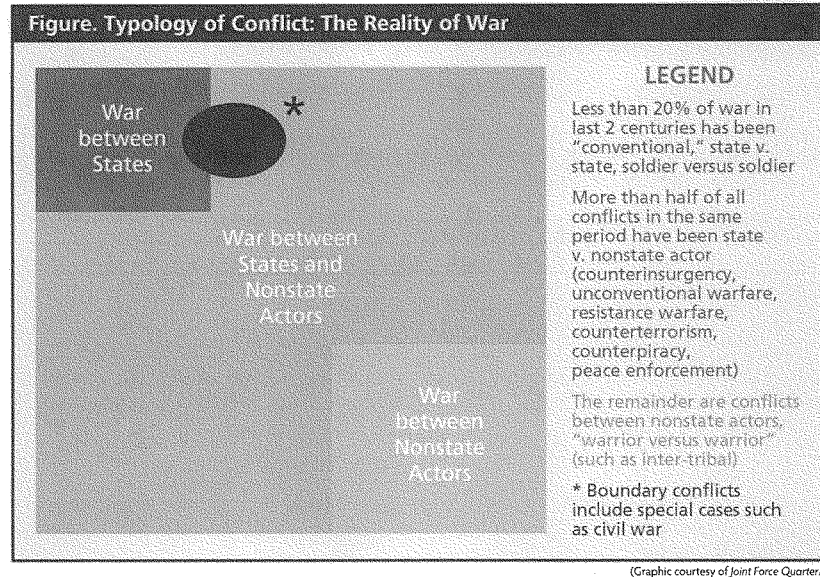
adept at exploiting irregular warfare (IW) and unconventional modes of attack will exploit these forces. This article is an introduction to three of the most important enemies we face today and who we will also face in the future, and how these actors use IW and unconventional warfare (UW) against our interests: the Islamic State, China, and Russia.

### The Operating Context

*There are many kinds of manoeuvre [sic] in war, some only of which take place upon the battlefield.<sup>1</sup>*

—Winston Churchill

The United States is still engaged in the longest formal military campaign since the founding of the Republic. Launched in October 2001, the war against the global jihadi movement—including al-Qaida and IS—persists and will continue into the next administration. We may have weakened the original al-Qaida's operational capacity, but the threat has transformed and moved elsewhere in the last fifteen years to areas as diverse as Yemen, Mali, and Nigeria, and more recently to Libya and Syria, with IS becoming a fully-fledged insurgency mobilizing eighty thousand-plus fighters. Additionally, the jihadist threat to the continental United States has not subsided but increased as the bloodshed and mass violence of San Bernardino and Orlando attest. In fact, according to the terrorist monitoring organization SITE, between 2 June 2016 and 1 August 2016, outside of Iraq and Syria, a jihadist attack is perpetrated every eighty-four hours.



At the same time we have seen America's erstwhile enemy, Moscow, act in newly belligerent and destabilizing ways. Its invasion of Ukraine breaking the sixty-plus year European taboo on territorial aggrandizement through force together with military jet fly-bys of U.S. naval vessels and along the American seaboard harken back to the Cold War days of military intimidation and brinkmanship.

And there is the Communist People's Republic of China. Although it has yet to use direct force against its neighbors or the United States, it has used a broad array of unconventional means to increase its military presence and strategic footprint—from very aggressive cyberattacks against U.S. interests, both governmental and commercial, to the manufacture of artificial islands in disputed waters as platforms for military installations.

Though none of these adversaries or enemies unilaterally could feasibly win a conventional war with the United States that still maintains a "hyperpower" position amongst the nations of the world, they have deployed old IW techniques as well as developed new

ones with which to progressively both undermine our interests now, and weaken our allies and partners.

The sooner we as a nation, and our armed forces understand that the age of conventional warfare is a bygone and grasp how nations like Russia and China, and "super-insurgencies" like IS, are waging IW against us today, the sooner we will be able to defeat them or lessen their impact upon our own national security.

### **Irregular Warfare Is Dead; Long Live Irregular Warfare**

*Although history may not in fact repeat, as Twain is reputed to have said, it surely does rhyme.*

The United States remains a true superpower, but mostly in one dimension: conventional warfare and kinetic direct action (DA). As our nation's response to the war in Vietnam, and the last fifteen years in Afghanistan and Iraq would seem to attest, we as a nation do not much care for fighting "irregular enemies." Nor does it seem that we are that often successful in such endeavors. This is a very serious problem given that IW is historically the most prevalent mode of warfare.

The *Correlates of War Project* at the University of Pennsylvania has collected all the most relevant data on every conflict since the age of Napoleon in one place. According to this data set, in the last two hundred years, there have been four hundred-sixty wars of various types. These can be broken down into conventional wars—state forces versus state forces, and unconventional or irregular conflicts—states fighting nonstate actors, or nonstate actors fighting other nonstate actors. The breakdown is expressed visually in the figure (see page 31).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, among all the other information the database contains, one can draw a very significant conclusion: of all the wars since Napoleon (460), more than 80 percent (380) were irregular in nature, conflicts in which at least one of the fighting forces was not a representative of a recognized government. In other words, in modern history we see four times as many conflicts resembling our war in Vietnam, or the war with IS and the Taliban, than wars that look like World War I or World War II, or even the first Gulf War.

Subsequently, if the frequency of IW has been so high in the last two hundred years, we can, with a high degree of certainty, predict that in the coming decades American forces will frequently be called upon to fight and assist others in future conflicts that fall under this category.<sup>3</sup>

Eleven years after the 2001 attacks, the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCAO) division of the Joint Staff J7 published a set of reports titled *Decade of War: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*.<sup>4</sup> Several of the J7's observations and conclusions concerning Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF and OIF) bear directly upon current and future missions. They include—

- a failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment, leading to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals,
- a slowness to recognize the importance of information and the “battle for narrative” in achieving objectives at all levels,
- difficulties in integration of general purpose and special operations forces (SOF),
- individuals and small groups exploiting globalized technology and information systems to shape the battlespace and near state-like disruptive capacity, and

- the increased state use of surrogates and proxies to generate asymmetric threats.<sup>5</sup>

There is widespread agreement among those who have been responsible for planning and running our more kinetic operations after 9/11 that on the whole the armed forces have performed without peer in the application of direct force. America's ability to execute strike- and maneuver-type missions has developed to such a degree that no other nation can come close to matching our capabilities in the conventional and surgical strike (SOF) domains.

But when we step beyond the application of “steel on target,” and move into the indirect and unconventional domains, our peer position is rapidly lost to others who have devoted more time to these less obvious modes of attack. IS has a force that represents less than 10 percent of the forces the United States has at its disposal yet persists and is now bringing the jihadi way of war to our shores more frequently than ever before. China escalates its military adventurism daily without our doctrine providing an obvious response mechanism or our policy providing a lucid strategic end-state. And the Russian Federation has not only used established modes of UW in Europe in ways that would impress surviving members of the Office of Special Services (OSS) of World War II, but it also has deployed a full suite of psychological operations (PSYOP) and information operations in the Middle East, Europe, and even the United States that matches anything from the heyday of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

What follows is a brief primer on how these actors use their IW and UW techniques against our interests. It should be taken as the most basic of introductions on how America is being challenged today and will be undermined by these adversarial actors in the future.

### **The Islamic State and the Modern Way of Jihad**

The modern movement for global jihad was born with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after World War I, refined by the fatwas of jihadi strategist Abdullah Azzam, and made a spectacular international phenomenon by Osama bin Laden and the attacks of 11 September 2001.<sup>6</sup> But in recent years, the global jihadi movement has transformed. With the death of bin Laden and the separation of al-Qaida in Iraq from the original parent organization, IS has become the new standard-bearer for Holy War

against the infidel and has done so in a way that makes it far more dangerous than al-Qaida ever was.

Today, after the collapse of Syria, the fall of Mosul in Iraq, and the multiple IS-connected attacks around the world, including the San Bernardino and Orlando massacres, very few people talk any more about al-Qaida or about its current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.<sup>7</sup> And for good reason, for on at least four counts, IS is now far more powerful than al-Qaida ever was:

1. Unlike al-Qaida, IS is a true transregional and global insurgency.
2. IS is the richest nonstate threat group of its kind ever.
3. IS has demonstrated stupendous recruitment capabilities, pioneering such recruitment through the global Internet.
4. Most important, IS has achieved that which all other modern jihadi groups have failed to achieve: the re-establishment of a theocratic caliphate, or actual Islamic state.

### **The Islamic State Is a True Transregional and Global Insurgency**

Elaborating further while comparing the two, al-Qaida, wherever it functioned after 9/11, never did so as a true insurgency. Instead, it maintained its identity as a globally ambitious and globally operational terrorist organization. Even when it was associated with a local insurgency, such as in Somalia and in Afghanistan, it was always in a parasitic fashion. Specifically, true insurgencies like Al Shabaab (al-Qaida's affiliate in Somalia) and the Taliban are defined by having a mass base of support and so many actual fighters that they can operate in daylight and capture territory with the intention of holding and governing it. In contrast, exclusively terrorist groups are by nature much smaller, without a mass base of support such that they must therefore operate covertly, and they do not attempt to govern the people they

terrorize. Instead, they hide in safe houses when inactive or plotting, then rapidly execute an attack only to return immediately back to their covert locations.

Thus, by comparison, an insurgency functions as a quasi-military force that is able to muster recruits and

deploy in formation not just to attack but to exercise lasting control over the territory it captures. For the insurgent, terrorist violence is but one tool with which to challenge government writ and not his or her reason for being. For the terrorist organization—which has no true military

capacity—coercion and intimidation through violence is the reason the organization exists. Thus, al-Qaida was never a true insurgency, but an organization that was founded only to terrorize in campaigns the purpose of which was to seek revenge and inflict punishment. Even in those theaters such as Afghanistan and Somalia where it is linked to an insurgency, it never recruited its own mass base of support, instead leveraging pre-existing insurgencies such as the Taliban and Al Shabaab and piggybacking on top of them.

On the other hand, IS is all the more impressive because it took no short-cuts to quasi-statehood. It is not a terrorist group perched upon another pre-existing insurgency and does not have to borrow its fighters from another older threat group. IS has recruited its own mass base of fighters, at least eighty-thousand, in just a couple of years. And not only is IS more powerful than al-Qaida because it is an insurgency, it is additionally unique amongst all modern insurgencies.

By way of context to see just how unique, if one looks at the whole range of modern twentieth-century insurgent groups, there is one characteristic common to them all. Whether it be Mao Tse-tung in China after World War II, or FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in Colombia, irrespective of ideology, they shared the same proximate goal: the defeat and displacement of the government they were fighting. Mao wanted to defeat and replace the nationalists and create a Marxist

**... an insurgency functions as a quasi-military force that is able to muster recruits and deploy in formation not just to attack but to exercise lasting control over the territory it captures.**

China. The FARC wanted to defeat and replace the Hispanic elite of Bogota and create a Bolivarian people's republic. Similarly, whether in Asia, Latin America, Africa, or Europe, insurgents are set on replacing just one regime, the regime they were at war with.

In contrast, though IS shares the immediate goal of usurping Syrian and Iraqi governance in a wide geographic area overlapping both nations, it is far more ambitious and has global objectives. To that end, not only has ISIS built its own insurgent base with tens of thousands of fighters, it has managed to capture city after city in multiple countries. IS now holds territory in both Iraq and Syria as well as Libya, making it the first historic insurgency to control land in multiple countries in one region. On top of that success, it has spread into West Africa as well. Two years ago, Boko Haram, the black African jihadi group of Nigeria swore *bayat*—made the Arabic pledge of allegiance—to al-Baghdadi, the self-appointed caliph of IS. It had done so several times before, but this time its pledge was accepted by IS, and Boko Haram was accepted into the new “caliphate” under al-Baghdadi's leadership.

Not long after, the leaders of Boko Haram officially changed its name to the West Africa Province of the Islamic State, meaning that any of the territory under its control was de facto part of the new sovereign Islamic State. Never before has an insurgency successfully captured and held land in multiple nations of multiple regions.

### **The Islamic State Is the Richest Nonstate Threat Group in History**

Secondly, IS is the richest threat group of its type ever. Unclassified U.S. government estimates put its income at U.S.\$2–4 million per day, which comports with the *Financial Times*' own estimate of IS having a gross domestic product of \$500 million. Considering that, according to the official 9/11 Commission Report, the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington only cost al-Qaida \$500,000, this means that IS is in a completely different league than its progenitor and is in no way a “JV [junior varsity] team.”

### **The Islamic State Has Demonstrated Stupendous Recruitment Capabilities**

Thirdly, IS has been incredibly impressive when it comes to mobilizing jihadist fighters. According to the United Nations, in the first nine months of renewed

IS operations in Iraq, it managed to recruit nine thousand fighters, and in the last few years, of the eighty-five thousand recruited, at least thirty-five thousand have been foreign fighters from outside of Iraq and Syria. The IS recruitment effort is all the more impressive given that when al-Qaida operated as the MAK (Arab Services Bureau) for *mujahideen* during the Afghan war of 1979–1989, its recruited only fifty-five thousand over a decade. This has been done through the use of truly pioneering Internet-based propaganda, which has enabled recruitment globally in ways that were previously unheard of when recruitment had to be done mainly face to face.

### **Establishment of a Theocratic Caliphate**

*When a country is being subverted it is not being outfought; it is being outadministered.*<sup>8</sup>

—Bernard B. Fall

But the last facet of IS that makes it truly stand out from other groups with similar motivation and objectives is what its leader al-Baghdadi managed to achieve on 29 June 2014 from the Grand Mosque in Mosul. When he declared reestablishment of the caliphate—the theocratic Islamic empire—and proceeded to exercise true control over a population of more than six million people in a territory larger than Great Britain, he achieved that which no other jihadist group has in the last ninety years. Here it is crucial to remember that the caliphate is historically not just the fabulist whim of extremists but was a true political and religious entity for over a thousand years, established in Mecca and then headquartered respectively over the centuries in Damascus, Baghdad, and lastly, Istanbul. Moreover, the caliphate in fact existed just one hundred years ago in the form of the Ottoman Empire. Yet it dissolved because of the Ottomans being on the losing side in World War I and the decision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the head of state of the new Republic of Turkey, to do away with it in order to clear the way for modernizing his nation. In doing so, he officially dissolved the caliphate by decree in 1924. Ever since then, jihadist organizations have been trying to bring the caliphate back, starting with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was created just four years after Atatürk disbanded the empire.

Subsequently, literally hundreds of extremist organizations were created over the next nine decades with the

express purpose of reversing what Atatürk had decreed. Yet every single one of them failed, including al-Qaida. Even after winning the elections in Egypt, the descendant group rooted in the original Brotherhood failed when it tried to Islamize too rapidly and was dethroned by Egyptian Gen. Fattah el-Sisi and the military.

This invokes the question, "How, exactly, has the

Islamic State succeeded where all other jihadist groups failed?" The answer is a twofold one. The first answer has to do with how effectively IS has leveraged a religious narrative, specifically an eschatological one that portrays their "holy war" as the final jihad prior to end times. (For detailed background and discussion beyond the scope of this article, see my article in the May-June 2016 edition of *Military Review*.<sup>9</sup>) And the second answer has to do with an Egyptian jihadi theorist of IW.

Prior to the success of IS, the key strategists of the global jihadist movement were less than pragmatic. The majority saw violence as a sacred act with the fate of their movement wholly contingent on the will of Allah. If the holy warriors of Allah were faithful in the execution of violence against the infidel in an escalation of operations, the caliphate would be miraculously established.

That idealist attitude was challenged when the Egyptian writer Abu Bakr Naji published his e-book, *The Management of Savagery*.<sup>10</sup> Although Naji was killed not long after the book was made public, the work remains extremely influential, and thus very dangerous, as it has injected a level of IW understanding into the jihadist movement that we had not seen previously. The

importance of *The Management of Savagery* as it relates to fomenting global Islamic insurgency is illustrated by the fact that it informs most of how IS operates today.

All national security professionals should read the full translation of the book, but the summary is as follows. Like all jihadis, Naji believed that a Muslim must live under a caliphate, and that war must be waged until

the Empire of Islam covers the world. However, he is explicit that violence alone will not magically result in the appearance of a functioning caliphate. Instead the jihadi movement must follow a comprehensive phased plan of operations that systematically builds layer upon layer until the final

#### The Management of Savagery:

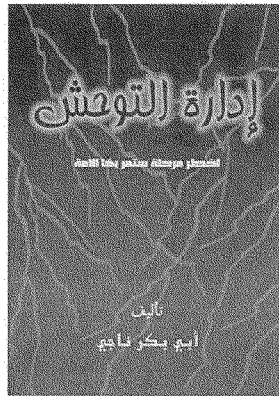
The Most Critical Stage  
Through Which the  
Umma Will Pass

Abu Bakr Naji

Translated by William McCants

Funding for this translation was provided by  
the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at  
Harvard University, and any  
use of this material  
must include a reference to the Institute.

