



NATIONAL SECURITY DEBATE BOOK

2016



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PROGRAM



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POLITICS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

NATIONAL SECURITY DEBATE BOOK



What Democrats Must Do To Win Back National Security Voters in 2016

In the 2016 election cycle, Democrats are facing a challenge they haven't seen since the Vietnam War. National security, specifically terrorism, is now among voters' most important public policy concerns, and they overwhelmingly trust Republicans more than Democrats to keep them safe. If handled ineffectively, this yawning gap between the parties on security poses a serious political risk to Democrats and continues to undermine public faith in government.

In this memo, we offer some data on the scale of the problem (Spoiler Alert: It's YUGE) and some perspective on what is driving voter mistrust. We also provide a brief roadmap back for Democrats and preview the work that Third Way is doing this year to help close the security trust gap.

The Problem: National Security Is Crucial and Democrats Are Lagging

National Security Is Currently the Most Important Issue to Voters

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, national security and terrorism quickly eclipsed the economy to become the most important issue to the public, and it has remained that way.¹ Third Way's most recent nationwide public opinion poll, fielded from December 10-16 (shortly after San Bernardino), found that the public's top priority was national security/terrorism.² Nearly twice as many respondents were worried about security (29%) as were worried about the economy/jobs (15%). More recently, a Gallup poll from January 21-25 found that national security/terrorism/foreign affairs collectively remained the top concern of voters (23%), besting the economy (17%).³

The Electoral Cost to Democrats Could be Decisive

These public opinion data also translate into electoral results. History shows that when Republicans hold a large advantage over Democrats on security—and when security is highly salient to voters—Democrats lose elections.

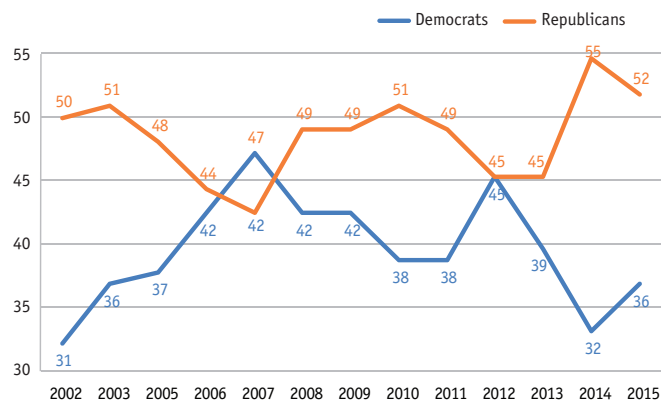
It sounds like a tautology that the party with the advantage on the public's most important issue, whether it be national security, the economy, or otherwise, almost always wins.

But we pulled the data,⁴ and the pattern is clear: in only three elections since 1964 did Democrats gain seats in the House while behind on the public's most important issue. In a year when the Senate is up for grabs and there are substantial pickup opportunities in the House, falling short on national security could blunt gains.

Voters Overwhelmingly Favor Republicans on National Security

Not only do voters care a lot about national security, currently they also have a strong political preference on keeping the country safe: Republicans. Democrats are currently trailing Republicans by 16 points on national security and terrorist threats, which is a larger margin than they have ever trailed Republicans on the public's most important issue in the last 50 years. The GOP now enjoys a security advantage by greater margins than we have ever seen in the post-9/11 era. As Figure 1 shows, the gap between Democrats and Republicans on national security and terrorist threats, while slightly less than it was a year ago, is now larger than it was when President Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq in 2003.⁵

Figure 1: Party Better Able to Protect U.S. From Terrorism Sept. 2002 - Sept. 2015



The Cause: Why Democrats Aren't Trusted Enough on Security

Under President Obama, Democrats have kept the country safe, have aggressively taken on terrorists overseas, and have passed defense budgets greater than any during the Reagan Administration. This has not translated to voters, and while there are many factors that affect the security gap, Democrats have one crucial cause in their control—

their own positioning on national security issues. And unfortunately, Democrats' current messaging does not address the fears of the public.

Dismiss and Pivot: What Democrats Get Wrong on National Security

Following a terrorist attack on the West, the acute symptoms of fear may fade quickly, but there is evidence that heightened levels of anxiety in the general population can linger for years.⁶ Now, in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, the public is going through this psychological response to terrorism to a degree not seen since 9/11. For example, a Gallup poll from December 8-9, 2015, found that 51% of Americans are worried that they or a family member will be the victim of a terrorist attack,⁷ a higher percentage than at any time since 2001. Moreover, the survey found a widespread sense of hopelessness: confidence in the government's ability to protect citizens from terrorism was at an all-time low of 55%. By comparison, immediately after 9/11, 88% said the government could protect them.

More recently, a Gallup poll from January 6-10, 2016, found that, for the first time, a majority of Americans (55%) are "dissatisfied with government security from terrorism."⁸ The previous high-point for dissatisfaction was 47%, in January 2002, just four months after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Beyond public opinion data, there are deep psychological reasons that security has such an outsized effect on voters. Research on the psychology of terrorism shows that, unsurprisingly, populations experience heightened levels of fear following terrorist attacks. What is surprising is how dramatically that fear leads voters to overestimate the risk of future attacks and devote an outsized share of attention to the threat of terrorism. Indeed, the fear of terrorist attacks in times like these is greater than that of common events like car accidents or shootings, and the politics reacts accordingly.

The problem with this extremely heightened level of concern for terrorism is that, all too often, Democrats seek to minimize the threat of terrorism. Instead of empathizing with voter fears, Democrats frequently dismiss them and explain that the actual threat of terrorism is very low, or they pivot from terrorism to other issues they feel more comfortable discussing. Both tactics are a mistake, because they ignore the psychological lens through which voters perceive the threat. This lens magnifies the probability of attack and the likelihood that a voter will know someone

that is a victim. Focusing on the actual threat of terrorism, while ignoring voter perceptions of terrorism, is a recipe for electoral defeat.

Former Senator Mark Udall's statement during his 2014 campaign that ISIS "does not present an imminent threat to this nation" is a perfect example. While factually accurate—at that time there was no intelligence indicating ISIS had the ability to attack the United States—this statement ignored voter fears that were driven by the beheadings of Americans and other ISIS horrors dominating the nightly news. The Republican Super PAC Crossroads GPS capitalized on this disconnect—omitting Udall's clarifying remarks—in a \$3.5 million ad buy that contributed to Udall's loss.⁹

More recently, in his 2016 State of the Union address, President Obama said that ISIS does "not threaten our national existence." Predictably, Republicans have assailed the President for downplaying the threat from ISIS.¹⁰ Many commentators saw this as "the least popular line in Obama's State of the Union address."¹¹

Democrats also are prone to paying lip-service to national security and terrorism before pivoting back to policy issues on which they have greater fluency. But this too is a mistake. Imagine a voter says, "I'm worried about crime. We had a shooting and a mugging last month. I won't send my kids to the playground." Their representative responds, "That's why we need to fight poverty and improve our schools. If these kids had better opportunities, they wouldn't be committing crimes." At one level, the elected official is not wrong. Better schools and robust anti-poverty measures would likely reduce crime in the long run. But this voter would be left unsatisfied, because instead of answering her concerns, this representative retreated to his hobby horse. In order to convince voters that Democrats can be trusted on national security, they must engage the issue specifically and exclusively—without minimizing or pivoting away.

The Solution: Making Voters Believe That Democrats Can Keep Them Safe

While Democrats are in a deep hole on national security, there is much they can do to regain the trust of voters. Doing so is vital to regaining majorities and moving their domestic agenda. And more importantly, it is an essential part of restoring citizens' faith in government.

Democrats must shed their unwillingness to discuss national security and take on the issue directly and proactively. When discussing national security, Democrats must show voters that they understand that their fears are substantial and real, and they must be unequivocal in acknowledging that ISIS is a direct threat to the people of the United States.

Tough and Smart Talk

Even if voters believe that Democrats see the world as they do, they need to be reminded that they and their government are not helpless in the face of this threat. This starts with how they talk about national security. In Third Way's nationwide survey in the summer of 2015, we tested a number of messages to see how voters would prefer to hear Democrats talk about national security. The top choice was a "tough and smart" message: "We must be tough and smart on national security, which means targeting and eliminating ISIS and other terrorist threats without getting dragged into another civil war."

Voters want to hear that our government has the ability to keep them safe, but they prefer a balanced approach to the problem. President Obama did precisely this in his State of the Union address, reminding voters that "The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period. It's not even close...Our troops are the finest fighting force in the history of the world," and "When you come after Americans, we go after you. It may take time, but we have long memories, and our reach has no limit."

But it's not enough to say "tough and smart" and then pivot back to domestic issues. Democrats must address the issue aggressively, repeatedly, and specifically, and they must work to build a credible record of concrete proposals on terrorism and national security.

Tough and Smart Action

Beyond rhetoric, voters must see that Democrats will support tough and smart action. Our 2014 focus groups showed that voters wanted specificity in addressing these crucial issues: what precisely are political leaders proposing to do? Give them timelines, strategy, and cost.

Voters need to know that Democrats are willing to commit the resources necessary to eliminate ISIS abroad and stop terrorists at home. This includes support for increasing U.S. airstrikes and the use of U.S. special operations forces in both Iraq and Syria.¹² While it will be up to our allies in the region to be the primary ground force, we should do more to assist them by providing additional airstrikes,

intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and whatever military equipment they need to defeat ISIS on the ground. And it also includes vocal support for the budgets Obama has proposed that are larger in real dollars than any during the Reagan Administration.

To better protect American citizens at home, Members of Congress should look for ways to improve counterterrorism capabilities here, including working with state and local law enforcement to identify shortfalls, reviewing screening programs for those coming to the United States, and barring those on the No-Fly List from getting guns.

While these actions are tough, it's vital that Democrats be seen as smart as well. This means that Democrats must be cautious about going too far and being seen as reckless—voters do not want another American ground war or military adventurism that isn't directed at keeping us safe. It also means keeping the focus on defeating terrorism and increasing the defense budget in a thoughtful, not wasteful, way. Again, the key is to be both tough and smart.

In order to do so, we offer ten basic actions that Members of Congress can take to demonstrate their tough and smart approach on national security:

1. Write a stump speech on the pillars of your plan to combat terrorism.
2. Place an op-ed in your local paper on what your plan is to combat terrorism.
3. Do NOT vote against defense, homeland security, or any other bills related to national security.
4. Speak directly to voter fears about terrorism without pivoting to other issues. Speak to their heart, not their head.
5. If you haven't already, visit troops in Afghanistan or Iraq.
6. Visit any VA facilities in your district.
7. Visit any military facilities in your district.
8. Assemble Veterans advisory boards to coordinate the Service Academy nomination process in your district.
9. Highlight Republican legislative initiatives that undermine security or harm veterans – like shutting down the Department of Homeland Security, reducing counterterrorism funding in non-defense agencies, or overbroad and reckless legislation that further alienates and radicalizes Muslims in the U.S.
10. Study up—make sure you know enough to be prepared for any questions you'll get on terrorism and national security.

In 2016, Third Way's National Security team is committed to helping Democrats close the security gap and win back national security voters. We will work with you to turn national security from a vulnerability to a strength for Democrats in 2016. We will work with you to develop tough and smart legislative proposals, provide tough and smart policy ideas, and craft tough and smart messaging. We will help you message the good work Democrats have already done to keep America safe and our military ready.

Too much is at stake to be complacent. If we continue down the path the Democratic Party is on, voter distrust will only deepen and it will lead to disappointing results for Democrats in November. Working together, we can change the security narrative and, we hope, that electoral outcome.

Endnotes

- See for example:
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- Note that for reporting purposes Gallup disaggregates all of these issues into separate categories. Thus, the 23% reported here is simply the sum of these categories.
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- Gallup data obtained through the Roper Center. The numbers reported are from the most recent Gallup poll preceding each election that included this particular question. Most polls are from July to October of the year in question. The most recent survey analyzed is: Gallup Organization. Gallup News Service Poll: Congress, Aug. 2014 [dataset]. USAIPOGNS2014-09, Version 2. Gallup Organization [producer]. Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, RoperExpress [distributor]. Accessed March 3, 2016.
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- These options and banning gun sales to people on the no-fly watch list were seen as the most effective options "in the U.S. campaign against ISIS." See: Frank Newport, "Anti-Terror: Visa Control, Airstrikes Seen as Most Effective," Poll, Gallup, December 11–12, 2015. Accessed March 1, 2016. Available at: http://www.gallup.com/poll/187682/anti-terror-visa-control-airstrikes-seen-effective.aspx?g_source=Politics&g_medium=newsfeed&g_campaign=tiles.

Public Opinion for the Top Counterterrorism Issues

This memo lays out the top counterterrorism questions that elected leaders and candidates will likely have to answer and accompanies each question with public opinion data pertinent to it. This is meant to serve as a one-stop source for understanding the public's stance on the most pressing national security questions, providing elected leaders and candidates with the information they need to effectively address constituent concerns on counterterrorism. For some questions there's ample public opinion polling, while for others there is little or none. But, in all cases where public opinion polling is available, the most recent poll is utilized.

#1: Strategy to Defeat ISIS

Q: ISIS has built up its forces and gained ground in Iraq and Syria since 2014. What is the best strategy to defeat ISIS?

- Voters are strongly in favor of banning gun sales to people on the no-fly list. For example, 76% of respondents to a USA Today [poll](#) fielded June 26-29 support the ban, while just 14% oppose it.
- A CNN/ORC [poll](#) fielded April 28-May 1, 2016, found that 48% favor and 48% oppose sending "ground troops into combat operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria."
- Gallup conducted a [poll](#) from December 11-12, 2015 that asked respondents to rate the "Effectiveness of actions to combat terrorism." Their top two choices (both seen by 79% as effective) were overhauling the visa waiver program and increasing U.S. airstrikes.

#2: U.S. Ground Troops Against ISIS

Q: ISIS continues to hold significant areas of Iraq and Syria, and it's clear that airstrikes alone are not making enough of an impact to destroy them. Should the U.S. send in ground troops to dismantle and defeat ISIS?

- A CNN/ORC [poll](#) from April 28-May 1, 2016, found 48% favored "the United States sending ground troops into combat operations against ISIS forces in Iraq and Syria," and 48% opposed this option.
 - Republicans are overwhelmingly in favor of ground troops, while Democrats and Independents are opposed.

#3: Homegrown Terrorists

Q: Recent domestic terrorist attacks, like in Orlando, New York, and New Jersey, have caused alarm about the threat ISIS can play in influencing homegrown terrorists. What should be done to prevent future terrorist attacks in the United States?

- A Pew [poll](#) conducted August 23 to September 2, 2016, found that 40% believe the ability of terrorists to launch an attack on the U.S. is greater now than it was on 9/11. This is the highest percentage since 9/11.
- A Washington Post/ABC News [poll](#) from June 20-23, 2016, asked "How concerned are you about so-called 'lone-wolf' terrorist attacks in which individuals in this country decide to take terrorist action on their own?" 86% said they were concerned, with 53% saying "very concerned."
- This poll also found that less than a third of respondents (31%) believe the government is doing a "great deal" or "good amount" to prevent these attacks.
- Voters are strongly in favor of banning gun sales to people on the no-fly list. For example, 76% of respondents to a USA Today [poll](#) fielded June 26-29, 2016, support the ban, while just 14% oppose it.

#4: No-Fly Zone

Q: Some experts have suggested a no-fly zone over Syria would advance U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS. Do you believe the U.S. should enforce a no-fly zone?

- There's very little polling on this, but a Rasmussen [poll](#) from October 6-7, 2015, found that only 31% believe a no-fly zone would decrease the level of violence in Syria.

#5: Syria

Q: The ongoing Syrian civil war and the arrival of various militia groups and proxy fighters has allowed the region to deteriorate even further into chaos. How can we stabilize Syria? Should Bashar al-Assad leave power?

- A Gallup [poll](#) from February 3-7, 2016, found 58% believe the conflict in Syria is a “critical threat” to the vital interests of the United States.
- However, the same poll found that Americans are divided on increasing U.S. military involvement, with 34% saying more involvement is needed, 29% saying the current level of involvement is about right, and 30% saying we should be less involved.
- A CNN/ORC [poll](#) fielded April 28-May 1, 2016, found that 48% favor and 48% oppose sending “ground troops into combat operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.”

#6: AUMF

Q: The President has called on Congress to pass a new Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against ISIS. But Congress has stalled on this front, and the President has continued to rely on the authority provided by previous authorizations. Should Congress pass a new AUMF to address ISIS?

- A CBS News [poll](#) from February 13-17, 2015, found 66% favor passing an AUMF, with just 26% opposed. This is in line with all public polls on the passage of an AUMF.

#7: Iraq

Q: After the Obama Administration withdrew troops from Iraq, the country spiraled into sectarian violence. Iraq was unable to defend its cities against ISIS and is still struggling to take back territory. What should the United States do to stabilize Iraq?

- A CNN/ORC [poll](#) fielded April 28-May 1, 2016, found that 48% favor and 48% oppose sending “ground troops into combat operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.”

#8: Arming Moderate Forces Against ISIS

Q: There are many forces fighting against ISIS, like the Kurdish Peshmerga and moderate opposition groups, who can be the driving force behind ISIS’s defeat. Why isn’t the U.S. doing more to arm these groups against ISIS?

- Public opinion on arming moderate forces to fight ISIS has varied over time and across polls. When the U.S. initially became involved in Syria, some polls showed support for arming opposition groups, but voters have soured on the idea as the conflict has gone on. An Economist/YouGov [poll](#) from May 2015 found that just 24% believe the U.S. should have “provided Syrian rebels with more aid sooner,” whereas a plurality, 44%, believed “The U.S. should not have gotten involved at all.” However, 55% of respondents to a Gallup poll from December 11-12 2015, believed providing more “U.S. training and equipment to Iraqi and Syrian forces fighting the Islamic state” would be effective.
- More recently, a CNN/ORC poll fielded April 28-May 1, 2016, found 57% believe the U.S. military response to ISIS has been “not aggressive enough.” That’s an 11 point reduction from a December 1, 2015 CNN/ORC poll.

#9: Immigration

Q: The terrorist attacks in Paris ignited fears in the U.S. that ISIS could use refugees and other immigrants to carry out attacks here. Should we stop allowing refugees to enter the U.S.?

- The public is decidedly pro-immigrant. A CBS/New York Times [poll](#) from September 9-13, 2016, asked what should be done about illegal immigrants, and 60% said they should be allowed to stay and apply for citizenship.
- Similarly, a Washington Post/ABC [poll](#) from September 5-8, 2016, found that 64% believe immigrants strengthen American society. And, 63% oppose building a wall across the border with Mexico.

#10: Visa Waiver Program

Q: The Visa Waiver program allows terrorists in Europe to easily travel to the United States without a visa. What is being done to address this gap in security?

- Overhauling the Visa Waiver program is extremely popular with the public. Of 11 options to combat terrorism presented to respondents in a Gallup [poll](#) from December 11-12, 2016, overhauling the Visa Waiver program was the top choice (along with increasing U.S. airstrikes), with 79% saying it would be very or somewhat effective at combatting terrorism.

#11: ISIS in Libya

Q: ISIS has spread to Libya, with estimates of 6,500 fighters there. Do you support U.S. action against ISIS in Libya? If so, in what form?

- There is no publicly available polling that directly asks this question. However, a Monmouth University [poll](#) fielded September 22-25, 2016, found that 53% believe homegrown terrorists pose a bigger threat than do terrorists who infiltrate the country. Just 34% believe the latter are the greater threat.

#12: Terrorists and Guns

Q: Do you support changing our gun laws to prohibit anyone on a terrorist watch-list from purchasing or receiving a firearm?

- The public overwhelmingly supports this. Most recently, a CNN/ORC [poll](#) fielded June 16-19, 2016, found that 90% support preventing people on the terrorism no-fly list from buying guns.

#13: Al Qaeda

Q: The Administration claims we've nearly defeated al Qaeda, but the organization maintains a strong presence in Yemen, has an affiliate amid the civil war in Syria, and may have inspired the recent New York City bomber. Is al Qaeda still a threat to the United States?

- There's no direct polling on this question, but terrorism remains among the top concerns of voters. A Washington Post/ABC poll fielded September 5-8 asked voters what "is the single most important issue in your choice for President?" 35% said the economy and jobs, while "terrorism and national security" came in second at 19%, besting corruption in government (16%), immigration (8%), and law and order (6%).

#14: Afghanistan

Q: The White House recently announced that 8,400 U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan instead of decreasing to 5,500. Should the U.S. withdraw troops from Afghanistan?

- A slim majority supports leaving troops in Afghanistan. According to a Washington Post/ABC News [poll](#) from October 15-18, 2015, 50% of respondents support the President's plan in Afghanistan, while 39% oppose this plan.

#15: Drones

Q: There are reports that the Obama Administration has been using drones to eliminate terrorist targets in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia for several years. Do you support the continued use of targeted drone strikes to kill terrorists?

- The public has consistently supported the use of drones to kill terrorists. The most recent poll asking this question was conducted by Pew from May 12-18, 2015. The Pew [poll](#) found that 58% of Americans support "U.S. drone strikes to target extremists." Support is bipartisan, with majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all supporting drone strikes.

16: Defense Budget

Q: Cuts in the defense budget made by the Obama Administration have made the U.S. vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Budget cuts have gutted the military and put our nation in harm's way. Do you support cutting the defense budget?

- The public is generally ill-informed about the size of the defense budget, but a University of Maryland [poll](#) fielded from December 20, 2015 to February 1, 2016, provided background information on the budget to place it in context and found that respondents supported modest cuts to the defense budget because "there is so much waste and corruption in the defense budget." A majority of respondents in the poll proposed modest cuts to each of the Services, but did not agree to cuts to the Marine Corps, Special Operations Forces, the next generation bomber, or nuclear submarines.
- Gallup asks respondents every year in February how much the U.S. is spending on national security. The 2016 [survey](#), fielded February 3-7, found that 37% believe we spend too little, 27% believe we spend the right amount and 32% believe we spend too much. The 37% who believe we spend too little is the highest mark since 2001.

#17: Torture

Q: Donald Trump has said he'd encourage the use of water-boarding and other harsh interrogation methods against terror suspects. Do you support torture?

- Surprisingly, a Reuters/IPSON poll from March 22-28, 2016, found that 63% believe “torture against suspected terrorists to obtain information about terrorism activities” can be justified.

#18: Benghazi

Q: Administration critics claim the White House and Secretary Clinton misled the public about the Benghazi attacks that killed four Americans, including the U.S. Ambassador. Do you think there was a cover-up?

- The most recent polling related to this is from the right-leaning Rasmussen report, which fielded a survey from June 28-29, 2016, and found that 49% believe Secretary Clinton lied the victim's families about the attacks.
- Prior to Secretary Clinton's day-long testimony on Benghazi last October, public interest in Benghazi had fallen off appreciably, with 56% saying they were not following the story closely. Following her eleven hour testimony public satisfaction with her response increased three points—though still only at 30%, compared to 38% who remained not satisfied with her response—and 40% of respondents believed the Benghazi committee was “unfair and too partisan,” compared to just 27% who thought it was “fair and impartial,” according to a Wall Street Journal poll fielded just after her testimony.

#19: Clinton Intervening in Libya

Q: Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocated for intervention in Libya and now it's a mess. U.S. intervention in Libya has led to chaos, infighting among different groups, and now there are over 6,500 ISIS fighters based there. Is Secretary Clinton to blame for the chaos in Libya now?

- There is no publicly available polling that directly asks this question.

#20: Iranian Sponsored Terrorism

Q: Iran recently received a \$100 billion windfall when it received sanctions relief under the nuclear agreement. Won't Iran use these unfrozen assets to finance terrorist proxies and promote regional instability?

- A Morning Consult poll fielded August 18-20, 2016, asked “As you may know, the United States and other countries have announced a deal to lift economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for Iran agreeing not to manufacture nuclear weapons. Do you support or oppose this agreement?” 49% of Americans support the agreement, 36% oppose. 41% of independents support the agreement, 38% are opposed, and a sizeable 21% are unsure. This was a large reversal from a year ago, when Morning Consult found that 56% of Americans opposed the agreement, and just 27% supported it.
- The Morning Consult poll also asked, “As you may know, the United States agreed to pay \$400 million dollars to Iran in the nuclear deal negotiated in 2015. The State Department has said that they made the previously negotiated payment to Iran, but only after Iran released several American prisoners. Based on what you know, do you support or oppose the United States making the payment to Iran only after securing the release of American prisoners?” Support and opposition were tied at 41%. 37% of independents support the payment, 40% are opposed, and 23% are unsure.

#21: Closing Guantanamo

Q: The Administration has sent to Congress its plan to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. There are many concerns over where these detainees should be transferred to, their potential return to terrorist activities, and whether they should be transferred to U.S. prison facilities. Should the U.S. close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp?

- The public has consistently been opposed to closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. Most recently, a CNN/ORC poll fielded from February 24-27, 2016, found that 56% believed the facility should continue running while 40% believed it should be closed.

Uncovering the Paradox of National Security Public Opinion

National security has emerged as a vitally important issue to voters across all partisan groups, second only to the economy. But most Democratic officials and candidates treat national security as if it were a third-tier concern of the electorate. This is an enormous mistake.

While Democrats seized the advantage on national security during the nadir of the Iraq War in 2006, they now face the biggest deficit on the issue—a “security gap”—that we have seen in the modern era. They currently trail Republicans among all voters by 19%, and they are losing Independent voters on this issue by a margin of two-to-one.

The paradox in these data is that voters actually believe Democrats are more like them on security than are Republicans. But they clearly want elected leaders who are tougher than they are to guarantee their safety. Thus, if Democrats follow the isolationist tendencies of the voters, they actually alienate those same voters on national security.

From June 22-26, Third Way fielded a national online survey of 1,200 registered voters (through Gerstein, Bocian, Agne Strategies). The goal was to understand how voters perceive the political parties when it comes to national security. The results confirm a number of voter concerns that we have previously documented.¹ Most notably, national security is a top priority for voters, and they simply don't trust Democrats when it comes to protecting the country.

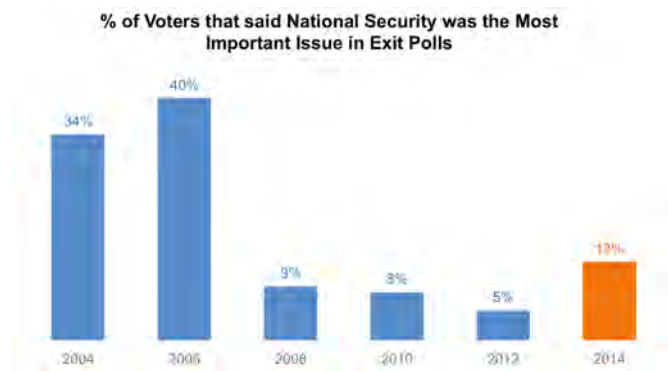
But our data reveals another startling fact: a conventional political approach to closing the security gap—convincing voters that Democratic candidates are more like they are than are the Republicans—will not work. Indeed, it would almost certainly make matters worse.