23 May 2006



*The Management of Savagery* by Egyptian jihadist Abu Bakr Naji closely parallels Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-tung's theory of revolutionary war as it outlines the process of waging insurgent jihad in stages. A link to the complete English-language translation, by scholar William McCants, can be found within endnote 10.

theocratic reality is achieved. The phases Naji describes in his book are:

**Phase One: The Vexation Phase (IS four years ago).** In the initial stage the jihadist organization will apply IW to execute dramatic terror attacks against the infidel and his regional partners. The goal here is to attrit and weaken the infidel and apostate governments and prepare the battlespace for Phase Two.

**Phase Two: Spread Savagery (IS two years ago).** Under this stage, the IW attacks are drastically increased in size and frequency. According to open source reports, when Ramadi fell, two hundred vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were employed in a twenty-four hour period; this is exactly what Naji prescribed. The objective of Phase Two is to dislocate the local government from its own territory, making it functionally impossible for it to govern. This illuminates IS strategy for focusing on operations to sever the Syrian government or the administration

in Baghdad from the people to prevent the respective governments from exercising sovereignty. The jihadist organization thus aims to engender such a level of chaos that the resultant doubt of the population in the viability of legacy state structures positions the threat group as the only viable governance alternative.

**Phase Three: Administer Savagery—Consolidate Expand (IS now).** In an echo of our own manual,

FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, this is the stage when the enemy consolidates its hold on captured territory; members of the local population are integrated into new fighting units, and a new governance structure is put in place that weds provision of services to the population with imposition of a draconian judicial system based upon sharia law.

The territory thus captured is gradually converted into a new “base state,” or giant forward operating base, to be used as a launching platform for new Phase One and Phase Two type operations in new territories such as Libya, Yemen, Jordan, or Saudi Arabia.

The significance of Naji’s work is that it injects a

dose of pragmatism and an understanding of IW into the global jihadi movement that had been lacking for ideological and theological reasons. Additionally, Phase Three is really a transitional stage after which the final global caliphate will be achieved. As such it represents a period under which the jihadist enterprise is functioning as a quasi-nation-state with a fixed territory, borders, administration, and a monopoly of force.

In contrast, prior jihadi strategists had rejected the Westphalian nation-state as a heretical construct of the infidel West. Naji’s great contribution—and a very dangerous one at that—was to argue in *The Management of Savagery* that even if one does not like the nation-state conceptually, it is an evolutionary

stage the movement must pass through if it is to finally succeed in its global mission. And, unfortunately, his pragmatic approach has been effectively implemented by Abu Bakr and his IS.<sup>13</sup>

Only when we understand that IS understands IW as an instrument to obtain specific pragmatic objectives far better than al-Qaida ever did will we be intellectually focused on understanding the true scope of their

aspirations and then better positioned to formulate effective ways and means to defeat them both on the battlefield and, more importantly, in the war of ideas.

### The Russia Federation: War by Other Means

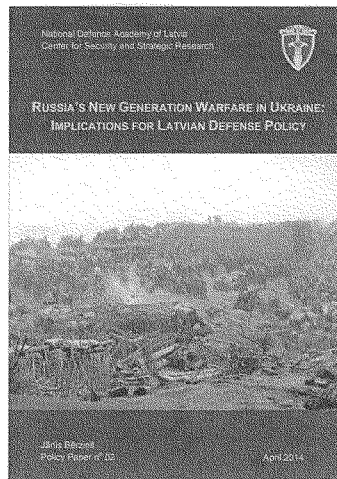
Turning to consideration of Russia as a growing IW foe, it is well to observe that today’s Russia is not the Soviet Union: it is not an existential threat to the United States.

However, it is an anti-status quo actor that intends to antagonize, undermine, and frustrate accomplishment of U.S. goals, a spoiler controlled by a thuggish former KGB officer who called the dissolution of the USSR the “greatest geostrategic calamity of the twentieth century.”

Consequently, it needs to be

acknowledged that Moscow is committed to re-establishing a sphere of unchallenged dominance in Central and Eastern Europe, and beyond that, to achieving an approximate level of influence globally that the Soviet Union had during the Cold War.

Unfortunately, its invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine resulting in the annexation of Crimea is a masterful example of how to do UW in a post-Cold War and post-9/11 world. Similarly, its exploitation of the vacuum caused by the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq in 2011 that enabled it to become a key player in Syria proves just how ambitious the Kremlin is to reshape the geopolitics of the Middle East also.



*Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy* is a detailed analysis of Russia's current approach to conducting warfare in the twenty-first century by Latvian military scholar Janis Berzins.

## IMMINENT ATTACK

How has Russia done this? Some have argued that it has developed a new mode of “hybrid war.” This is not in fact true. Moscow has simply further developed and recalibrated old Cold War tools in a new combination that emphasizes a less direct and more subversive approach to war that Sun Tsu would have instantly recognized. As those nations under greatest threat after the invasion of Ukraine, the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are doing some of the most important work in showing the world just how it is that Russia is winning its wars without recourse to conventional means.

The best English-language summary of the revamped Russian approach to war is in the 2014 report of the National Defence Academy of Latvia’s Center for Security and Strategic Research. Titled *Russia’s New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy*, Janis Berzins summarizes Russia’s approach as emphasizing the following guidelines for war in the twenty-first century:

1. from direct destruction to direct influence, and from direct conflict to “contactless war”;
2. from direct annihilation of the enemy to subverting them internally;
3. from war with kinetic weapons and an emphasis on technology and platforms, to a culture war attacking the will of the enemy;
4. from war built around conventional general-purpose forces to subconventional war using specially prepared UW forces and irregular groupings and militias;
5. from the traditional three-dimensional perspective of the battlespace to an emphasis on information operations, PSYOP, and the “war of perceptions”;
6. from compartmentalized war to a total war, including the targeting of the enemy’s “psychological rear” and population base;
7. from war focused on the physical environment to war targeting human consciousness, cyberspace, and the will of the enemy to fight; and
8. from war in a defined period of time to a state of permanent war—war as the natural state for the nation to be in.<sup>12</sup>

These guidelines, each of which can be illustrated in the campaign to subvert Ukraine, were used to politically, psychologically, and economically undermine it as a nation prior to any hostilities breaking out. They were further employed in concert with

unmarked SOF units covertly deployed as UW force multipliers to conduct operations to assist fifth-column local militia assets.

The guidelines are, according to Berzins, implemented in a set of clear phases.

**First Phase: Nonmilitary Asymmetric Warfare.**

Synchronized informational, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic measures supporting the overall Russian plan to establish a political, economic, and military environment favorable to the interests of Moscow.

**Second Phase: Special UW Operations.** Actions designed to mislead the adversary’s political and military leaders through coordinated measures on diplomatic channels, through the media, and via key government and military agencies, utilizing the “leaking” of false data, and counterfeit orders and directives.

**Third Phase: Subversion.** Intimidating, deceiving, and bribing adversarial government and military officers with the objective of making them abandon their service duties.

**Fourth Phase: Propaganda.** Information operations targeting the civilian population to increase discontent amplified by the arrival of Russian-sponsored and trained bands of militants, escalating subversion.

**Fifth Phase: Military Measures below Open War.**

Establishment of no-fly zones over the country to be attacked, imposition of blockades, extensive use of UW units and direct action in close cooperation with armed “opposition” units.

**Sixth Phase: Open Use of Force.** Commencement of military action, immediately preceded by large-scale reconnaissance and sabotage missions. Employment of all means of attack and types of assets, kinetic and nonkinetic, including SOF, space capabilities, electronic warfare (EW), aggressive and subversive diplomacy, and intelligence assets, industrial espionage, allied force-multipliers, and embedded fifth-column actors.

**Seventh Phase: Force Escalation.** Intensification of targeted information operations, increased EW, air operations, and harassment, combined with the use of high-precision weapons launched from multiple platforms, including long-range artillery, and the use of weapons platforms based on new physical principles, including microwaves, radiation, and nonlethal biological weapons targeting the will to resist.

**Eighth Phase: Assert Control.** Roll over and neutralization of all the remaining points of resistance, use of SOF and stand-off platforms to destroy remaining combat-effective enemy units, deployment of airborne assets to surround last points of resistance, execution of “mop up” and territorial control operations with ground forces.

As can be seen, none of the above together constitute a new type of war. However, the focus and combination of modes of attack have changed. Instead of the Cold War scenario of all-out war under which all means of attack are to be used initially, including chemical, biological, and nuclear, and during which *maskirovka* (deception) was an integral part of the plan to defeat the enemy, the Kremlin’s new priorities put indirect and nonkinetic measures first.

Sun Tsu wrote that the ultimate skill in war was to achieve victory without fighting, and the Kremlin has taken Sun Tsu to heart and modified its approach. As has been demonstrated in its actions relative to Ukraine and elsewhere, for Russia, the approach is now to win without fighting too much. The Russian Federation has even established a pseudoscientific theory upon which its new approach is based. This repurposed Soviet-era theory is called Reflexive Control and is the science of how to shape the information environment in such a way as to make your enemy take decisions that are preferable to your victory and detrimental to his success. This more aggressive version of “perception management” is well worth studying by the U.S. military and intelligence community. An excellent primer is Timothy Thomas’s “Russia’s Reflexive Control Theory and the Military” from the *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*.<sup>13</sup>

### The New Sun Tsus: “Making Trouble for the Troublemakers”

In 1999 two senior colonels of the Communist Chinese People’s Liberation Army, with experience in political warfare, published the work *Unrestricted Warfare*.<sup>14</sup> Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui proposed with their work that the context of conflict had drastically changed and that this change required a “new” type of war without limits.

In their work, the colonels focused first on the geostrategic and geopolitical changes that necessitate “unrestricted warfare.” This discussion included excursions on the topic of globalization, the waning power of the classic nation-state, the rise of

“super-empowered” actors such as hackers and cyber warriors, and a lengthy discourse of the significance of the First Gulf War in demonstrating the new “omnidirectionality” of combat, wherein integration is at a premium and the instruments of war are deployed in all dimensions and directions at the same time. This then led to the authors enumerating the eight principles of UW:<sup>15</sup>

- **Omnidirectionality.** A 360-degree perspective guaranteeing all-around consideration of all the factors related to war and when observing the battlefield, designing plans, employing measures, and combining the use of all war resources to have a field of vision with no blind spots. Warfare can be military, quasi-military, or nonmilitary with the “battlefield” existing everywhere with no distinction made between combatants and noncombatants.
- **Synchrony.** Conducting actions in different locations within the same period. Synchrony accomplishes objectives rapidly and simultaneously.
- **Limited Objectives.** Limit objectives in relation to measures employed. Objectives must always be smaller than measures used to obtain them.
- **Unlimited Measures.** Once objectives are limited there should no restrictions placed on the measures used to achieve them. Hence UW.
- **Asymmetry.** Understanding and employing the principle of asymmetry correctly so as to find and exploit an enemy’s weaknesses.
- **Minimal Consumption.** Use the least amount of combat resources sufficient to accomplish the objective. (Analogous to the U.S. principle of economy of force.)
- **Multidimensional Coordination.** Coordinating and allocating all forces, which can be mobilized in the military and nonmilitary spheres covering an objective (this includes nonmilitary assets, such as cultural warfare).
- **Holistic Adjustment and Control of the Entire War Process.** Continual acquisition of information through the campaign to allow for iterative adjustment and comprehensive control.

As even a cursory glance will demonstrate, none of these principles is at all new. In fact, several are as old as Sun Tsu’s *The Art of War* itself. And others are simply good common sense. Likewise, the contextual factors that lead to these principles being evinced are not new

either, with scores of Western authors, such as Phillip Bobbitt and Ed Luttwak, having discussed them after the end of the Cold War.

Nevertheless, we should not disregard this work, or rather, we should not conclude that there is nothing new about how China has been thinking about and exercising its power in the post-9/11 world. Every nation—and even individual nonstate actors—has its own unique strategic culture. China is shaped by two specific historical experiences the most. The one is the original period of the warring states which brought us the wisdom of Sun Tzu, and the other is the nineteenth and early twentieth-century experiences of modern China. The former imbued the strategic personality of China's generals and leaders with an obsession for maintaining internal cohesion to a degree that far exceeds any reasonable attitude other nations have toward maintaining internal peace and harmony. And, the second created a suppurating psychological wound in the mind of the political elite that China must never again be exploited and humiliated by foreign powers as it was for so long in the modern age.

What has this resulted in today when it comes to China's strategic goals and actions? Liang and Xiangsui may not have expounded a revolutionary new way of war for their nation, but Beijing is most definitely practicing a very shrewd form of IW that seems to reflect its prescription for war. Less aggressive than Russia's in that its primary purpose is not subversion, this approach is focused less on remote political control than on intimidation and economic control.

Simply looking at China's actions in Latin America and South Asia, with billions "invested" in countries like Venezuela and Afghanistan for access to natural resources such as oil and copper, we see how China uses the nonkinetic to realize its national goals. Add to that the privatization and co-option of the state China has perpetrated in Africa in places such as Angola and Nigeria, and we can agree with

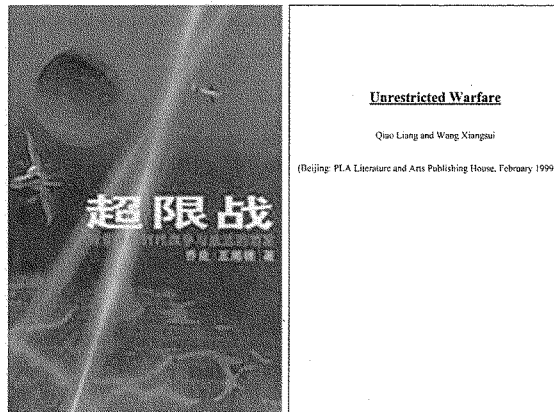
the label Rafael Marques has used to describe China's foreign policy: new imperialism.

While Russia subverts and buys individual actors, China buys the good will of whole governments in ways that are very reminiscent of the mercantilist ways of the West just a couple of centuries ago. In

short, Beijing's approach is to exploit weak nations and corrupt regimes, while exploiting the weaknesses of strong nations. And when it comes to the strongest of its competitors, such as the United States, to quote Liang, from a CCTV interview in 2012 when he was already a general, the goal is "to make trouble for the troublemaker."

### Irregular Warfare: Back to the Future

As the empirical data shows, war is most often "irregular" and "unconventional." With America's capacity to maintain an overwhelming competitive advantage in the conventional military arena, our adversaries and enemies will continue to develop and employ established unconventional and irregular modes of attack. Although not all of these are



Original cover of *Unrestricted Warfare* by Chinese People's Liberation Army Cols. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, published in 1999. Several commercial translations are available. See endnote 13 for a partial translation originally made by the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

revolutionary, or even novel, there are proving very effective already. The sooner our strategists and policymakers recognize and acknowledge this, the better able they will be to develop relevant counters and

hone our own indirect and nonkinetic modes of attack to better secure our republic and all Americans in what has become a decidedly unstable and ever more dangerous world. ■

### Biography

Sebastian Gorka, PhD, is a professor of irregular warfare and strategy and vice president for national security support at the Institute of World Politics, Washington, D.C. He is the author of the New York Times bestseller *Defeating Jihad: The Winnable War*. Gorka can be found online at <http://www.TheGorkaBriefing.com> or followed on Twitter @SebGorka.

### Notes

**Epigraph.** U.S. Special Operations Command, *ARSOF Operating Concept: Future Operating Environment/ARSOF Operating Concept Phase 1* (28 June 2013), 17.

**Epigraph.** This quote has been apocryphally attributed to Leon Trotsky though no original source has been found.

1. Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 5.

2. Sebastian Gorka and David Kilcullen, "An Actor-Centric Theory of War," *Joint Force Quarterly* 60(2011): 14–18, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA535254>.

3. Based upon the empirical data described and the frequency of unconventional wars in contrast to state-on-state conflicts, it would seem obvious that we should, in fact, doctrinally label irregular warfare as conventional, and see conventional warfare as the anomaly, not the standard. Even though these are the facts of the matter, I do not expect to see the Pentagon make such a switch in the near future.

4. The Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis findings were drawn from forty-six separate studies that looked at operations raging from *Strategic Communications Best Practices to Counter-IED Efforts and Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan*.

5. Joint Staff J7, "Decade of War, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations," Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (2012), 20 March 2012, accessed 4 August 2016, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/training/conferences/wjts12\\_1/wjts12\\_1JLL\\_decadeOfWar.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/training/conferences/wjts12_1/wjts12_1JLL_decadeOfWar.pdf).