How Important is National Security to Voters?

The Rising Salience of Security

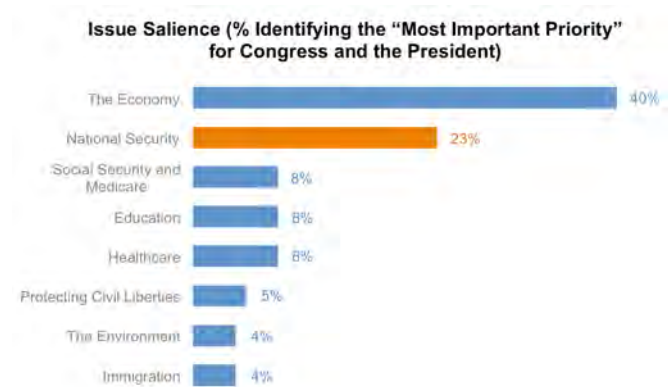
Voters' view of the importance of national security tracks current events. Following the Republican missteps in Iraq and Afghanistan, the salience of national security soared in the 2006 elections, when 40% of voters declared it to be the most important issue in CNN exit polls. The salience of security quickly diminished in subsequent elections,

settling to a peacetime norm of 5% in the 2012 elections. But in 2014, with the rise of ISIS and the Ebola scare in the months preceding the election, this figure more than doubled, with 13% of voters saying it was the most important issue. With the continued threat from ISIS and general instability across the world, all the evidence pointed to this trend continuing, and it did.



National Security Now is the Second Most Important Issue

Third Way's survey from late June found that national security was the second most important issue for all partisan groups, trailing only the economy. Overall, 23% of respondents identified security as their most important issue, a 10% increase since the 2014 midterm elections. 35% of Republicans, 21% of Independents, and 17% of Democrats listed national security as the most important issue. Independents chose it more than twice as often as any issue except the economy. In fact, more independent voters selected national security as the most important issue than those that selected education (8%), healthcare (7%), and the environment (5%) *combined*.



Issue Salience

But there are important distinctions in the data. When broken down by ideology, only 14% of liberals rank national security as the most important issue, while 21% of moderates do. Thus, the voters that Democrats hear from most view national security as less salient than do the moderates who are crucial to Democrats winning a governing majority.

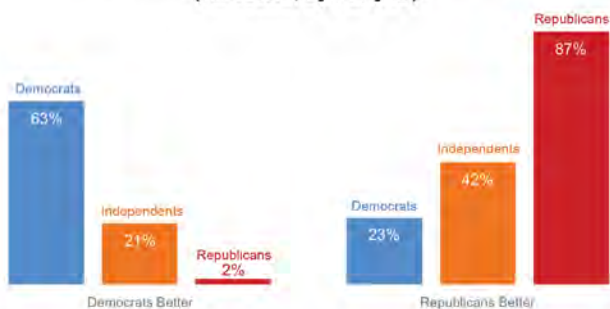
Democrats at a Disadvantage On National Security

The challenge for Democrats with the rising salience of national security is that our survey showed Republicans enjoyed a 19% advantage on this issue, the same advantage they held over Democrats right after 9/11.² Worse yet, for voters ranking national security as their most important issue, the partisan gap was 43%. By comparison, while 40% of respondents still identified the economy as their most important issue, Democrats only enjoyed a 3% advantage on that issue.

Losing Independents on National Security by a 2:1 Margin

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of Republicans (87%) said that Republican elected officials do a better job on national security. Somewhat more surprisingly, 23% of Democratic voters agreed that Republicans are better at security. But most surprising—and troubling—of all, the gap on this issue for those in the middle was enormous. By a two-to-one margin (42% to 21%), Independents said that Republicans do a better job than Democrats on national security.

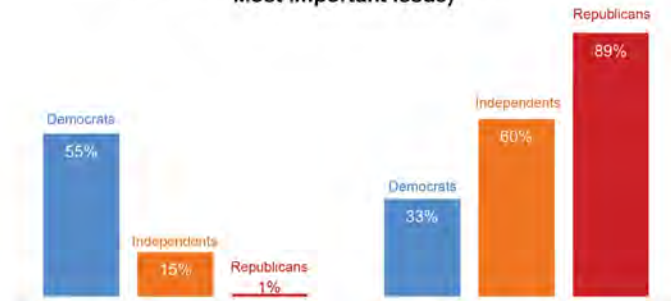
Who Does a Better Job on National Security?
(All Voters, by Party ID)



For voters who ranked national security as the most important issue, this ratio was even higher—15% of security-minded Independents said Democrats do a better job on national security, while 60% prefer the Republicans. Moreover, Democrats are struggling even with their own security partisans. Among Democratic respondents who rated national security as the most important priority, only 55%

said their own party did a better job on national security, and a third of such Democrats preferred the Republicans. Conversely, nearly 89% of security-first Republicans said that Republicans do a better job on the issue.

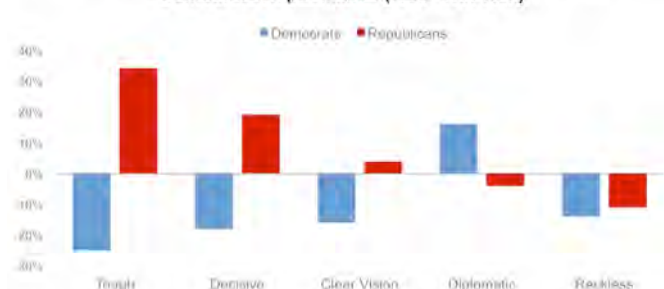
Who Does a Better Job on National Security?
(Only Voters Ranking National Security as the
Most Important Issue)

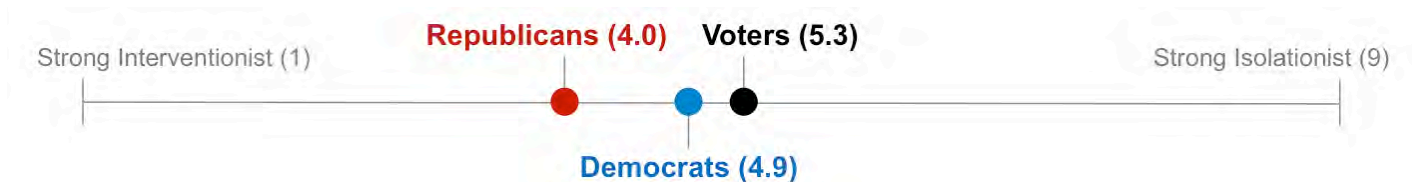


Negative Perceptions of Democrats

Underlying this deficit were voter perceptions that Democrats lack the characteristics needed to be trusted with our nation's security. For example, Republicans were seen as both tougher and smarter than Democrats when voters were asked to explain how well the words describe each party (the partisan gaps are 30% and 3%, respectively). And Republican negatives appear to have faded. Third Way's polling previously found that Republicans were seen as "reckless" on security matters.³ It is unclear if voters still blame Republicans for the ill-fated decision to invade Iraq, but voters no longer associate the word "reckless" with the Republican Party. In our poll, 48% said the word "reckless" describes Republicans "not too well" or "not well at all," whereas only 37% of voters said "reckless" describes Republicans "well" or "very well."

When it Comes to National Security and Foreign Policy,
Please Indicate How Well the Following Words Characterize
Democrats/Republicans. (Well - Not Well)





On the other hand, 54% of respondents said “stubborn” describes Republicans well, compared to 34% who said it did not. This was, by far, the largest negative for Republicans. Moreover, Independents and moderates cut against Republicans on “stubborn” by an approximately 2:1 margin. Even among Republican voters, this was seen as their greatest vulnerability.

How Did it Get this Bad?

The Paradox

Most importantly, our survey revealed a paradox that may be at the heart of the Democratic Party’s national security problem. While voters overwhelmingly favored Republicans on national security, they viewed Democrats as much more like themselves on national security.

To make this determination, we asked respondents to place Democrats and Republicans on a scale from 1 (Strong Interventionist) to 9 (Strong Isolationist). In response, voters put Democrats in the middle (4.9), themselves slightly isolationist (5.3), and Republicans as decidedly interventionist (4.0).⁴ The divide between where voters saw themselves and Republicans was very significant—a 1.3 difference in a 9-point scale is huge. Across all socioeconomic and demographic subsets of voters that we polled, not a single group believed they are more interventionist than the Republican Party.

The paradox is that, unlike most issues, where conventional wisdom suggests that a candidate should move towards the voters, our survey, and nearly all national security surveys, showed that voters prefer the Party they view as tougher than they are.

As further evidence of this phenomenon, in our survey we asked voters to rank the persuasiveness of national security messages, and the isolationist message (“Instead of serving as the world’s policeman and putting American troops at risk, it is time for us to reduce our international involvement and instead invest at home”) was the least preferred message for moderate voters (out of 10 choices).

On the other hand, we also tested a hyper-interventionist message (“9/11 taught us that we must take the fight to the enemy before they reach us. We put America at risk if we do not confront bad actors. In order to keep us safe, we must pre-emptively deal with emerging threats.”) This message finished second to last for moderates and was the least preferred message amongst all voters.

The lesson from all of this is clear—voters don’t want reckless interventionism, but they want to know that those representing them aren’t afraid to intervene. If the Democratic Party moves more towards isolationism, it will sow the seeds of its own continued national security deficit.

Endnotes

1. Ben Freeman and Michelle Diggles, “What Democrats Can do to Close the Security Gap,” Third Way, February 6, 2015. Accessed September 18, 2015. Available at: <http://www.thirdway.org/report/what-democrats-can-do-to-close-the-security-gap>.
2. Frank Newport, “Republicans Expand Edge as Better Party Against Terrorism,” Poll, Gallup, September 4-7, 2014. Accessed February 2, 2015. Available at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/175727/republicans-expand-edge-better-party-against-terrorism.aspx>.
3. Matt Bennett, Jeremy Rosner, and Sean Barnery, “Winning on National Security: Results of New Public Opinion Research,” Memo, Third Way, September 2008. Accessed on September 18, 2015. Available at: <http://blogs.trb.com/news/politics/blog/2008/09/06/Greenberg%20national%20security%20poll.pdf>.
4. Voters were asked “Using the scale below, please indicate where you would put yourself and Democrats and Republicans on the spectrum from interventionist to isolationist.” They were given a definition of Strong Interventionists—“Interventionists believe in a foreign policy where the U.S. often gets involved in the affairs of other countries and uses the military to protect U.S. interests, attack terrorists, defend democracy, or stop humanitarian crises”—and Strong Isolationists—“Isolationists believe in a foreign policy where the U.S. rarely intervenes in the affairs of other countries and rarely uses military force, focusing more on affairs at home.”



KEY TOPICS

NATIONAL SECURITY DEBATE BOOK



Talking Points for the Top National Security Issues

During their terms of office, elected officials will have to address a variety of international concerns and threats facing the U.S. Polling from early September, 2016 shows national security and terrorism is a top priority for voters.¹ Issues ranging from Russian aggression in Eastern Europe to civil unrest in the Middle East will top the national security challenges facing members of Congress. Policymakers must be prepared to answer the tough questions on the broad global issues facing the country. In this memo, we provide answers to and talking points on the most pressing questions likely to be asked on U.S. national security issues.

#1: ISIS Strategy

Q: ISIS has built up its forces and gained ground in Iraq and Syria since 2014. What is the best strategy to defeat ISIS?

A: Americans are rightly concerned about ISIS and the awful things they do and stand for. But here is what Americans need to know: the U.S. has a tough and smart strategy to degrade and defeat ISIS. The Iraqi government has regained the key cities of Ramadi, Sinjar, and Tikrit from the terrorists, and U.S. forces have killed or captured key ISIS leaders.

- The U.S. is leading a 66-nation coalition against ISIS through airstrikes and assisting local ground forces. Coalition forces are averaging 20 airstrikes per day against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, killing more than 45,000² ISIS fighters since strikes began in 2014.
- Going forward, the U.S. must lead the coalition in accelerating the air campaign and assisting Iraqi security forces and vetted Syrian opposition groups in pushing back ISIS on the ground.
- We can target and eliminate terrorist threats without getting dragged into a civil war. This is not our fight alone. Our Arab partners must also provide the resources to stabilize the region against terrorists.

Donald Trump has no coherent strategy to defeat ISIS. His reckless ideas flip-flop between inserting tens of thousands of U.S. ground troops in the war and allowing Russia to defeat ISIS and ensure U.S. security for us. This would leave our military without an exit strategy and leave American security in Russian hands. Trump wants to “bomb the hell” out of ISIS, without considering the humanitarian toll it would inflict on the region and the

near-certain aftermath of greater ISIS recruitment and resentment from those who feel betrayed by U.S. actions.

#2: Homegrown Terrorism

Q: Domestic terrorist attacks, like those in San Bernardino and Orlando, and more recent attempts in New York and New Jersey, have caused alarm about the threat ISIS plays influencing homegrown terrorists. What should be done to prevent future terrorist attacks in the U.S?

A: We’re cutting off ISIS propaganda, preventing terrorist recruitment, and partnering with local leaders to safeguard communities. The U.S. will continue to do everything possible to seek out and stop homegrown terror in its tracks.

- Our number one priority is protecting Americans, and that means defending the homeland. State and local law enforcement agencies on the frontlines need better resources, training, and coordination to fight domestic terrorism.
- We need a strategy, working alongside social media companies, which prevents ISIS recruitment and blocks their online propaganda. We should also develop a local partnership strategy that brings together community leaders, law enforcement, and civil society to prevent homegrown terrorism in at-risk communities.
- We must remember that the numbers of Americans becoming influenced by ISIS ideology and traveling to Iraq and Syria are few—about 250—especially compared to how many Europeans are joining ISIS—about 5,000.³

Donald Trump’s reckless plan to ban Muslims from entering our country betrays U.S. principles, will not work, and doesn’t address the threat of homegrown terrorism. His ideas are extreme at a time when we need to be smart. Muslims make up nearly one quarter of the global population. Banning them would tell more than a billion people that America is their enemy. It would play right into ISIS’s messaging and potentially lead to radicalization. It would make it impossible to use diplomacy and work with important Muslim allies. His reckless ideas are against our principles, against our Constitution, alienates allies, and does nothing to address the homegrown terrorist threat.

#3: Terrorists Traveling to the U.S.

Q: The terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels ignited fears in the U.S. that ISIS could use refugee status or the Visa Waiver Program to travel and carry out attacks here. What can we do to prevent terrorists from coming to the U.S.?

A: We can do this right and we can do this safely. Already, the U.S. thoroughly vets refugees entering the country. This includes a stringent 18-24 month vetting process. It's important that Americans know our process is much more thorough than any in Europe. The U.S. recently made changes in the Visa Waiver Program to require certain dual citizens to apply for a visa and go through additional screening before being allowed to enter the country. We recognized the problem and addressed it—we got smart and formed a bipartisan solution.

- The U.S. has an incredibly robust vetting system for processing refugee applications. Refugees go through an 18 to 24 month screening process with several U.S. agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the State Department, the Defense Department and the Department of Homeland Security. Terrorists are highly unlikely to use the refugee system to enter the U.S.—it would take too long and the vigorous vetting system would prevent them from getting in.
- After the Paris attacks, Congress changed the Visa Waiver Program to close remaining gaps. These changes prevent travelers with dual citizenship from Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, or travelers who have visited these countries in the last five years, from entering the U.S. without a visa and additional screening. This will ensure the Department of Homeland Security does a thorough investigation of these travelers who wish to enter the U.S. when they apply for a visa.
- The Department of Homeland Security and State Department must continue to be vigilant in screening all visa applicants to ensure potential terrorists do not enter our borders.

Donald Trump's mindless ban on Muslims entering the country is half-baked and reckless. Banning Muslims would tell 1.5 billion people that America is their enemy. It would potentially lead to radicalization and make the war on terror longer and harder to win. And, of course, it goes against every principle this nation was founded on.

#4: Syria

Q: The Syrian civil war and arrival of various militia groups and proxy fighters has allowed the region to deteriorate even further into chaos. What does a peaceful resolution in Syria look like? Do you believe the U.S. should enforce a no-fly zone in Syria to advance coalition efforts against ISIS?

A: Neither ISIS nor Assad can be allowed to hold power in Syria. We have to be tough and smart in dealing with them. We must intensify existing U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS and pave the way for a political transition from Bashar al Assad. Progress on maintaining a cease-fire and starting peace talks has been shaky and fighting continues. If the cease-fire and peace process collapses, a no-fly zone over northern Syria will allow civilians to get access to humanitarian assistance and make space to resume a peaceful resolution.

- The U.S. should not become directly entangled in Syria's civil war, but there are ways it can help stabilize the country and destroy ISIS.
- The U.S. must accelerate its efforts to defeat ISIS, which is a threat to regional stability and U.S. national security, and support the UN-led peace talks to end the civil war. Assad has terrorized his own people and must transition out of power.
- If peace talks do not progress, creating safe corridors through a no-fly zone will provide innocent Syrians access to humanitarian assistance, while providing the international community the time and space needed to find a political solution. This could also potentially reduce the refugee flow into Europe and provide the U.S. leverage over Russia and Assad in ending the civil war during the peace process.

I oppose Donald Trump's reckless plan to let ISIS and Assad fight each other. He fundamentally misunderstands foreign policy, arguing he would "bomb the hell out of ISIS" and that Russia would go after ISIS in Syria. Russia's withdrawal from Syria shows it is interested only in propping up Assad, not attacking ISIS. The alternative from Donald Trump is ineffectual: indiscriminate bombing, sending U.S. ground troops into a civil war, and making no distinction between innocent civilians and combatants.

#5: Iraq

Q: After the Obama administration withdrew troops from Iraq, the country spiraled into sectarian violence. Iraq was unable to defend its cities against ISIS, is still struggling to take back territory, and a large number of its citizens are protesting the government's policies. What can be done to stabilize Iraq?

A: The first step is leading coalition partners against ISIS with airstrikes and providing military assistance and training to Iraqi forces to take back territory from ISIS—which is what we are doing now. Going forward, the U.S. must increase security assistance, get the Iraqi government to form more inclusive policies, and help build Iraq's capacity to defend its borders.

- ISIS's hold on Iraqi territory shrank by 45%, with losses in Ramadi, Sinjar, and Tikrit, and they have not retaken any more land.
- U.S. and coalition forces have been training Iraqi military forces against ISIS since 2014. There are currently about 5,000 U.S. military advisers and special operation forces on the ground in Iraq, providing the necessary training to Iraqi forces to take back territory from ISIS, and mounting attacks on ISIS leaders.
- The Iraqi central government must maintain and encourage inclusive policies that don't alienate Iraqi Sunnis and Kurds. The U.S. has been providing Iraq with significant aid to boost their military forces and promote good governance. This assistance must increase to ensure Iraq doesn't fall along sectarian divides and has the capacity to secure its people going forward.

Donald Trump wants Iraq War III. He supports sending tens of thousands more U.S. ground troops to Iraq and putting our military in harm's way without an exit strategy. His reckless policies insult our Muslim allies who are fighting ISIS alongside the U.S. His flip-flopping between an isolationist foreign policy and committing to another ground war is dangerous.

#6: Libya

Q: Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocated for intervention in Libya and now it's a mess. U.S. intervention in Libya has led to chaos, which caused the attack against the U.S. facility in Benghazi, killing four Americans, and now there are over 6,500 ISIS fighters based there. Was intervention necessary?

A: Let's be clear: the Libyan people rose up against a vicious dictator who tried to massacre his own people. We did not turn our backs on the Libyan people. The U.S. doesn't stand by and let evil leaders get away with that, but we have to be tough and smart about it.

- In 2011, the Libyan people joined the wave of popular uprisings in the Middle East, but dictator Muammar Qaddafi threatened to kill all opposed to him. To prevent this, the U.S. and NATO allies enforced a no-fly zone over Libya and attacked Qaddafi's military positions.
- The U.S. has started carrying out airstrikes to destroy ISIS training camps and prevent them from setting up a new base in Libya. ISIS cannot be allowed to jeopardize Libya's political unification process.
- The new Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) is showing promise in uniting previously warring factions. Once it's on a firm footing, the U.S. and coalition partners should train Libyan forces to take on what's left of ISIS in Libya and secure the country from internal and external threats.

Donald Trump continues to flip-flop on Libya. Now he says he wanted to leave Qaddafi in place, but in 2011 he favored intervening on humanitarian grounds.⁵ His criticism of Secretary Clinton is baseless, and he has no coherent plan for Libya.

#7: Iran

Q: The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) does not do enough to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. What can the U.S. do to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon and threatening our regional partners? Why did the U.S. pay Iran ransom for American hostages?

A: We have to remain vigilant and hold Iran accountable for its destructive regional activities. The JCPOA is the best path forward to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. While imperfect, the deal extends Iran's breakout time of acquiring a nuclear weapon from two months to one year. For the next 25 years, Iran will undergo unprecedented and extensive monitoring and verification of the JCPOA and the U.S. will maintain its capability to re-impose sanctions or use a military option if Iran violates the agreement.

- Iran's repeated ballistic missile tests since the nuclear deal proves the deal was not an opening to an improved relationship with the West. The Obama administration imposed sanctions on Iran for its ballistic missile tests in January, but continued tests must not go unchecked. The UN Security Council must address this issue and hold Iran accountable for its hostile activities.
- Iran's destabilizing activities across the Middle East and ongoing support for terrorist proxies is unacceptable. Iran is still listed as a state sponsor of terrorism. The nuclear deal did not lift terrorism-related sanctions, so Iran will continue to be under extensive terrorism sanctions from the U.S.
- The Iran Nuclear Agreement isn't perfect, but it's going to keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon for decades. The deal gives IAEA inspectors the more access into Iran's nuclear program than ever before, and the international community will know—and have the capacity to react quickly—if Iran tries to breakout and acquire a nuclear bomb.
- The U.S. owed Iran money from a 1970s dispute. An international tribunal was bound to rule in Iran's favor, likely making the U.S. pay billions in interest. Instead, the U.S. settled the dispute and paid only \$1.7 billion. Because Iran can't touch the U.S. financial system, the money was paid in foreign currency. The bottom line is that we got the better end of the deal, and we were able to use this leverage to make sure Americans came home.

Let's be clear: Trump's reckless calls to redo the Iran nuclear deal is the first step toward blundering into the next disastrous and expensive ground war in the region. The international community will not commit to more years of negotiating when they are satisfied with the deal as is and Trump would only play the spoiler. Breaking the deal would blind the U.S. to what Iran is doing, allowing it to acquire a nuclear weapon and threaten our allies, especially Israel.

#8: Guantanamo

Q: The Obama administration sent Congress its plan to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. Should the U.S. close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp?

A: We should close Guantanamo Bay and prosecute detainees in federal courts, which are far more effective than the current process of trying detainees through military commissions. Detainees who are transferred to other countries or are released must not be able to rejoin the battlefield, and if they do, the U.S. will do everything possible to take them out.

- Only 61 detainees remain at Guantanamo. The annual cost to keep one prisoner at Guantanamo is more than \$7 million, compared to \$78,000 for a prisoner at a maximum security prison.⁶
- Indefinite detention at Guantanamo is not a sustainable policy and the Administration must work with Congress to develop safe means to close the facility and protect the homeland.
- Robert Hood, the former warden of the supermax security prison in Florence, Colorado, has said if the detainees were transferred to this facility from Guantanamo, they would be secure, stating, "From a former warden's point of view, it would be secure, they could be handled and there will be no impact on the community."⁷

Guantanamo Bay is a recruitment tool for terrorists and keeping it open will put Americans at risk, cost taxpayers money, and run counter to our values. Donald Trump's support for keeping Guantanamo open runs counter to humanitarian principles and U.S. national security interests.

#9: Afghanistan

Q: The White House recently announced that 8,400 U.S. troops will remain in Afghanistan instead of dropping to 5,500 by the end of 2016. Should the U.S. withdraw troops from Afghanistan?

A: We have a number of troops remaining in Afghanistan at the advice of our military commanders who are certain that the security situation requires it. We're winding down the war, but we have to be smart about it and continue monitoring the security situation and listening to our military leaders.

- Taliban insurgents have been increasingly successful in their attacks and the security situation in Afghanistan has been worsening.
- In the last few months, U.S. military officials assessed the security in Afghanistan and recommended the U.S. keep 8,400 troops in the country.
- We must continue to closely observe the security situation in Afghanistan to ensure the country does not once again become a safe haven for terrorists to attack our homeland.

Donald Trump is ill-informed on U.S.-Afghanistan policy. He said he was in favor of the U.S. getting involved in Afghanistan because it's next to nuclear-armed Pakistan – not because Afghanistan is where Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda was able to plan and carry out 9/11 from. Further, his reckless calls to indiscriminately bomb ISIS will backfire. Our enemies aren't Muslim civilians, who despise ISIS, so it's insane to kill them. That will only turn them against our cause and potentially lead to radicalization, turning our friends into enemies. Our enemies are the terrorists, and we should focus on taking them out.

#10: Russia

Q: Over the past few years, Russia has invaded Ukraine, propped up the regime of Bashar al Assad, hacked U.S. computer systems, and sought to undermine America's electoral process. How should the U.S. deal with an apparently emboldened Russia?

A: Russia is a major challenge. Russian President Vladimir Putin often relies on military force and covert influence campaigns to achieve his foreign policy objectives, and his authoritarian government can resist many forms of diplomatic and economic pressure. But Russia is an important international player in many global crises. We have to be tough with them in certain areas, like in Ukraine, while cooperating in other areas where there are mutual interests, like the Iran nuclear deal.

- To deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, we need to help Ukraine defend itself by sending more rotational U.S. forces to Europe and providing increased security assistance. The President's budget provides a tough and smart path forward in this area, quadrupling the funding for the European Reassurance Initiative.
- The U.S. must also maintain economic sanctions against Russia until it ceases support for Ukrainian separatists.
- In Syria, Russia is in the best position to convince Bashar al Assad to step down, opening a realistic path toward ending the civil war there and defeating ISIS permanently.
- The U.S. should impose targeted sanctions on and should prosecute Russian actors responsible for attacking U.S. computer systems. The U.S. should also classify electoral computer systems as "critical infrastructure" and devote more resources to defending them from cyberattacks.⁸
- Nuclear nonproliferation is an area of mutual interest for Russia and the U.S. Although cooperation has stalled in recent years, it will be necessary to secure nuclear stockpiles globally and limit the spread of nuclear weapons to other states and terrorist groups.

Donald Trump would let Russia fight ISIS and have a stronger influence in the Middle East at the expense of U.S. security. He is pro-Russia and pro-Putin, and we can't afford a president who thinks Putin will look out for American interests — especially when Russia is challenging our European allies. Trump wants to befriend a dictator who just sold weapons to Iran and supports Assad in Syria — a man who is responsible for massacring his own people. Trump's ideas are weak and dangerous for the U.S.