6. For a summary exposition of the key strategists of modern Jihad, including Azzam, see Sebastian Gorka, "Understanding Today's Enemy: The Grand Strategists of Modern Jihad," *Military Review* 96, no. 3 (May-June 2016): 32–39, accessed 10 August 2016, [http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview\\_20160630\\_art009.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20160630_art009.pdf).

7. This is dangerous. Although the Islamic State (IS) is currently more impressive and capable than al-Qaida, that does not mean that al-Qaida is finished or dormant. On the contrary, Al-Qaida has, in fact, expanded its reach in many parts of the world outside

of IS influence, including Africa. The war for the "crown of the Caliphate" is far from over.

8. Bernard B. Fall, "The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Naval War College Review*, 8 no. 34 (April 1965): 34.

9. Gorka, "Understanding Today's Enemy."

10. Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical State Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. William McCants (Cambridge, MA: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, 23 May 2006), PDF e-book, accessed 8 August 2016, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>.

11. Note also that it is clear the IS has studied their Mao. The original al-Qaida had a more Guevarist approach to insurgency, believing that spectacular attacks would trigger a mass movement and mass mobilization of fighters. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has demonstrated an understanding of what Mao taught: the insurgent will be successful if he can establish the "counter state" and provide services to the local population in competition to a failing legacy government. Appreciation of what the hackneyed phrase "hearts and minds" truly means illuminates what makes IS much more dangerous than al-Qaida ever was.

12. Janis Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy*, Policy Paper No. 2, (Riga, Latvia: National Defence Academy of Latvia, Center for Security and Strategic Research, April 2014), accessed 5 August 2016, <http://www.naa.mil.lv/~media/NAA/AZPC/Publikacijas/PP%2002-2014.ashx>.

13. Timothy Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004): 237–56, [https://www.rit.edu/~w-cmmc/literature/Thomas\\_2004.pdf](https://www.rit.edu/~w-cmmc/literature/Thomas_2004.pdf).

14. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999), accessed 4 August 2016, <http://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf>.

15. Adapted from Maj. John A. Van Messel, "Unrestricted Warfare: A Chinese doctrine for future warfare?" (master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2005), accessed 4 August 2016, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a509132.pdf>.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired.  
Mr. Pregent, you are up for 5 minutes.

#### STATEMENT OF MICHAEL PREGENT

Mr. PREGENT. Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on National Security, on behalf of the Hudson Institute, I am honored to testify before you today about the successes against ISIS and the challenges that remain.

Both the Obama and Trump Administrations achieved success against ISIS. Under President Obama, ISIS lost the Mosul Dam, ISIS was defeated trying to take the Syrian town of Kobane in Syria and lost control of Tikrit, Ramadi, and Fallujah in Iraq. Under President Trump, ISIS lost its caliphate capitals of Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria, and its stronghold of Deir ez-Zor.

We learned early on that ISIS lost territory every time it faced a capable force backed by U.S. airpower. The first example of this was the battle over the Mosul Dam in 2014 where the Kurdish Peshmerga, backed by U.S. Special Operation Forces and U.S. air power, retook control of the Mosul Dam and handed ISIS its first defeat.

The second example was Kobane. In October 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry indicated that preventing the fall of the Syrian town of Kobane to ISIS was not a strategic U.S. objective. As ISIS moved on Kobane, international media broadcasted ISIS maneuvers and artillery barrages on the city in broad daylight. ISIS was winning, and it was being televised. The administration, embarrassed by this, finally authorized U.S. Special Forces to partner with Peshmerga forces and call in airstrikes on ISIS, and ISIS was handed its second loss.

The key lesson here that emerged from both Kobane and the Mosul Dam was that the clear and hold force was from the area and had a vested interest in fighting to keep ISIS out. The most important aspect of a clear and hold strategy that was tested and proved successful during the surge of 2007 in Iraq basically is that the force from the area has a vested interest in keeping it out. So the most important aspect of that strategy is to use local force, and it has to be empowered to keep ISIS out. It has to be empowered to do so.

After Kobane and the Mosul Dam, operations to take back Tikrit, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Mosul in Iraq were done with predominantly Shia forces, with the support of IRGC militias. In other words, the "clear" phase has been touted as a success, but the "hold" phase will not hold without Sunni forces empowered by their central government to protect Sunni areas. It is critically important that the "hold" force reflect local political dynamics for there to be success. This is not happening in Iraq or Syria.

Obama and Trump have key differences in strategy, but also unfortunate similarities. The Obama Administration's anti-ISIS strategy took away from the combatant commander the decision-making process, resulting in lost opportunities to kill and capture targets of opportunity. It publicly touted victories hours after successful raids against ISIS, killing the intelligence community's ability to exploit ISIS networks and conduct follow-on raids, and it allowed

the IRGC Quds Force to increase its influence and presence in Iraq and Syria.

The Trump Administration's strategy has pushed resources and decision-making back to the combatant commander, restoring authorities to break the will of the enemy. It has expanded our Special Operations missions to kill and capture key ISIS and al-Qaeda leadership throughout the globe, and allowed the time for our intelligence agencies to exploit intelligence before touting success to the media and to the terrorist organizations themselves. When you tell a terrorist organization that you have effectively conducted a raid hours after that raid, they throw away their SIM cards and they go to the mattresses, and it sets back the intelligence community big time.

One of the things, unfortunately, that the Trump Administration is continuing to do is it is continuing to stand by while the IRGC Quds Force increases its influence and presence in Iraq and Syria.

So now that ISIS has lost territory, challenges remain in holding liberated terrain with non-Sunni Arab forces. ISIS sought out ungoverned spaces in Iraq and Syria where disenfranchised Sunnis were oppressed by a sectarian government. That dynamic exists today in both Iraq and Syria. ISIS continues to seek out and operate in areas where Sunnis are distrustful of their government, be it sectarian, secular, or even Sunni. ISIS operates in the Sunni Pashtun areas of Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Egypt's Sinai, Yemen and Libya, and the list goes on.

ISIS has lost territory but has not been defeated in Iraq and Syria. ISIS still operates in liberated areas, following the insurgent al-Qaeda model, as demonstrated by the two suicide attacks in Baghdad resulting in the loss of 38 personnel. The Institute for the Study of War has an ISIS control map. That map still shows ISIS operating in most areas declared liberated by the U.S. and Baghdad.

Losing territory is phase one of many. The next phase is building and partnering with Sunni forces capable of effectively holding territory. These phases are the most important and are not likely to happen due to continued U.S. deference to Russia and Iran and Syria, and to Baghdad and Iran and Iraq. If this is not changed, we simply reset the conditions that led to ISIS to begin with.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Pregent follows:]

Testimony of

**Michael Pregent**

Adjunct Fellow, Hudson Institute

on

**“Battlefield Successes and Challenges: Recent Efforts to  
Win the War Against ISIS”**

U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform’s  
Subcommittee on National Security

Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on National Security, on behalf of the Hudson Institute, I am honored to testify before you today about the successes against ISIS, and the challenges that remain.

### Successes

Both the Obama and Trump administrations achieved success against ISIS. Under President Obama, ISIS lost the Mosul Dam, was defeated trying to take the Kurdish town of Kobane in Syria; and lost control of Tikrit, Ramadi, and Fallujah in Iraq. Under President Trump, ISIS lost its caliphate capitals of Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria, and its stronghold of Deir ez-Zor.

We learned early on that **ISIS lost territory every time they've faced a capable ground force backed by US airpower**. Two key examples of this happened early on in the campaign.

The first example of this was the battle over the Mosul Dam in 2014. There, Kurdish Peshmerga forces backed by US Special Forces and US air power retook control of the Mosul Dam and handed ISIS its first defeat.<sup>1</sup>

The second example was Kobane.

In October 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry indicated that “preventing the fall of the Syrian town of Kobane to Islamic State fighters was not a strategic U.S. objective.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, Kobane was nothing if not strategic. A border town between Syria and Turkey, ISIS could have used it to profit from the black market oil trade and to facilitate foreign fighter flows in and out of Syria, not to mention that ISIS taking a Kurdish town while the world watched would help the terrorist army recruit.

Such situations underscored the incoherent approach the Obama administration brought to their understanding of how to contain and roll back ISIS. Without a broader strategy, the U.S. struggled to articulate its role in fighting ISIS.

As ISIS moved on Kobane, international media broadcasted ISIS maneuvers and artillery barrages on the city in broad daylight. Initially, Secretary Kerry did not see Kobane's strategic value in defeating ISIS. Then, the administration authorized US Special Operations Forces (SOF) to call in airstrikes in support of Kurdish fighters – but from this, ISIS quickly adapted to our targeting windows when it became clear the U.S. would not strike during the day.

ISIS was allowed freedom of movement during the day – the group knew when we would hit, and when we wouldn't.

<sup>1</sup> Jethro Mullen and Susana Capelouto, “U.S. airstrikes critical in Mosul Dam capture,” *CNN*, August 19, 2014. (<http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/meast/iraq-mosul-dam/index.html>)

<sup>2</sup> Arshad Mohammed and Lesley Wroughton, “The US Isn't Too Eager to Help Save Kobane From ISIS's Onslaught,” *Reuters*, October 8, 2014. (<http://www.businessinsider.com/us-is-not-eager-to-help-kurds-in-kobane-2014-10>)

Eventually, ISIS's ability to reorganize its formations in Kobane during daytime hours embarrassed the administration and led to a partial reversal of the policy, allowing daytime strikes. But the incapacity for local commanders to make targeting decisions in the early stages of the fight against ISIS certainly enabled ISIS to take more territory.

One crucial lesson that emerged from both Kobane and the Mosul Dam was that the key to success in both cases was that the "Clear and Hold" force was from the area and had a vested interest in fighting to keep ISIS out. The most important aspect of a "Clear and Hold" strategy is the Hold phase that keeps ISIS and future iterations from coming back, but only when its government empowers it to do so.

After Kobane and Mosul Dam, the operations to take back Tikrit, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Mosul in Iraq were done with predominantly Shia forces in Sunni areas, which were the same forces that had lost that territory to begin with under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. In other words, the "Clear" phase has been touted as a success, but the "Hold" phase will not hold without Sunni forces empowered by their central government to protect Sunni areas.

#### **Obama and Trump Have Key Differences in Strategy, but Also Unfortunate Similarities**

The Obama administration's anti-ISIS strategy centralized decision making, resulting in lost opportunities to kill and capture targets of opportunity. It publicly touted victories hours after raids, killing the Intelligence Community's ability to exploit the ISIS network after a successful "JackPot" – meaning a key leader was captured or killed. And it allowed the IRGC Quds force to increase its influence and presence in Iraq and Syria.

The Trump administration's strategy has pushed resources and decision making down to the combatant commander, expanded our special operations missions to kill and capture key ISIS and Al-Qaeda leadership, and allowed the time for our intelligence agencies to exploit intelligence before touting success to the media and to the terrorist organizations themselves. Unfortunately, the Trump administration has also continued to stand by while the IRGC Quds force increases its influence and presence in Iraq and Syria.

#### **PR Victory vs. Intelligence Win**

The key change between the Trump and Obama administrations' ISIS strategy is **Strategic Patience when it comes to battlefield successes**.

The Obama administration showed more interest in gaining PR victories than in gaining tactical or strategic intelligence victories. One of the biggest shifts in President Obama's approach versus President Trump's approach is that, under President Trump, after high-value targets are killed, the military often waits up to two weeks to publicly announce the successful operation. This allows intelligence analysts to comb through the target's personal computer and effects, and to watch jihadi networks "light up" as the communication travels. This allows for follow-on

raids based on the communication patterns they saw. Typically, the actionable intelligence and patterns dies down after a couple of weeks.

Under President Obama, however, immediate publicity of the killing was prioritized. After the Abu Sayyaf raid, for example, President Obama's Administration waited only a handful of hours to announce the killing and the specific details of the raid.<sup>3</sup> Announcing the death of one of ISIS's top men immediately meant that ISIS leaders immediately burned their SIM cards and went to the mattresses – different mattresses, setting back intelligence efforts considerably.

There's no better place to be than at the NSA after a raid to see a network light up – each selector with a geolocation our Special Operations Forces can strike. Under President Obama, this opportunity was repeatedly lost.

#### ROE Differences

**The Trump Strategy has relaxed the rules of engagement, and this has accelerated ISIS's loss of territory.** Targeting authority has been moved down to the combatant commander - the operational commander, who has the best sense of the tactical situation on the ground. This makes sense. Both Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster were operational commanders who were trusted to make decisions without asking D.C. for permission. There would be no tactical hotline to the NSC under their watch. Targets of opportunity are being hit and again, without getting permission from thousands of miles away in the U.S. to conduct an attack.

Indeed, their predecessors Leon Panetta and Robert Gates also voiced frustrations with Obama's National Security Council aides interfering in and micromanaging military decisions. Secretary Gates famously ripped out a phone line at the Joint Special Operations Command in Kabul that went straight to the NSC. "You get a call from the White House, you tell 'em to go to hell and call me."<sup>4</sup>

It wasn't just interference. Obama-era rules of engagement (ROE) were very stringent, designed in part to avoid the potential loss of a pilot. The established framework was to strike targets at night, and only if there was a high certainty of hitting the right target while minimizing collateral damage. Furthermore, the Obama administration made the decision to avoid striking convoys carrying oil out of environmental concerns. Thus, ISIS was enabled to continue profiting enormously from the oil trade. The U.S. Treasury estimated ISIS made up to \$500 million a year from oil in 2015.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Juliette Kayyem, "Abu Sayyaf raid: Messing with the heads of ISIS," *CNN*, May 18, 2015.

(<http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/18/opinions/kayyem-abu-sayyaf-isis-operation/index.html>)

<sup>4</sup> "Hagel's Predecessors Decried White House 'Micromanaging,'" *NBC News*, November 24, 2014.

(<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/hagels-predecessors-decried-white-house-micromanaging-n255231>)

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing Daniel Glaser, "The Evolution of Terrorism Financing: Disrupting the Islamic State," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, October 21, 2016.

This risk aversion meant that targets had to be cleared by the National Security Council (NSC). However, targets of opportunity often disappear within seconds, and many of these targeting opportunities were lost. Furthermore, ISIS was able to continue making enough money to sustain itself. Thus, ISIS maintained the ability to move assets and oil around without being hit.

The Obama-era NSC employed a system of Centralized Targeting, which was fundamentally at odds with the windows of opportunity presented in which the U.S. could have incapacitated ISIS assets and leaders. This made prosecuting the fight against ISIS more difficult, as, to strike ISIS targets within the targeting window, approval authority must be at the ground level.

#### **Destroying Sunni Cities to “Liberate” them from ISIS**

The Rules of Engagement were relaxed when it came to taking back Ramadi. In 2015, Ramadi fell to 800 ISIS fighters as the numerically superior Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) withdrew. Ramadi had a population of 500,000 when the ISF withdrew and left it to 800 ISIS fighters, a number that later grew to 1,600. Eighty percent of Ramadi was destroyed in the ensuing campaign to retake the city, and the population became internally displaced refugees—all to defeat fewer than 1600 fighters.<sup>6</sup>

This is not what liberation looks like – this is what the destruction of a Sunni city looks like. Unfortunately, it continued with the Mosul operation under President Trump.

Mosul was left to ISIS for two and half years. ISIS was able to emplace sophisticated obstacle belts backed up by car bombs and snipers. They were able to wire buildings to explode, and took human shields.

Mosul, a Sunni city with a population of 1.6 million at the beginning of the operation, was heavily destroyed, and its residents pushed into the internally displaced refugee camps—all for an estimated four-thousand ISIS fighters who were allowed years to prepare their destructive defenses.<sup>7</sup>

The US and the ISF played a role in the destruction of Mosul as well. The coalition allowed IRGC-led militias to use crude artillery and rockets to indiscriminately target the city, and the

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(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/theevolution-of-terrorism-financing-disrupting-the-islamic-state>)

<sup>6</sup> Tim Arango, “Key Iraqi City Falls to ISIS as Last of Security Forces Flee,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 2015. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/18/world/middleeast/isis-ramadi-iraq.html>)

<sup>7</sup> Peter Cook, various reporters (17 October 2016). Defense Department Briefing. Arlington, Virginia, United States: C-SPAN. Event occurs at 23:02. Archived from the original on 18 October 2016. Retrieved 17 October 2016. The estimate [of ISL fighters in Mosul] I've seen was... 3,000 to 5,000... We've seen other numbers that are higher.

disproportionate use of force in President Trump's air campaign against ISIS saw our air force use 500 pound bombs in densely populated civilian areas against ISIS sniper positions.

In the Old City of Mosul, ISIS's last stronghold in the city, there were an estimated sixty-thousand civilians and 400 ISIS fighters in a 2km square area. The ratio for civilian to ISIS fighter was 150:1. The Old City of Mosul was completely destroyed. This is not counterinsurgency, nor is it victory over ISIS. At no time were the 300,000 Sunni military aged males in Mosul empowered by the Government of Iraq and the U.S. to resist and ultimately defeat an ISIS force of less than 5000.

#### **Where we are now**

**Now that ISIS has been defeated militarily and has lost territory**, challenges remain in holding that terrain—with a tenuous and opportunist force in Syria, and a sectarian one in Iraq—while striking ISIS wherever they pop-up.

ISIS sought out ungoverned spaces in Iraq and Syria where disenfranchised Sunnis were oppressed by a sectarian government. **That dynamic exists today in both Iraq and Syria.** ISIS continues to seek out and operate in areas where Sunnis are distrustful of their government—be it sectarian, secular, or even Sunni. ISIS operates in the Sunni Pashtun areas of Afghanistan, in Egypt's Sinai, Yemen, and Libya—and **they will continue to operate in Iraq and Syria and attempt to take back territory.**

#### **1.) Loss of Territory and Status**

Early successes by ISIS resulted in an increased flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria. The loss of terrain had the opposite effect. The golden nugget here is that jihadists weren't rushing in to help the so-called caliphate after a loss – and those that were already there were trying to exit. These Bandwagon Jihadists were caught and executed by ISIS, along with ISIS fighters who lost territory.

**Now, ISIS has to rely on local recruits in Iraq and Syria – the only foreign fighters coming into Iraq and Syria are those sent by the IRGC's Quds Force.**

Early on, ISIS compensated for the loss of terrain by releasing Quentin Tarantino-like execution videos, adding affiliates that Al-Qaeda rejected like Boko Haram, conducting attacks in the West, and claiming credit for lone-wolf attacks across the globe.

Now they are grasping at straws, attempting to take credit for anything that hints at a connection to the terrorist group, and even attacks with no connection to the group, like the Las Vegas shooting. ISIS, aware that they were grasping at straws and looking desperate, tried to distance itself after claiming credit for the failed subway suicide bomber in New York.

## 2.) Down but Not Out

ISIS has lost territory, but has not been defeated in Iraq and Syria. **ISIS still operates in liberated areas, following the “al-Qaeda model.”** The al-Qaeda model employs decentralized cells that recruit, intimidate, ransom hostages, assassinate, foment sectarian divisions, plan and execute targeted operations, and conduct high-profile attacks.

The Institute for The Study of War ISIS control Map shows that ISIS is operating in the al-Qaeda model in most areas declared “liberated” by the U.S. and Baghdad.<sup>8</sup>

### Obstacles to Success

Losing territory is phase one of many: the next phase is building and partnering with local Sunni forces capable of effectively holding territory while U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) simultaneously conduct kill and capture missions based on actionable intelligence. The phases of government concessions, reconciliation, and the dismantling of sectarian militias in Iraq and Syria remain.

These phases are the most important, and are not likely to happen due to continued U.S. deference to Russia and Iran in Syria, and to Baghdad and Iran in Iraq. If this does not change, we have simply reset the conditions that led to ISIS to begin with.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee.

Michael Pregent  
Adjunct Fellow, Hudson Institute

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<sup>8</sup> “ISIS Sanctuary: December 18, 2017,” *Institute for the Study of War*, December 18, 2017. (<https://twitter.com/TheStudyofWar/status/948237408897765376/photo/1>)

Michael Pregent

Mike Pregent is an adjunct fellow at Hudson Institute. He is a senior Middle East analyst, a former adjunct lecturer for the College of International Security Affairs, and a visiting fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University.

Pregent is a former intelligence officer with over 28 years experience working security, terrorism, counter-insurgency, and policy issues in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. He is an expert in Middle East and North Africa political and security issues, counter-terrorism analysis, stakeholder communications, and strategic planning.

He spent considerable time working malign Iranian influence in Iraq as an advisor to Iraq's Security and Intelligence apparatus, including an embedded advisory role with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's extra-constitutional Office of the Commander-in-Chief. An office set up to ensure Iranian-backed Shia militia party control of Iraq's security and political process.

Pregent served in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, served as a liaison officer in Egypt during the 2000 Intifada, as a counter-insurgency intelligence officer at CENTCOM in 2001, and as a company commander in Afghanistan in 2002.

Pregent served as an embedded advisor with the Peshmerga in Mosul 2005-06. Also, as a civilian SME working for DIA, he served as a political and military advisor to USF-I focusing on reconciliation, the insurgency, and Iranian influence in Iraq from 2007-2011. He was a violent extremism and foreign fighter analyst at CENTCOM from 2011-2013.

He holds a Masters in Strategic Public Relations from The George Washington University and is a graduate of the U.S. Army's Defense Language Institute in Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Dialect.

Mike is a free-lance writer for the *The Wall Street Journal* and a contributing writer to the *Daily Beast*.

Mike Pregent has numerous publications on ISIS, Iran's Qods Force, and on Syria and Iraq. His writings have been published in *Foreign Affairs*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, *The Tower Magazine*, *Long War Journal*, *New America Foundation*, *CNN*, *Al-Jazeera*, *Business Insider*, and the *Daily Beast*.

Mike frequently appears as an expert analyst on Shia militias, Iran, Iraq, and ISIS with appearances on BBC World News, MSNBC, Al-Jazeera International, CNN, CNN International, VOA Persia, and Fox News.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Lohaus for 5 minutes.

#### STATEMENT OF PHILLIP LOHAUS

Mr. LOHAUS. Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and honorable members of the Subcommittee on National Security, I am honored by the opportunity to testify before you today as you examine our nation's recent efforts to defeat the Islamic State.

My testimony will show that while the Obama Administration's approach incrementally degraded the Islamic State's grip on swaths of Iraq and Syria, the Trump Administration's timely reforms have accelerated America's gains against the Islamic State. I caution that these gains should not obscure the amount of work left to do to defeat ISIS and jihadist terrorist groups more generally. Doing so will require adjustments to our strategy, a few of which I will discuss today.

In response to the rise of the Islamic State, President Obama took a measured and cautious approach to reestablishing Iraq's internal security. He relied primarily on conducting limited air strikes and to putting a small cadre of Special Operators to build the capacity of the fledgling Iraqi armed forces. A similar though more restrictive approach characterized our efforts against ISIS in Syria. In both cases, partner forces did eventually grow more adept at fighting ISIS, but only after the latter had weakened significantly.

The White House's decision-making style impeded rapid progress against the Islamic State. This is without doubt. Their risk aversion, inefficient target nominations process and, above all, involvement in day-to-day operational and tactical decision-making added unnecessary friction to the decision-making process. These policies made for a time-consuming approach to a problem that required rapid responses.

Despite this, one cannot deny that progress has been made in the fight against the Islamic State, particularly in Iraq and Syria. I would echo the comments made earlier by the Chairman and Ranking Member in that regard. The siege of Mosul resulted in the ouster of Islamic State from that city, as did the siege of Raqqa. As of October 2017, territory controlled by ISIS had shrunk to isolated pockets mostly along the Iraq-Syria border.

None of this would have been possible without the valiant efforts of American troops and partner forces. Their efforts should be applauded. However, progress in the fight against ISIS may have occurred sooner, or its rise may have been prevented entirely if friction points between the military and its civilian leadership had not impeded America's responsiveness.

The Trump Administration has streamlined the executive decision-making process and authorized a more aggressive posture towards the Islamic State. For one, they appear much more willing to rely on the expertise of military advisers. This has made a difference. From personal experience, I have seen how empowering decision-makers and operators on the ground enhances operational responsiveness and increases joint and combined synergies and operations.

Trump has also signaled a willingness to dedicate more resources to the fight. He deployed, for example, 400 Marines and Army Rangers to Syria in advance of the siege of Raqqa, increased the pace of air strikes within U.S. Central Command, and approved the training of YPG fighters in Syria. These developments have been timely and appropriate.

These successes aside, much more work remains to be done to defeat the Islamic State and other extremist groups around the globe. An effective counterterrorism strategy must go beyond air strikes and Special Operations direct-action missions. The Administration is also yet to articulate U.S. policy toward a post-Islamic State Iraq and Syria. The danger remains that recent gains will be viewed as signs of total victory and therefore used as a reason to reduce America's involvement in the region. Doing so would be pennywise but pound foolish.

Defeating a group like ISIS and other jihadist groups will require more than just military victories on the battlefield. It will require a sustained commitment to our partners and allies and the creation of new ones. It will require an understanding of the ideological appeal of extremism and efforts to reduce that appeal. It will require a clever and coordinated application of all sources of national power. Above all, it will require an understanding of the long-term and ideological nature of this fight.

There are several things that our political leadership and decision-makers could do to improve our global position vis-a-vis Islamic extremists. First, the White House should map out the role that individual agencies will play in implementing the counter-jihadist terrorism provisions of the recent National Security Strategy. To name just two examples, the Department of State should redouble public diplomacy efforts that incorporate local partners whenever possible in vulnerable countries around the world. I would second Dr. Gorka's attestation to taking a look at the Active Measures Working Group from the Soviet Union era, which gives a great example of how interagency groups can combat these types of threats. And the Department of Defense and intelligence agencies for their parts should emphasize the importance of military information support operations, human intelligence and Special Forces. Bombing campaigns and direct-action missions cannot succeed without or be replaced by the knowledge gained by these ground assets.

For its part, Congress could consider revising U.S. code to better reflect the overlapping nature of government-wide counterterrorism efforts.

It is accepted in the defense community that strategy equals ends plus ways plus means. Compared to jihadist groups, the United States does not want for means. If America's goal is to move the needle from degrading ISIS to finally defeating it, the ways and ends, however, will require ongoing examination.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss these issues, and I look forward to your questions.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Lohaus follows:]



Statement before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Subcommittee on National Security  
On "Battlefield Successes and Challenges: Recent Efforts to Win the War Against ISIS"

## **Moving the Needle from Degradation to Defeat**

Aligning Ends, Ways, and Means in the Fight Against the  
Islamic State

**PHILLIP LOHAUS**  
Research Fellow

17 January 2017

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author.

“Battlefield Successes and Challenges: Recent Efforts to Win the War Against ISIS”

Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch, and honorable members of the Subcommittee on National Security, I am honored by the opportunity to testify before you today as you examine recent successes and challenges in our nation’s effort to defeat the Islamic State. For the past five years, I have conducted research and published numerous articles on the evolving use of our nation’s special operations forces, the intelligence community, and our national security strategy. I continue to work closely with military and civilian leaders to devise innovative and adaptive operational approaches for some of the most pressing threats facing the United States. My understanding of the international threat environment draws from prior service in the intelligence community, during which time I served as an embedded analyst with the US military in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

My testimony today will discuss the current state of the fight against the Islamic State and contrast the approaches of Presidents Obama and Trump. It will show that while both Presidents played a role in decimating the Islamic State’s presence in Iraq and Syria, the processes and policies in place during Obama’s tenure may have inhibited the pace of battlefield success. The reforms made by the Trump administration have been timely and correspond appropriately with the later stage of the fight they inherited from their predecessors. Whether this administration will resist the temptation to declare victory over the Islamic State and reduce America’s presence in the Middle East remains an open question, as does the future of America’s approach to countering Islamic extremism. Taking a realistic stock of the ends, ways, and means associated with the fight against the Islamic State is the first step to devising a long-term strategy to move from “degrading” it to finally “defeating” it. I conclude by providing a few thoughts on how the current administration may accomplish this.

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Carl von Clausewitz defined strategy as the “use of engagements for the object of war.”<sup>1</sup> Though now ubiquitous, the “ends + ways + means = strategy” formula was not put forth until 1989. The elegance of the formula led to its widespread adoption, but its simplicity suggests an equal weight to each variable on the left side of the equation.<sup>2</sup> As the ongoing struggle against comparatively resource-poor groups such as the Islamic State shows, the ways that resources are employed often explains more about strategic success than does a comparative enumeration of military equipment and tools.

Ends, ways, and means of warfare are all impacted by policy decisions. The United States, compared to other countries and organizations, does not want for means. However, America has not always succeeded in aligning its stated goals with its willingness to employ the ways required to achieve victory. Sometimes, such as in Operation Iraqi Freedom, these imbalances have been corrected mid-campaign, but sometimes, as in Vietnam, they have not. Political will, friction within the national security establishment, and a short-term, crisis-oriented outlook have all affected America’s ability to deliver strategic success, particularly in protracted low-intensity campaigns.<sup>3</sup> Examining how national security resources are applied is thus critical to understanding how strategic misalignment impedes success.

Since the conclusion of the prior administration, ends concerning ISIS have been refined, and additional means of military power have been made available for employment in the battlefield. Though significant gains in the battle against the Islamic State have been made, moving the

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needle from degradation to defeat will require additional adjustments to the way America approaches the enemy, and above all, a greater understanding of the long-term nature of the fight against Islamic extremism. To quote strategist B.H. Liddell Hart, “in strategy, the longest way round is often the shortest way home.”<sup>4</sup>

America’s current position concerning the Islamic State is rooted in the context of the procedures employed during the prior administration, both in the field and in Washington.

Not long after the drawdown of American troops in 2011, the Islamic State threatened to overwhelm Iraq’s ability to defend itself, a development that was both politically inconvenient and, potentially, strategically disastrous to the United States. To square the circle, President Obama took a measured and cautious approach to re-establishing Iraq’s internal security. The administration’s methodology lay primarily in conducting airstrikes and deploying a small cadre of special operators to build the capacity of the fledgling Iraqi military. The administration would later take a similar approach to fighting ISIS in Syria.

In the field, airstrikes were authorized against ISIS targets beginning in August of 2014. Though the air campaign initially focused on providing supplies to isolated groups such as the Yazidis on Mount Sinjar, the number of munitions released by the US military and its coalition partners increased dramatically in the years to come.<sup>5</sup> Airstrikes thus quickly took a central role in the campaign against ISIS, though American forces were not responsible for all of these airstrikes.<sup>6</sup> The administration exempted airstrikes against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria from collateral damage regulations,<sup>7</sup> but in practice, the theaters received differing treatment. In Iraq, the administration largely delegated targeting authority for airstrikes to the military. Strikes conducted in Syria, however, underwent additional scrutiny from the White House.<sup>8</sup>

Despite promises to not deploy additional ground troops to the Middle East, the Obama administration devised an approach that would eventually have American special operators on the ground in both Iraq and Syria. Guided by the principle that U.S. forces would act primarily to enable local forces rather than act in combat roles, the administration deployed 300 military advisers to Iraq in June 2014, a number that would grow to 5,200 by the end of Obama’s second term.<sup>9</sup>

In Iraq, special operations advisers faced strict limitations on engagement with the enemy, such that, initially, few left their headquarters base at all. Eventually, trainers were allowed to accompany smaller units into the field. However, American forces were still subject to highly restrictive rules of engagement, which curtailed their ability to join their trainees on many missions. Despite eventual successes in training Iraqi Special Forces, political infighting in the Iraqi government, the rise of Shi’a militias, and the size of the American trainer cadre hindered the wide-scale improvement to the Iraqi military that the administration had envisioned attaining.<sup>10</sup> The Iraqi military grew more adept at fighting ISIS, but only after the latter had weakened significantly.

With respect to Syria, American forces were initially limited to training local fighters outside of the country. When this effort proved unsuccessful, if not counterproductive, a small number of American special operators were deployed to train Kurdish fighters inside of Syria. This

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initiative, which originated and was advocated for years prior, proved highly successful. Whether pursuing it earlier would have made a difference in the fight against ISIS, however, remains an open question, as deeper cooperation with the Kurds came with the risk of upsetting Turkey.

In Washington, the White House’s style of oversight complicated efforts to “degrade and defeat” ISIS. Some of the friction points between the west wing and subordinate agencies were hardly unique to the Obama administration. It is not uncommon, for example, for civilian leadership to place certain constraints on processes related to targeting. The magnitude of friction, however, was amplified by an emphasis on caution and an aversion to risk, an inefficient target nominations process, and, above all, the involvement of the National Security Council—and often the President himself—in day-to-day operational and tactical decision-making. The targeting process resulted in missed drone strike opportunities, which, outside of “areas of active hostilities,” required explicit White House approval, and also reportedly increased the weight of political considerations in decisions affecting national security.<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, these processes would have impacted the ability of SOF to innovate and adapt to changing operational circumstances on the fly, undermining the effectiveness of the instrument most central to the White House’s approach to counterterrorism.<sup>12</sup> In short, the White House’s decision-making style made for an incremental and laborious approach to a problem that required decisive and rapid responses to an enemy that was quickly metastasizing around the world.