#11: China

Q: China is trying to challenge America all over the world, but especially in Asia. What should we do to stop China?

A: We need to make very clear to our allies and the rest of the world that there's a clear choice: our rules or China's rules. And our rules will ensure peace, growth, and independence for countries around the world. The U.S. will remain a steadfast supporter of those countries that stand up for democracy, fair competition, and diplomatic solutions to disputes. The U.S. must continue to push back against China's unfair or aggressive actions around the world:

- The U.S. has brought criminal charges against Chinese military units for cyber-espionage. China is thought to be behind attempts to hack U.S. companies for their intellectual property, and have made multiple attempts to gain access to U.S. government information.
- The U.S. is challenging China's attempts to expand their influence in the South China Seas by signing new basing agreements and stepping up U.S. Naval patrols to reassure our Asian allies we are there for them.
- The U.S. is leading a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) to set global trade rules to counteract a free-for-all vision of trade where labor and environmental practices would lose out.

Donald Trump opposes the TPP and would allow China to write the rules of commerce in Asia. He's in favor of placing tariffs on goods from China, which would increase the price of goods to Americans and could result in a reckless trade war. He wrongly claims China's attempts to expand its presence in the South China Sea is because they don't respect the U.S. or our President.

#12: NATO

Q: Russia continues to support and arm Ukrainian separatists in the country's eastern provinces, while Donald Trump has increasingly praised Russian President Vladimir Putin. What is the U.S. doing to help its NATO allies deter Russian aggression?

A: Donald Trump's stance on NATO is a threat to U.S. national security. From his veiled threat to not support a NATO ally that is attacked, to his campaigns' recent refusal to meet with the Ukrainian President, Donald Trump is attempting to unravel the strongest military alliance in history. But, the U.S. together with our European allies, have imposed harsh sanctions on Russia, strengthened Ukrainian defenses, and deployed U.S. military forces to Europe:

- U.S. and EU sanctions on Russia have punished the Russian economy, which shrank 3.8% last year.⁹
- The U.S. has given hundreds of millions of dollars to train Ukrainian soldiers and equip them with advanced technology.¹⁰
- The U.S. is rotating its best ground forces through the Baltic States and Poland, while the Pentagon is considering a permanent presence there.¹¹ The Air Force sent its most capable fighters to Germany and Romania, and the U.S. Army is moving hundreds of tanks and other armored vehicles into Eastern Europe.¹²
- The President's budget provides a tough and smart path forward in this area, quadrupling the funding for the European Reassurance Initiative.

Donald Trump has said NATO is obsolete and he has sided with Putin at a moment when Russia is threatening some of our closest allies. He supports pulling back the U.S. presence from Europe in order to save money because he trusts Putin. But Putin is playing Trump for a fool. A weaker Europe and a stronger Putin-led Russia is bad for America.

#13: Surveillance

Q: When it comes to surveillance and encryption, are you on the side of U.S. companies like Apple, or do you agree with government agencies like the FBI and NSA? Are you in favor of more privacy, or more security?

A: I reject the premise that it is an either-or matter, which feeds the adversarial tone that has dominated the debate, and which hurts everyone. Our number one goal should be to restore trust between government, companies, and the public.

- I support policies that can safeguard public safety, national security, data privacy, and data security.
- The government must identify and disrupt terrorists and criminals, and we should be able to do that without undermining the security of innocent individuals' data.
- Successful outcomes in the San Bernardino case and related cases in New York show that we can find solutions that satisfy all the interests in play.

#14: North Korea

Q: How should the U.S. respond to North Korea's September 9th nuclear test—its fifth test?

A: North Korea is the most isolated and repressive regime on the planet. In light of North Korea's fifth nuclear test, we must work closely with all of North Korea's neighbors, including Japan, South Korea, and China to prevent aggressive North Korean military actions from undermining the stability and economy of the region.

- North Korea's fifth nuclear test is a blatant violation of UN Security Council resolutions and threatens regional stability.
- The U.S. must continue securing our allies in the region and counter North Korea's aggressive behavior.
- We should work with China to develop an appropriate response to North Korea's continued belligerent behavior, one that addresses the nuclear tests and sets the stage for denuclearization.

Donald Trump seeks to weaken U.S. leadership in the world and abandon our allies, like South Korea and Japan. He supports the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region as a means to counter North Korea, which would further escalate tensions in the region and set a dangerous precedent.

#15: Border Security

Q: The U.S. has done nothing to stop undocumented immigrants from pouring across the U.S. border every day. Donald Trump has proposed building a wall across the U.S. southern border. How do you propose to stop this problem?

A: Donald Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric is un-American. The U.S. is a nation founded by immigrants who continue to help make America the greatest country in the world. Trump's xenophobic rants alienate our allies and embolden our adversaries. Moreover, his proposal to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it is naïve and ignores the facts about what we've done to dramatically enhance border security:

- In the last ten years, the Customs and Border Protection budget has increased by 75%.
- The number of agents at the border has doubled to more than 18,000, and illegal border crossings have been cut in half since 2008.¹³

Donald Trump's ridiculous idea to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it — which they have said they will not do—will not solve the underlying problem. He fails to understand the Obama administration has already taken action and successfully reduced the number of illegal border crossings. Still, the U.S. should increase efforts to bolster law enforcement in Central America. This includes adequately funding programs like the State Department's Regional Security Initiative that promote increased policing and judicial capacity.

#16: Cyber

Q: Experts worry that U.S. critical infrastructure is vulnerable to a cyberattack that could cripple major cities and possibly cause serious injury or death. How can we better protect against these threats?

A: Addressing cyber security as a national security matter requires a whole-of-government approach combining our nation's full technological, economic, diplomatic, and military power:

- Technologically, we need to improve the federal government's ability to hire sorely needed computer specialists by exempting certain cyber positions from the federal pay scale and offering more work flexibility.
- Economically, we should sanction foreign individuals known to have perpetrated cyberattacks against the U.S. government, freezing their assets and preventing banks that serve such individuals from doing business with U.S. banks.

- Judicially, we should indict and prosecute hackers who attack U.S. computer systems and steal sensitive data.
- Diplomatically, the U.S. should continue current efforts to develop international norms governing what kind of activities are acceptable in cyberspace, as well as building closer cyber cooperation with close allies.
- The U.S. should partner with the private sector, including major technology companies, to facilitate early detection and response to cyberattacks.

#17: Defense Spending

Q: Cuts in the defense budget made by the Obama administration have made the U.S. vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Budget cuts have gutted the military and put our nation in harm's way. Do you support cutting the defense budget?

A: What defense cuts are you talking about? The President is proposing bigger defense budgets than President Reagan did. This talk about a weak military is an absolute myth. We have, by leaps and bounds, the ablest, and most sophisticated military in the world.

- My #1 priority is keeping the American people safe. Because of that, I fully support the military's request for a 50% increase in funding for the fight to defeat ISIS. We have to use every tool at our disposal to defeat ISIS and keep Americans safe. That's why, in addition to the military, I'll fight for more funding for counterterrorism programs at the Department of Homeland Security, State Department, and the FBI.
- The debate over national security budgets should not be about how much we spend, it should be about having what's needed to keep us safe. We should be investing in the tools our troops need and use to address threats like ISIS, not wasting money on Cold War-era systems we don't use.
- Sequestration is a disaster. While Congress has used band-aids to lessen the pain to the military, I would fight to eliminate sequestration altogether, and give our military the financial resources and certainty they need to keep protecting the nation.

First, Donald Trump is wrong about our military and the defense budget. Second, Republican sequestration efforts are the biggest danger to our military's budget. Third, Donald Trump's reckless idea to build the military with less money is a fallacy. In a time of unprecedented threats ranging from ISIS, to North Korea, to Russian aggression in Ukraine, now is not the time to be cutting our defense budget.

#18: Terrorism in Europe

Q: Europe is grappling with a security crisis unlike ever before. What can be done to prevent terrorist attacks in Europe?

A: Turkey has to do more to close off its border with Syria and prevent terrorists from moving in and out of Europe. The U.S. has already established information-sharing and passenger database-sharing agreements with international partners to screen potential terrorists trying to reach the U.S. Europe must implement similar mechanisms to know if potential terrorists are traveling within its borders.

- Turkey has made significant strides in closing its border and preventing the movement of terrorists into and out of Europe from ISIS' stronghold in Syria. But Turkey must do more, including deploying additional troops, to fully secure its border, continuing its efforts to stop the movement of terrorists in and out of Syria, and sharing information with European counterparts about the movement of potential terrorists.
- After years of debate, the European Parliament finally passed a plan this year to allow European governments to share and analyze passenger information. This is a significant step forward in monitoring the movements of foreign terrorist fighters, but European governments must start implementing the plan quickly.
- Intelligence-sharing between European countries also remains a major gap when it comes to tracking terrorist movements. Increased cooperation is needed to help prevent attacks. U.S. counterterrorism officials have years of experience and can aid in facilitating this cooperation.

Donald Trump's foreign policy vision is reckless and self-centered. He would weaken American leadership in leaving Europe to Russia's influence and the spread of terrorism from ISIS. His response to terrorism abroad is to shut American borders and isolate the U.S. from the rest of the world. There are smart and tough ways to do this, but Donald Trump only resorts to reckless and rushed reactions.

#19: Yemen

Q: The Yemen civil war and intervention by Saudi Arabia and Iran has exacerbated an already-dreadful humanitarian crisis. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and now ISIS also pose a threat to the U.S. from Yemen. What should be done in Yemen? Why is the U.S. aiding Saudi Arabia's intervention when they've been responsible for so many civilian deaths?

A: The U.S. continues counterterrorism operations against AQAP in Yemen and is supporting diplomatic efforts to bring the Houthi rebels and government together for a peaceful resolution in Yemen. The U.S. provides Saudi Arabia logistical and intelligence support in their operations against the rebels, but Saudi Arabia must do more to prevent civilian casualties.

- The U.S. has carried out airstrikes against AQAP targets in Yemen since 2009. The U.S. must continue counterterrorism operations against both AQAP and ISIS in Yemen while supporting a peaceful resolution to the civil war.
- Saudi Arabia is a major U.S.-ally and contributes to the fight against terrorists, including ISIS. Indiscriminate bombing is unacceptable and if the humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by Saudi Arabia's inability to limit civilian deaths, the U.S. must reconsider aiding the Saudis' effort in Yemen.
- A ceasefire was reached in April, but faltered in recent months. U.S. negotiators are in the process of establishing a new ceasefire between the groups so that peace talks can resume.

Donald Trump's reckless policies would isolate the U.S. His call for withdrawing support to countries around the world would allow terrorist groups, like AQAP, to grow in power. A stable Yemen is in our national security interest and ending our counterterrorism operations there or abandoning a diplomatic solution would jeopardize the safety of Americans and our regional allies.

#20: Nuclear Asia

Q: Donald Trump has said that, if elected president, he would support allowing Japan and South Korea to develop nuclear weapons. Do you agree?

A: No. Donald Trump wants to undermine the most important national security interest we have: preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. This is a tough and smart policy the U.S. has been implementing in earnest since President Obama first came into office.

- North Korea recently tested its fifth nuclear bomb, threatening our allies in the region, and Donald Trump thinks the best response is to spread the use of nuclear weapons. The more nuclear weapons there are, the more likely it is that someone—including possibly a terrorist—will use one. This is why U.S. policy for decades has been to reduce global stockpiles of nuclear material.
- A South Korean or Japanese nuclear program would give Iran and other countries a perfect argument for why they should be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon, leading to a potential nuclear arms race.
- In the face of North Korea's fifth nuclear test, Senate Republicans have threatened to cut essential nuclear detection and verification funding for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization Preparatory Commission, undermining our national security.¹⁴

#21: Bowe Bergdahl Release

Q: Do you support President's Obama's decision to trade five senior Taliban leaders for Bowe Bergdahl, who is now standing trial for desertion? What would you say to the families of the soldiers who died searching for Bergdahl?

A: The U.S. will do whatever it takes to rescue the men and women who serve our country. This commitment is not only our moral duty, but also a critical component of an all-volunteer force.

- We had to get Bergdahl back to know what happened to him. To have left him behind just because some people claimed he deserted, without knowing the truth, would have been the same as condemning any criminal without a trial.
- As President Obama said, "The U.S. has always had a pretty sacred rule, and that is: we don't leave our men or women in uniform behind."¹⁵

Donald Trump shows a complete lack of respect for U.S. military servicemen and women. He's said Senator John McCain—a former Navy pilot who was tortured in Vietnam—isn't a war hero because he was captured. Trump's statements are a grave disservice to the brave men and women who fight for our country and he is not fit to be commander-in-chief.

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Talking Points for the Top Counterterrorism Issues

Polling from early September, 2016 shows national security and terrorism is a top priority for voters.¹ In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Orlando, Paris, San Bernardino, Brussels, and Nice, countering terrorism will continue to be a major issue of concern and one that needs to be effectively addressed. As the election season goes on, policymakers must respond to the fundamental questions on U.S. counterterrorism policy. In this memo, we provide answers to and talking points on the most pressing questions likely to be asked on U.S. counterterrorism efforts. This memo reviews some of the same questions from our “Talking Points for the Top National Security Issues” memo, but focuses more specifically on counterterrorism. Also included in the Debate Book under the “Politics of National Security” section is a memo that explains what public opinion is on these questions.

#1: Strategy to Defeat ISIS

Q: ISIS has built up its forces and gained ground in Iraq and Syria since 2014. What is the best strategy to defeat ISIS?

A: Americans are rightly concerned about ISIS and the awful things they do and stand for. As Americans see and hear more about this terrorist group, here is what they also need to know: The U.S. has a tough and smart strategy to degrade and defeat ISIS. Strikes against ISIS continue to increase, the Iraqi government has regained the key cities of Ramadi, Sinjar, and Tikrit from the terrorists, and U.S. forces have killed or captured key ISIS leaders.

- The U.S. is leading a 66 nation coalition against ISIS through airstrikes and assisting local ground forces.
- Coalition forces are averaging 20 airstrikes per day against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, killing more than 45,000² ISIS fighters since strikes began in 2014.
- Going forward, the U.S. must accelerate its efforts in leading the coalition against ISIS through airstrikes on ISIS targets, as well as assisting Iraqi security forces and vetted Syrian opposition groups to push back ISIS on the ground.

These efforts are working, but it will take time. On the other hand, there is a reckless way to go: Donald Trump wants to indiscriminately bomb the Middle East and send U.S. troops into a civil war. This hasn't been done since World War II. These ideas would unnecessarily put our military servicemen and women in harm's way and would result in civilian casualties in the Middle East.

#2: U.S. Ground Troops Against ISIS

Q: ISIS continues to hold significant areas of Iraq and Syria and it's clear that airstrikes alone are not making enough of an impact to destroy them. Should the U.S. send in ground troops to dismantle and defeat ISIS?

A: The question is: should the U.S. get entangled in a civil war? Americans are angry and fearful of ISIS because they are despicable terrorists. But here is what they need to know: The U.S. is enforcing a tough and smart strategy by leading coalition airstrikes, training local ground forces to take the fight to ISIS, and using U.S. special operations forces for targeted raids. Getting involved in a civil war just won't work. It's expensive, costs lives, and will leave us in worse shape. We should continue attacking ISIS from the air and enabling local forces to defeat ISIS on the ground.

- We can target and eliminate terrorist threats without getting dragged into a civil war.
- This is not our fight alone. Our Arab partners must also provide the resources to stabilize the region against terrorists.
- Combined with increased U.S. special operations forces and intensified coalition airstrikes, regional ground forces will have the tools necessary to push back and defeat ISIS on the ground.
- I oppose the reckless position of Donald Trump, who wants to send U.S. ground troops into a civil war and leave our military without an exit strategy.

#3: Homegrown Terrorists

Q: Recent domestic terrorist attacks, like in Orlando, New York, and New Jersey, have caused alarm about the threat ISIS can play in influencing homegrown terrorists. What should be done to prevent future terrorist attacks in the United States?

A: We will continue to do everything possible to seek out and stop homegrown terror in its tracks. We'll cut off ISIS propaganda, prevent terrorist recruitment, and partner with local leaders to safeguard their communities.

- Our number one priority is protecting Americans. Of course we have to improve our defense of the homeland. State and local law enforcement agencies on the frontlines need increased resources, training, and better coordination to fight domestic terrorism.
- We need a strategy, working alongside social media companies, which prevents ISIS recruitment and blocks their online propaganda.
- We should also develop a local partnership strategy that brings together community leaders, law enforcement, and civil society to prevent homegrown terrorism in at-risk communities.
- We must remember that the numbers of Americans becoming influenced by ISIS ideology and traveling to Iraq and Syria are few – about 250 – especially compared to how many Europeans are joining ISIS – at about 5,000.³

Now, there are some other ideas, like Donald Trump's reckless position to ban Muslims from entering our country, that not only betray U.S. principles, but will not work. It's extreme at a time when we need to be smart. Muslims make up nearly one quarter of the global population. Banning them would alienate this entire group and potentially lead to radicalization. It would make it impossible to use diplomacy and work with important Muslim allies like King Abdullah of Jordan and activist Malala Yousafzai from entering our country. We need allies like these to win this fight against ISIS; we can't make it impossible to work with the U.S. Citizens from major Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia would also be banned. His support for proposals to require Muslim-Americans to carry identification labeling them with their religion would make our Founding Fathers spin in their graves. His reckless ideas are against our principles, against our Constitution, alienate allies, and won't defeat ISIS.

#4: No-Fly Zone

Q: Some experts have suggested a no-fly zone over Syria would advance U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS. Do you believe the U.S. should enforce a no-fly zone?

A: Yes, I support it if the current attempts at a ceasefire fail and the peace process collapses. It's a perfect example of a tough and smart strategy. A no-fly zone over northern Syria allows civilians to get access to humanitarian assistance. That helps us in this fight against ISIS because chaos and starvation in Syria is what the terrorists want.

- Enforcing a no-fly zone would let civilians get humanitarian care that has been blocked by Russia and the Assad regime. This could also potentially reduce the refugee flow into Europe.
- A no-fly zone must be coordinated with local ground forces to prevent ISIS and government forces on the ground from blocking access to humanitarian assistance.
- In addition, a no-fly zone could provide the U.S. leverage over Russia and Assad in ending the civil war during the peace process.

The alternative from Donald Trump is reckless and ineffectual: indiscriminate bombing, sending U.S. ground troops into a civil war, and making no distinction between innocent civilians and combatants.

#5: Syria

Q: The ongoing Syrian civil war and arrival of various militia groups and proxy fighters has allowed the region to deteriorate even further into chaos. How can we stabilize Syria? Should Bashar al-Assad leave power?

A: Neither ISIS nor Assad can be allowed to hold power in Syria. We have to be tough and smart in dealing with them. We must intensify existing U.S. efforts to defeat ISIS and pave the way for a political transition away from Assad.

- The U.S. should not become directly entangled in Syria's civil war, but there are many ways it can help stabilize the country and destroy ISIS.
- The civil war in Syria has claimed over 250,000 lives, created more than 4 million refugees and left 6.6 million displaced within Syria. It is becoming increasingly more complex.
- The U.S. must first accelerate its efforts to defeat ISIS, which is a threat to regional stability and U.S. national security.

- UN-led peace talks provide an opportunity for a political and peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria. However, if they collapse, creating safe corridors through a no-fly zone will provide innocent Syrians access to humanitarian assistance, while providing the international community the time and space needed to find a political solution.

I oppose Donald Trump's reckless suggestion to let ISIS and Assad fight each other and let the U.S. pick up the pieces. He fundamentally misunderstands foreign policy, arguing he would "bomb the hell out of ISIS"⁴ and that Russia would go after ISIS in Syria. Russia's withdrawal from Syria shows it is interested only in propping up Assad, not attacking ISIS.

#6: AUMF

Q: The President has called on Congress to pass a new Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against ISIS. But Congress has stalled on this front, and the President continues to rely on the authority provided by previous authorizations. Should Congress pass a new AUMF to address ISIS?

A: Yes, this is essential to whether our future policy will be tough and smart or reckless and ineffectual. Here's the way we should do it: we should specifically authorize U.S. action against ISIS, limit it to the battlefield, include reporting requirements to Congress, and have an expiration date with the possibility of renewal.

- ISIS is a serious threat to the U.S. and its allies. The Administration has said defeating ISIS will be a long-term effort and it is important that Congress weighs in.
- Congress must pass a new AUMF, one that specifically addresses ISIS. Our troops in the field need to know that Congress has their backs against ISIS and that the country is united in this effort.
- Congress should also include a broader set of policy objectives in the region to accompany the AUMF so the U.S. has a plan to ensure long-term stability in the region after the defeat of ISIS.

I oppose the reckless position of Donald Trump, who wants to indiscriminately bomb the region, kill innocent civilians, and send U.S. ground troops into a civil war. He ignores the rule of law and has no strategy in place to defeat ISIS, encourage stability in the region, or work with Congress in authorizing U.S. action.

#7: Iraq

Q: After the Obama Administration withdrew troops from Iraq, the country spiraled into sectarian violence. Iraq was unable to defend its cities against ISIS and is still struggling to take back territory. What should the U.S. do to stabilize Iraq?

A: We must lead coalition partners against ISIS with airstrikes and providing military assistance and training to Iraqi forces to take back territory from ISIS – which is what we are doing now. Going forward, the U.S. must increase security assistance, get the Iraqi government to stop discriminating against certain Muslim sects, and help build Iraq's capacity to defend its borders.

- ISIS's hold on Iraqi territory shrunk by 45%, with losses in Ramadi, Sinjar, and Tikrit, and they have not retaken any more land.
- U.S. and coalition forces have been training Iraqi military forces against ISIS since 2014. There are currently about 5,000 U.S. military advisers and special operation forces on the ground in Iraq, providing the necessary training to Iraqi forces to take back territory from ISIS, and mounting attacks on ISIS leaders.
- The Iraqi central government must maintain and encourage inclusive policies that don't alienate Iraqi Sunnis and Kurds. The U.S. has been providing Iraq with significant aid to boost their military forces and promote good governance. This assistance will have to be increased to ensure Iraq doesn't fall along sectarian divides and has the capacity to secure its people going forward.

I oppose the reckless position of Donald Trump, who supports sending U.S. ground troops in Iraq and putting our military in harm's way. His reckless policies unnecessarily alienate and insult our Muslim allies who are fighting ISIS alongside the U.S.

#8: Arming Moderate Forces Against ISIS

Q: There are many forces fighting against ISIS, like the Kurdish Peshmerga and moderate opposition groups, who can be the driving force behind ISIS's defeat. Why isn't the U.S. doing more to arm these groups against ISIS?

A: The U.S. is arming many of those groups, but only those who have been vetted, implementing a tough and smart strategy by providing them weapons, equipment, and training. Once again, Republicans argue we need to do things we are already doing.

- The U.S. is currently providing weapons and equipment to vetted Syrian opposition groups and arming Kurdish Peshmerga forces in coordination with Iraq and other coalition forces.
- There are many groups on the ground fighting ISIS, but the U.S. needs to be careful in vetting which forces receive arms and training. Some opposition groups have extremist elements and varying priorities in Iraq and Syria.
- The U.S. must continue to provide these carefully vetted groups the resources they need to defeat ISIS.

I oppose the reckless suggestions made by Donald Trump to indiscriminately bomb the region and inflict civilian casualties. I do not support his call for putting U.S. ground troops in the Middle East to take out ISIS.

#9: Refugees

Q: The terrorist attacks in Paris ignited fears in the U.S. that ISIS could use refugee status to travel and carry out attacks here. Should we stop allowing refugees to enter the U.S?

A: We can do this right and we can do this safely. Already, the U.S. thoroughly vets refugees to enter the country, including a stringent 18-24 month vetting process. It's important that Americans know that we don't do this in any way like Europe.

- It's understandable that Americans are afraid. The Paris attacks were a heinous and reprehensible attack on innocent civilians.
- The U.S. has an incredibly robust vetting system for processing refugee applications. Refugees go through an 18 to 24 month screening process with several U.S. agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the State Department, the Defense Department and the Homeland Security Department.
- Terrorists are highly unlikely to use the refugee system to enter the U.S.—it would take too long and the vigorous vetting system would prevent them from getting in.

Donald Trump's proposed ban on Muslims is meant to incite hysteria, not solve any problems. These are desperate people, fleeing near certain death, rape, and torture at the hands of our real enemy: ISIS. Almost one-quarter of the global population is Muslim. We must not alienate an entire religious group, one that also happens to be our most important ally in fighting terrorism.

#10: Visa Waiver Program

Q: The Visa Waiver Program allows terrorists in Europe to easily travel to the U.S. without a visa. What is being done to address this gap in security?

A: We've tightened this up. The U.S. is implementing, through recent changes in the Visa Waiver Program, a requirement for certain dual citizens to apply for a visa and go through additional screening before being allowed to enter the country. We recognized the problem and we didn't get hysterical—we got smart and formed a bipartisan solution.

- After the Paris attacks, Congress changed the Visa Waiver Program to close these gaps.
- These changes prevent travelers with dual citizenship from Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, or travelers who have visited these countries in the last five years, from entering the U.S. without a visa and additional screening. This will ensure the Department of Homeland Security does a thorough investigation of these travelers who wish to enter the U.S. when they apply for a visa.
- The Department of Homeland Security and State Department must continue to be vigilant in screening all visa applicants to ensure potential terrorists do not enter our borders.

I oppose Donald Trump's reckless ban on Muslims from entering the country. Banning Muslims would disrupt U.S. diplomacy, hurt tourism, go against our principles, and prevent Muslims like King Abdullah of Jordan and activist Malala Yousafzai from entering our country. Citizens from countries like Malaysia and Indonesia would be banned from entering the U.S. Donald Trump's reckless ideas will only hurt U.S. interests

#11: ISIS in Libya

Q: ISIS has spread to Libya, with estimates of 6,500 fighters. Do you support U.S. action against ISIS in Libya?

A: We must deny ISIS safe havens from which they can attack the U.S. Right now we are hitting ISIS in Libya with airstrikes and drone operations in order to prevent just that.

- U.S. and coalition forces should continue targeted airstrikes to destroy ISIS training camps and prevent them from carrying out attacks across the region and establishing a safe haven in Libya.
- ISIS cannot be allowed to jeopardize Libya's political unification process. The UN-backed unity government is key to Libya's stability and will contribute to ISIS's ultimate defeat in Libya.

- This strategy has proven to be successful in pushing back ISIS gains in Libya, especially in the ISIS stronghold, Sirte. The U.S. and unity government forces must continue this momentum to fully defeat ISIS in Libya.

This is another country that Donald Trump would be indiscriminately bombing to get at ISIS, further draining U.S. resources across the Middle East and North Africa, and likely hitting innocent civilians. It's reckless and ineffectual.

#12: Terrorists and Guns

Q: Do you support changing our gun laws to prohibit anyone on a terrorist watch-list from purchasing or receiving a firearm?

A: If you buy a gun, you should go through a background check. What's so hard about that? Nearly 24 million people underwent one last year. It doesn't infringe on anyone's rights; let's close the loophole that allows terrorists and criminals to sidestep it. That is completely consistent with Second Amendment rights, which I support strongly.

- Right now, a known or suspected terrorist can purchase a gun from a dealer, at a gun show, or online. Al Qaeda has called on potential recruits in the U.S. to exploit this weakness, telling them "You can go down to a gun show at the local convention center...what are you waiting for?"⁵
- No fly, no buy: If we think someone is too dangerous to fly, we should not let them buy a deadly weapon.
- Congress must pass a law preventing those on terrorist watch-lists from buying weapons, and close loopholes that allow them to buy them online or at gun shows without background checks.

Unlike Donald Trump, I don't believe the Second Amendment extends to terrorists, criminals, and those who are dangerously mentally ill.

#13: Al Qaeda

Q: The Administration claims we've nearly defeated al Qaeda, but the organization maintains a strong presence in Yemen, has an affiliate amid the civil war in Syria, and may have inspired the recent New York City bomber. Is al Qaeda still a threat against the United States?

A: Yes, al Qaeda is a threat and we can't let up, but let's be clear: al Qaeda has been diminished. It is a shadow of its former self because we've been tough and smart. Bin Laden is dead. We've taken out many of their top leaders. We've riddled them with drone strikes. But we're not going to let up on them or on ISIS.

- Since 9/11, the U.S. killed Osama bin Laden, detained 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and neutralized many al Qaeda lieutenants. Effective military action against al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan has wiped out its core leaders and destroyed their safe havens.
- The U.S. continues to carry out operations against al Qaeda around the world. In February, a U.S. drone strike killed several Al Qaeda fighters in Yemen, including a leading field commander. In 2015, the U.S. killed several al Qaeda leadership figures, including the second in command, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, who was in charge of al Qaeda's operations in Yemen.
- We must continue to increase the pressure and conduct operations against al Qaeda and their affiliates.

Donald Trump's reckless remarks against Muslims is hurting us. He is now a recruitment tool for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. He fundamentally misunderstands foreign policy, arguing he would "bomb the hell out of ISIS,"⁶ which would treat civilians and terrorists alike, and actually strengthen ISIS by driving more recruits to their cause.

#14: Afghanistan

Q: The White House recently announced that 8,400 U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan instead of decreasing to 5,500. Should the U.S. withdraw troops from Afghanistan?

A: We have a small number of troops remaining in Afghanistan at the advice of our military commanders who are certain that the security situation requires it. We're winding down the war, but we have to be smart about it and continue monitoring the security situation and listening to our military leaders.

- Taliban insurgents have been increasingly successful in their attacks and the security situation in Afghanistan has been worsening.
- In the past few months, U.S. military officials assessed the security in Afghanistan and recommended that the U.S. maintain troops in Afghanistan.
- We need to closely observe the security situation in Afghanistan to fully assess security needs on the ground.

I oppose the reckless calls by Donald Trump to "bomb the hell out of ISIS,"⁷ which would likely result in civilian deaths and alienate our most effective allies in the fight against ISIS.

#15: Drones

Q: There are reports that the Obama Administration has been using drones to eliminate terrorist targets in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia for several years. Do you support the continued use of targeted drone strikes to kill terrorists?

A: Yes, because it is tough and smart. We have the surgical ability to take out terrorists without killing civilians. That's because we have the greatest and most sophisticated military in the world. It's putting our enemies on the defensive. Let's stick with it.

- Drone strikes, in combination with good intelligence, are an effective way to kill terrorists and limit civilian casualties.
- These strikes are entirely different from the indiscriminate carpet bombing Republicans are calling for, which would incur civilian casualties.
- Drone strikes allow us to keep our troops out of harm's way while ensuring U.S. national security, limiting civilian deaths, and saving U.S. taxpayers money.
- We do need more transparency, and so I believe drone operations should be moved from the CIA to the Defense Department.

I oppose the reckless call by Donald Trump to indiscriminately bomb ISIS—which would likely result in civilian deaths—and put U.S. ground troops in harm's way. Trump fundamentally misunderstands U.S. military capabilities and how modern weapons have evolved.

#16: Defense Budget

Q: Cuts in the defense budget made by the Obama Administration have made the U.S. vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Budget cuts have gutted the military and put our nation in harm's way. Do you support cutting the defense budget?

A: What defense cuts are you talking about? This year's budget is bigger than last year's. The President is proposing bigger defense budgets than President Reagan did. This talk about a weak military is an absolute myth. We have, by leaps and bounds, the largest, ablest, and most sophisticated military in history.

- I fully support the military's request for a 50% increase in funding for the fight to defeat ISIS. We have to use every tool at our disposal to defeat ISIS and keep Americans safe. That's why, in addition to the military, I'll fight for more funding for counterterrorism programs at the Department of Homeland Security, State Department, and the FBI.

- The debate over national security budgets should not be about how much we spend, it should be about having what's needed to keep us safe. We should be investing in the tools our troops need and use today to address threats like ISIS, not wasting money on Cold War-era systems we don't use.
- I believe that sequestration is terrible. While Congress has used band-aids to lessen the pain to the military, I would fight to eliminate sequestration altogether, and give our military the financial resources and certainty they need to keep protecting the nation.
- The bottom line is we must continue to maintain a strong defense and ensure our forces have the resources to protect the homeland and defeat terrorists.

First, Donald Trump is wrong about our military and the defense budget. Second, Republican sequestration efforts are the biggest danger to future spending. Third, Donald Trump's reckless ideas to build the military with less money are a fallacy. In a time of competing threats ranging from ISIS, to North Korea, to Russian aggression in Ukraine, now is not the time to be cutting our defense budget.

#17: Torture

Q: Donald Trump has said he'd encourage the use of water-boarding and other harsh interrogation methods against terror suspects. Do you support torture?

A: Of course it's torture and we should never use it to gather intelligence. Torture works in movies, but it doesn't work in real life. That's not my opinion, that's what our intelligence and military experts say. People who have been tortured have given false information to make the torture stop. And we don't find out the information is bad until after we've spent millions of dollars and lost lives chasing false leads.

Whether it's on humanitarian grounds or just being smart about winning the war on terror, I'm opposed to torture.

- Water-boarding is torture because it inflicts "severe mental pain or suffering,"⁸ which distorts memories and is unnecessarily cruel. I agree with our military and intelligence experts that we should never use it to gather intelligence.
- Torture doesn't work. We get much more reliable information from standard interrogations conducted by our experienced career interrogators.
- In addition, torture fundamentally contradicts the Constitution and our values. It harms our worldwide reputation, which is a key component of American strength. By torturing, the U.S. throws its lot in with Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

#18: Benghazi

Q: Administration critics claim the White House and Secretary Clinton misled the public about the Benghazi attacks that killed four Americans, including the U.S. Ambassador. Do you think there was a cover-up?

A: I think it's a shame that this tragedy has become so political. There was no cover up. The U.S. State Department has implemented independent recommendations to improve security for our diplomats and prevent this from happening again. It takes a lot of courage to be in our diplomatic corps around the world. We must do everything possible to keep our people safe.

- There was no cover-up. Ten congressional committees have investigated the Benghazi attacks and provided reports and recommendations. There have been 32 hearings in Congress addressing the issue.
- An independent group of experts—the Accountability Review Board—provided recommendations to the State Department in the aftermath of the Benghazi attacks to ensure the safety of American diplomats and enhance the security of our diplomatic facilities abroad.
- The State Department implemented every single one of these recommendations right away. It's time to move beyond partisan finger-pointing and focus on solutions that prevent a future attack.

These excessive investigations into the Benghazi attacks is evidence that Washington is broken and too partisan. We should focus on everything we can do to prevent this from happening. Enough of the hearings.

#19: Clinton Intervening in Libya

Q: Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocated for intervention in Libya and now it's a mess. U.S. intervention in Libya has led to chaos, infighting among different groups, and now there are over 6,500 ISIS fighters based there. Is Secretary Clinton to blame for the chaos in Libya now?

A: Let's be clear: the Libyan people rose up against a vicious dictator who tried to massacre his own people. We did not turn our backs on the Libyan people. The U.S. doesn't stand by and let evil leaders get away with that, but we have to be tough and smart about it.

- In 2011, the Libyan people joined the wave of popular uprisings in the Middle East, but dictator Muammar Qaddafi threatened to kill all opposed to him.
- To prevent this, the U.S. and NATO allies enforced a no-fly zone over Libya and attacked Qaddafi's military positions.

- The U.S. has been carrying out airstrikes to destroy ISIS training camps and prevent them from setting up a new base in Libya while Libyan forces have been advancing against ISIS on the ground.

Donald Trump says he wanted to leave Qaddafi in place. Tell that to the Pan Am Flight 103 families and the victims of the Berlin nightclub attack. His criticism of Secretary Clinton is baseless. Donald Trump should listen to his own advice when he argued in favor of intervening in Libya in 2011 on humanitarian grounds.⁹

#20: Iranian Sponsored Terrorism

Q: Iran received billions in sanctions relief under the nuclear agreement. Won't Iran use these unfrozen assets to finance terrorist proxies and promote regional instability? Why did the U.S. pay Iran ransom for American hostages—providing money that could be used to sponsor terrorism?

A: The U.S. is still holding Iran accountable for its terrorism activities. Iran is still listed as a state sponsor of terrorism and will continue to be under extensive terrorism sanctions from the U.S. We have to remain vigilant, enforcing a tough and smart strategy to hold Iran accountable for its destructive regional activities.

- Recent elections in Iran are a small step forward on a long path to opening moderate voices.
- Iran's economy is struggling. Most of this money will sit in foreign banks to prevent inflation in Iran.
- The country owes more than \$50 billion of this to debt payments and various infrastructure projects. Iran simply doesn't have the capacity to funnel all this money to terrorists at the expense of its own economic recovery.
- The U.S. owed Iran money from a 1970s dispute. An international tribunal was bound to rule in Iran's favor, likely making the U.S. pay billions in interest. Instead, the U.S. settled the dispute and paid only \$1.7 billion. Because Iran can't touch the U.S. financial system, the money was paid in foreign currency. The bottom line is that we got the better end of the deal, and we were able to use this leverage to make sure Americans came home.

Trump's reckless call to break the Iran nuclear agreement could be a prelude to the next disastrous and expensive ground war in the region. And it would blind the U.S. to what Iran is doing, allowing it to acquire a nuclear weapon and threaten our allies, especially Israel.

#21: Closing Guantanamo

Q: The Administration has sent Congress its plan to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. There are many concerns over where these detainees should be transferred to, their potential return to terrorist activities, and whether they should be transferred to U.S. prison facilities. Should the U.S. close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp?

A: We should close Guantanamo Bay and prosecute detainees in federal courts, which are far more effective than the current process of trying detainees through military commissions. Detainees who are transferred to other countries or are released must not be able to rejoin the battlefield, but if they do, the U.S. will reserve the capability to take them out.

- Only 61 detainees remain at Guantanamo. The annual cost to keep one prisoner at Guantanamo is more than \$7 million, compared to \$78,000 for a prisoner at a maximum security prison.¹⁰
- Indefinite detention at Guantanamo is not a sustainable policy and the Administration must work with Congress to develop safe means to close the facility and protect the homeland.
- Robert Hood, the former warden of the supermax security prison in Florence, Colorado, has said if the detainees were transferred to this facility from Guantanamo, they would be secure, stating, “From a former warden’s point of view, it would be secure, they could be handled and there will be no impact on the community.”¹¹

Guantanamo Bay is a recruitment tool for terrorists and keeping it open will put Americans at risk, cost taxpayers money, and run counter to our values.

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The Plan to Combat Terrorism

Overview

The threat ISIS poses in the Middle East and fears of homegrown terrorist attacks in the U.S. will keep national security and terrorism issues at the forefront for 2016. The public wants to know their government is working to keep them safe from terrorism but doesn't support extreme and reckless proposals. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump advocates policies contrary to American values by threatening indiscriminate bombing and bans on Muslim immigrants.¹ Yet the public fears current policies might not be enough to address the terrorist threat.

Policymakers should embrace a tough and smart approach to defeating ISIS. They must show their strategy will eliminate the threat of terrorism without going too far and putting the United States on a long-term war footing. They should be clear about their four-part strategy to stop terrorists at home and abroad, right now and in the future.

1. Prevent the Immediate Threat

The ability of ISIS and other terrorist groups to influence potential recruits within the United States could prove devastating. To address this threat in the near-term, the United States must protect our communities, prevent terrorists from entering our country, and keep guns out of terrorist hands.

Protect Communities

Our local agencies need to be fully prepared, trained, coordinated, and funded to protect Americans against ISIS and other terrorist threats on the homeland. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is on the frontlines at the federal level, protecting Americans from these threats, and will require increased funding as the threat continues. The Department must work hand-in-hand with local law enforcement, the intelligence community, and the National Counterterrorism Center to ensure all levels of first responders and agents have the information and training necessary to prevent and respond to a terrorist attack on U.S. soil. Congress will need to continue providing increased funding to these agencies to make sure the U.S. is not vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association should establish a joint task force on counterterrorism that works with the federal government to address gaps in security. This would allow local leaders

and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to share best practices in strengthening communities, identify and address shortfalls in funding and training, enhance training of local law enforcement, and further develop federal-city relationships.

These measures taken together will enable our local agencies to avert an attack while preparing for the worst. This short-term plan will lessen the immediate threat that ISIS and other terrorists pose to Americans on the homeland.

Stop Terrorists from Entering the U.S.

Until recently, the Visa Waiver Program allowed citizens of 38 participating countries to enter the United States without a visa.² The heinous terrorist attacks in Paris revealed how foreign terrorists might exploit the Visa Waiver Program to enter the United States undetected. The Administration worked with Congress to fix this vulnerability, changing the program to require that any citizen of a participating country who is also a citizen of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen must now apply for a visa before traveling to the United States.³ Those who have been to any of these countries in the last five years are also now required to apply for a visa. These applicants will undergo an interview, fingerprinting, and screening by the U.S. State Department to determine if they should be allowed to enter the United States. In addition, there are now tighter information-sharing requirements between the U.S. and the 38 participating countries. Changing this program was essential, adding another layer in travel regulations to prevent potential terrorists from reaching our shores.

Early media reports suggested that Syrian refugees were involved in the Paris attacks, and although this was not confirmed, it sparked a debate in the United States to ban the entry of refugees. The U.S. has an incredibly robust vetting system in place for processing refugee applications compared to Europe. For the United States, applicants go through the most thorough and stringent vetting, with an 18 to 24 month screening process before arriving to the country. Syrian refugees in particular go through a heightened level of screening.⁴ Several agencies are involved in reviewing each applicant, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the U.S. State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the National Counterterrorism Center.⁵ Interviews are conducted,



Areas in which the United States conducts operations against terrorist groups, including ISIS and al Qaeda.

biometric data is compiled, and background information is cross-checked against terrorist databases. A year after they arrive to the U.S. – if they are approved by U.S. agencies through this vetting process – refugees are required to apply for a green card, beginning another round of security vetting.⁶ A foreign terrorist is unlikely to try to use this stringent process to enter the United States.

One of the San Bernardino terrorists arrived to the United States through a K-1 visa, or the “fiancée visa.” The screening process for these visas typically takes about six to nine months, and involves an extensive background check and security investigation.⁷ Despite this vetting, she was still able to enter the country and carry out the attack. The Administration has ordered a review of the K-1 visa program at the U.S. Homeland Security and State Departments to address gaps in this program. In addition, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has begun a pilot program to review K-1 visa applicants’ social media accounts as part of the vetting process.⁸

Going forward, more can be done to ensure terrorists are unable to enter the United States. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security should send agents to countries at high-risk of terrorist activity to provide advanced screening of visa applicants. Increased information-sharing between intelligence agencies will give countries a better grasp of the foreign terrorist fighter problem, their movements, and how to stop them from entering the United States. To address potential security gaps in the visa application process, Congress can task the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the programs, including the fiancée visa, and provide an assessment to identify ways for Congress to address any shortcomings.

Keep Guns Out of Terrorist Hands

Lawmakers must protect Americans against would-be terrorists who are already in the United States. The GAO uncovered that between February 2004 and December 2014, people on the FBI’s terror watch list underwent 2,233 background checks when trying to purchase firearms or explosives. But because there’s no law preventing them from buying a gun, 91% – 2,043 of these cases – were able to purchase a gun.⁹ Those who U.S. experts deem too dangerous to fly should be prevented from having weapons. This is not a partisan issue. Congress should enact common-sense legislation to prevent terrorists from buying guns by closing up the cracks in our gun laws through which they slip to prevent terrorist attacks against Americans.¹⁰

The United States should also expand background checks to all stranger-to-stranger gun purchases in order to close loopholes that allow the purchase of weapons anonymously online and at gun shows. Terrorists know they can purchase weapons in cash at gun shows or online from total strangers, without showing any identification, leaving no record of the purchase, and never passing a background check.

Al Qaeda has called on recruits to exploit this weakness in our gun laws, telling them “You can go down to a gun show at the local convention center... what are you waiting for?”¹¹

Expanding background checks is a sensible measure that would add another layer of protection for Americans from potential terrorists without infringing on the rights of responsible gun-owners to buy guns.

2. Destroy ISIS Abroad

In the near-term, there are several ways the U.S. can ramp up its efforts to destroy ISIS, secure our national interests, and move toward regional stability. The U.S. should intensify coalition efforts by increasing airstrikes, enforcing a no-fly zone if the Syrian peace process collapses, and adding U.S. special operations forces on the ground to assist local ground forces. These local forces must be increased to take the fight against ISIS on the ground. Congress must also do its part and pass an authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) against ISIS.

The United States and coalition members have been attacking ISIS targets since 2014. Jointly, over 15,000 airstrikes have been conducted in Iraq and Syria. Over 30,000 ISIS targets have been damaged or destroyed, including oil infrastructure, combat positions, and tanks. The U.S. has spent more than \$9.3 billion since operations against ISIS began in August 2014 and there are currently about 5,000 U.S. military service members on the ground, primarily serving as advisers to regional forces.¹² In recent months, the U.S. and our coalition partners have accelerated this campaign:

- ISIS lost control of Ramadi to Iraqi forces in December.
- ISIS has lost 45% of the territory it once controlled in Iraq.¹³
- Hundreds of millions of dollars held in cash by ISIS has been destroyed by coalition airstrikes.¹⁴

Enhance Coalition Efforts

Going forward, the U.S., along with our coalition partners, must continue increasing the pressure on ISIS, through more airstrikes, continued training of local forces to take back territory from ISIS, and better information-sharing.

If no ceasefire is agreed to in Syria, the United States should consider working with coalition partners to enforce a no-fly zone over northern Syria along the border with Turkey. This would create a safe zone on the ground for civilians to access the humanitarian care that has been blocked thus far in the conflict because of airstrikes. Local forces must complement the no-fly zone by ensuring ISIS and government forces don't block civilian access to humanitarian assistance on the ground.

A no-fly zone would also have the benefit of slowing the flow of refugees into Europe and providing the U.S. leverage over Russia in developing a political resolution in Syria. Turkey has long called for a no-fly zone in order to create a safe zone along its border and German Chancellor

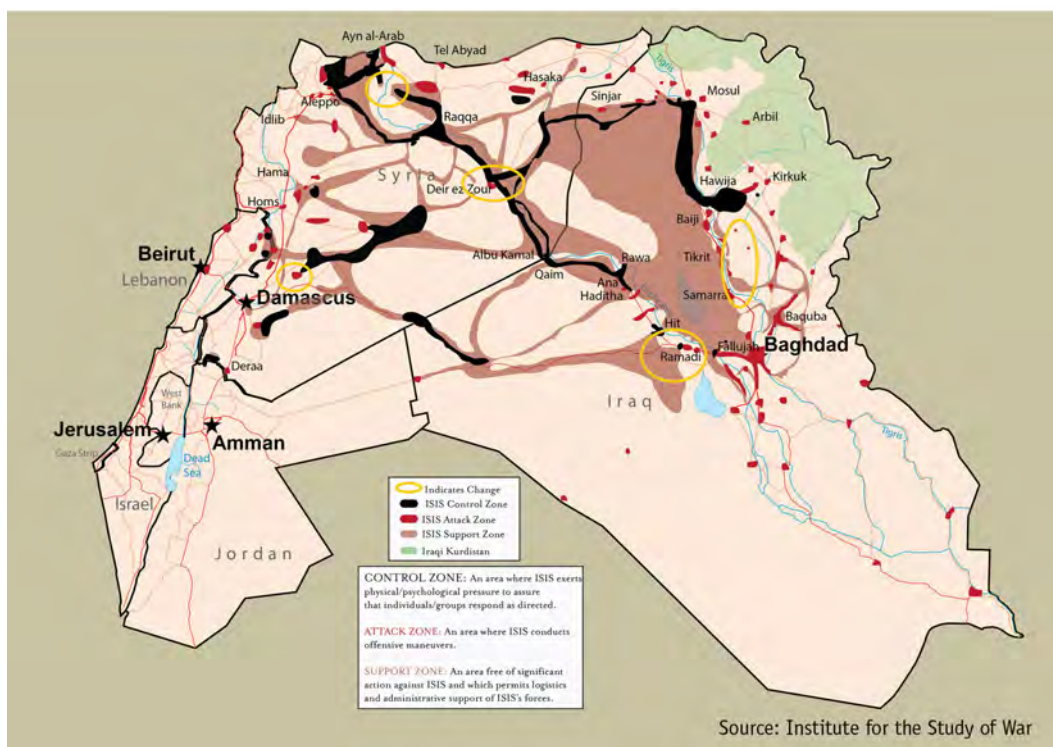
Angela Merkel has recently signaled that it would be helpful.¹⁵ Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has repeatedly expressed her support for enforcing a no-fly zone to create a humanitarian corridor.¹⁶ There is also bipartisan support in Congress for a safe zone for civilians with the potential aid of a no-fly zone. Last April, Senators Richard Durbin, Tim Kaine, Lindsey Graham, and John McCain stated their support for "humanitarian safe zones with the necessary enforcement mechanisms, including the potential use of air assets" in a letter to President Obama.¹⁷ Should the cessation of hostilities and peace process collapse, the United States and coalition forces must be prepared to take this approach.

There are currently about 5,000 American forces in Iraq, most of whom are serving as military advisers to train Iraqi troops in the fight against ISIS; the vast majority do not fight ISIS directly.¹⁸ A smaller portion of U.S. forces, about 200, are special operations forces in Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Syria, who are mounting direct capture and kill operations against ISIS.¹⁹ This is a smart and effective way to safely insert a small U.S. military presence to better prepare local forces to take on ISIS in combat. The United States should increase the use of these forces to advance precision attacks and make local groups more effective in combatting ISIS.

ISIS will not be defeated by airstrikes alone. U.S. regional allies and local groups must supply the ground troops to defeat ISIS in the Middle East. The United States should not become involved in another ground war in the region. This would put our military servicemen and women in harm's way and tie the U.S. to the war and its aftermath for years to come. President Obama has said this would play right into ISIS's endgame, stating it would help their recruitment for years and further extend the war.²⁰ Regional ground forces, complemented with U.S. and coalition airstrikes, will eliminate ISIS in the region.

Authorize the Use of Military Force

Finally, Congress should pass a new AUMF, one that specifically addresses ISIS. They represent a significant threat to U.S. national security and the security of our allies. The Administration has said defeating ISIS will be a long-term effort and it is important that Congress uphold its constitutional responsibility to authorize U.S. action. Unlike prior AUMFs, this one should have limits. It should be specifically tailored to take on ISIS, limited to the battlefield, include reporting requirements to Congress, and have an expiration date with a possibility of renewal. The United States cannot become embroiled in a permanent



Areas ISIS exerts control or influence in Iraq and Syria

war. Congress should also include a broader set of policy objectives for ensuring long-term regional stability.

3. Prevent Radicalization in the U.S.

Short-term plans to defeat ISIS and related terrorist groups at home and abroad must complement a long-term effort to address terrorist threats against the United States. ISIS and other terrorist groups will pose a threat for the foreseeable future. Long-term policies must include efforts to counter extremist propaganda online and establish a local partnerships strategy.

Defeat Terrorists Online

Defeating ISIS and other terrorist groups will require more than military force. ISIS's successful use of the internet, and social media especially, to recruit individuals from around the world is a serious threat. The United Nations estimates about 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters from 100 countries are connected to ISIS, al Qaeda, and related terrorist groups.²¹

The U.S. must develop a national strategy to defeat terrorists in cyberspace and increase our efforts to counter terrorist narratives online. U.S. agencies and the technology industry can work together to create a strategy to effectively prevent ISIS and other terrorist groups from using online

platforms to communicate with potential recruits and spread propaganda. This strategy must also include U.S. efforts to counter this propaganda and their false narratives.

Government action is only part of the solution. Technology companies have stepped up their efforts against ISIS in recent months. Since mid-2015, Twitter has suspended 125,000 accounts related to ISIS,²² and Facebook has also committed to taking down terrorist accounts.²³ U.S. national security officials have been meeting with the industry on ways to counter violent extremism online. This continued cooperation will be necessary to effectively stop terrorist messaging, discredit ISIS and terrorist propaganda, and prevent recruits from being influenced by these narratives.

Local Partnerships

Local communities need to build their resilience against threats from ISIS and like-minded terrorist groups. It's essential that communities, civil society groups, religious leaders, and local law enforcement work together to help prevent radicalization at home. True partnerships between these groups, rather than a top-down government-led initiative, can address at-risk individuals and develop better community relationships. This would support Muslim-Americans across the country to participate in efforts preventing recruitment through youth programs, job training, community engagement opportunities, and

mentoring initiatives. These kinds of community-based programs that address terrorist recruitment head-on need funding and federal government support. The U.S. government should expand the pilot program focusing on these partnerships, Building Community Resilience, to more cities to confront terrorist recruitment around the country.²⁴

These long-term proposals will allow the U.S. to build a more coordinated and organized policy path to address terrorist threats. Disrupting ISIS narratives in the online space and safeguarding our communities will prevent homegrown terrorism and reduce terrorist recruitment.

4. Deny Fertile Ground for Terrorists

The last part of our counterterrorism plan includes a long-term strategy to permanently defeat ISIS and other terrorist groups abroad. This will include addressing what happens after ISIS, by supporting a political transition in Syria, providing U.S. governance and security assistance in the region, and countering extremist propaganda.

Russia's decision last fall to boost its support of the Syrian government has altered the state of play in Syria. The Assad regime is in a stronger position now against opposition forces than it was before Russia's arrival. Should UN peace talks progress, a political transition away from Assad's rule will be necessary to ensure legitimacy of the central government.