Despite these shortcomings, one cannot deny the progress made in the fight against the Islamic State, particularly in Iraq and Syria. The siege of Mosul, however delayed, resulted in the ouster of the Islamic State from that city, as did the siege of Raqqa. As of October 2017, the overall territory controlled by ISIS had shrunk from a wide swath extending from central Syria to the outskirts of Baghdad to an isolated rump along the Iraq/Syria border.

These successes would not have been achievable without the efforts of American forces on the ground and in the air. Their accomplishments on the battlefield deserve applause. It is worth asking, however, whether the degradation of ISIS would have occurred sooner—or its rise prevented entirely—if friction points between the military and its civilian leadership had not impeded America’s responsiveness, and if the ends, ways, and means of strategy had been aligned more effectively.

Although the pace of operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria accelerated under President Trump,<sup>13</sup> it would be disingenuous to attribute all of the recent successes in the fight against the Islamic State to the current administration—the siege of Mosul, after all, began prior to the 2016 election. Nonetheless, specific reforms that have taken place since that time have enhanced the ability of America and its coalition partners to eradicate the Islamic State from its former sanctuary.

For one, the Trump administration’s willingness to rely upon the expertise of military advisers contrasts with the more civilian-centric approach of the prior administration. Increased reliance on military expertise should not be viewed as a categorical positive, as an overreliance on advice of the military can erode the ability of civilians to oversee the military and lead to a discounting of other tools of national power.<sup>14</sup> Rules and constraints have a proper role in regulating military actions—including tactical ones. Once these rules are in place, however, devolving judgment to

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lower levels of the hierarchy enhances operational responsiveness and allows for unforeseen synergies within the services, and also with interagency and international partners.<sup>15</sup> This is particularly important in the latter phases of conflict when the destruction of the enemy is in sight. In this sense, the Trump administration’s change in approach was timely.

The increased influence and autonomy of military advisers accompanied a more aggressive stance toward jihadist groups, both in Iraq and Syria, as well as further afield. For example, the President rescinded Obama-era regulations on drone strikes and loosened restrictions on how the military operated in Yemen. Trump also authorized the deployment of 400 Marines and Army Rangers to Syria, and approved arming the YPG, in advance of the siege of Raqqa, and the number of airstrikes authorized by the administration in US Central Command’s area of responsibility has increased dramatically.<sup>16</sup> When taken into account with the streamlining of National Security Council involvement, these developments will aid in the military’s ability to execute upon their commander’s intent.

In many respects, however, the current administration has simply amplified Obama’s approach. They have streamlined processes, brought additional means to bear on the battlefield, and created space for operational and tactical innovation. Yet the fundamentals of their counterterrorism strategy remain similar to those of their predecessor, including an emphasis on the direct-action missions of special operations forces, drones, and airstrikes. Perhaps most importantly, like prior administrations, they have yet to devise a plan for what US policy toward a post-Islamic State Iraq and Syria should look like, or how US counterterrorism strategy writ large might be improved to move the needle from “degrade” to “defeat.”

Another danger, one that is hardly unique to this administration, is that recent gains will be viewed as signs of total victory, and therefore used as a reason to reduce America’s involvement in the region. The decimation of the Islamic State’s presence in Iraq and Syria represents just one battle in a much larger war against Islamic extremism. The Trump administration has accelerated the degradation of ISIS that commenced during the Obama administration, but the Islamic State has not yet been “defeated.”

Defeating a group like ISIS and other instantiations of Islamic extremism will require more than just military victories on the battlefield. It will require a sustained commitment to our partners and allies, and the creation of new ones. It will require an understanding of the ideological appeal of extremism, and efforts to reduce that appeal. It will require the use of all tools of national power, orchestrated in a manner that facilitates adaptation and innovation, and alignment towards clearly articulated ends. Above all, it will require that, if our goal is to extinguish the power and lure of extremist groups, political leaders are honest with themselves and their constituents about the need for an extended commitment to these endeavors.

The United States is at a strategic crossroads concerning its fight against Islamic extremism. The path of least resistance would be to declare victory over ISIS and reduce our presence in the Middle East. This course of action would likely open new opportunities for ISIS and similar groups to reconstitute, and could potentially create the need for the United States to intervene, with significant cost of lives and treasure, at some point in the future. Alternatively, the United States could maintain or expand its efforts to support regional security in the Middle East and

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beyond. Cost-wise, this choice would forego small savings today for larger savings tomorrow. The prudent choice is clear.

In a concrete sense, there are a few measures that the United States could take to help move the needle from “degrade” to “defeat.” First, we should develop a blueprint that articulates explicitly how individual agencies and partners should pursue the counter-jihadist terrorism provisions in the recent National Security Strategy. For its part, Congress could significantly enhance the effectiveness of such a blueprint by revising US Code that governs agency authorities (e.g., Titles 10, 50, and 22) to better reflect the overlapping nature of government-wide counterterrorism efforts.<sup>17</sup> Jihadist groups benefit from their size and structure, which permits flexible and nimble responses that challenge the ability of America to respond quickly and effectively. Revising US Code would be a first step toward mitigating this advantage.

Second, the US should reassert its commitment to diplomatic initiatives in the Muslim world. Specifically, it should redouble efforts to counter violent extremism, particularly concerning the development of compelling counter-narratives. Sophisticated public diplomacy efforts, especially online, and through third parties when possible, will be critical to winning the ideological war against Islamic extremists. American diplomats should continue to work with partners in other countries to devise bespoke strategies for particular contexts, settings, and mediums.

Third, the US should take a hard look at the disposition of its intelligence and special operations personnel around the globe, and consider whether current allocations and positioning align with the ideological nature of the fight. Emphasis should be placed on military information support operations, human intelligence, and Special Forces, as bombing campaigns and direct-action missions cannot succeed without, or be replaced by, the knowledge gained by ground assets. These elements should expand efforts to foster long-term relationships with key partners, and continue to build the capacity of our allies to eradicate extremism within their borders. The resources brought to bear by these frequently overlooked professionals are particularly well suited to creating strategic advantages before extremist organizations grow to the point where direct action is required. The Islamic State made many counterproductive choices on its road to failure; the United States should develop ways to compel them and other extremist groups to continue to make decisions that lead to their own demise. It is time for America to think two steps ahead.

To summarize, the United States has made significant battlefield gains against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Still, a danger remains that these successes will distract from the amount of work left to effectively counter Islamic extremism around the globe. Though the framework created by President Obama to counter ISIS manifested in gradual achievements, friction emanating from the White House delayed and presented significant complications to battlefield success. The Trump administration has taken action to address the missteps of their predecessors, and loosened the reigns of the military in conjunction with the heightened pace of operations that the recent battles against ISIS have required.

Moving forward, the Trump administration should carefully consider the ends, ways, and means pertaining to its efforts to counter Islamic extremism. With respect to ends, it should consider whether the true goal of US policy is to eradicate (“defeat”) Islamic extremism or to simply

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mitigate or minimize (“degrade”) it. If the current administration’s goal is to defeat it, I hope that I have provided several recommendations today that demonstrate how we might go about optimizing the employment of the American people’s resources. I thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss these issues and look forward to your questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War, Indexed Edition*, trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret,

<sup>2</sup> See Jeffrey W. Meiser, “Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy,” *Parameters* 46, no. 4 (Winter - 2017 2016), [https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter\\_2016-17/10\\_Meiser.pdf](https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter_2016-17/10_Meiser.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See Phillip Lohaus, “A Missing Shade of Gray: Political Will and Waging Something Short of War,” *War on The Rocks*, January 11, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/a-missing-shade-of-gray-political-will-and-waging-something-short-of-war/> The piece discusses how these dynamics impact political will to fight in the gray zone, but much of the analysis is extendable to other kinds of conflict.

<sup>4</sup> B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, Reprint Edition (Pentagon Press, 2012), 25.

<sup>5</sup> In 2014, according to the Combined Forces Air Component Command, from the initiation of airstrikes in August 2014 to December 2014, 6,292 coalition weapons were released as part of Operation Inherent Resolve. Those numbers increased to 28,696 and 30,743 in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Taking into account the shorter reporting period in 2014, the rate of munitions releases more than doubled from 2014 to 2015, and increased slightly in 2016.

<sup>6</sup> In December 2016, the White House reported that the US had conducted 16,000 airstrikes against the Islamic State. See Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Administration’s Approach to Counterterrorism” (MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, December 6, 2016), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/06/remarks-president-administrations-approach-counterterrorism>.

<sup>7</sup> Jim Acosta and Kevin Liptak, “White House Exempts ISIS Strikes from Civilian Casualty Guidelines,” *CNN*, October 2, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/01/politics/wh-isis-civilians/>.

<sup>8</sup> Julian Barnes and Carol Lee, “Obama Plans to Tightly Control Strikes on Syria,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 2014, sec. Middle East, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-u-s-military-commanders-discuss-fight-against-islamic-state-1410969352?mg=prod/accounts-wsj>.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Gordon and Michael Landler, “U.S. to Send Up to 300 Military Advisers to Iraq,” *New York Times*, June 19, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/20/us/obama-to-address-nation-on-iraq-crisis.html>; Molly Hennessy-Fiske, “Americans Adjust to a Changed Role in Iraq,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-americans-iraq-20161217-story.html>.

<sup>10</sup> See Ned Parker and Jonathan Landay, “U.S. Falters in Campaign to Revive Iraqi Army, Officials Say,” *Reuters*, June 3, 2016, sec. World News, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-exclusive/exclusive-u-s-falters-in-campaign-to-revive-iraqi-army-officials-say-idUSKCN0YP2DO>.

<sup>11</sup> In his memoir, Leon Panetta, White House staff would “regularly put politics over the advice of intelligence and military advisers. See Leon Panetta and Jim Newton, *Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace*, Reprint edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2015); David Ignatius, “A CIA Director and Defense Secretary Uncensored,” *Washington Post*, October 6, 2014, sec. Opinions, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/book-review-leon-panettas-worthy-fights/2014/10/06/ed517c6e-4d70-11e4-aa5e-7153e466a02d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/book-review-leon-panettas-worthy-fights/2014/10/06/ed517c6e-4d70-11e4-aa5e-7153e466a02d_story.html).

<sup>12</sup> As the military’s primary sources of innovative and adaptive operational thinking, special operations forces are most effective when allowed to execute on a commander’s intent with minimal outside involvement. See Phillip Lohaus, *A Precarious Balance: Preserving the Right Mix of Conventional and Special Operations Forces* (American Enterprise Institute, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Karen DeYoung, “Under Trump, Gains against ISIS Have ‘Dramatically Accelerated,’” *Washington Post*, August 4, 2017, sec. National Security, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/under-trump-gains-against-isis-have-dramatically-accelerated/2017/08/04/8ad29d40-7958-11e7-8f39-eeb7d3a2d304\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/under-trump-gains-against-isis-have-dramatically-accelerated/2017/08/04/8ad29d40-7958-11e7-8f39-eeb7d3a2d304_story.html).

<sup>14</sup> The proper relationship between civilians and the military, as well as how to characterize its

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current state, is the subject of much academic debate. For a summary of some foundational arguments in the context of the current presidency, see Sara Plana, “Civil-Military Relations Under President Trump,” Newsletter, précis Student Piece (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Fall 2017), <http://cis.mit.edu/publications/newsletter/civil-military-relations-under-president-trump>; for more recent treatments of the subject, see also Janine Davidson, Emerson Brooking, and Benjamin Fernandez, “Mending the Broken Dialogue” (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, December 2016), <https://www.cfr.org/report/mending-broken-dialogue>; and Jim Mattis and Kori N. Schake, eds., *Warriors and Citizens: American Views of Our Military* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> This was the central argument of Stanley McChrystal, whose approach to the special operations forces and intelligence officers under his command (of which this author was one) that resulted in the now ubiquitous “fusion” of many sources into a common operating picture. See General Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir*, Reprint edition (Portfolio Trade, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Note that recent airstrike increases have occurred concurrently with a higher operations tempo. See United States Department of Defense, “AFCENT Airpower Summary” (United States Air Forces Central Command - Combined Air Operations Center, November 30, 2017), <http://www.afcent.af.mil/Portals/82/Documents/Airpower%20summary/Airpower%20Summary%20-%20November%202017.pdf?ver=2017-12-14-053557-530>.

<sup>17</sup> Andru E. Wall, “Demystifying the Title 10-Title 50 Debate,” *Harvard Law School National Security Journal* 3 (December 2011), <http://www.soc.mil/528th/PDFs/Title10Title50.pdf>.

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement — “Truth in Testimony”**

Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5) and Committee Rule 16(a), non-governmental witnesses are required to provide the Committee with the information requested below in advance of testifying before the Committee. You may attach additional sheets if you need more space.

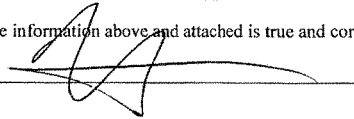
Name:

1. Please list any entity you are representing in your testimony before the Committee and briefly describe your relationship with each entity.					
Name of Entity	Your relationship with the entity				
	N/A				
2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
Recipient of the grant or contact (you or entity above)	Grant or Contract Name	Agency	Program	Source	Amount
		N/A			
3. Please list any payments or contracts (including subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015 from a foreign government, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
Recipient of the grant or contact (you or entity above)	Grant or Contract Name	Agency	Program	Source	Amount
		N/A			

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I certify that the information above and attached is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature



Date:

1/8/2018

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Phillip Lohaus is a research fellow in the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he blends practical experience gained from serving in the intelligence community with a broad interest in emerging foreign military capabilities. His current research focuses on the unconventional and emerging national security challenges posed by Russia, Iran, China, and the Islamic State. In addition to numerous reports and articles, he is the author of a forthcoming book in which he explores how America's adversaries gain strategic advantage in the space between war and peace.

Before joining AEI, Mr. Lohaus served as an analyst with the Department of Defense and the Multi-National Force – Iraq. He was also embedded with the US Army in eastern Afghanistan, where he supported the counterterrorism efforts of US Special Operations Command. While in government, he focused on counterproliferation, counterterrorism, and economic security issues related to the Middle East.

Mr. Lohaus' writings have appeared in a variety of publications, including *The Hill*, *PBS News Hour*, *The National Interest*, and *US News & World Report*. At AEI, he has conducted studies on foreign denial and deception capabilities and on the balance between special operations and conventional forces. He has also served as the executive director of AEI's American Internationalism Project. His awards include a Joint Civilian Service Commendation Medal from USSOCOM.

A graduate of the University of Florida, Mr. Lohaus holds an M.A. in Strategic Studies from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.  
Dr. Pape, 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT ANTHONY PAPE, JR.**

Mr. PAPE. Thank you very much for having me. There is a slideshow that will be starting in just a moment.

ISIS has been effectively defeated as a territorial entity in Iraq and Syria, a military victory that makes America safer. This military victory is due not to any one person or any one president. This is America's victory due to the steadfastness of the American people; our superb military, diplomacy, and intelligence agencies; our regional allies like Qatar that provided an air base for our bombers; large ground forces in Iraq and Syria; and an international coalition that has grown every year since 2014.

Next slide, please.

The key to our success was the application of a consistent hammer and anvil strategy. In effect, Western air power and local ground power worked together like a hammer and anvil to smash ISIS to bits, while Special Forces and intelligence coordinated the effort.

Next slide.

Our hammer and anvil strategy progressively succeeded over three years and over three phases under the leadership of two presidential administrations.

Next slide.

Phase 1, the containment of ISIS expansion, occurred in the fall of 2014. Once ISIS surprised the world by taking Mosul, the most urgent problem was to prevent ISIS from going further to seize oil fields and other resources in Iraq that could have vastly increased the group's power and threat. The Obama Administration reacted quickly and decisively, leading a coalition to use air power like a hammer to smash numerous ISIS military offensives and contain it.

Next slide.

Phase 2, rollback, began in early 2015. The coordination of air power and ground power produced results almost immediately, with large portions of ISIS territory falling by the summer.

Next slide.

Rollback was nearly complete in Iraq by the time administrations changed. As you can see, by February 2017 our coalition had seized about two-thirds of Mosul, the heart of ISIS in Iraq, controlling the large grey areas to the west.

Next slide.

By the end of the Obama Administration, over half of ISIS-controlled territory had been liberated, the large green areas. Equally important, these two years established the essential mobilization and coordination of Kurdish and Iraqi government forces that would enable the final push in Phase 3. So when the Trump Administration took office, ISIS was losing fast, and America's coalition was a well-oiled machine, in a position to finish off the group.

Next slide.