Once ISIS is defeated, international powers will have to reckon with the aftermath in Iraq and Syria. Going forward, Iraq's central government must prevent sectarian divides by enforcing inclusive policies that don't alienate its Sunni and Kurdish population. Iraqi security forces must continue training to better defend Iraq from internal and external forces.

Despite the eventual defeat of ISIS, terrorist groups inspired by ISIS and al Qaeda will likely endure in fragmented groups. It will be essential to support our allies in the region so that a future power vacuum does not allow for any terrorist group to gain territory or influence. Continued U.S. security assistance and training will be a vital tool to promoting U.S. national security interests and defending our allies. The U.S. should also provide increased assistance and training to strengthen governance structures in the region so countries are able to hold their leaders accountable, provide for their own security, and

resolve disputes without falling to violence. In countries throughout the region, governments that have attempted to suppress or disempower their opposition have seen that opposition resort to increased violence and radicalization. Over the long-term, the U.S. should re-invigorate democracy assistance programs so that in the Middle East, countries will choose to resolve their disputes at the ballot box instead of on the battlefield. As the U.S. learned all too well in the Iraq War, without a political solution, there will be no military solution, so in order to restore stability in the Middle East, resolving the underlying political conflicts will be necessary.

Cutting off terrorist messaging will remain an essential part of this long-term effort in combatting extremism in the Middle East. The Department of Defense's U.S. Cyber Command recently began an intensified effort against ISIS members and their use of social media platforms to recruit and influence potential followers.²⁵ The U.S. State Department has also made efforts this year to change its approach to countering ISIS messaging with the new Global Engagement Center. This includes working with regional partners and using data-tested messaging strategies to counter terrorist narratives, focusing on their attacks on innocent civilians and offering an alternative and positive narrative to vulnerable groups. These efforts should be expanded upon to wipe out terrorist efforts to recruit followers.

Conclusion

Developing—and implementing—a strategy to defeat ISIS and prevent homegrown terrorism will save American lives and provide regional stability in the Middle East. These short and long-term proposals will set the U.S. on a path to effectively defeat ISIS and related terrorists at home and abroad. Policymakers should capitalize on this tough and smart strategy to combat terrorism and reassure the public on national security and terrorism issues.

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Narrowing Terrorists' Destructive Capability in the U.S.

The four-part strategy we are using to stop large-scale attacks in the United States post-9/11

#1: Eliminated Terrorist WMD Threat

WMD Threat: Massive casualties, economic disruption, rapid conflict escalation

What We've Done: *Iran:* Curtailed nuclear abilities; *Syria:* Confiscated chemical weapons

Left to do: Remain vigilant on Iran

Result: *Zero WMD attacks on U.S. soil*

#2: Eliminating Safe Havens

Safe Haven Threat: Large scale casualties, platform for training terrorists, and launching attacks

Afghanistan: Removed Taliban government, decimated al Qaeda, killed terrorist leadership

Iraq and Syria: 14,000 airstrikes against ISIS, taking out ISIS leadership, curtailing money supply, retaken 45% of Iraqi and 25% of Syrian territory from ISIS

Result: *Zero successful attacks on U.S. soil from terrorist safe havens*

#3: Stopping Coordinated Domestic Attacks

Coordinated Attack Threat: Casualties in the hundreds, widespread panic

What we're doing: Surveillance, disruption of networks, and 500 prosecutions for terrorism cases

Result: *Zero successful coordinated attacks*

on U.S. soil since 9/11

#4: Stopping Lone-Wolf Attacks

Lone-Wolf Threat: Casualties in the dozens, inc fear





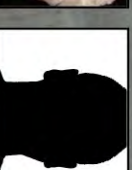










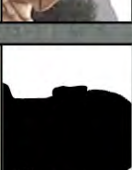




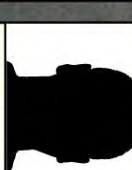
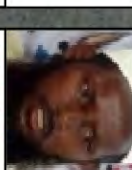
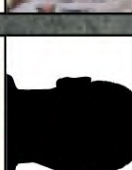

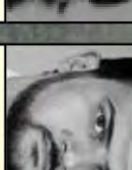








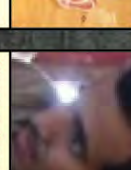




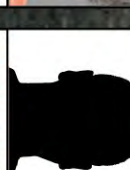

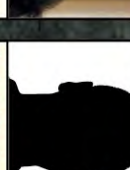
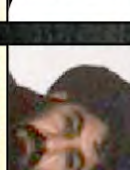


What we're doing: Trained 229,000+ law enforcement agents, \$36 billion in local anti-terrorism grant funding

Result: *Nine fatal lone-wolf terrorist attacks in the U.S. since 9/11*

Left to do: Close terror gun loopholes, expand community partnerships, deny safe haven online

Terrorist Leaders Taken Out Under Obama

Since the death of Osama bin Laden, the United States has accelerated its relentless campaign to capture or kill terrorist leaders around the world. By removing top figures and military commanders, the U.S. has degraded the ability of these groups to target the U.S. homeland.

Understanding the Terrorism Threat

The threat from terrorism lingers fifteen years after the attacks on 9/11. Recent attacks in Brussels, Ankara, San Bernardino, and Paris have ignited fears across the globe of ISIS's reach beyond the borders of Iraq and Syria. Although it's a shadow of its former self, the original terror threat, al Qaeda, still poses a danger to Americans and our allies. Al Qaeda's affiliate groups in Yemen and across North Africa continue to carry out attacks in their respective regions, often against western interests. These groups continue to threaten the homeland, recruit, and influence attackers beyond the traditional battlefield, and plan attacks in the West. In order for our elected officials to provide effective oversight and evaluate U.S. efforts to combat terrorism, a comprehensive understanding of the terrorism threat is essential.

This primer will provide:

- A background on al Qaeda, ISIS and related terrorist groups;
- The tools they use for recruitment and radicalization; and
- Ongoing U.S. efforts to defeat them.

The Threat From al Qaeda Background and Ideology

During the decade-long Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, scores of volunteers from across the globe traveled there to join the insurgency against the Soviets. Among them was Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi national who established a fundraising and recruitment network to bring in more fighters. After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988, bin Laden used these fighters to found a new Sunni terrorist group called al Qaeda, which he dedicated to overthrowing pro-Western governments in the Arab world.¹

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, bin Laden vehemently opposed the decision by the Saudi government to allow U.S. forces into Saudi Arabia. After he turned against the Saudi royal family, bin Laden was expelled from the kingdom. He moved to Sudan and began training al Qaeda fighters for conflicts in the Balkans, Kashmir, and the Philippines. Under pressure from the U.S. and Egypt, Sudan ejected bin Laden in 1996. He returned to Afghanistan, where the new government under the Taliban provided sanctuary for al Qaeda. It was during this time that al Qaeda shifted its focus from governments in the Middle East, the "near enemy," to the "far enemy" – the U.S.²

Evolution of Attacks

Al Qaeda carried out several terrorist attacks against the U.S. before they became well known on a global scale. Its first attempt to kill U.S. troops was in 1992, when it bombed a hotel in Yemen, killing two Austrian tourists.³ In 1993, two U.S. helicopters were shot down in Somalia and 18 U.S. special operations forces were killed by Somalis trained by al Qaeda. In 1998, bin Laden issued a fatwa—an Islamic decree—calling on his followers to kill Americans around the world. Later that year, al Qaeda carried out one of its largest attacks, bombing the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and killing about 300 people and injuring thousands.⁴ In 2000, al Qaeda bombed the USS Cole, a navy destroyer, in the port outside Aden, Yemen, killing 17 American sailors.⁵

The attacks on September 11, 2001, marked the largest operation ever by al Qaeda, killing nearly 3,000 people. The U.S. named bin Laden and al Qaeda as responsible for the attack, and Congress passed an Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), giving the President the authority to attack al Qaeda.⁶ Operation Enduring Freedom began soon after to take out al Qaeda members and the Taliban—who provided them safe haven—in Afghanistan. This AUMF is still used today to justify U.S. operations against ISIS and al Qaeda groups. NATO invoked its mutual defense clause for the first time, and coalition partners joined the U.S. in attacking al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Efforts to Defeat al Qaeda

In the almost 15 years since the war on terror began, the U.S. has decimated so-called "core" al Qaeda in Afghanistan and the tribal regions of Pakistan. An estimated 20,000 to 35,000 Taliban and insurgent fighters were killed in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, which ended at the close of 2014. During this time, the U.S. spent an estimated \$686 billion on Operation Enduring Freedom to conduct operations in Afghanistan.⁷ In May 2011, U.S. Navy Seals carried out an operation in Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden, and Ayman al-Zawahiri was named the new leader of al Qaeda.

In Pakistan, the U.S. has conducted drone strikes against terrorists, killing between 1,500 and 3,500 terrorists⁸ and carrying out over 400 drone strikes since 2004.⁹ The U.S. continues to carry out covert drone strikes against terrorists in Pakistan, killing an estimated 60 to 85 in 2015 alone.¹⁰ About 9,800 U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan to train and assist the Afghan National Security

Forces. The U.S. also continues counterterrorism operations against insurgent groups in Afghanistan. In October, U.S. and Afghan forces carried out a joint operation to destroy al Qaeda training grounds.¹¹ Remaining al Qaeda terrorists, however, still aim to attack Americans, and the symbolism of the central organization still inspires supporters.

The Threat from al Qaeda Affiliates

The influence of al Qaeda spawned several other Sunni extremist groups across the region with similarly radical aims. Although these groups generally seek to achieve regional supremacy, they often have international targets in mind. Major al Qaeda affiliates include:

- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP): Based in Yemen.
- Al Shabaab: Based in Somalia.

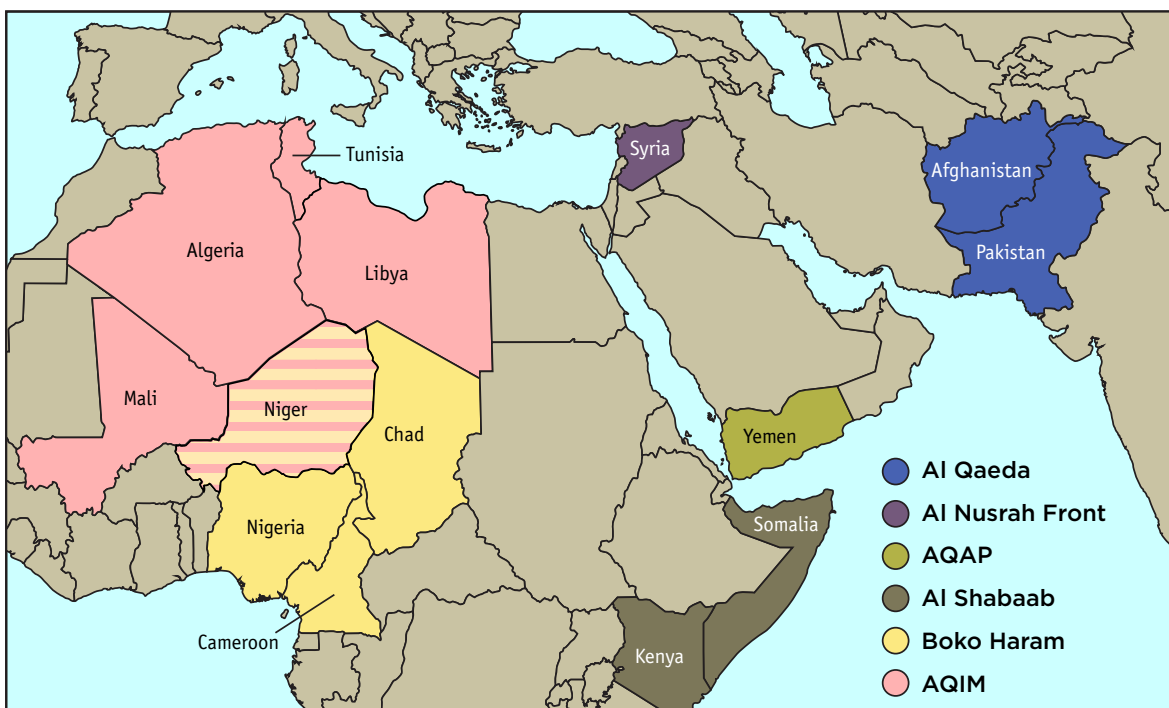
- Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): Based in Algeria and the Sahel.
- Boko Haram: Based in Nigeria.
- Al Nusrah Front: Based in Syria.

The Affiliates

AQAP, which sometimes goes by its alias, Ansar al-Sharia (not to be confused with a Libyan group by the same name), is one of the most lethal al Qaeda affiliates, and one the U.S. government

labeled most likely to attempt an attack against the U.S. Like core al Qaeda, AQAP aims to attack the U.S., as well as regional pro-Western governments, like in Yemen and Saudi Arabia.¹² It was formed in 2009, combining different branches of al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and Yemen under one organization. It comprises roughly 1,000 members as of 2015.¹³ Its most notable attempt at an international attack took place in 2009, when the “Underwear Bomber” tried but failed to detonate a bomb on a flight to Detroit. A year later, intelligence agencies foiled an AQAP plot to hide explosives in printer cartridges bound for the U.S. AQAP has seen much more success inside Yemen, where it conducts frequent car bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations. The group also publishes propaganda in the English-language online magazine, *Inspire*.

Al Qaeda and its Affiliates: Where They’re Active



The U.S. has pursued a strategy of taking out AQAP terrorists who pose a threat to the homeland, while working with the Yemeni government to build their capacity to take on the threat. Citing authority provided by the 2001 AUMF against al Qaeda, the U.S. has carried out over 140 airstrikes against AQAP since 2002. These operations have killed 725 AQAP members, including several key leaders.¹⁴ In 2011, the U.S. killed Anwar al Awlaki, an American citizen who was an influential recruiter for AQAP. Last summer, AQAP leader Nasir al Wuhayshi was also killed in a U.S. airstrike. In March, the U.S. took out 50 AQAP militants in one strike.¹⁵

Al Shabaab is a Somalia-based terrorist group formed in 2006 that focuses its efforts internally, aspiring to create Islamic rule in Somalia. Its leaders share ties with core al Qaeda, and al Shabaab formally joined forces with al Qaeda in 2012.¹⁶ The U.S. State Department estimates the group has “several thousand members.”¹⁷ Al Shabaab’s activities generally remain confined to Somalia, but the group has launched major attacks in neighboring countries. Al Shabaab was responsible for the 2013 attack on the Westgate Mall in Kenya, which killed 67 people. Last year, al Shabaab militants laid siege to a Kenyan university and killed about 147 people.

The U.S. has concentrated its efforts in Somalia on strengthening African Union forces to fight al Shabaab. In addition, since 2013, the U.S. conducts targeted drone strikes and special operations missions against the group and has stepped up these efforts in recent months. In 2015, U.S. airstrikes killed al Shabaab’s top leaders, including Adnan Garaar and Abdirahman Sandhere.¹⁸ This year, U.S. aircraft struck an al Shabaab training camp, killing more than 150 militants, including senior leaders.

AQIM was founded in 2007. They operate primarily out of Algeria, but also in Libya, Tunisia, Mali, and Niger. AQIM aims to remove western influence and establish Islamic law throughout North Africa. Members have increasingly spoken out against the West, and aspire to create an Islamic state. The terrorists who attacked the U.S. facility in Benghazi and killed four Americans, including the U.S. ambassador, were linked to AQIM.

The U.S. provides civilian and military assistance and established the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership in 2005 to counter violent extremism in the region. France’s 2013 intervention in Mali was a setback for AQIM, which has dwindled to “several hundred fighters” in Algeria and

across the Sahel.¹⁹ As their operations have died down, AQIM has been kidnapping western citizens and holding them for ransom in order to make money.

Boko Haram is a Nigeria-based terrorist group that aims to replace the Nigerian government with Islamic rule, but also conducts operations in the broader region. Its name translates to “western education is forbidden.”²⁰ It was created in 2002, but escalated its attacks following a period of civil unrest in 2009. They promote a violent Sunni extremist ideology, and in 2010 expressed solidarity with al Qaeda and received funding and training from AQIM. In 2014, the U.S. State Department estimated the group had “several thousand” members.²¹ In recent years, they’ve carried out suicide bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings. Some of Boko Haram’s largest profile attacks in Nigeria were in 2014: they reportedly killed about 5,000 Nigerians and were responsible for the kidnapping of 276 young female students from a school.²² Last year, Boko Haram switched its allegiance to ISIS.²³

In 2014, the U.S. sent 80 military advisers to Nigeria following Boko Haram’s school kidnapping. Last fall, 300 U.S. military personnel were deployed to Cameroon to provide regional forces surveillance and intelligence assistance and training against Boko Haram.²⁴ Currently, the Defense Department is planning to send Special Operations forces to Nigeria to assist regional forces in advisory roles.²⁵ The Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, has said that Boko Haram lost territory in 2015, but will continue to pose a threat in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad.²⁶

Al Nusrah Front developed out of the civil war in Syria and was originally linked to ISIS. They declared their intention in 2012 to overthrow the Assad regime from power and set up Sunni Islamic law in its place. Divisions grew between ISIS and al Nusrah and Al Nusrah pledged its allegiance to al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2013. Al Nusrah is at war with the Syrian government, and often clashes with ISIS and various Syrian rebel groups.²⁷ Many al Nusrah fighters have defected to ISIS, further revealing strains between the two organizations. Last fall, Zawahiri called for reconciliation between al Nusrah and ISIS, despite viewing ISIS as illegitimate. The U.S. State Department estimates al Nusrah has members in the “low thousands.”²⁸ The U.S. has been targeting al Nusrah in Iraq and Syria since 2014. The U.S. recently conducted an airstrike that hit a senior al Qaeda meeting in Syria, killing 20 al Nusrah terrorists, including their spokesman, Abu Firas al-Suri.²⁹

The Rise of ISIS

Al Qaeda in Iraq to ISIS

After the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, a man named Abu Musab al Zarqawi, a former volunteer fighter in Afghanistan in the 1990s, turned his Sunni insurgency group into al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, AQI attacked U.S. forces and exacerbated sectarian divisions by attacking Shia Muslims, the predominant Muslim sect in Iraq—a tactic denounced by core al Qaeda. After U.S. forces killed Zarqawi in 2006, AQI lost momentum. Gradually, other insurgent groups joined AQI and the group rebranded as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) in the years leading up to the civil unrest in Syria. By 2013, its leaders moved to Syria and changed ISI to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), referring to the Levant territory that includes Syria.

Al Qaeda leadership preferred its offshoot, al Nusrah, to operate in Syria and had demanded ISIS to leave the country. ISIS moved into Syria despite this demand, and al Qaeda disassociated with ISIS in early 2014. ISIS attacked al Qaeda allies and other rebel groups across Syria. By the summer of 2014, ISIS had expanded territory in Iraq and Syria, using Iraq's political and sectarian divisions to seize Mosul from Iraqi security forces, in addition to many Sunni-populated lands. Once it acquired control of significant territory, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, declared ISIS a caliphate—a state that enforces Islamic law. ISIS has also created its own propaganda magazine, Dabiq, to flaunt its successes, lay out its vision, and recruit followers. According to the December 2015 issue of the magazine, ISIS's goal is to expand the caliphate in the region and eventually across the world—a stark contrast to related terrorist groups that focus on attacking Western targets and regional governments.³⁰

U.S. and Coalition Efforts to Defeat ISIS

Since 2014, the U.S. has led a 66-nation coalition against ISIS, conducting airstrikes against their positions and assisting local ground forces to take back territory. Coalition forces are averaging about 20 airstrikes per day against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, killing more than 26,000 ISIS fighters since 2014.³¹ In addition, 22,000 ISIS targets, including vehicles, fighting positions, and oil facilities have been destroyed.³² Airstrikes are also taking out ISIS's finances, with strikes on major ISIS cash depots in Iraq and Syria.³³ The group has lost more than 40% of the territory it once held in Iraq, and has lost nearly 20% of the territory it held

in Syria.³⁴ The key cities of Ramadi and Tikrit have been retaken by Iraqi forces, and the groundwork is being laid to retake the major city of Mosul.

The U.S. recently announced U.S. forces in Iraq will increase from about 3,800 to a little over 4,000.³⁵ These forces serve in noncombat roles, predominantly serving as military advisers to the Iraqi security forces and, to a lesser extent, conducting special operations kill and capture raids.

ISIS has also established a 6,000-strong force in Libya. Fighters have come from other North African countries, as well as Iraq and Syria, taking advantage of the years of political turmoil there to acquire territory. The U.S. recently begun conducting airstrikes against ISIS in Libya and the new UN-backed unity government is working to secure the country.

Radicalization and Recruitment

The growth of ISIS is in part a result of their successful recruitment and radicalization efforts. This has increased the number of foreign fighters flocking to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS, some of whom might return to carry out attacks in their homeland. The UN estimates that about 30,000 foreign fighters from over 100 countries have joined ISIS and related groups.³⁶ Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Turkey are the leading nationalities of foreign terrorist fighters. Russia, France, Germany, the UK, and Belgium are the top western countries with nationals becoming foreign fighters. The U.S. is estimated to have had about 250 fighters go to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS, and about 40 have returned.³⁷

Al Qaeda carried out a structured, selective, top-down approach to choosing recruits and bringing them to al Qaeda safe havens for training and planning an attack. Once these recruits, most often of Arab descent, were trained, they went out to western targets under al Qaeda instruction. These attackers took direct guidance from al Qaeda leadership in coordinating attacks, which often led to western law enforcement disrupting the attack.³⁸ By contrast, ISIS is not so selective, and therefore recruits far more volunteers than al Qaeda ever did. The porous border between Turkey and Syria allows easy passage for foreign fighters. ISIS's enhanced use of the internet and social media allows it to reach followers in the West, who can be radicalized and trained into homegrown terrorists without ever traveling to Syria. ISIS followers who carry out attacks have demonstrated a degree of independence unseen in al Qaeda attacks, shielding their plans from counterterrorism officials.

U.S. Efforts to Counter Radicalization and Recruitment

These terrorist groups threaten our allies abroad, but there are two ways terrorists are most likely to attack us on the homeland: (1) sending a terrorist to the U.S. with a western passport and (2) radicalizing people already here. The U.S. has worked to block both paths. Following the Paris attacks, the U.S. changed the Visa Waiver Program to require that any citizen of one of the 38 participating countries who is also a citizen of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen, must now apply for a visa before traveling here. Those who have been to any of these countries in the last five years are also now required to apply for a visa. The visa application process will include an interview, fingerprinting, and screening by U.S. officials to determine if they should be allowed to enter the U.S.³⁹

In recent years, the U.S. has stepped up its efforts to address radicalization and counter violent extremism. In 2011, the administration developed a strategy to counter violent extremism. This includes: enhancing federal-local community engagement, expanding law enforcement expertise on countering violent extremism, and countering extremist propaganda.⁴⁰ The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's new Countering Violent Extremism Task Force is a permanent office that shares best practices to bolster the capacity of international partners to address the problem. The U.S. held a summit in 2015, bringing together world leaders, local leaders, and civil society to better understand the threat, counter extremist narratives, and address how to safeguard communities against the threat.

The U.S. Defense Department's Cyber Command has intensified their effort to prevent ISIS members from using social media to recruit and influence potential followers. The U.S. State Department recently modified its approach to countering ISIS messaging with the new Global Engagement Center. This will allow the U.S. to work with regional partners and use data-tested messaging strategies to counter terrorist narratives. Some technology companies are also committed to preventing the use of their platforms by ISIS and related terrorist groups for recruitment and radicalization. Twitter has taken down more than 125,000 accounts related to ISIS, and Facebook has agreed to do the same. The U.S. government is working with technology companies to establish the most effective ways to prevent terrorist messaging, discredit ISIS and terrorist propaganda, and prevent recruits from being influenced by terrorist narratives.

Conclusion

The U.S. continues to build the capacity of regional partners to fight back against these groups, while also carrying out special operations attacks and airstrikes. ISIS remains the most enduring threat, seeking to expand their territory and influence across the Middle East. U.S. and coalition efforts have been successful in pushing back its territorial gains, but the war against terrorist groups and radicalization will be a long-term effort. Gains on the battlefield alone will not be enough to defeat the ideology behind ISIS. For information on how U.S. policymakers can craft a tough and smart strategy to defeat ISIS and related groups, see our Plan to Combat Terrorism.

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Why We're Not Brussels

The tragic terrorist attacks in Brussels on March 22 were followed by bombastic statements by politicians making extreme and overbroad proposals. Senator Ted Cruz has already called for police patrols of Muslim neighborhoods and Donald Trump announced that he would close U.S. borders. Before we get carried away with the rhetoric, let's step back and give a little context to why the challenge facing U.S. counterterrorism professionals is very different than that confronting their Belgian counterparts.

First, Belgium is the European hotbed of terrorism. In 2014 there was a terrorist attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels. In 2015, weapons used in the Charlie Hebdo attack were linked back to Brussels. The Paris attacks last November were planned by ISIS members based in Brussels. It is estimated that about 520 Belgians have gone to Iraq and Syria to fight for ISIS, and over 100 have returned, making Belgium the country with the highest number of ISIS fighters per capita from Europe. According to one estimate, Belgium has 46 foreign terrorists for every one million people, where the U.S. has only 1 per million.

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There is no hotbed of terrorist activity in the U.S. The scale of radicalization in the U.S. is far less than in Europe, and especially compared to Belgium. Only about 250 Americans have been influenced by ISIS ideology and traveled to Iraq and Syria, and of that, only about 40 have returned. The U.S. has a whole of government approach to investigating and prosecuting those who want to become a foreign terrorist fighter and return to the U.S. In addition, the U.S. has a pluralistic society where mosques and local communities work with the FBI to prevent radicalization and Muslims stand on the front lines in our military, law enforcement, and intelligence services. As a result, the U.S. homegrown threat is orders of magnitude lower than that in Belgium.

Second, Belgian counterterrorism efforts are some of the worst in Europe, in part for structural reasons. Belgium has three official languages, French, Flemish, and German, which complicate law enforcement communication across the various regions in Belgium. Brussels, where much of the terrorist activity is taking place, is separated into 19

districts, covered by six separate police forces, crippling the intelligence sharing needed to communicate more effectively between these communities and stop terrorist attacks. And since Belgium, like other European countries, has open borders, potential terrorists are able to move in and out of the country without Belgian counterterrorism officials knowing.

The U.S., on the other hand, has a coordinated counterterrorism policy that ensures communication across all levels of government, from the federal level, to local law enforcement. The U.S. has a vast surveillance apparatus staffed by thousands of counterterrorism analysts who track terrorist communications across the globe. The CIA and FBI maintain a terror watch list, and in coordination with screening agencies at the borders, ensures suspected terrorists cannot enter the country. The sophistication of U.S. counterterrorism efforts allows for far better coordination and preparedness than Belgium's current policies.

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Lastly, the combination of high numbers of potential terrorists, and the small and fragmented nature of Belgium's police force means they have been spread too thin by investigations into terrorist attacks. A Belgian counterterrorism official said the country's entire military, police, and intelligence resources are devoted to terrorism investigations. He admitted Belgium lacked the resources and infrastructure to address the threat effectively. Belgium has been grappling with terrorism seriously since last year, but the U.S. has been doing this for fifteen years and has few resource constraints. The U.S. has thousands of federal agents and prosecutors who have deep experience investigating and convicting terrorists. The FBI has Joint Terrorism Task Forces, which operate throughout the country, staffed by 4,000 specialists who investigate local terrorist threats and disrupt them. The U.S. Homeland Security Department dispatches personnel throughout the country to provide training and technical assistance, and has provided more than \$31 billion in funding since 2003 to build the capacity of state and local governments to prepare for terrorist attacks.

That is not to say that after 9/11 terrorist attacks can't happen here. The families in Boston, San Bernardino, and Chattanooga know that all too well. But the challenge and the threat in Belgium is very different than in the U.S. Proposals to ban or register Muslims would not only run counter to our values, they would alienate and potentially radicalize more people in the U.S. Not knowing, or not caring, about that shows a lack of understanding of both the threat and also the expertise and professionalism of U.S. counterterrorism officials. Let's not make their jobs harder. They've got enough to do already.

The President's 2017 Defense Budget

The President's Budget in Context

Before getting to the specifics of how the President's budget keeps Americans safe, this section explains what the total budget is and how it relates to past military funding.

More Military Funding than Reagan Ever Provided

The President's military budget adheres to the Republican Congress's constraints in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015,¹ but still provides the U.S. military with a historically very high level of funding. In 2017, the President's budget would give the military \$523.9 billion in base budget funding, and another \$58.8 billion for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding, for a grand total of \$582.7 billion. This is \$2.4 billion above total defense spending in 2016.

At \$523.9 billion this is a larger base budget than any under President George W. Bush and, even when controlling for inflation, \$582.7 billion is greater than any military budget passed by Ronald Reagan.²

While the military budget rightfully gets the majority of attention in national security discussions, it's important to note that the President's 2017 budget also increases funding for a number of other agencies that work tirelessly to keep Americans safe, including the Departments of:

- Energy,
- Homeland Security,
- Justice (the Federal Bureau of Investigation),
- State.
- Dramatically Increased Funding to Defeat ISIS and Other Terrorist Threats

"My highest priority is keeping the American people safe and going after terrorist networks," says President Obama in his Budget Message.³ His budget is a reflection of this promise. By dramatically increasing Department of Defense funding to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and increasing funding at other agencies—like the State Department, Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation—that are vital for ensuring we're using every resource at our disposal to defeat terrorists and keep Americans safe. This is a tough and smart approach to defeating terrorists.

50% Increase in Department of Defense Funding to Defeat ISIS

The President's budget provides a total of \$11.5 billion to fund the fight against ISIS. \$7.5 billion of this goes to the Department of Defense, a 50% increase in funding to defeat ISIS.

- \$1.2 billion of that funding will go towards expanding intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support for counter-terrorism
- \$1.8 billion will be used to purchase munitions to replace the more than 24,000 bombs that the Air Force has dropped on ISIS. Given the pace of the bombing campaign against ISIS, the Air Force was beginning to run low on munitions, but this funding will guarantee that the Air Force continues to have the weapons it needs to kill terrorists. As Secretary of the Air Force, Deborah Lee James, said, "We're in the business of killing terrorists, and business is good."⁴
- Despite previous plans for nearly all combat troops to leave Afghanistan by 2017, this budget also includes funding to keep over 6,000 troops in Afghanistan through 2017.

A Whole of Government Approach to Defeating Terrorism

While this 50% increase in DoD funding is essential to defeat ISIS, the President's budget makes the smart choice to invest in all the tools at our disposal to destroy ISIS. That includes providing \$4.1 billion to the State Department to "stabilize communities liberated from ISIL in Syria and Iraq; disrupt ISIL's attack-plotting, financing and recruitment; discredit ISIL propaganda; and support a political solution to the Syrian civil war," according to the State Department.⁵

The President's budget also increases funding to keep Americans safe at home. The Department of Justice's budget release includes, "\$780.7 million in program increases to counter violent extremism, improve intelligence collection and analysis, strengthen foreign partnerships and address critical law enforcement technology challenges."⁶ This includes funding to enhance collaboration between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the intelligence community.

The Department of Homeland Security also saw funding increases to programs that prevent terrorism and counter violent extremism, including \$5.1 billion for aviation security and screening and \$7 billion for border security.⁷

Investing in a High-Tech Offense and Defense

The technological sophistication of our adversaries is increasing rapidly. Russia and China, for example, are both increasing defense spending and seeking asymmetric counters to U.S. military superiority. Thus, it's essential that our military invest today in weapons best suited to fight the wars of tomorrow, and the President's 2017 defense budget does precisely that by making a number of smart choices, including:

- Increasing Research and Development funding at the Department of Defense by \$2.4 billion;
- Nearly doubling funding for the long-range strike bomber, a plane which will be able to elude enemy radar and strike targets deep within contested environments, from \$736.2 million in 2016 to \$1.3 billion in 2017;
- "Offensive cyber operations" at the Air Force see a near doubling of funding as well, going from \$12.8 million in 2016 to \$25 million in 2017;
- The Air Force also made a more than tenfold increase in funding for electronic warfare research and development, from \$834,000 in 2016 to \$12 million in 2017.

To further combat Russian aggression, the President's 2017 budget quadruples funding for the European Reassurance Initiative, from \$789 million in 2016 to \$3.4 billion in 2017. This would add an additional brigade—3,000-5,000 U.S. troops—in Europe.⁸

\$19 Billion Cyber Security National Action Plan

The vulnerability of U.S. government networks to hackers was laid bare last summer when the Office of Personnel Management announced that more than 20 million Americans had their information taken in the largest known hack of a U.S. government network. In response to this growing and pervasive threat, the President's budget includes a sweeping proposal to defend the government's networks. The \$19 billion "Cyber-Security National Action Plan" is a comprehensive plan to tackle this problem. Highlights include:

- A 35% increase in cyber funding from 2016;⁹

- The Department of Defense alone will devote \$6.7 billion to cyber-security (approximately \$870 million more than in 2016);
- Part of this funding will go towards the creation of 133 cyber security teams and 6,200 military and civilian personnel at U.S. Cyber Command, which is scheduled to be fully up and running in 2018.

The Cyber Security National Action Plan will also create a "National Cyber Security Alliance" that will "partner with leading technology firms like Google, Facebook, DropBox, and Microsoft to make it easier for millions of users to secure their online accounts, and financial services companies such as MasterCard, Visa, PayPal, and Venmo that are making transactions more secure," according to the President's budget release.¹⁰

Smart Efficiencies

This budget continues vitally important steps to reduce wasteful spending and reduce the size of the Pentagon bureaucracy to free up resources for the battlefield.

Cutting Overhead

Third Way has repeatedly warned about the consequences of what we call "Star Creep"—the increasingly top-heavy military bureaucracy.¹¹ Thus, we're very pleased to see that this budget takes a number of steps to combat this problem:

- A 25 percent headquarters reduction by 2020;
- A reduction of 5,400 civilian Department of Defense personnel;
- This cut will save "more than \$8 billion over the next five years," according to Secretary of Defense Ash Carter.¹²

The budget also requests a round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in 2019. Because of representatives' fears of losing jobs and hurting the economy in their Districts, and concerns that previous BRAC rounds haven't yielded substantial savings and didn't have analytic rigor, they are skeptical about DoD's ability to appropriately baseline. At the same time, the DoD Comptroller argued last year that, "The Department is wasting scarce defense resources on maintaining facilities that far exceed DoD's needs...as the Department draws down to a smaller, more agile force, it must eliminate all areas of waste to include maintaining unneeded facilities."¹³

Reducing Wasteful Spending

This budget reduces spending on two of the military's most controversial programs—the F-35 and the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS).

In the FY 2017 budget the Air Force made the decision to buy five fewer F-35's than it had planned to this year and 45 fewer in the next five years. As Third Way has noted previously, the F-35 is the fighter aircraft of the future, and there's not an operational necessity to rush it into production before testing is complete.¹⁴ To fulfill its close air support mission, the Air Force decided to defer retirement of the A-10 until 2022. This gives the Air Force ample time to complete testing of the F-35 prior to its deployment in combat.

Similarly, the Navy's decision to reduce spending on the LCS by \$206 million in 2017, and reduce the total number of LCS purchased from 52 to 40, given the troubled history of the program. The LCS has been fraught with problems—including leaking, corrosion, and inadequate offensive and defensive capabilities—since the first ship hit the seas.¹⁵ Just last month, the Pentagon's testing director once again questioned the LCS's ability to survive in a hostile combat environment, given its lack of firepower.¹⁶

Missed Opportunities

Overall, this budget does an exemplary job of making the investments needed to keep America safe. But no budget is perfect. This budget includes at least two funding decisions that might be detrimental to U.S. national security.

First, this budget continues to increase funding to protect the ground based leg of the nuclear triad—the term for the U.S.'s ability to launch nuclear weapons from the ground, submarines, and aircraft. The idea behind having three legs of the triad is to deter our enemies from launching a nuclear attack on the U.S. out of fear that they couldn't eliminate our entire nuclear arsenal and we'd thus have the ability to launch a devastating counter attack. This counter strike ability, however, is already guaranteed by the air and sea based legs of the triad. In fact, there's compelling evidence that submarines alone could guarantee the U.S. maintains an effective nuclear deterrent.¹⁷ Moreover, it's

expected to cost approximately \$700 billion over the next 25 years to maintain all three legs of the triad. By cutting the ground based leg of the triad the government could save an enormous amount of money that could go towards combating threats like terrorism, which nuclear weapons do little to stop.

Second, the President's 2017 budget abruptly cuts funding for one of the most technologically sophisticated weapons the military has been developing. The Unmanned Carrier Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike (UCLASS) program had seen funding levels of \$818 million in 2015 and 2016, only to be cut to \$89 million in 2017 and converted to a "Carrier Based Refueling System." The UCLASS were going to be cheaper to buy and operate than their manned counterparts and capable of covering longer distances given their lighter weight. This is a perfect example of military acquisitions being penny-wise, but pound foolish.

Tough and Smart Choices for a Stronger Future

Despite these missed opportunities, the President's 2017 budget does an exemplary job of providing the resources the Department of Defense and other agencies need to defeat the threats of today and tomorrow. The budget invests in the technology we need to defeat terrorists today, win the wars of tomorrow, and cuts wasteful spending in the back-office to provide for those on the front-lines.

This budget is tough, smart, and will help to create a safer and stronger future for America.

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The Iran Agreement is Working, But Congress Has More to Do

In this report we show how the JCPOA is working and why the progress reached on Implementation Day has proven critics of the deal wrong. Congress, however, can work on improving oversight of the agreement and effectively address its weaknesses. We lay out next steps Congress can take to maintain an independent role in strengthening the agreement, verifying it, and addressing potential Iranian violations.

Proving the Critics Wrong

Overview of the Deal

The nuclear agreement reached last summer committed Iran to scale back its nuclear program and freeze it for decades. In return, the international community promised to lift certain nuclear-related sanctions against Iran—but only once the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verified that Iran fulfilled its obligations. In January, the IAEA did just that, confirming Iran had fulfilled its commitments under the JCPOA on Implementation Day, allowing the UN, U.S. and EU to lift nuclear-related sanctions on Iran.

With the JCPOA, Iran has restated its commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to not acquire nuclear weapons. Iran is now also required to implement and ratify the Additional Protocol—an IAEA agreement for countries under suspicion of nuclear activity allowing additional IAEA inspections. Lastly, Iran agreed to implement its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, which will add another layer of inspections and transparency over Iran's nuclear program.¹ These agreements combined allow unprecedented access to Iran's nuclear program by the IAEA beyond the life of the JCPOA.

Accomplishments

On Implementation Day, January 16, 2016, the JCPOA passed its first critical test. The IAEA confirmed that Iran:

Reduced its Enrichment Capacity:

- Iran's installed centrifuges decreased from 19,000 to 6,104.
- Iran's remaining centrifuges are in sealed storage under IAEA monitoring.

- No uranium enrichment over 3.67% of low-enriched uranium (LEU) is allowed for the next 15 years. This is far below weapons grade uranium levels, which would require 90% uranium enrichment.
- Iran's 10,000 kg stockpile of LEU was cut down to 300 kg, and will remain at this level for 15 years. The excess stockpile was shipped out of the country.
- Iran agreed not to build any new facilities allowing uranium enrichment for the next 15 years.

Converted the Fordow facility to a medical research center:

- Iran converted the facility from a uranium enrichment facility into a medical isotope research center for the next 15 years.
- No uranium enrichment will be allowed here for 15 years.

Redesigned the Arak reactor:

- The core of the reactor was removed and destroyed. The reactor has been redesigned to support peaceful nuclear research.
- All excess heavy water beyond Iran's needs will be exported for 15 years.

Allowed IAEA access to verify and monitor nuclear facilities, including access to and monitoring of:

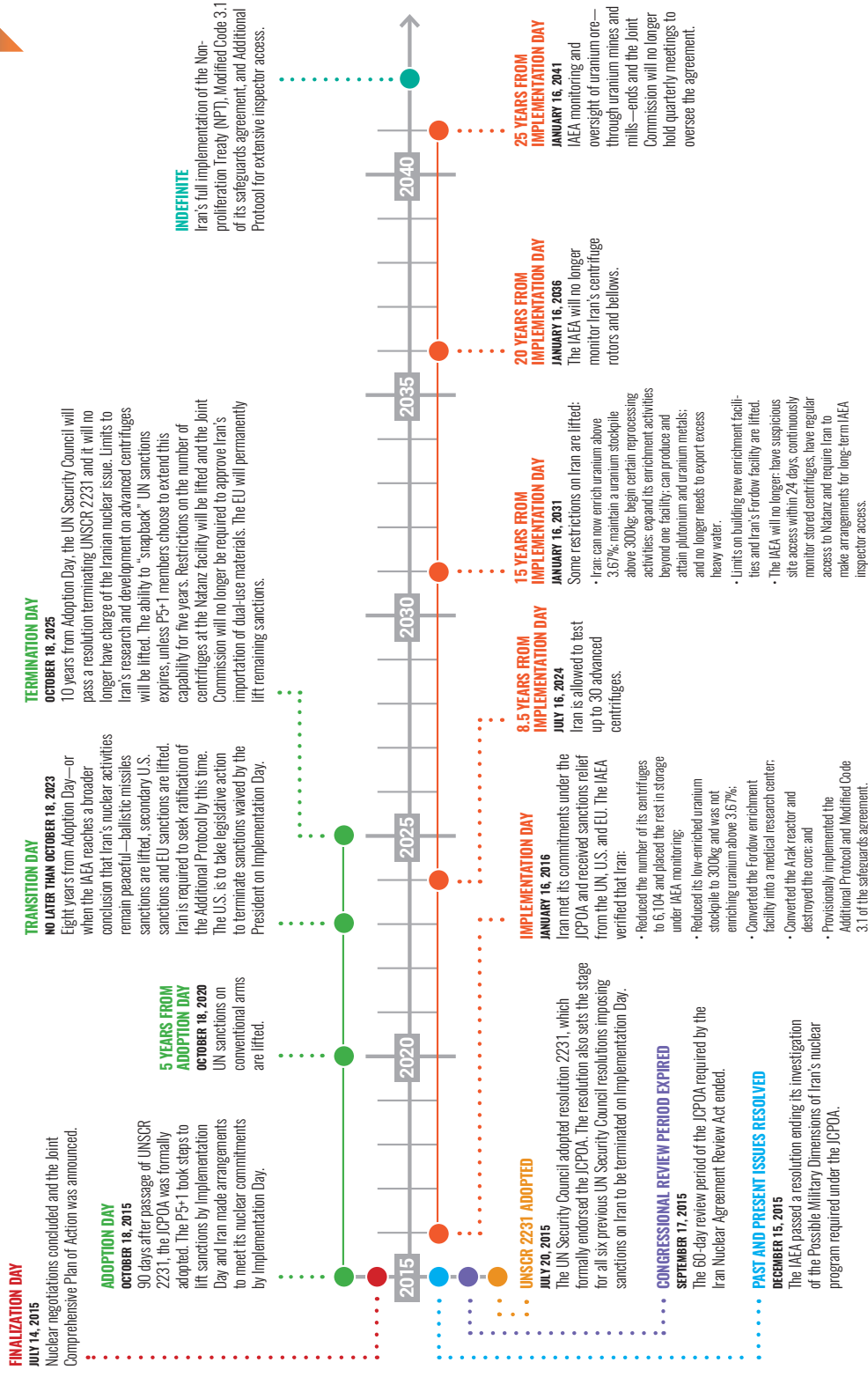
- The Natanz and Fordow facilities.
- Iran's nuclear supply chain.
- Iran's uranium mines and mills.
- Centrifuges.
- Production of centrifuge rotors and bellows.
- Storage areas.
- Suspicious sites.

Implemented the Additional Protocol of the IAEA.

Addressed IAEA concerns on Past and Present Outstanding issues of the Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of Iran's nuclear program under the Roadmap agreement with the IAEA. On December 15, 2015 the IAEA voted to close its investigation into the PMD aspects of Iran's nuclear program.²

Timeline of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

The JCPOA includes restrictions on Iran's nuclear program for 25 years—many of which are gradually phased out over the course of the agreement. The timeline below outlines the agreement's major milestones and verification measures.¹



¹This timeline is based on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action released by the Obama Administration on July 14, 2015. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/fts/sp/iran/jcpoa/>. See also: Rodolfo Quevenco, "IAEA Board Adopts Landmark Resolution on Iran PMD Case," International Atomic Energy Agency, December 15, 2015. Accessed February 9, 2016. Available at: <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-board-adopts-landmark-resolution-iran-pmd-case>.

These steps pushed Iran's breakout time to a nuclear weapon back to one year. Before the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, it could have taken Iran as little as two months to potentially acquire a nuclear weapon—and that was with a rigorous sanctions regime against it. In return for these restrictions, the international community lifted various sanctions on Iran while retaining the capability to re-impose them if Iran breaks the deal.

Sanctions

On Implementation Day, the six previous United Nations Security Council Resolutions imposing sanctions on Iran's nuclear program were terminated.³ The U.S. and EU suspended various sanctions against Iran on Implementation Day, including from the energy, banking, shipping and automotive sectors. In addition, about \$100 billion in frozen Iranian assets, made from previous oil sales, was released back to the country.⁴ Treasury and State Department officials recently testified that more than \$50 billion of this is already committed to Iran's debts and various projects.⁵ It's important to note that only the sanctions related to Iran's nuclear weapons program were lifted. U.S. sanctions against Iran regarding terrorism and human rights will remain in place. Iran had initially wanted UN ballistic missiles sanctions lifted immediately, but the U.S. pushed back. These sanctions, which were originally put in place to curb Iran's nuclear weapons program, will remain in place for another eight years. Lastly, new sanctions the U.S. placed on Iran in January for its ballistic missile tests will remain in effect.

Addressing the Critics

Despite vast support for the agreement, Republicans were quick to denounce the JCPOA long before the ink was dry. Below are brief rebuttals to the most common and misleading Republican arguments against the JCPOA.

Claim: Iran will use its access to \$100 billion in unfrozen assets to finance terrorist proxies.

Response: Most of this money will sit in foreign banks to prevent inflation in Iran.⁶ Iran owes more than \$50 billion of this to debt payments and infrastructure projects. Further, Iran is still listed as a state sponsor of terrorism and will continue to be under extensive terrorism sanctions from the U.S.

Claim: Iran will be allowed to inspect itself, rather than being inspected by the IAEA.

Response: This is false. The JCPOA explicitly states in Annex I that the IAEA will be provided access to monitor facilities for several years. IAEA staff in Iran will be increased to 130-150 members.⁷ IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano has also dismissed this claim, reassuring the public that IAEA inspections in Iran are consistent with long-established IAEA safeguard practices.⁸

Claim: Prime Minister Netanyahu criticized the agreement's dispute resolution mechanism, claiming Iran would be able to hide any nuclear activity before inspectors get in.

Response: The P5+1 can vote to ensure IAEA access to suspicious sites within 24 days at the most. Experts, including Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, say this time frame is not sufficient to hide any nuclear activity.⁹ The half-life of uranium is millions of years, and would leave traces well beyond 24 days. Much like leaving DNA at a crime scene, it would be impossible for Iran to hide its nuclear activities. Investigators would easily be able to detect traces of nuclear activity through environmental samples.

Claim: The Obama Administration didn't punish Iran for its recent ballistic missiles tests.

Response: The Obama Administration has imposed sanctions on Iran for these tests. To ensure the safe return of American hostages, including Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian and former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati, the Administration delayed imposing sanctions. The day after these Americans were safely out of Iran, the Administration imposed severe sanctions for Iran's illegal tests.¹⁰

Claim: The agreement creates an emboldened Iran which endangers our allies.

Response: Our Arab allies have come out in support for the agreement and the U.S. has provided additional assistance to guarantee their security. A coalition of Iran's Arab neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, expressed confidence that "all the efforts that have been exerted make this region very secure, very stable."¹¹ Following Implementation Day, the Israel Defense Forces' Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Gadi Eisenkot, acknowledged that the JCPOA has eliminated the greatest threat to Israel.¹²

While the Iran deal has plenty of critics, it has a growing list of supporters who have highlighted the success of Implementation Day (see Appendix). Because of the

JCPOA and the arrival of Implementation Day, Iran's breakout time to a nuclear weapon has been pushed back to one year from two months. Should Iran attempt to break the agreement, the U.S. and the international community will have the time and ability to respond.

What Happens if Iran Cheats?

The JCPOA includes mechanisms to quickly reinstate sanctions if Iran violates the agreement. Under the JCPOA, the six UNSC resolutions terminated on Implementation Day can be re-imposed if Iran doesn't comply with the agreement. A member of the P5+1 need only alert the UN Security Council of a violation by Iran and these UN sanctions will be re-imposed if the issue is not resolved within 30 days. This is more than enough time for the IAEA to discover radioactive traces in Iranian nuclear facilities. The P5+1 members can use this snapback mechanism for 10 years of the JCPOA and have the option to extend it another five years if they feel Iran may be in noncompliance with the JCPOA at the 10-year mark.

The U.S. and EU will also be able to snapback sanctions if Iran violates the agreement. If Iran cheats, the United States could reinstate sanctions "in a matter of days."¹³ These would include sanctions against Iran's oil and financial sectors, as well as the possibility of new sanctions.

Next Steps for Congress

The JCPOA isn't perfect, but it is the best path forward to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran and maintain transparency over its nuclear program for decades. Implementation Day proved the merits of the JCPOA in restricting Iran's nuclear ambitions. More can be done going forward, however, and there are a variety of ways for Congress to maintain rigorous oversight of the JCPOA and strengthen it.

In the near term, Republican Senators must stop blocking confirmations of qualified nominees who are critical to implementing the JCPOA. Adam Szubin, nominated to be the Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, has been held up in the Senate since April 2015. This official will prevent illicit financial support to Iranian-backed terrorists and oversee the economic sanctions regime against Iran.

Congress should pass legislation creating a bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Commission to oversee verification of the JCPOA and Iranian compliance. This commission would include members from the relevant committees, as well as relevant agency representatives, to regularly

review the status of the JCPOA and maintain a proactive role over the course of the agreement. This would serve as an additional venue dedicated to oversight of the JCPOA to review reports submitted to Congress from the Administration, as well as IAEA and Joint Commission meetings and reports. Much like the Helsinki Commission, the Congressional Commission would maintain a small staff devoted entirely to monitoring Iranian compliance with the JCPOA. The commission should meet regularly and provide recommendations on appropriate legislative action. In addition, Congress should closely monitor reports submitted under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015. Members must hold Iran accountable in reviewing these reports and Iran's compliance with the JCPOA.

Congress must do its part by providing the President's full request for IAEA funding, allowing the IAEA the resources and personnel required to verify Iran's nuclear commitments. IAEA Director General Amano has stated the agency will require \$10.5 million every year for the Iran nuclear issue, which is a pittance to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon.¹⁴

The U.S. State Department recently created the position of Lead Coordinator for Iran Nuclear Implementation, who will be in charge of the interagency process to verify Iran's implementation of the JCPOA. This office must be fully funded by Congress in order to have the resources required to oversee implementation of the agreement. Regular updates, briefings and hearings from the Lead Coordinator, as well as relevant agency officials, on the status of JCPOA implementation and any Joint Commission meetings will be necessary. U.S. intelligence agencies must also have increased funding levels from Congress in order to do its work, which may include alerting the IAEA to any intelligence they feel may prove Iran is violating the JCPOA.

Congress will lead the way in authorizing military operations in the event that force is necessary. The expansive transparency we have over Iran's nuclear program because of the agreement enhances our military option, should the U.S. need to use it. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has said, "...any prospective military option, if called for, will be more effective under this deal."¹⁵ The JCPOA provides the U.S. with more information on Iran's nuclear program and allows better planning in the event that a military option is needed. The United States has the most advanced and capable military in the world. If Iran violates the JCPOA and attempts to acquire a nuclear weapon, the United States reserves the right to use military force against Iran.¹⁶

Conclusion

The nuclear agreement with Iran is working. It has effectively scaled back Iran's nuclear program and put in place a stringent monitoring and verification program for decades to come. On Implementation Day, the agreement passed its first crucial test. Although it's not perfect, the JCPOA has eliminated the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran and secured our regional allies—all while maintaining our capabilities to respond to any attempt by Iran to cheat. Going forward, Congress must maintain a proactive role overseeing the agreement and holding Iran accountable.

Appendix

Below is a list of organizations and experts who have highlighted the success of Implementation Day.