Phase 3 was the final push in Syria that completed ISIS' defeat as a territorial entity. What exactly changed under the Trump Administration? Two things, one good and one problematic. The good

change was cooperating tacitly with the Russians and the Syrian government so that the Kurdish-led forces could take Raqqa and other areas north of the Euphrates while Syrian government forces could take Palmyra and the area to the south of the river. This change made America's strategy of hammer and anvil more effective in Syria and accelerated ISIS loss of territory there.

Next slide.

The problematic change was over-escalation of air power. As this slide shows, both the escalation of air strikes and spikes in civilian casualties related to the coalition's air strikes occurred within weeks of the new administration. The sharp increase in civilian casualties is not just a moral issue. These casualties pose a strategic threat to the United States because they significantly amplify the propaganda that ISIS and other terrorist groups rely on to inspire people to attack America. Let's see how they do it.

Next slide.

Just last November, ISIS released *Flames of War 2*, a video targeting Westerners with powerful segments focused on how the escalation of bombing has killed children, and the group calls for revenge.

Please show the video.

[Video shown.]

Mr. PAPE. Under the Obama Administration, we saw similar ISIS video propaganda related to drone strikes which was leveraged to justify attacks against the West, but nothing this extreme.

Sir, if I may just have 20 more seconds?

Mr. DESANTIS. Twenty, all right.

Mr. PAPE. The next slide.

The main danger for the future is that we declare victory and walk away. ISIS remains a threat. The root cause is not just ISIS' ideology but its power to take advantage of political grievances and the disenfranchisement of millions of Sunnis. Without a political strategy to address this problem, a new ISIS 2.0, worse than the past, could emerge.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Pape follows:]

Robert A. Pape, PhD

Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago  
Director of the University of Chicago Project on Security and Threats  
Testimony to the National Security Subcommittee for the US House Committee  
on Oversight and Government Reform  
Capitol Hill, January 17, 2018

Thank you for having me.

Let me begin with a summary of my key points.

As of today, ISIS has been defeated as a territorial entity in Iraq and Syria, since the group controls less than 3 percent of its former territory. This military victory makes America safer.

This military victory is due not to any one person or any one President. This is America's victory - due to the steadfastness of the American people and the superb execution of policy by our military and many parts of the US government. This is a victory for the Iraqi and Syrian people – whose forces and people endured many thousands killed and many more injured, mostly at the hands of ISIS, without buckling. This is an Allied victory – where regional partners like Qatar provided an airbase for US B-52 bombers and international partners in Europe and elsewhere committed critical over-the-horizon resources and power. This international coalition has grown every year since 2014.

The primary key to success was the application of a consistent hammer and anvil strategy, which was executed over three years and over three phases under the leadership of the United States spanning two Presidential administrations.

The Trump administration was key for the final push in Syria, but certain aspects of the campaign have fueled ISIS propaganda to inspire attacks against America.

Our military strategy was a classic case of “hammer-and-anvil,” where US and Western airpower, special forces and intel worked by, with, and through local ground partners. In essence, Western-led airpower, the hammer, and local ground power, the anvil, worked together to smash ISIS between them.

Our hammer and anvil strategy was executed over three phases. Phase 1 involved the successful containment of ISIS expansion in the fall 2014. Phase 2

was successful rollback of ISIS from Iraq and large parts of Syria, which occurred in 2015-Spring 2017. Phase 3 was the final push, completing the military defeat of ISIS as a territorial entity in Syria. The next set of maps will show the progressive success of our hammer and anvil strategy.

The containment of ISIS expansion in fall 2014. Once ISIS surprised the world by quickly taking Mosul, the most urgent problem was to prevent ISIS from going further to seize oil fields and other strategic resources like dams in Iraq, because even partial control of these resources could have vastly increased the group's power and threat. The Obama administration reacted quickly and decisively, leading a coalition to use air power, like a hammer, to smash numerous ISIS military offensives and contain it. The Obama administration also put US boots on the ground in Syria. This was required to properly work by, with, and through our partners on the ground to set conditions for rollback in phase 2 and the final push in phase 3.

Phase 2, rollback, occurred in Iraq and Syria from 2015 to May 2017. This phase occurred mostly under the Obama administration and continued under the Trump administration. It involved detailed coordination of air strikes and local ground forces, mainly with the Kurds in Syria and Iraq as well as Iraqi government forces. Together with our allies, America sequentially liberated Kobane in Syria in 2015, Ramadi in Iraq in spring 2016, and then Mosul.

Rollback was nearly complete in Iraq by the time the administrations changed. Mosul was the heart of ISIS in Iraq. As you can see, by February 2017, our Coalition had seized about 2/3rds of the city – the large areas to the west of the Tigris River – and we were already advancing from the airport to take the remaining third of the city.

ISIS suffered major losses by the end of the Obama administration. By the end of 2016, overall, over half of ISIS-controlled territory had been liberated. Equally important, these two years represent not only the degradation of ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq, but also the essential mobilization and coordination of local allies, particularly the Kurdish forces in Syria and Iraq as well as Iraqi government ground forces that would enable the final push in phase 3. The critical coordination between US and local partners in Iraq and northern Syria was established in 2015. So, when the Trump administration took office, ISIS was

losing fast and America's coalition was a well-oiled machine, in a position to finish off the group.

Phase 3, the final push in Syria, occurred from spring to fall 2017. By December 2017, there was virtually no ISIS control in significant areas in Syria as both US-allied ground forces and Syrian government forces independently controlling nearly all previous ISIS territory, essentially on different sides of the Euphrates River Valley.

Phase 3 completed ISIS's defeat as a territorial entity. The Trump administration took steps that accelerated this phase.

So, what exactly changed? Two things, one good, one problematic. The good change was cooperating tacitly with the Russians and Syrian government, so that the Kurdish-led forces could take Raqqa and other area north of the Euphrates River, while Syrian government forces could take Palmyra and the area south of the river. This change made America's strategy of hammer and anvil more effective in Syria and accelerated ISIS loss of territory there. De-conflicting air power efforts with Russia was also important. As our respective ground allies neared each other, this brought Russian and Coalition air power closer together. This detailed coordination avoided problems and facilitated success.

The problematic change was over-escalation of air power. Both the escalation of airstrikes and spike in civilian casualties related to airstrikes occurred within weeks of the new administration.

The sharp increase in civilian casualties is not just a moral issue. These casualties pose a strategic threat to the United States, because they significantly amplify the propaganda that ISIS and other terrorist groups rely on to inspire people to attack America. This propaganda can be powerful.

Just last Nov 29, ISIS released "Flames of War II," a video targeting Westerners with powerful segments focused on how the escalation of bombing has killed children in ugly ways and the group calls for revenge. Under the Obama administration, we saw similar ISIS video propaganda related to drone strikes, which was leveraged to justify attacks against the West. But, nothing this extreme.

The main danger for the future is that we declare victory and walk away. ISIS remains as a threat because its remnants in Iraq, Syria, and many other countries

can use propaganda to inspire attacks against America. Further, the root cause of ISIS's power is not just ideology, but the exploitation of political grievances and disenfranchisement of millions of Sunnis. ISIS took advantage of these before, just as its predecessor, Al Qaeda in Iraq took advantage of the turmoil after we toppled Saddam. And without a political strategy to address Sunni disenfranchisement, a new ISIS 2.0 could emerge.

I am delighted to answer your questions.

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement "Truth in Testimony"**

Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5) and Committee Rule 16(a), non governmental witnesses are required to provide the Committee with the information requested below in advance of testifying before the Committee. You may attach additional sheets if you need more space.

Name: Robert A. Papp

1. Please list the entities that you are representing in your testimony before the Committee and briefly describe your relationship with each entity.					
Name of Entity	Year relationship with the entity				
Univ of Chicago	Professor of Public Security				
2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
Recipient of the grant or contract (name or entity above)	Grant or Contract Name	Agency	Program	Source	Amount
CPOST	THE SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE CONSTRUCTION OF NSR TRIPLED	DoD - ONR	MINERVA		1,642,656
CPOST	THE OCEANIC HOBBS PROJECT	DoD - ONR			588,419
3. Please list any payments or other financial benefits (including subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015 from a foreign government, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
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CPOST	INDOTEC REPORT	ASPI			3500

I certify that the information above and attached is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature Robert A. Papp

Date: Jan 11, 2018

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**ROBERT PAPE**

Professor



Robert A. Pape is Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago specializing in international security affairs. His publications include *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago 2010) (with James Feldman); *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House 2005); *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Cornell 1996), "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security* (1997), "The Determinants of International Moral Action," *International Organization* (1999); "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* (2003); and "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* (2005). His commentary on international security policy has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New Republic*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, as well as on *Nightline*, *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, and *National Public Radio*. Before coming to Chicago in 1999, he taught international relations at Dartmouth College for five years and air power strategy for the USAF's School of Advanced Airpower Studies for three years. He received his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1988 and graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pittsburgh in 1982. His current work focuses on the causes of suicide terrorism and the politics of unipolarity. He is the director of the Chicago Project on Security and Threats.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes.

Looking forward, one of the reasons why ISIS was able to inspire folks in this country via social media was because of the existence of this caliphate. People actually thought that was a romantic concept. So, Mr. Pregent, do you think, having broken the caliphate—obviously, people can still be inspired, but do you think that that is helpful in combatting the inspiration for terrorism here at home and in places like Western Europe?

Mr. PREGENT. Thank you for the question. What we saw early on, when ISIS had success, the foreign fighters were coming into Iraq and Syria. But after a defeat or a loss of territory, that foreign fighter flow stopped. It ebbed. Foreign fighters tried to leave the caliphate. They were captured. They were executed by ISIS, and ISIS fighters who had actually lost territory were being executed by ISIS as well.

So what we saw early on was that the brand attracted people to the caliphate when it was successful, and when it lost territory that flow started to ebb.

Mr. DESANTIS. Dr. Gorka, when I was in Iraq back in '07, '08, we had pretty restrictive rules of engagement. I think that was under Bush. Under Obama, I think it was similar or even more restrictive. Was there an effort to obviously delegate to the commanders but say, look, fighting with one hand tied behind your back is just not going to do the job, we need adequate rules of engagement so we can actually win?

Mr. GORKA. Absolutely, absolutely. There are, on the unclassified side, one can find stories of ISIS targets not being engaged because the individual who has eyes on the pilot or what-have-you was not allowed to engage unless somebody in Washington had given him the all-clear from the Obama Administration.

During Vietnam we had something called the 8,000-mile screwdriver. It got even worse under the Obama Administration because that decision, once you have been trained at the cost of millions of dollars, taxpayer dollars, whether you are an A-10 pilot, whether you are a Special Forces detachment leader, the decision to engage the enemy once you have the requisite intelligence should be taken by that military professional, not by a civilian staff who is sitting in the NSC or somebody watching a video screen in the DOD.

So, yes, the operators who I had the honor of working with have said they were given the due recognition to execute the mission as they had been trained to do, which not only makes America more successful operationally but also has a requisite effect on the morale of all our fighting forces, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Pregent, don't we need to, at this point, though, support people like the Kurds more robustly than we have under either Obama or so far under the Trump Administration?

Mr. PREGENT. We do. The Kurdish Peshmerga of Iraq have been an ally since the beginning, since we entered Iraq. We actually entered Iraq in Kurdish areas, and they have been instrumental to not only defeating ISIS but also defeating al Qaeda during the surge effort and the initial phase of the Iraq war.

What has happened, unfortunately, under this administration is our Kurdish allies have been abandoned. After President Trump's

October 13th speech declaring that the IRGC in its entirety would be declared a terrorist organization based on its support for Qasem Soleimani's Kuds Force, within hours Qasem Soleimani used his Shia militias—and they had access to U.S. tanks and equipment—to move on Kurdish spaces. We should have done something about that. It sent a loud message to our Kurdish allies, but it also sent a loud message to Qasem Soleimani.

Mr. DESANTIS. I think it also hurts our national prestige when you have people like Soleimani that have a lot of American blood on their hands attacking an ally like the Kurds with American equipment left over from the Iraq campaign. We have to do a lot better than that.

The President, I think, has rightfully spoken out in favor of the protesters in Iran. What more do we need to do? Because when you are talking about fighting Sunni Islamic jihadism, one of the problems I had with the Obama Administration is as they were doing that, they did do some good things, they were passively empowering the Iranians on the ground in places like Iraq. We cannot do that.

So we need to support the protesters. What else should the Administration be doing?

Mr. PREGENT. Well, the good thing about this protest, initially it started off as an economic protest, but then it started complaining about the adventurism from the IRGC Kuds Force, the fact that the regime was using that windfall of money it received from the JCPOA, the Iran deal, to actually export terrorism, to destabilize Iraq, to further destabilize Syria, to destabilize Lebanon and Yemen. So what we should do is we should go after the IRGC Kuds Force in Syria, in Iraq. We can sanction the Supreme Leader's vast fortune, his network that he set up of shadow companies to skirt sanctions. Upwards of \$86 billion goes unsanctioned that the Supreme Leader has access to, to conduct these operations with the IRGC and the Kuds Force.

We should also listen to what they are complaining about. They are complaining about the Basij. The Basij is the most unpopular directorate in the IRGC. It is the organization that makes you disappear at night if you protest the government. There are a lot of things we should do. We should encourage our Iraqi allies to increase their Internet bandwidth to allow messages to get out of Iran. We should also do that with other neighbors that border Iran, basically hold the regime accountable for pressure on the Iranian people, but also pressure our European allies to voice their concerns.

Mr. DESANTIS. Our time is up, but I think 100 percent we need to be doing that, and I would just say before I yield to the gentleman that ISIS is not the sum total of militant Islamic terrorism. It is a part of it. There are other Sunni jihadist groups, and then the Iranian-inspired Shia jihadist groups. This is a good step. We have to do more.

God bless those people fighting off that Iranian regime. If they could do something there, that would be such a positive environment. But we are going to continue to have to deal with this problem in the United States and in places like Western Europe. I am concerned about Las Vegas, the lack of information. ISIS claimed

credit for that. We have no evidence either way, but no evidence on anything bothers me, and ISIS typically when they claim these things, they typically are borne out. So that is a very, very important thing to know exactly which attacks are being inspired by ISIS.

With that, I will yield to Mr. Lynch.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree on the point of supporting our allies in northern Iraq, in Kurdistan. I think more can be done. I agree with Mr. Pregent's testimony.

As a member of this committee, a lot of us have been to Iraq multiple times. I have been there 20 times with my Republican colleagues going back to 2002, 2001, to the present. One of the most remarkable changes that I can see from my early trips is that back in the day we had 165,000 U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq. That was about our peak, 165,000. The one huge change that I think the Obama Administration brought about was that he compelled the Kurds and the Iraqi government in Baghdad to take responsibility and to carry the fight.

You can see it in the casualty numbers in the fight against ISIS, several thousand Kurdish Peshmerga casualties, 10,000 Iraqi National Army casualties, and thankfully far, far fewer U.S. casualties.

The change there, though, will not remain if we don't support the incumbent government and empower the local government to prevent the next iteration, as I think Mr. Pregent and all of the witnesses have said. We have to prevent the next iteration of ISIS from taking hold.

It appears to me, Dr. Pape—and thank you for your great presentation—supporting the State Department is a key part of making sure that the Iraqi government that is in power now that has driven out ISIS, including the Kurdish authority in northern Iraq, that they are empowered really to provide services to those areas that they have liberated. That, I think, will be very important. Can you talk about that, please, Dr. Pape?

Mr. PAPE. Yes, sir. We need a political strategy to win the peace. We have won a military victory. That is only half the battle. The task in front of us is the key fight, the real fight, which is winning the peace. In order to do that, we need a political strategy, and I would just expand on your points for just a little bit.

Number one, we need a political strategy that prevents score settling from undermining the military victories we have just achieved. You are hearing from Mr. Pregent that we have other instances of score settling that could easily take hold. So if we just walk away and say, "Oh, yes, let's let them deal with this themselves," this is ripe for score settling across the board.

Number two, we need, as you said, direct support so that the military victory can be backed up with economic strategies, economic policies to empower especially Sunnis, who actually are the heart of the problem that we have. When we toppled Saddam back in 2003, we didn't just knock off an evil dictator. We basically created a situation of massive ungoverned space, and the Sunni part of Iraq was the worst. And then with the Arab Spring, this spread. Now we had more ungoverned space in Syria, and the problem is the Sunnis need a voice in their own future. It is not enough to put

them back under a repressive regime, and we need a political strategy to do that.

The third thing is we need to mediate more the Sunni/Shia divide. This is in Iraq, this is in Syria. The Alawites are Shia, of course, as you all know. But in Yemen we have a proxy war effectively going on between the Saudis and the Iranians inside of Yemen, and if we just let that go, if we don't mediate that, what is going to happen is we are going to have enormous pools of ungoverned space for those millions of Sunnis, which is just going to be ripe for ISIS 2.0 to take hold.