Dr. Jim Walsh, Dr. Edward Levine, and Lieutenant General Robert Gard; The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.¹⁷

Lieutenant General Gadi Eisenkot; Chief of General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces.¹⁸

The Arms Control Association.¹⁹

Center for a New American Security.²⁰

Center for American Progress.²¹

Robert Einhorn; Brookings Senior Fellow and Former State Department official.²²

Gary Samore, Nicholas Burns, Graham Allison, Aaron Arnold, Matthew Bunn, Richard Nephew, and Stephen Walt; experts with the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.²³

Anthony H. Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy; Center for Strategic and International Studies.²⁴

Roger Cohen, Op-Ed Columnist; *The New York Times*.²⁵

Endnotes

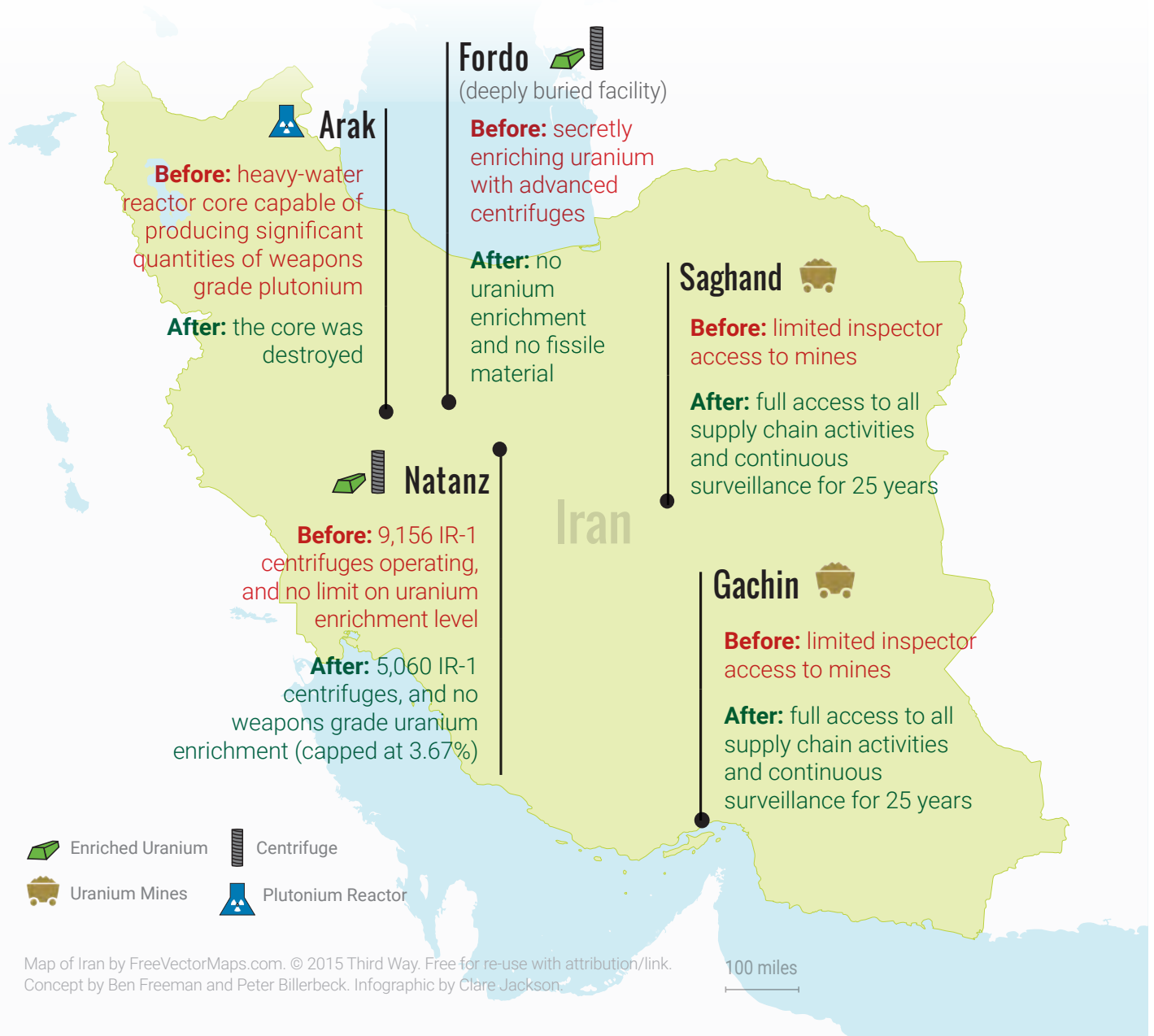
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Iran: Deal or No Deal

Bottom line, the deal will:

- Reduce the overall number of centrifuges by two-thirds.
- Cut the stockpile of 10,000 kg of low-enriched uranium to 300 kg.
- Block all three paths Iran has to obtain a nuclear weapon: uranium, plutonium, and covert.
- Increase the breakout time from 2 months to 1 year.
- Give IAEA inspectors access to all nuclear facilities and the entire supply chain.



JCPOA: Evaluating Issues since Implementation

Since the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was implemented on January 16, 2016, numerous issues emerged which bear watching. We review major updates surrounding the deal that have arisen since the agreement went into effect, starting with the most recent.

Donald Trump's Misinformed Critique of the Deal

During the first presidential debate on September 26th, Donald Trump criticized the JCPOA, arguing the deal should have also addressed North Korea's nuclear ambitions, the situation in Yemen, "and all these other places."¹ On its face, Trump seems to allow that the Iran deal is effectively limiting Iran's nuclear program and the U.S. can do more. Trump's critique, however, is misguided in assuming one agreement could solve all the world's problems. He also ignores the different dynamics at play in different parts of the world, including North Korea, with which the U.S. has previously attempted to broker an agreement in order to curb its nuclear program. A nuclear-armed Iran presented a serious threat to U.S. allies in the Middle East and it's one that world powers were able to agree on and come together to address.

Secret "Exemptions" to the Nuclear Deal

On September 1st, noted nuclear expert David Albright issued a report claiming secret exemptions were made to allow Iran to exceed some of the nuclear deal's required limitations. The exemptions seem to be narrow, technical deviations from the language of the deal. The administration would not publicly comment other than to say Iran had completed all of its required steps as verified by the IAEA.

The report raised legitimate concerns but it doesn't indicate Iranian cheating or a decreased breakout time to a nuclear weapon. Vigilant Congressional oversight of the nuclear deal, including briefings of Joint Commission meetings, will be necessary to verifying Iranian compliance. While the public is not aware of the details, members of Congress should confirm the administration's claims that these exemptions do not give Iran any additional latitude or change its nuclear breakout timeline.

Missile Defense System

On August 28th, Iranian state television reported that Iran had deployed a mobile missile defense system around its underground nuclear facility, Fordow. The contract for the S-300 system was signed in 2007 with Russia but was delivered this year after nuclear-related sanctions were lifted on Iran. Under the nuclear agreement, Fordow is no longer enriching uranium. The site was converted into a medical isotope research center for the first 15 years of the JCPOA. Delivery of the system does not violate the JCPOA, and while Iran's choice to deploy the system at Fordow is unusual, **IAEA inspectors will continue to have access to Fordow to ensure its activities are not used for weapons purposes.** What's important is that inspectors continue to have unrestricted access to Fordow to verify no weapons activity is taking place.

Republicans Allege "Ransom" Payment

The U.S. paid Iran \$1.7 billion in cash to settle a transactional dispute from the 1970s. The initial \$400 million cash payment to Iran, delivered and announced in January, was related to a transaction before the 1979 Iranian revolution — not for hostages and not related to the nuclear deal. When the Shah ruled Iran and was an ally of the U.S., Iran paid \$400 million to the U.S. for military hardware. Before the U.S. delivered the hardware, the Shah was overthrown by Ayatollah Khomeini, and the U.S. never made the delivery. In the decades since, a tribunal has been addressing the legal aspects of the U.S. returning the funds to Iran. Iran sought billions in interest in addition to the initial payment and the tribunal was likely to rule in Iran's favor. Instead, a settlement was reached to pay \$400 million plus just \$1.3 billion in interest — a \$1.7 billion total — which was much less than what Iran sought. The remaining \$1.3 billion was also paid in cash in two separate shipments in the three weeks following the initial January payment.

The initial payment — the \$400 million — was announced on the same day the nuclear deal was implemented in January, and the same day American hostages were released from Iran. As details of the type of payment (cash) emerged in August, the White House acknowledged the payment was used as leverage to ensure the Americans were returned.

But it was not ransom — this was money already owed to Iran and settled in a separate negotiation unrelated to the nuclear deal or the hostage situation. The payment was made in cash because Iran doesn't have access to the U.S. financial system or to U.S. dollars. The U.S. made the settlement on its terms and got the better of the deal.

Iranian Purchase of Boeing Planes

In June, a memorandum of agreement was signed for the sale of about 80 of Boeing's commercial airliners to Iran Air. The agreement also expressed Iran Air's intent to lease about 30 additional Boeing commercial aircraft. The sale is worth about \$17 billion and would be the first commercial deal between a U.S. company and Iran since the nuclear deal was implemented, and the first time U.S. aircraft have been sold to Iran since 1979. The aircraft would be delivered to Iran Air over the next six years. According to the State Department, the deal is allowable business activity under the sanctions relief provided with the JCPOA if it's approved by the Treasury Department.

In January, Airbus, a competing European aircraft manufacturer, made a deal with Iran to sell Iran 118 commercial aircraft for about \$25 billion. Because 10% of their aircraft are made up of U.S.-made parts, Airbus has said its deal with Iran will also require licensing and approval by the U.S. Airbus has applied for the license but it has not yet been approved. Boeing Vice Chairman, President and CEO of Commercial Airplanes, Ray Conner, has said that if Congress blocks the deal, other U.S. companies that provide parts for its competitors should also be blocked.

In July, the House of Representatives passed legislation with bipartisan support that included two amendments blocking the sale of Boeing aircraft, as well as Airbus aircraft, to Iran over concerns that the aircraft would be used for illicit activities. One amendment would prohibit the Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control from using funds to authorize the license needed to allow aircraft to be sold to Iran. The other amendment ensures Iran doesn't receive loans from U.S. financial institutions to purchase military compatible aircraft by prohibiting the Office of Foreign Assets Control from using funds to authorize the financing of these transactions. The President has indicated he would veto legislation that undermines the nuclear deal. If the Pentagon and CIA say the sale is not in U.S. national security interests, the deal will not go forward.

On September 21, the Treasury Department approved licenses for both Boeing and Airbus to deliver planes to Iran.

Heavy Water Purchases

In April, the U.S. agreed to purchase 32 metric tons of excess heavy water from Iran for \$8.6 million— which had been stored in Oman. Iran had previously been unable to find a buyer for its excess heavy water, which was estimated to be up to 50 tons, and Oman had agreed to store it until a buyer was available. This is an example of the exemptions reported earlier.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to keep its stores of heavy water below 130 metric tons. Heavy water is naturally occurring, but when combined with uranium, it has serious implications of weapons grade material. According to the Department of Energy, the U.S.-purchased Iranian heavy water will be resold to domestic commercial and research buyers. The purchase serves a dual benefit in preventing Iran from exceeding its 130 metric tons of heavy water while providing heavy water for the domestic market. It's in U.S. interests that we buy the heavy water, serving our needs while preventing Iran and other countries from acquiring it and potentially using it for nuclear weapons.

Ballistic Missile Tests

In March, Iran tested two ballistic missiles with ranges capable of hitting Israel. One of these missiles had "Israel should be wiped off the Earth" written on it in Hebrew. The U.S., Great Britain, France and Germany declared the tests "inconsistent with" and "in defiance of" United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 in a letter to the United Nations. The tests, however, were not seen as a direct violation of the resolution due to its vague language. The resolution states "Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons..." instead of explicitly saying Iran "shall not" undertake ballistic missile activity. It's unlikely sanctions will be imposed by the UN given Russia and China's veto power over any possible resolution.

The U.S., however, has imposed unilateral sanctions in response to Iran's ballistic missile tests. Following the March tests, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned two Iranian companies that support Iran's ballistic missile program. In addition, two British individuals and groups, and two UAE entities, were sanctioned for helping an Iranian airline avoid sanctions. Going forward, the U.S. and European counterparts will need to respond to any further ballistic missile tests by Iran, and urge the UN Security Council to respond. Congress should continue putting pressure on Iran for its ballistic missile tests while ensuring Israel has the military equipment and aid needed to counter Iranian threats.

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Surveillance and Encryption

In the United States, the technology industry and government have become sharply divided over the power of intelligence agencies and law enforcement to access private information, either through electronic surveillance or bypassing encryption. We must recognize that:

- Everyone involved shares the goals of keeping the public safe, upholding the law, and improving economic growth;
- Major challenges caused both by technology and government surveillance policy have undermined the trust built by those goals;
- The status quo is unacceptable, and we need to explore solutions that restore trust among the public, private industry, and the government.

Background

Electronic surveillance generally refers to any activity whereby intelligence or police officials: (a) intercept communications in transit or (b) access stored communications. Encryption can make it more difficult for law enforcement to access these communications, while at the same time protecting user data from criminal hackers. How surveillance is regulated depends on the location, purpose, and target of the particular surveillance. When conducted abroad against foreigners, surveillance falls under the President's constitutional authority as Commander-in-Chief. This is generally true regardless of the purpose of the surveillance. Accordingly, intelligence programs that collect information overseas are governed by the Constitution and executive order.

By contrast, any surveillance conducted inside U.S. territory must follow laws passed by Congress (although the president may add additional restrictions). When it comes to national security programs, the most important law is the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Under FISA, a secret court called the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) must individually approve electronic surveillance of U.S. citizens or foreigners who are suspected of being a threat to national security (although the precise legal language is different). The FISC must also sign off on domestic intelligence activities that target foreigners overseas.

Most surveillance that occurs within U.S. territory is about normal criminal investigations, not national security. Here, Congress and the courts have imposed major restrictions on

the ability of law enforcement agencies to gather electronic evidence. Most importantly, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) requires police investigators to obtain a court-approved search warrant before they can eavesdrop or gather private data.¹ To this end, a law called the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA) lays out how telecommunications providers must help police enforce search warrants.

Shared Goals Build Mutual Trust

Any productive discussion of surveillance and encryption must begin by acknowledging that average citizens, industry leaders, and government officials share the same interest in improving society. That means striking a reasonable balance between fighting crime and terrorism, upholding the U.S. Constitution, and maximizing economic growth.

Disrupting and Prosecuting Terrorists and Criminals

First and foremost, government is supposed to protect the life, liberty, and property of its citizens. Officials in law enforcement and intelligence have a duty to apprehend the criminals and terrorists that threaten these basic rights. That means government agents need to identify who they should target for investigation and gather the information that justifies subsequent police, intelligence, or military action. Some degree of government surveillance is therefore necessary to keep the public safe. NSA surveillance authorized by FISA was critical to foiling a 2009 terrorist plot to bomb the subway in New York City.²

Upholding the Constitution and Individual Privacy

Most of the debate around electronic surveillance in the United States revolves around three key features of the U.S. Constitution. The first is a system of “checks and balances” which empowers each branch of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—with the ability to constrain the other two. The second is the First Amendment, which guarantees the freedom of expression. Finally, the Fourth Amendment generally requires that government agents obtain a judicially approved search warrant before they can search someone's house, belongings, or—in many cases—electronic communications. When it comes to surveillance in the United States and against U.S. citizens, opposing sides in the debate all agree that these principles apply.

Boosting Economic Growth and Innovation

Economic success is the bedrock of American power. For the past century, incredible achievements by U.S. companies and their employees have allowed the United States government to boost revenue, build the world's strongest military, and wield unprecedented diplomatic influence anywhere in the world. It is the policy of the U.S. government to ensure economic growth "by opening markets and leveling the playing field for American workers and businesses abroad."³ In 2015, the largest U.S. technology firms drew 59% of their revenue from foreign sales.⁴ Thus, in today's world, sound economic policy means improving the ability of U.S. firms to extend their reach into overseas markets.

Recent Tensions have Undermined Trust

In recent years, three crosscurrents have generated an adversarial relationship between government agencies, U.S. technology companies, and consumers in the United States and around the world.

Criminals and Terrorists are Using Technology to Hide

While modern computing and telecommunications have generated untold benefits for society, terrorists and criminals can use these technologies to evade detection and capture. Organizations like al Qaeda and ISIS use the Internet to spread their propaganda, attract recruits, and remotely plot terrorist attacks from relative safety.⁵ Their communications are needles in a massive haystack of global data. Even if intelligence agencies can single out their targets, terrorists can use encryption to make their messages unreadable.⁶ Law enforcement agents must confront sophisticated criminals who take advantage of the Internet and encryption.⁷ These technologies make it difficult for police to track and, should they successfully apprehend them, collect the evidence necessary to convict criminals.

For many years, this challenge has been manageable because only the most advanced terrorists and criminals were able to use complex technology. But in a post-Snowden world where many consumers worry about the privacy of their communications, many companies, such as Apple or WhatsApp, have made it far easier for the average consumer to use the same technology. According to some government representatives, this kind of default security means that even unsophisticated adversaries can take advantage of advanced technology and evade capture. Some officials have accused private companies of carelessly enabling criminals and

terrorists.⁸ At the same time, security professionals say that the value of encryption in protecting data outweighs other risks.⁹

Perceptions of Government Abuse

At the same time, for many privacy advocates and civil libertarians, the Snowden affair provided concrete evidence that the U.S. government was abusing its power in conducting mass electronic surveillance. Leading members of Congress claimed that government attorneys misinterpreted a single word in the USA PATRIOT Act to authorize the collection of metadata (call information that does not include audio content, such as the number dialed and the duration of the call) on millions of Americans.¹⁰ Privacy groups and some Senators have suggested the FBI violated the Fourth Amendment by conducting warrantless searches of Americans' data incidentally collected by the NSA under Section 702 of FISA.¹¹ News stories suggesting that the NSA had tampered with products sold by U.S. companies and hacked into the internal networks of U.S. corporations spun accusations that the government was going behind the backs of technology executives who were otherwise willing to help disrupt criminals and terrorists.¹² Despite multiple independent reviews that found no intentional abuse of statutory authority, the perception of government overreach remains, especially in the technology community. This has led many companies to assume a more adversarial stance toward law enforcement and the Intelligence Community.

News Reports and Government Proposals Hurt U.S. Technology Industry

The Snowden disclosures claimed to describe how the U.S. government collects data on millions of non-U.S. citizens in bulk—not just metadata, but also the content of their conversations. President Obama's surveillance review group acknowledged that intelligence activities could cause "severe" harm to U.S. competitiveness in the global technology market.¹³ Indeed, the Snowden disclosures spooked foreign consumers of U.S. products, particularly in Europe and South America, where companies and governments began cancelling contracts with American firms and turning to foreign providers.¹⁴ European regulators have begun scrutinizing the relationship between U.S. companies and intelligence agencies, transforming consumer discontent abroad into a potentially distressing legal obstacle to cross-border data flows.

This backlash contributed to a push by some U.S. companies to introduce encryption as a default security function, which can make it difficult for any entity—

except the owner of the device—from accessing encrypted information. Even if law enforcement gets a lawful court order demanding that the manufacturer of the device provide access, the company itself is locked out. In some cases, this means that government agents cannot easily obtain evidence without the help of a suspect, who might be unwilling to cooperate. In some cases this has led the government to seek out third parties who can exploit existing vulnerabilities to access required data.

Congress is moving to address this situation in a variety of ways. Senators Richard Burr and Diane Feinstein have sponsored a proposal that requires companies to provide any information requested by a lawful court order in a format that is legible to the requesting government agency. This would prohibit any company from using encryption that prevents it from accessing any data belonging to one of its customers.¹⁵ Most major technology companies and trade associations oppose the measure as bad not only for security, but for technological innovation and economic competitiveness.¹⁶ Alternatively, Senators Michael McCaul and Mark Warner have proposed legislation to establish a Commission on Digital Security, which would be designed “to collectively address the larger issue of protecting national security and digital security, without letting encrypted communications become a safe haven for terrorists.”¹⁷

We Need Solutions to Decrease Tensions and Restore Mutual Trust

This trust gap has created a situation where industry and government, once close partners in the fight against criminals and terrorists, have begun to launch rhetorical and legal attacks against one another. This adversarial relationship is bad for national security. We need commonsense policy changes that better protect civil liberties and American industry, while preserving appropriate government access to vital information for security purposes.

USA Freedom Act was a Start

After the Snowden affair broke in the summer of 2013, the U.S. government acknowledged that it was using Section 215 of the USA PATRIOT Act to collect the domestic phone records of millions of Americans, without having to show that each person was under investigation for foreign intelligence reasons. Privacy groups and leading members of Congress claimed that the executive branch had stretched the meaning of the law. In 2015, Congress passed the USA FREEDOM Act. Among other things, USA FREEDOM amended Section 215 to require that the government obtain a separate court order every time it wants an individual’s

domestic phone records. However, this only ended the bulk collection of telephone metadata, which amounts to everything about a call except the audio content. Other laws, such as the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) or the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), address when and how the government can actually listen to phone calls and read Internet messages.

We Need to Reform Section 702 and EO 12333

As discussed in the background, FISA governs national security surveillance that involves eavesdropping on the *content* of communications. A special part of FISA, called Section 702, allows the NSA to use infrastructure inside U.S. territory to spy on telephone and Internet data that enters, exits, or passes through the United States. A court must authorize it, but the legal standard is much more deferential to the NSA than a typical search warrant. The NSA can only use Section 702 to target foreigners who are overseas, but if a U.S. person talks to a foreign target, the NSA can collect that conversation.

The statute is sufficient if one is only concerned about the NSA. Section 702 gives the Intelligence Community valuable counterterrorism tools and institutes unprecedented controls on the data its agencies collect. But in the initial drafting of Section 702, policymakers did not thoroughly review two potential downsides of the law: (1) its impact on U.S. electronic communications companies and (2) the use of the information by the U.S. government in non-national security, criminal investigations. As Congress contemplates whether to reauthorize Section 702, which expires in December 2017, it must consider how to improve the law to mitigate these harms.

But even reforming Section 702 will not be enough to restore trust. Executive Order 12333 governs all intelligence activities that actually take place overseas. It says that if the U.S. government grabs electronic data stored abroad by a U.S. corporation, that company does not get any protections. The company is not given notice, nor are they guaranteed a right to challenge the collection. This is why, to this day, 12333 can be read to provide authority to the Intelligence Community to access the data of American firms overseas, without the consent of the target companies. Changing this will be an important step to changing the relationship between the U.S. technology industry and the government tasked with protecting it.

Conclusion

The civil liberties groups, industry leaders, and government officials currently wrangling over surveillance and encryption share core values. As they explore new technologies that might improve privacy, consumer security, and national security, industry and government should strive for solutions that accommodate these vital objectives: protecting the public, upholding the law, and ensuring a bright future for the U.S. economy in the 21st century.

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National Security Interrogations: Myth v. Reality

Following the U.S. raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in Pakistan, several Bush officials claimed that so-called "enhanced" (i.e. coercive) interrogation techniques performed on a few high-value detainees generated actionable intelligence used to locate and ultimately kill the al Qaeda chief.¹ While Obama Administration officials have refuted this claim, questions remain regarding the effectiveness of coercive techniques. Unfortunately, constructive dialogue is hindered by a general misunderstanding of the interrogation process—reinforced by inaccurate Hollywood depictions—and a lack of comprehensive analysis of intelligence acquired through coercive versus non-coercive means.

Unfortunately, the ubiquitous media portrayals of brutal interrogations as an effective model for eliciting information have often proven more influential in informing the decisions of policymakers, and public opinion, than have science or actual experience. While heavy-handed methods may have some measure of appeal as entertainment, evidence-based research in interrogation strongly suggests that the stress of coercive interrogations is more likely to cloud memory than to clarify it. Similarly, coercion is likely to also generate false information and obfuscation as the detainee struggles to meet the demands of his interrogator. On the other hand, if an interrogator focuses on building a useful degree of accord with the detainee, the questioner has a much better chance of collecting useable data.

Clearly, a more realistic appraisal of interrogation's true capabilities and limitations is necessary to avoid wasting this precious national security tool in the crises of the future.

Defining Interrogations and the Rapport-Based Approach

To understand how this media-driven image falls short, it is important to understand the overall purpose of an interrogation. An interrogation is the systematic questioning of an individual who is reasonably and objectively assumed to possess information of potential intelligence and/or law enforcement value.² The interrogator's central challenges in such a process are:

- Eliciting a sufficient level of cooperation from the detainee so his or her knowledge may be explored;

- Gaining this cooperation in a manner that does not undermine his or her ability to reliably recall events, places and personalities; and
- Asking questions that increase the potential for gaining accurate details and decrease the possibility of obtaining false, misleading, or distorted information or details, inducing corrupted recall.

The competitive exchange of information between the interrogator and the detainee can be categorized into two primary categories:

- **Information the detainee may provide to the interrogator:** This includes not only information of intelligence value, but also information that provides insights into the detainee's interests and motivations.
- **Information the interrogator may provide to the detainee:** This might include the current realities outside the detention environment, or timelines for release.

The interrogator must deftly manage this complex, information-driven dynamic by continually evaluating, monitoring, and synthesizing the detainee's needs, hopes, fears, and interests to create an environment that encourages cooperation. By doing so, the interrogator builds the critical rapport with the detainee. Once this is established, it is possible to create a situation in which the detainee realistically perceives that providing accurate and comprehensive information is in his best interests.³ At that point, information is much easier to elicit. Additionally, this approach has often induced detainees to volunteer important operational information that the interrogator may not have suspected they possessed.⁴

Cooperation as the Interrogator's End Goal

The primary purpose of national security interrogations is to gain actionable information, and experienced interrogators know the best way to accomplish this goal is to use a rapport-based approach. Interrogators who employ coercive measures are seldom successful, and use of such methods often reflects inexperience or impatience. A more sophisticated, relationship-based strategy is consistently the best means of generating accurate information. Simply put,

overt aggression may serve short-term emotional interests, but will have long-term negative repercussions. As the former head of vaunted East German foreign intelligence service once observed, “interrogations... should serve to extract useful information from the prisoner...not to exact revenge by means of intimidation or torture.”⁵

To this effect, a detainee’s *cooperation* can seldom be gained, much less sustained, with coercive practices. If the U.S. requires timely and accurate information, it is preparation, patience, guile, and attention to detail that can be relied upon to generate results. Even Americans subjected to brutality in wartime interrogations are uncomfortably aware that they might have been more cooperative with their captors under other circumstances. As Jack Fellowes, who shared a cell with John McCain during their time as POWs during the Vietnam War, once noted, “The tougher [the Vietnamese interrogators] got on us, the tougher we got back at them...[although] I often thought, if they started treated [sic] us kindly, what would we do? I really think they would have gotten more information.”⁶

Of course, questioning a detainee over a period of time is seldom a linear, concrete, and predictable process, especially when it involves high-value targets with considerable life experience and advanced education. In these situations, interrogators should be prepared to interview a detainee over a long period of time, striving to establish a bond amidst an environment shaped by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

Getting to the Truth on Interrogation

To better understand the complexities and challenges of interrogations as they unfold under real-world conditions, it might be helpful to contrast the fundamental principles and processes with the fictional portrayals found on television and in books and movies. It will be readily evident that reality is far more complicated than media images of snappy repartee by sharp-witted interrogators, quick capitulations from confused suspects, and a quick resolution that offers answers to every critical question.