So we really need a political strategy, sir, to win the peace.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

Mr. PREGENT, I want to go back to one point that you made which I thought was very, very good, the presence of foreign fighters being drawn into Iraq. When the U.S. had 165,000 troops on the ground, foreign fighters were pouring in. But when the Obama Administration required Iraqis and Kurds to carry the fight, we saw the number of foreign fighters drop precipitously. Are those factors correlated?

Mr. PREGENT. Thank you for the question. The key difference is when foreign fighter flow was coming into Iraq, it was being facilitated by Assad, being facilitated by the IRGC Kuds Force. These foreign fighters were coming into staging areas in Syria and then being allowed to come into Iraq to carry out attacks against Americans.

The foreign fighter flow in this case was foreign fighters and their families to come into the caliphate. ISIS sold them a false narrative that it was safe to come, and ISIS quickly learned that unless you could shoot down an American aircraft, it wasn't safe to plant a black flag. So the foreign fighter flow was just a little different, sir.

Mr. LYNCH. Very good. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the Vice Chairman of the committee, Mr. Russell, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUSSELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for all the guests being here today. We appreciate the perspective.

I guess, Dr. Pape, there is one major area we are in agreement on—actually, a couple—the danger of declaring victory and walking away. But no factor was more instrumental in creating ISIS than doing just that in 2011 in Iraq. We created the ISIS caliphate simply by our abandonment of what was a good strategy to win the peace in Iraq.

Having commanded a task force in 2003 and 2004, and having been heavily involved in the hunt and capture of Saddam Hussein, I am very familiar with what our objectives were at the beginning of that venture. We did not leave ungoverned space, sir. In fact, after the surge in 2008, we stabilized it. We had every member of the military here begging to continue to have a presence, at least a brigade combat team, to draw down but leave a presence so that we could use U.S. advisers and air power.

Instead, we abandoned it. And what did that do? It created Sunni Baathists, who now, having seen Iranian influence in Bagh-

dad, they would no longer be accommodated and they created this narrative that they could go out and now have a better way, that there was no accommodation, there was no future for Iraq, and we began to see it unravel at the seams.

How do I know? Because I am heavily invested there. I still have friends there.

Whatever saving we thought we had in terms of treasure and troops we lost when it unraveled. When we lost friends in Tikrit, Samara, Hawija, all the way up to Mosul and Tal Afar, all of it unraveled at the seams. Whatever lives were spared in the U.S. military were more than compensated by human suffering on a grand scale with a million people in Mosul who lived torturous lives under ISIS. We saw barbarians gain power, and guess who was helping administrate that? We sat and wondered that they had currency or that they had administrative skills in the occupied territories. Guess who was doing that? The very people we arrested, the very people we incarcerated, the very terrorists that we tracked down and captured. The Sunni Baathists were those that were creating that.

So I agree, we shouldn't declare victory and abandon anything.

I am very concerned about a narrative that the United States is involved with indiscriminate bombing. I find it as a warrior offensive, and here is why. It assumes a lack of training. There is no military more trained on targeting than the United States military, period. There is none. No one spends more treasure and more training effort and more legal classes, morality classes, than the United States military in terms of targeting.

It also assumes a lack of technology. We would rather spend 100 times the cost of a bomb so that we can put it in the correct place than we would to make 100 bombs and hope that we just hit it.

It also assumes a lack of morality on the warrior. The warrior, perhaps more than any politician or college professor or anyone else, when they look down the rifle sights or the crosshairs of any weapon, they take dead serious that they hold in their hands the taking of human life. How do I know this? Because for me, sir, it is not academic, it is experiential. I have been there. I have done that. I have had to take human life. It is not pleasant, but it is not done indiscriminately.

When we see these videos and we see things like that—okay, do you want to see dumb bombs? Do you want to see the hitting of water works? Do you want to see the hitting of hospitals? Do you want to see all of that? Just go to the Russian targeting and Assad's air force targeting and you will find examples of all of that, to include the examples of the footage that we see in these ISIS videos.

One, we should not, nor should our national media, propagate such propaganda by using it as B-roll and showing these people running around, sneaking around in their tennis shoes and standing on burning equipment as if they are heroes or something. That is offensive. And as Americans, we should not allow that to happen.

Instead, what we ought to do is back up the Iraqi people, back up the free Syrian people, back up those that have been trapped by this torturous jihadist, absolute absurdity that we see with bar-

barians sawing off the heads of people, killing children, killing women.

And you know what? Thank God for our military. We can debate the politics all day long, but we should never, ever assume that it is our warriors indiscriminately taking human life on battlefields.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I don't apologize for not having any questions, but I yield back my time.

Mr. DESANTIS. Well, I appreciate that, Mr. Vice Chairman. I know your experience —

Mr. PAPE. Mr. Chairman, may I respond?

Mr. DESANTIS. I will recognize Mr. Welch for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you very much.

First of all, thank you for your service and for your statement of support for our military. I agree with what you said about the military. Where I think we have a problem is with the politicians who sometimes give the military a mission that we don't support or we don't sustain.

But one of the big questions I have, because I do disagree with some of your analysis, the one was the question on Iraq and the wisdom of going in. We are not going to cover that today. Two was the wisdom of totally unraveling the Sunni governing structure once we did take Baghdad, again a political decision made by the leader of that. So it totally created a vacuum.

But three, the long-term question, and this is I think a real dilemma. The military will do the job we give them to do. They will do it with honor, professionalism, and integrity. But then we added a new mission for the military in Iraq, and that was nation-building, and frankly I have a question as to whether that is an appropriate job for the military. Is it a reasonable expectation for warriors to be required to essentially build a nation?

On the other hand, if there are gains that our military makes, they have to be consolidated, so just leaving the field accentuates that vacuum. But, as I recall, one of the reasons that we didn't stay was not so much an unwillingness even on the part of the Obama Administration but an unwillingness on the part of the Baghdad government to acknowledge that the rule that would apply to our troops would be American law and American military law, as opposed to Iraqi law, and we were not going to allow our soldiers to be put in that kind of jeopardy in that political environment. That is my take on it.

But I will ask this question, and I will start with you, Dr. Pape. How do we get this balance between avoiding the problem that Mr. Knight said, you get these battlefield gains and then you leave, and then you lose them all, but do that short of taking on the responsibility of full-scale nation-building that costs hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars, something that we are continuing to do in Afghanistan?

Mr. PAPE. The first step is to avoid this false dichotomy that it is either nation building or no political strategy whatsoever.

Mr. WELCH. Can I interrupt? Congressman Russell, sorry. I was saying your name wrong.

Mr. RUSSELL. Oh, thank you. Look, when we went into Iraq, for example, we had five very clear objectives. It was defeat Saddam's army, and then it was to kill or capture Saddam himself, it was

to stabilize the area and key infrastructure, and then it was to set the conditions for free elections and nascent institutions, and then they could rebuild governance for themselves.

How do I remember all five of those things? Because it was very, very clear to us when we went in. And you know what? That was the spring of 2003. Every one of those objectives we met.

I think part of it—and I totally agree with you and even find myself in agreement with many of Dr. Pape's statements. But as we debate the politics of it here, let's have a crystal-clear view of what created and got us there. It was intransigence. It was abandonment. Our State Department has to be involved with that, as well.

Mr. WELCH. I agree with that. Thank you, Congressman Russell. Go ahead.

Mr. PAPE. The first step, I think, is to see that it is a false dichotomy that it is either nation building or no political strategy. A good example of the middle ground that we need to navigate is Bosnia in the 1990s. I am sure many of you know that for years there was an awful civil war occurring, '92 to '95, in Bosnia. Well, there is no civil war there now. It is actually quite stable.

How did that happen? That happened not because we went in to nation-build Bosnia, but it is also not because we just walked away. It is because we navigated a political strategy that really worked with the three different warring factions, and that is why that is stable. That is a really good example, and it is one that we should be using for the future.

Sir, I would also like to say that I am very pro-military. I worked with the U.S. Air Force for three years in the 1990s. I was one of the faculty that helped stand up the School of Advanced Air Power and Space Studies that now exists to this day. I educate to this day; the Air Force and the Army sends me military officers to get Ph.D.s. Some of my military officers, one of whom came to the University of Chicago, is running Air Force intelligence in South Korea. One is commanding U.S. forces in Syria right this second. So I absolutely believe we have the best men and women with the best morals that are involved in the military.

The other thing I would like to say is you and I have an awful lot that we should go and talk about because when we toppled Saddam, we had objectives but not a plan for the Sunnis, which opened the door to AQI. And then what happened is we had this false idea that they were all religious. Well, I was one of the people with my work, coming to Washington dozens of times to speak with NSA, CIA, our Secretary and Deputy Secretaries of Defense to argue for what became the Anbar Awakening. So I wasn't just loosely doing this from Chicago. I came to speak to our 3rd ID in February 2007 before they went into the surge in Baghdad for two hours in front of all their military officers to talk specifically about their strategy in the different neighborhoods in Baghdad.

I fully believe we need to not have this repeat of a problem that we let it unravel.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair notes the presence of our colleague from North Carolina, Mr. Meadows, and I ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to fully participate in today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair will now recognize the gentleman from Kentucky for 5 minutes.

Mr. COMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Gorka, it is a pleasure to have you here today. I have a few questions for you. First of all, in your opinion, what should our level of support for the Iraqi government be moving forward?

Mr. GORKA. Thank you. The level of support in Iraq isn't about the Iraqi government. I am going to get technical for a moment here, but bear with me. The outline of this argument is in the Military Review article that I have given to the committee.

In the United States U.S. Army doctrine, there are two types of function that fall under irregular warfare. One of them is counterinsurgency. Everybody is familiar with that, the so-called Petraeus doctrine, Field Manual FM 324. The other one, which is less well known, is called Foreign Internal Defense. It is one of the core missions that the Green Berets were created to execute.

America is not good at counterinsurgency writ large because we are not an empire. Counterinsurgency is what empires do on their own soil, whether it is France in the northern Akwa Akpa in North Africa, which became Algeria, or whether it is the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland or elsewhere. What we are exceptionally good at is foreign internal defense such as El Salvador, such as Colombia.

It is not about how we support or how much we support the Iraqi government. It is about how everybody who needs to be part of the solution in Iraq is part of the solution. The great test—I think it was the Iraqi member who mentioned this—is now the political objective.

Iraq, whether or not we invaded under correct objectives or not, is irrelevant. We did, and we are there, and we are assisting Iraqi forces. As a former African American general said, you break the china in the china shop, you have to fix it. So how do we do that?

We have to have our local partners, all of them, not just the Baghdad government, be part of the solution. The objective is a very simple one, sir. Everybody who lives in Iraq has to agree that living together in a functioning Iraq is better than a continued civil war or instability. It sounds simple, but as Clausewitz said, war is simple but not easy.

So the challenge is not how much we support Baghdad but the following question, as Mr. Pregent has rightly demonstrated, that we must not allow Baghdad to become an appendix of Tehran, and we have allowed it to do so for far too long. We have to have our local Sunni allies, not just from Iraq but from the region, such as Egypt, such as Jordan, buy into the future of Iraq and assist them to stabilize the region.

All too often—and I will end on this—our successes against the Sunni jihadists in Iraq have led to the Shia jihadists, such as the IRGC and the Kuds Force, profiting from those successes. So the goal is to support Baghdad as much as possible while supporting our other partners even more.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. COMER. That leads me to my next question, Dr. Gorka, and I get asked this a lot. Should Americans expect to be in Iraq indefinitely?

Mr. GORKA. A great question. In my time in the White House as strategist to the President, I always reminded people of the question number one of strategy: Why should we care? It is a very simple question. Some nations—I know it is not politically correct. Some nations are more important than others. It is called life. Iraq is a geo-strategically important nation.

How long should we expect to be there? Let's go back to the mission set. Why are we there? To make sure that that part of the world is not used to plan and execute attacks against us here in America or against our partners and allies. That is the metric.

How long does that take? How long is a piece of string? But at the end of the day, it is much more effective to help our local Sunni partners effect that stability than to have U.S. forces in U.S. uniforms that are targets on the ground be there for a long period of time. So the ideal situation is, again, foreign internal defense, a very small footprint of trainers and advisors who help our local partners execute that stabilization mission.

And if I may, with regards to the parallel to Bosnia, Bosnia and the Balkans is not a good example of strategy. I don't know when Dr. Pape was last there, but Bosnia has become a hive of recruitment for Iran and it is a hotbed of extremism today. It may not be a civil war as it was in the 1990s, but Bosnia is not solved in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. COMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Jordan, for 5 minutes.

Mr. JORDAN. I thank the Chairman.

Dr. Gorka, in his testimony Dr. Pape basically said that not much of the credit should go to the Trump Administration, it should also go to the Obama Administration. In fact, he said in his testimony, "The Obama Administration reacted quickly and decisively, leading a coalition to use air power like a hammer to smash numerous ISIS military offensives and contain it," talking about how the Obama Administration did an amazing job dealing with ISIS, and I think his point was terrorism at large.

Do you agree with that assessment of Dr. Pape?

Mr. GORKA. Not in the slightest. It makes for a good PowerPoint visual, but it wasn't an anvil and a hammer. It was a scalpel used now and again in a fashion in which the Commander in Chief was not interested in winning.

Will is key to success. Remember, the former senator from Illinois campaigned for president under a very simple bumper sticker when it came to national security. Let's remind ourselves, 10 years ago he said Afghanistan was the good war, Iraq was the bad war. Once he became Commander in Chief, he was locked into that narrative, which meant sooner or later, if he was going to be true to his campaign pledge, we had to leave Iraq.

And I agree with the statements already made, we are not responsible for the creation of ISIS, but the decision of the then-Commander in Chief to leave without a SOFA—we could have gotten a SOFA. It is not a question. America has always managed to get Status of Forces Agreements. We could have got one. Leaving with-

out a SOFA meant that ISIS could become the most powerful jihadi organization of the modern age.

Talking to the military, it is very simple: the Commander in Chief and his White House did not have the will to win because they had made an ideological decision that Iraq was the wrong war.

Mr. JORDAN. Mr. Pregent, what would be the—I mean, if you had to summarize the legacy of the Obama Administration when it comes to foreign policy and dealing with terrorism, what would you say that it was?

Mr. PREGENT. Well, unfortunately, the call saying that ISIS was a JV team was unsettling for a lot of us that followed the Zarqawi movement from the al-Qaeda model to the ISIS model.

What I would say to the Obama strategy against ISIS, Mosul was left to ISIS for two-and-a-half years, to 4,000 ISIS fighters. A population of 1.6 million Sunnis was left under brutal control by this terrorist army for two-and-a-half years without a single effort to call up the 30,000 Sunnis that Maliki had kicked out of the Iraqi security forces. Fallujah was left to ISIS for three years.

So if you look at the strategy, there was no attempt in the beginning to build a Sunni force like we did during the surge, the awakening, the Anbar Awakening, the Sons of Iraq. We couldn't do it because the Administration had embedded 5,000 Americans with a predominantly Shia force that was heavily influenced by the IRGC Kuds Force. It basically made our advisers hostages to our policies in Iraq. If we called for the standing up of a Sunni force, it would put our soldiers in harm's way.

Mr. JORDAN. Broaden it out a little bit. What are things like today in Libya?

Mr. PREGENT. It is ungoverned space. ISIS can do what it wants

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Mr. JORDAN. Wasn't that supposed to be—I had the privilege of serving on the Benghazi committee, and my read on all of it was that Libya was supposed to be the Obama Administration's shining example of foreign policy success, Secretary Clinton, the State Department's example of how it was going to work: throw out a dictator, usher in the Arab Spring, put no troops on the ground, and this was how it was going to work. And what we wound up with was that tragedy on September 11th, 2012, and then this narrative where, because it happened 56 days before an election and it went against their narrative during the campaign, they had to create this story that it was somehow inspired by a video, a video-inspired terrorist attack.

So when I think about the legacy of the Obama Administration relative to terrorism and what Dr. Pape said in his opening comment, I just see an entirely different scenario altogether. Am I accurate, Dr. Gorka?

Dr. Gorka, and then Mr. Pregent.

Mr. GORKA. I will be very blunt, as blunt as you have been, sir. For eight years, narrative was more important than reality. It wasn't the reality on the ground. It was spin. And when you have the deputy national security adviser whose qualifications are a Master's degree in fictional writing, it tells you everything you need to know.

Mr. JORDAN. Mr. Pregent, you get the last word.

Mr. PREGENT. I would just say that the message that was sent to the terrorists was an unserious one, and it actually led to ISIS and other groups.

Mr. JORDAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California for 5 minutes.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Ranking Member, and thank you to the panelists for this informative hearing.

So, Dr. Pape, I would sort of like to talk about why we can learn lessons from what has happened on the military side. It is more sort of where we go from here. So recently in the San Francisco Bay area, where I am from, the FBI fortunately caught a disaffected gentleman who is a former Marine Corps veteran who was working through social media to plan to blow up Pier 39, a very touristy area, over the Christmas holiday.

So in the context of—I am confident that the American military is adjusting with our partners to take care of a military threat, but it is the radicalization, the use of social media to turn Americans into radicals and to appeal to this radicalization. To me, it is the combination of disaffected human beings wherever they are in a globally connected community.

So talk to me a little bit about how sophisticated their ongoing operations are vis-a-vis social media.

Mr. PAPE. Absolutely, sir. This is something I study; and our center, CPOST, a half-dozen full-time people, 40 people work on this problem, the propaganda problem. And I was just at our U.S. Attorney's office in Chicago just a couple of days ago giving a two-hour briefing to the new attorney general for Chicago who has just come in.

This is a serious problem that the end of the caliphate has not yet stopped, if it is going to stop at all. So our national counterterrorism representative for the Midwest started that briefing by giving a two-minute statement saying that we have seen no decline in the pace of radicalization inside the United States with the collapse of the caliphate. In fact, Saipov just did the attack in New York in November when most of the caliphate was gone.

So you are exactly right, sir, to be concerned.

The fundamental problem that we are seeing is that inside—the threat we face here at home is now a home-grown threat. I have looked at all 158 cases of individuals indicted in U.S. courts for ISIS-related offenses or carrying out attacks inside the United States. Two-thirds of those individuals were born in the United States. The other one-third are immigrants, but they are people who have been here for many, many years. Over 83 percent are watching these jihadi videos as the gateway in. Lots of other things are happening too, but these videos are the gateway that is starting the process. Saipov himself, the guy who did New York, says it was the videos that radicalized him.

So, sir, we have to be very vigilant. We can't just sort of think, oh, yes, we dealt with ISIS and it is dead and we are going to walk away. We really have to pay attention here inside because the

video propaganda doesn't die with the caliphate. The video propaganda is really difficult to get off the Web. It can go to the Dark Web. There is a whole lot more to say about this, but we are nowhere near in a position to think we have cleansed the threat, and it really would be kind of foolish to think that internally, yes, we are done, check that box.

Mr. DESAULNIER. So to go to the second part about encryption, as we develop new technologies and they learn from those technologies or use them, our struggle here in Congress to preserve American traditional civil liberties but also do all our due diligence to make sure we are making people safe here in America and in the West from terrorist attacks, could you talk a little bit about that, particularly encryption applications?

Mr. PAPE. Yes. A few years ago there was a terrific panel. Michael Morrel was on the panel. It was a commission. Jeff Stone, a professor from the University of Chicago was on this, to really look closely at our steps of international phone calls to see whether or not—because this was Snowden and so forth, became quite a big deal. We need a new such major effort to really look closely at exactly where we should move that bubble.

Jeff Stone, a former dean of the University of Chicago Law School, professor of civil liberties, provost—we need to bring together security experts, legal scholars to really look closely at exactly—because the fact of the matter is we are developing more encryption technology day by day, and the terrorists are only just a few weeks behind.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Let me ask you one last question, Dr. Pape. So in the context of sewing more radicals in Syria or Iraq, what are our responsibilities to go in and rebuild those countries, particularly Syria?

Mr. PAPE. It is tremendously in our strategic interest. There are moral issues, sir. But the fundamental problem is we have created, over a period of many years, since 2003, enormous governance problems for Sunnis in Iraq, and now the spillover effects in Syria, and unless we take diplomatic efforts with a sustained political strategy to, number one, prevent score settling among the folks we actually worked with; number two, to have more direct economic support; and number three, to mediate the Sunni/Shia divide, we are going to be right back here again, or very likely, in just a few years.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair notes the presence of our colleague, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Krishnamoorthi. I ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to fully participate in today's hearing.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Hice for 5 minutes.

Mr. HICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Pregent, let me ask you, all the bureaucratic processes that were added under the Obama Administration, can you address through the international security team, can you address how that impacted the military?

Mr. PREGENT. Well, commanders were being questioned by aides in the National Security Council whether or not they should actually go forward with a target. One of the biggest complaints coming from combatant commanders was that they weren't necessarily trusted to make those decisions. Initially, again, we talk about aircraft flying with munitions that weren't able to drop their bombs when they actually had targets of opportunity on the ground.

The biggest complaint is the targets of opportunity. That is a small window in which a commander has an opportunity to hit ISIS and hurt it, and when you have to call back to D.C. for permission to do it because there happens to be an oil tanker in the convoy, the ISIS convoy, that not only allows that target of opportunity to go away but it sustains a terrorist organization.

Remember, ISIS early on, in 2015, was estimated to receive \$500 million a year in the illicit oil trade, and that was because they were able to simply move during the daytime. Initially, one of the biggest problems with the ROE as it relates to getting permission from D.C. to do something was that ISIS could move around freely during the daytime without being hit. Those convoys who were flying black flags after taking territory should have never been allowed to move without being hit, and the biggest complaint was that they had to get permission from D.C.

Mr. HICE. Okay, so you are saying that our commanders were not trusted, and with that the National Security Council, they were actually making decisions about strikes rather than our leaders in the field?

Mr. PREGENT. Right. They were delaying the decisions, which made the targets of opportunity go away, and then they were questioning whether or not they should be attacking convoys with oil in them anyway due to environmental concerns.

Mr. HICE. This seems like insanity to me. So what other decisions was the National Security Council making that should have been made by our commanders on the field?

Mr. PREGENT. Well, I can only contrast the difference between the Obama and Trump Administrations. Combatant commanders now can make those decisions on the ground. They are able to use lethal force to degrade ISIS, to defeat ISIS, and they are trusted, and that should be no surprise. Both H.R. McMaster and Secretary Mattis were both combatant commanders in Iraq. They didn't have to ask D.C. for permission to do anything.

So it is good that they pushed it down to combatant commanders in Iraq and Syria to be able to do these things without asking permission, as well as Afghanistan. So that is the key difference.

Mr. HICE. All right. So with that, obviously, there has been an enormous difference in impact and what has been accomplished from the previous administration and the rules of engagement versus now.

Mr. PREGENT. Yes. ISIS, the leadership, once we initially had success with our information operations campaigns. In 2015, we talked about an imminent move on Mosul. That resulted in ISIS highlighting targets and convoys of ISIS fighters and equipment to leave Mosul and go to Syria during the daytime without being hit. That is not happening now. We did not see ISIS try to reinforce

Mosul. We did not see ISIS try to reinforce any of the territories that were taken under the Trump Administration.

One of the key differences also is every piece of territory that ISIS lost under the Obama Administration using this proxy force of a predominantly Shia Iraqi security force with IRGC militias, there was a negotiated evacuation of ISIS fighters. You saw that in Fallujah with convoys leaving Fallujah. You saw that in Ramadi. Initially in Mosul we saw that, but the combatant commanders on the ground wanted to close off Mosul so nobody could get out, and that was one of the differences that I think has expedited the loss of territory for ISIS.

Mr. HICE. The way you phrased it a while ago was extremely strong, where our commanders were not trusted. That is just stunning to me. Whereas now they are trusted, and the difference of outcome between those two points of view is enormous.

Mr. PREGENT. I will just go back to what Secretary Gates did in Afghanistan. He walked into a Joint Special Operations Center and saw a phone line connected directly to the NSC. He said what is that for? They said it goes back to the NSC. He said rip it out of the wall. If they call you, if the White House calls you, you tell them to call me. That is a key difference.

Mr. HICE. That is excellent. Thank you for your testimonies, each of you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Illinois for 5 minutes.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Thank you, Chairman DeSantis, and thank you, Ranking Member Lynch, for allowing me to participate in today's hearing. And thanks to all of you for coming today.

On January 27th, 2017, the White House issued a Holocaust Remembrance statement that made no mention of the Jewish people, Jewish deaths, or the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination. This is a notable break from past administrations. President George H.W. Bush's Remembrance statement was explicit. "On Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, Jews recall the Nazi atrocities that claimed the lives of six million of their fellow Jews." President George W. Bush was just as clear in his statement. The Holocaust was "a policy aimed at the annihilation of the Jewish people."

It is important to accurately remember the past, even more so in these types of situations. According to Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt, minimizing the Third Reich's focus on Jews is a common tactic of Holocaust deniers and neo-Nazis.

Dr. Gorka, on Monday, February 6th, 2017, Michael Medved asked you on CNN if President Trump's statement was "at least questionable in being the first such statement in many years that didn't recognize that Jewish extermination was the chief goal of the Holocaust." Your response was, "It's a Holocaust Remembrance statement. No, I'm not going to admit it because it's asinine."

Dr. Gorka, it wasn't asinine for President George H.W. Bush to recognize Jewish extermination in his Holocaust Remembrance statement, was it?

Mr. GORKA. I don't know if the good member, Mr. Krishnamoorthi, has arrived at the wrong hearing. I was invited

here to discuss the Trump policies towards the defeat of ISIS. If you wish to lower this meeting to a —

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Sir, please answer my question. Did you understand my question?

Mr. GORKA. Well, since it was so inaccurate, it is hard— Michael Medved does not work for CNN, number one. Number two, you have arrived 75 minutes into this hearing and may have arrived at the wrong hearing.

So, no. I would like to ask you, do you know —

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. I will assume that you are not prepared to answer the question.

Mr. GORKA. If you keep interrupting me—would you like —

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Mr. Gorka, I will reclaim my time. Dr. Gorka, please answer the question. Was it asinine of President George W. Bush to recognize Jewish extermination in his Holocaust Remembrance statement?

Mr. GORKA. It is asinine —

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Please answer the question.

Mr. GORKA. Will you hector me, or allow me to answer?

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. I allowed you.

Mr. GORKA. Will you continue to hector me while I am to answer?

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Will you answer the question?

Mr. GORKA. I am trying to, but you are interrupting me.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Please do so.

Mr. GORKA. The President's grandchildren are Jewish. How asinine is it to posit that his White House would do anything not to recognize the tragedy of the Holocaust? That is my answer.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Dr. Gorka, are you saying that it was not questionable that it was asinine to mention that this Holocaust Remembrance statement omitted the mention of Jews?

Mr. GORKA. It is asinine to posit that a Holocaust Remembrance statement is not about the Holocaust. Yes, I hold that line; it is asinine then, it is asinine now.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. So you stand by your statement.

In recent years there has been a disturbing rise in far-right parties in Europe, from AFD in Germany to Marie Le-Pen's National Front in France, to Jobbik in Hungary. In fact, the President of the European Jewish Congress, Moshe Kantor, described Jobbik as "unabashedly neo-Nazi" in an October 1st, 2014 interview with the Times of Israel.

Dr. Gorka, in an August 6th, 2007 interview with Hungary's Echo TV, when asked if you supported the formation of a militia run by Jobbik, you responded "that is so." You explained this militia as a necessary response to "a big societal need." You, of course, stand by this statement; correct, Dr. Gorka?

Mr. GORKA. No, because I never made that statement. That was a 12-minute interview which had been scurrilously edited down to two-and-a-half minutes. That is a lie, sir, on the record. It is a distortion of the facts. I reject it. And my father, who defended Jews during World War II as a teenager, has been recognized on the record by Rabbi Billet and the Tablet magazine, the most important Jewish magazine, as having done so. Sir, I reject your absolute smear campaign —

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. You can argue all you want with the record, sir.

Mr. GORKA. It is an edited interview.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. You can debate with me on television about this record.

Mr. GORKA. It is 13 minutes long.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. We will hand this to the reporter so they can verify what you said.

Mr. GORKA. Absolutely, and I will share with them —

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Sir, on August 15th, 2007, the World Jewish Congress —

Mr. GORKA. Mr. Chairman, are we here to discuss ISIS?

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY.—called this militia a serious violation of human rights. Do you still support this organization?

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman's time has expired. I appreciate that. That was a little bit far afield. But I will say, if we are going to be bringing up things related to Israel, this subcommittee has taken the lead on not only framing the issue of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital—I led the trip last March where we looked at the different sites that will be ready. We were disappointed when the President didn't announce that in May, so we had another hearing here in November stressing that this is something that he should follow through on. And to his great credit, he did that, and I am eagerly anticipating news from the State Department about how they are going to implement that directive. We are not going to be satisfied if they take years to do it. It needs to happen this year, and we need to have a temporary site up and running.

So we are going to follow that issue 100 percent. I just give the President a lot of credit because we haven't talked about it since we did our hearing in November. That was a big, big deal, long overdue. Other presidents have promised it. Jerusalem is and always has been the capital of the Jewish people.

And with that, I want to thank the witnesses again for appearing with us today.

The hearing record will remain open for two weeks for any member to submit a written opening statement or questions for the record.

If there is no further business, without objection, the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:33 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



## **APPENDIX**

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

The Fight Against ISIS: The Road Ahead

Point Paper – For the January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Hearing on  
Battlefield Successes and Challenges: Recent Reform Efforts to Win the War Against ISIS

National Security Subcommittee of the  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Michael J. Morell  
Former Acting and Deputy Director, Central Intelligence Agency

1. The destruction of the ISIS caliphate is nearly complete. The last figure provided to the public by the Administration is that ISIS now holds only 5 percent of the territory it controlled at its peak. This is a significant success story, and compliments go to both the Obama Administration, which put together the overall strategy of fighting the group through proxies supported by the United States and to the Trump Administration, which made some meaningful adjustments in military tactics, including putting additional U.S. special forces on the ground and deploying them closer to the fighting, cutting off escape routes for ISIS fighters trapped in urban areas, and employing a greater use of U.S. airpower (with a consequent increase in civilian casualties, which ISIS is using in its propaganda). I have no doubt that the Obama Administration's tactical approach would have brought us to where we are today, but I also have no doubt that the Trump Administration's tactics accelerated the success. The destruction of the caliphate is important as it has already reduced the ability of ISIS in Iraq/Syria to direct attacks in the West and as it will undermine the ISIS brand and therefore eventually lead to a reduction in attacks in the West inspired by ISIS in Iraq/Syria.
2. The elimination of the caliphate is not the same thing as the elimination of ISIS in Iraq/Syria. ISIS fighters will now go underground, will now operate out of the shadows, much like its predecessor organization, al-Qaida in Iraq did for years. From these shadows, we will see traditional terrorist attacks in both countries – against regime targets and against Shia targets in an effort to kindle sectarianism – as well as attacks in neighboring countries. What is the U.S. strategy for dealing with the remnants of the group in both countries and the near-term risks they pose? I have not yet heard the Administration articulate such a strategy.
3. Importantly, military/security success against ISIS is only the first step in ensuring that we do not see a reemergence of a safe haven for group in Iraq/Syria. We need a similar political success in both countries. What is that success? It is the Sunnis in both Syria and Iraq feeling as if they have a stake in the future of their countries and that they have a say in how they are governed. Without that, ISIS, in that name or some other, will reemerge, and our current military success will be for naught. Thus, the focus now needs to shift from DoD to the State Department. What is State's political strategy for both countries? I have not heard this clearly articulated. Two final points on this: First, some say that this is not the job of the U.S. Some say this should be left to the region to resolve. The answer to that point is that if we do not lead, it won't happen, and we will be the ones who pay the price down the road. And, second, a political solution in both countries, particularly Syria, will be exceptionally hard to achieve. But we should not shy away just because it is hard. America can and is able to do hard.
4. ISIS has spread around the globe. ISIS affiliates now operate in some over 20 countries, including in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, the Philippines, and many other countries. My sense is that DoD is on the offensive against these groups, aggressively assisting local forces and allies/partners in their fights against them. This is important and needs to continue, as we can't

let ISIS outside Iraq/Syria become the new center of gravity for the group, become the new caliphate, become the place where the group can again direct operations against the West, become the place that can inspire young men and women to either join the group where it is or fight where they are by conducting lone-wolf attacks. The overriding lesson of my time working CT issues for both the Bush and Obama Administrations is that you have to keep the pressure on terrorists and that the best way to do that is, as a first choice, supporting allies/partners in their fights but also being willing to do it on our own when allies/partners are not available.

5. The United States and its allies/partners have largely focused on the symptoms of the extremist disease – that is, those terrorists who already exist, those terrorists who are trying to kill us. We have not focused on the causes of the disease – poor governance in many countries around the world, the regional struggle between Iran and the Sunni gulf states, and the struggle within Islam between fundamentalists and moderates. We cannot solve these problems, but we can lead those who can solve those problems. If we do not – and we have not in the past and we are not doing so today – the problem of Islamic extremism will be with us for generations. As fast as we take bad guys off the battlefield, the enemy will put more on it.