Getting to the Truth on Interrogation	
ON TELEVISION...	IN REALITY...
The subject of an interrogation is almost always guilty of a crime or has direct knowledge of issues pertinent to the interrogator.	The primary task of an interrogation is accurately assessing an individual's level of knowledge or involvement in a crime or specific activity. It remains unclear whether any one person has information of value.
The subject's memory is reliable and complete. Denials, claims of innocence or changes in the story are dismissed as resistance or deception.	Memory is fragile and more unreliable than widely believed. The ability to recall information can be undermined by personal and environmental factors. Similarly, truth-tellers unknowingly modify details with each successive recitation of a story, while fabricators commonly repeat the same story almost verbatim.
Physical indicators of deceit manifest during interrogation—gaze aversion, gestures, speech impairments, shifts in body posture, and changes in skin tone—that may be used to detect lies.	These alleged indicators of deception employed by many interrogators are often anecdotal and not scientific.
Interrogation involves psychological and physical force to gain a subject's cooperation or compliance.	By definition, interrogation involves the systematic questioning of an individual who is objectively assessed as possessing information of intelligence and/or law enforcement value. Using psychological and physical force is not always necessary, and can be counterproductive.
Threats of harsh treatment or serious consequences expedite the process of gaining a subject's cooperation or compliance.	Fear and anxiety produced by threats of harsh treatment have markedly negative effects on recall ability. Stress has been shown to increase false memories.
After psychological or emotional pressure applied by a threatening interrogator, subjects decide to cooperate, especially when presented with a more understanding interrogator.	The well-known “good cop/bad cop” strategy, which produces a ‘fear then relief’ situation, can create a cognitive deficit, undermining the ability of the detainee to reliably recall names, places and events.

Why Force is Ineffective

Some incorrectly assume that physical coercion is an integral part of the interrogation process.⁷ In fact, many have accepted the unfounded premise that the employment of physical, psychological, or emotional pressure is necessary to gather critical intelligence in the course of an interrogation.⁸ Further, there has been wide acceptance of the erroneous belief that vital information cannot be obtained from a resistant subject after they are provided legal protections or treated in a manner consistent with the Geneva Conventions. This assumption is exacerbated by the equally invalid proposition that most, if not all, detainees captured under hostile circumstances possess valuable information or are able to recall information in remarkable and accurate detail.

Operational realities tell a different story. For example, the American experience in Afghanistan and Iraq revealed many detainees were misidentified as terrorists or insurgents.⁹ Not surprisingly, a large number of these individuals possessed little information of value, thus wasting U.S. interrogators' time and energy. In fact, one US Army investigation conducted in 2004 in Iraq estimated that 85-90% of detainees in one major detention facility "were of no intelligence value."¹⁰ Complicating these issues was the fact that some military units employed a haphazard methodology in detaining individuals across their areas of operation, leading to "...an increased drain on scarce interrogator and linguist resources to sort out the valuable detainees from innocents who should have been released soon after capture, and ultimately, to *less actionable intelligence*."¹¹

Successful interrogators understand that there are two general reasons why forcible techniques invariably generate poor results.

First, **the focused application of sufficient psychological and physical force may often cause a detainee to respond to questions even if he or she has no useable information.** A detainee placed under prolonged physical duress may be compelled to answer any question, even if he or she has no meaningful or relevant answer. When coercion is employed in association with leading questions—a common tactic used in coercive models of interrogation—the detainee may characteristically begin answering questions in the manner clearly suggested by the person employing the physical pressure. The detainee in such a scenario will understandably say and do practically anything to escape the torment. This force-outcome dynamic may be accurately described as *compliance*, as opposed to *cooperation*.

Of course, if the intended outcome is for the detainee to make statements regardless of his or her veracity, then coercion may be a useful tool. For example, obtaining a prisoner's compliance for propaganda purposes was the primary focus of the Chinese and North Vietnamese interrogation programs during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, respectively. As a prisoner of war, Senator John McCain was brutalized by his Vietnamese interrogators into writing several bogus "confessions."¹² One of his statements, for example, included naming the Green Bay Packers' offensive line as part of his air squadron.¹³

Coercion is indeed an effective means of gaining compliance—but it is a poor mechanism for acquiring reliable intelligence. In his book *An Ethics of Interrogation*, U.S. Naval Academy Professor Michael Skerker notes:

For a practice meant to reveal truth, interrogatory torture generates ambiguity in series. It will usually be unclear to interrogators if a given detainee has security-sensitive information; unclear if torture has compelled the truth from him; unclear whether he would have spoken without torture (interrogators who claim to have exhausted noncoercive means may simply be unskilled in those methods); and unclear if further torture would reveal more information.¹⁴

Second, **interrogation is an intelligence collection initiative, not one that seeks intimidation or punishment as a fundamental outcome.** Just as signals intelligence (SIGINT) captures electronic signals, and imagery intelligence (IMINT) collects photographic and digital representations of selected sites, interrogation seeks accurate, comprehensive, and unbiased information about people, places, and plans from *within a detainee's memory*. A major challenge—one that an ill-trained interrogator may overlook to his or her detriment—is that human memories may be unreliable and oftentimes malleable. Human memory may be shaped or corrupted even under the most benign and non-threatening circumstances.¹⁵

Hence, it stands to reason that **coercive measures can easily compromise a detainee's constructive recall ability.** Studies on this topic have demonstrated how personal and environmental stressors may diminish the ability of any individual to accurately recall detailed information.¹⁶

In an operational context, a detainee who has been subjected to sleep deprivation, overt threats, dietary manipulation, and extended interrogations is unlikely to be able to reliably and fully report information even if he or she had a desire to cooperate. Supporting this notion, Trinity College (Dublin) research psychologist Shane O'Mara offers an important observation on the effects of coercive interrogation on memory and its unreliability:

“Information retrieved from memory though the employment of coercive interrogation methods is assumed to be reliable and veridical, as suspects will be motivated to end the interrogation by revealing information from long-term memory. No supporting data for this model are provided by the U.S. Government memos describing enhanced interrogation techniques; in fact, the model is unsupported by scientific evidence.”¹⁷

The Way Ahead

The Obama Administration has made a good-faith attempt to bring standards to American interrogation practices by issuing an Executive Order that extended the relevant U.S. Army Field Manual’s directives to all government-wide interrogation efforts. Nonetheless, to meet the extensive collection needs of U.S. security requirements in a legal, ethical, and operationally effective manner, the military and Intelligence Community should develop a new interrogation doctrine in order to prepare for the national security crises of the future.¹⁸ This model of interrogation should feature the following critical elements:

- A government-wide recognition that interrogation’s complex challenges are on par with those of clandestine collection operations.
- An appreciation that methods will be consistent with long-standing U.S. legal and ethical traditions.
- The long-term examination of selected high-value detainees will take place under strict standards and subject to appropriate Congressional oversight.
- Experimental research will be followed by carefully controlled trials in an operational setting to demonstrate the efficacy of emerging strategies and methods.
- Formal vetting programs will limit recruitment to a select cadre of interrogators who can effectively grapple with the complexities and ambiguities of interrogation.
- Rigorous training and standards will improve the overall level of professionalism in the interrogation discipline.

This new interrogation model must also be supported by a robust and ongoing research effort. Both basic and applied research will be necessary to develop an appropriate body of scientific knowledge. The following are recommended critical building blocks for a successful research program:

Determine how people make decisions. During an interrogation, the interrogator and the detainee are continually making decisions, forming assessments, selecting among options, and choosing to hide/reveal emotions, while simultaneously trying to shape the decision-making of the other. Thus, it is important that a successful program capture the practical applications of the best research available about how people make decisions in order to refine the interrogator’s knowledge.

Improve and augment the resilience of memory. The key to interrogation is gaining virtual access to the detainee’s memory. Interrogators sometimes erroneously assume that people are able to fully and accurately recall even distant events regardless of conditions. The challenge, then, is to facilitate high-quality “recall,” sometimes from individuals who initially may choose to not even answer a question.

Improve cultural literacy, especially with foreign detainees. Successful interrogators should be consistently informed by a deep understanding of the complex cultural factors that divide peoples across faiths, viewpoints, and cultures. At a minimum, the interrogation strategies should be customized for their appropriateness and effectiveness within various target populations.

Conclusion

History provides ample warning that some interrogators will be tempted to resort to physical force in the quest for information. Given the evolving threats facing Americans at home and abroad—and the relentless pressure placed upon interrogators to extract time-sensitive information from incarcerated high-value targets—this unsavory prospect will continue. The professional cadre of interrogators supporting America’s national security interests, and representing the nation’s values, must not be seduced by the siren call of coercion; rather, it must rely on a rapport-based, field-tested, scientifically-valid strategic architecture to elicit cooperation and, as a result, provide meaningful information to the country’s political and military leaders.

Endnotes

1. While a precise definition of what constitutes coercive interrogation practices remains elusive, for the purposes of this paper, we will define coercion as any interrogation tactic that would violate Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, specifically those involving violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.
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Brexit Primer

The planned separation of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) will have serious international implications. We outline some of them below.

Brexit Vote

On June 23, 2016, the UK—which includes England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland—held a vote to either stay in the EU, or leave it. Leave won with 51.9%—about 17.4 million votes—to 48.1%—about 16.1 million votes.

Leave Campaign: The UK Independent Party (UKIP) leader, Nigel Farage, and the former London mayor and conservative politician, Boris Johnson, led efforts for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. Michael Gove, the UK's Justice Secretary was also in favor of the UK leaving the European Union. Older voters generally voted to leave the EU, with 50-64 year olds voting 56% to 44% to leave and those over age 65 voting to leave by 61% to 39%. England voted to leave the EU by a vote of 53.4% to 46.6%, with much of the countryside voting in favor of leaving. Wales voted to leave the EU by a vote of 52.5% to 47.5%.

Remain Campaign: UK Prime Minister David Cameron, from the Conservative Party, was the leading advocate for the UK staying in the European Union. London's new mayor, Sadiq Khan and Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, also led efforts to keep the UK in the European Union. President Obama argued in favor of the UK staying in the EU, as did EU leaders. Younger voters overwhelmingly voted to remain in the EU, with 18-24 year olds voting 75% to 25% to stay in the EU and 25-49 year olds voting to stay in the EU 56% to 44%. Scotland voted to remain in the EU by a vote of 62% to 38%. Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU by a vote of 55.8% to 44.2%. The city of London was also overwhelmingly in favor of remaining in the EU 60% to 40%.

The vote itself carried no legal weight. The Prime Minister would have to call on Parliament to trigger the formal withdrawal process. Although the Prime Minister is under no legal obligation to do so, not starting the process would be seen as highly undemocratic.

Following the Brexit results, Prime Minister David Cameron announced he would step down as Prime Minister of the UK. On July 13th, Theresa May, the British Home Secretary of Cameron's Conservative cabinet, became the new UK Prime Minister and began forming a new cabinet that includes Boris Johnson as the new Foreign Minister.

The European Union

The European Union concept developed soon after World War II in an effort to prevent another war through economic cooperation. In 1957, six European countries (France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Italy) created the EU's forerunner, the European Economic Community (EEC). In 1973, the United Kingdom joined. Today, there are 28 countries in the European Union with over 500 million people. The EU is based in Brussels, Belgium. Members also include: Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Austria, Spain, Malta, and Portugal.

The EU has also grown into a political partnership, in addition to an economic one. It established a variety of regulations on the economy, environment, and transportation sectors. There are four major institutions that run the EU: the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Court of Justice. The EU is a single market, so there are no taxes imposed on imports and exports between EU countries. The EU adopted the Schengen Area open-borders agreement, which allows free movement of EU nationals within EU borders without border checks, but the UK has not participated in this. The EU uses the euro as currency, which is only used by 19 of the member states — the so-called "Eurozone." The United Kingdom has kept pound sterling as its currency instead of switching to the euro. Arguments to Leave the EU

Those in favor of leaving the EU made several arguments against continued membership:

- **Save money:** In 2014, the UK's net contribution to the EU was 9.8 billion pounds (roughly \$12.9 billion). Leavers claimed that this money would be used to revamp the UK's National Health Service — a claim they admitted was false after the vote.
- **Immigration:** Under the EU, the UK must allow EU nationals to travel and/or live in the UK. In recent years, immigration has significantly increased, alarming those who would like restrictions on immigration. The refugee crisis last year also added to fears of increased immigration.
- **Reclaim sovereignty:** Some believed continued membership in the EU eroded British sovereignty. Laws passed in the EU parliament are binding on EU member states. Those in favor of leaving the EU believed this hampered the UK's self-rule.

Consequences of Leaving the EU

Major arguments for the UK to stay in the EU include:

- **Global Influence:** Leaving the EU will mean the UK loses a seat at the negotiating table for a variety of global issues, including security and trade. The United Kingdom has been in agreement with Germany in leading the bloc with harsh European sanctions against Russia for its aggressive posture in Ukraine. Without the UK in the European Union, this united front to counter Russia could be weakened. Following the vote, EU lawmakers suggested dropping English as its official language, which would complicate relations within the bloc, as well as U.S. relations with the EU.
- **Economy:** The UK currently benefits from participation in the EU's single market, not having to pay taxes on imports and exports among EU members. Without EU membership, the UK will no longer have this benefit. The more immediate economic effects have already started to take shape. Soon after the vote, the British currency, the pound, dropped to its lowest value since 1985, and the global stock markets dropped significantly. The International Monetary Fund has predicted a 0 to 0.2% knock to global economic growth outside of the EU as a result of the vote. The full impact of the UK leaving the European Union will be better understood once the terms of the separation are finalized, which won't happen for another two years, but the uncertainty in the meantime will contribute to a volatile market.

- **Immigration:** There are about 1.3 million British citizens living in Europe and roughly three million EU nationals living in the UK. The UK leaving the EU will likely impact their "right to work," as well as other rights and services in the EU and the UK once a deal to leave is finalized.
- **Independence votes:** In 2014, Scotland held a referendum for independence from the United Kingdom, but the vote failed 55% to 45%. Because Scotland overwhelmingly voted to stay with the European Union, some Scottish leaders are calling for another vote for independence from the UK. Similarly, Northern Ireland overwhelmingly voted to stay in the European Union. Irish republicans in Northern Ireland have called for a referendum to leave the United Kingdom and be united with Ireland in order to remain a part of the EU.

The vote has raised interest in other EU countries to leave the bloc, including in France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Politicians in France and the Netherlands have already called for a vote to leave the EU.

- **Security:** As a member of the EU, the UK is able to participate in intelligence and information sharing reserved for EU members, including sharing criminal records and passenger records. Without membership, the UK may be more vulnerable to security threats. All of the UK's nuclear weapons are stationed in Scotland. If Scotland votes for independence from the UK, this deterrent will have to be moved elsewhere. No plans exist to find an alternative location for these nuclear submarines, which will cost billions and take years.

U.S.-UK Relationship

What will the Brexit vote mean for the U.S.-UK relationship? As President Obama noted, "one thing that will not change is the special relationship that exists between our two nations. That will endure."

- **United Nations Security Council:** The UK is currently one of five states that holds a permanent seat on the Security Council, which grants them an overriding veto vote. The UK is a major U.S.-ally and generally votes in lockstep with the U.S., but the UK leaving the EU has the potential for other countries — like Germany and Japan — to seek a permanent seat on the council and alter the dynamic at the UN.

- **NATO:** The impact the vote will have on NATO remains to be seen. Lieutenant-General Ben Hodges, who is the commanding general of the U.S. Army in Europe, expressed concerns prior to the vote that the UK leaving the EU would show divisions in Europe while facing a variety of threats. He worried the vote could begin a process of breaking up the EU, which would have a major impact on the NATO alliance. However, following the vote, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said “The UK will remain a strong and committed NATO ally, and will continue to play its leading role in our Alliance.”
- **Five Eyes:** This is a decades-long intelligence-gathering alliance between five English-speaking countries — the U.S., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK. — that share intelligence and commit to not spying on one another. This alliance will continue with or without the UK’s membership in the EU.
- **Trade:** The U.S. has been negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). With the UK’s departure from the EU, they will no longer be part of the future agreement and would have to seek a separate free trade agreement with the U.S.

The Process

The UK will not immediately leave the European Union. The British Parliament first needs to invoke Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty to begin the separation process, which has not yet happened. The Prime Minister indicated negotiations to withdraw will formally begin in March of 2017. From that point, the United Kingdom will have two years to negotiate with the EU on the terms of their exit. However, the UK will no longer be a party to EU-member deliberations on the terms of the UK exit. If the UK and EU do not agree to terms of the separation at the end of the two years, the UK will depart the EU without a deal in place outlining the terms of their future relationship.

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NATO and Donald Trump's Dangerous Proposition

Congratulations, you will be defending yourself.” That’s what Donald Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, is saying to U.S. NATO allies. In an interview with the New York Times on July 21st, he vowed the U.S. would not come to the defense of our NATO allies unless they’ve paid their dues under a Trump administration. Here’s what’s wrong with this:

NATO — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — developed soon after World War II as a mutual assistance agreement to counter the Soviet Union’s attempts to expand into Europe. The alliance now has 28 members, from Europe to North America. Article V of the pact states that if a NATO member is attacked, it is an attack on all members, and the alliance will come together to take appropriate action in defense of their ally, exercising their right of collective self-defense. The U.S. has made a commitment to come to the defense of these allies if the worst should happen. But what good is our word if we no longer keep our promises?

NATO not only secures U.S. allies; it secures the U.S. When we were attacked on 9/11, NATO invoked Article V for the first time in the alliance’s history, stating the attack on the U.S. was an attack on all. The U.S. led an international military campaign in Afghanistan to wipe out al Qaeda and bring down their protectors, the Taliban. From 2003 to 2014, NATO commanded the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan to prevent the country from once again becoming a safe haven for terrorists. Without NATO allies coming to aid America, the mission would have been squarely on U.S. shoulders alone. Under a Trump administration, do we really want our NATO allies to abandon us?

Collective self-defense is an essential part of the NATO alliance. Given recent Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, the pact’s importance is even clearer. Smaller NATO countries that border Russia depend on this alliance to protect them if Russia challenges their sovereignty. The very existence of NATO and the real threat that the alliance will come to members’ aid under Article V prevents Russia and other aggressors from threatening NATO members.

We also have a key NATO ally in the Middle East: Turkey. Russia continues to prop up Assad in Syria to maintain their strongman in the region. But if we abandon Turkey, a NATO ally since the 1950s and on Syria’s border, its security could be threatened by its neighbors and potentially Russia. What is American leadership if we can’t come to the aid of our allies?

Retreating from NATO and our commitments is exactly what Putin and our adversaries want. Isolating our allies would present an opportunity for Russia to easily expand their influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Donald Trump has made a dangerous proposition to disregard commitments we’ve made to allies since 1949. And it’s a cowardly suggestion to forget the security of those who helped defend us when we needed it the most.

Endnotes

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Reckless Donald Trump Statements on Terrorism and National Security

Over the course of the election season, it has become increasingly clear that Donald Trump lacks a meaningful understanding of U.S. foreign policy. His reckless approach alienates the American public,¹ world leaders,² and stands in stark contrast to the tough and smart approach preferred by the American people and the U.S. military.³ Even Republican national security leaders have disavowed him, saying he would “make American less safe.”⁴

We culled the most reckless Donald Trump statements on terrorism that reveal how misinformed he is on the most critical national security issues facing the U.S. These statements, countered with facts, rebuttals, and the Obama Administration’s tough and smart counterterrorism policies, show just how out of his depth Donald Trump is on terrorism and national security issues.

#1: We’re Not Bombing

Statement: “We’re not bombing. We’re not doing much. We have a president that thinks ISIS has been contained. We have a president that doesn’t know what’s happening. So when you say we’re bombing, we’re not bombing.”⁵

Response: This is false. We *are* bombing ISIS. The Obama Administration has been bombing ISIS since 2014 and between U.S. efforts and 65 coalition partners, more than 14,000 airstrikes have hit ISIS since 2014.

- The U.S. is leading a huge coalition against ISIS, hitting them from the air and working with regional partners on the ground to take back territory.
- Since 2014, the U.S. and coalition partners have been conducting airstrikes against ISIS. These efforts have accelerated in recent months, hitting 20 ISIS targets on average every day. This strategy has been effective, cutting back ISIS’s territorial gains by 45% in Iraq and more than 25% in Syria and significantly diminished their financial resources.
- Donald Trump is sorely mistaken on U.S. policy and his lack of understanding of U.S. counterterrorism efforts is dangerous.

#2: U.S. Generals Reduced to Rubble

Statement: “...The Generals have been reduced to rubble...They have been reduced to a point where it’s embarrassing to our country...”⁶

Response: Donald Trump is insulting the finest fighting force in human history. He may have forgotten we have the greatest military in the world: We have the most powerful navy fleet, with 273 ships⁷ and 11 commissioned aircraft carriers,⁸ roughly 7,100 nuclear warheads,⁹ and missile defense systems. Our senior military leaders stand together beyond partisanship in defense of our nation.

- Donald Trump has no understanding of how the U.S. military works or of how career military service members are promoted to general. This isn’t a reality show where you can simply denigrate career military professionals and fire them.
- Trump saying he’ll “rebuild our military”¹⁰ implies it’s broken, which is an insult to the brave men and women of our armed forces. He also ignores the fact that our military budget is larger than the largest Reagan budget.¹¹
- The U.S. is unquestionably the world’s strongest military power. Implying otherwise demonstrates ignorance of other countries’ military capabilities and our own.

#3: Kill Terrorist Families

Statement: “The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families, when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families. They care about their lives, don’t kid yourself. When they say they don’t care about their lives, you have to take out their families.”¹²

Response: Donald Trump supports killing innocent people and committing war crimes. Killing the family members of ISIS would result in the deaths of innocent women and children. Donald Trump has no regard for our basic principles or humanitarian law.

- There is a targeted and smart way to hit ISIS, which is what the Obama Administration is doing. Donald Trump doesn't understand the difference between a reckless strategy, and a smart one.
- Donald Trump's plan to kill innocent people will not defeat ISIS. Killing innocent families runs counter to international law, our principles, and would enrage the world against the U.S. Resorting to such barbaric attacks would bring the U.S. down to the terrorists' level, hurting our reputation and leadership role in the world.
- Precision bombing and intelligence will effectively identify and eliminate the threat without incurring too many civilian casualties. The overkill Trump suggests is an insult to our military and intelligence professionals.

#4: Torture

Statement: "Torture works. Ok, folks?" You know, I have these guys – "Torture doesn't work!" – believe me, it works. And waterboarding is your minor form. Some people say it's not actually torture. Let's assume it is. But they asked me the question, 'What do you think of waterboarding?' Absolutely fine. But we should go much stronger than waterboarding.¹³

Response: U.S. national security experts, military officials, and the intelligence community agree that torture does not work. People who have been tortured have given false information to make the torture stop. We don't find out that information is bad until after we've spent millions of dollars and lost lives chasing false leads. It doesn't work and it goes against our values, which is why the U.S. does not and should not use torture.

- Torture often produces false information. We get much more reliable information from standard interrogations conducted by our experienced career interrogators. Every time we see an American give a forced confession in North Korea or at the hands of ISIS before a beheading, we get absolute proof that torture doesn't work.
- Torture fundamentally contradicts the Constitution and our values. It harms our global reputation, which is a key component of American strength. By using torture, the U.S. throws its lot in with Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

- Waterboarding inflicts "severe mental pain or suffering,"¹⁴ which distorts memories and is unnecessarily cruel. In response to the rhetoric from Trump on torture, the current CIA director, John Brennan, has said he wouldn't allow CIA officers to waterboard terrorists. Donald Trump's thoughtless approach to national security and support for torture would hurt U.S. interests.

#5: Russia and ISIS

Statement: "If you look at Syria. Russia wants to get rid of ISIS. We want to get rid of ISIS. Maybe let Russia do it. Let 'em get rid of ISIS. What the hell do we care?"¹⁵

Response: We care because we're not going to defer to Russia on matters of U.S. national security. Russia does *not* share our interests. Vladimir Putin does not care about the security of Americans. The Russian military is not even trying to destroy ISIS; its priority is to shore up the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, even if that means allowing ISIS to plan attacks against the U.S. Donald Trump's suggestion that we let Russia fight ISIS shows how little he knows about the state of affairs in Syria. And yet Donald Trump defense Russia so often the former head of the CIA has called Trump an "unwitting agent" of Russia.

- Russia's intervention in Syria bolstered Assad's forces and helped the regime gain ground against Syrian rebels. Russia's focus was not in attacking ISIS targets, but attacking rebel targets to increase Assad's leverage during peace talks.
- Russia has only exacerbated the chaos in Syria with its indiscriminate bombing that's killed thousands of innocent civilians.¹⁶
- It is in the interest of U.S. national security that we eliminate ISIS, which is why we're leading a tough and smart campaign with our coalition partners to defeat them. Making Russia responsible for our security and the security of our allies in the region is reckless.

#6: Admiration for Vladimir Putin

Statement: “It is always a great honor to be so nicely complimented by a man so highly respected within his own country and beyond.”¹⁷

Response: Donald Trump has repeatedly praised Vladimir Putin, a dictator who not only doesn’t share U.S. interests, but actively counters them. He believes Putin—a dictator—is a better leader than President Obama. Donald Trump’s admiration for this authoritarian leader is reprehensible and shows how little Trump cares or knows about global affairs and U.S. national security.

- Trump was interviewed on a Russian government network where he blasted U.S. foreign policy. He refuses to condemn Russia’s hacking into Americans’ emails and their interference into the presidential election.
- Russia continues to support Ukrainian separatists and strengthen Assad in Syria. But Donald Trump continues to express admiration for a leader who deliberately counters U.S. interests.
- Donald Trump refused to meet with the Ukrainian president, a U.S. ally, showing just how much he has cozied up to Putin.
- His campaign even changed the Republican platform to be more Russia-friendly, taking out sections that call for providing weapons to Ukraine in order to counter Russian and rebel forces.

#7: Advocating Nuclear Weapons Against ISIS

Statement: “We’re going to hit them and we’re going to hit them hard. I’m talking about a surgical strike on these ISIS stronghold cities using Trident missiles.”¹⁸

Response: The Obama Administration has made nuclear nonproliferation a priority, reducing the world’s stockpiles of nuclear materials to prevent a nuclear war. Donald Trump, on the other hand, is either confused or reckless. Trident missiles are nuclear weapons, so he’s suggesting the U.S. launch a nuclear attack against a terrorist group. Using a nuclear weapon against ISIS is out of the question. It would cause a humanitarian catastrophe and incur thousands, if not millions, of innocent civilian deaths. It would open the door for other nations to use their nuclear weapons, endangering the world and America.

- ISIS is embedded in cities and towns in Iraq and Syria. They are in tight spaces and hidden among innocent civilians. Using a nuclear bomb against ISIS would have a catastrophic effect on the region and kill thousands of innocent people. The U.S. is employing a smart approach to defeat ISIS through coalition airstrikes and aiding local groups on the ground.
- A nuclear weapon hasn’t been used in war since 1945. Donald Trump doesn’t understand the ramifications of introducing a nuclear weapon on the battlefield against a non-state actor.
- Trump’s statements on nuclear weapons, which include his support for proliferation in Japan and South Korea, reveals he, as President Obama has noted, “doesn’t know much about foreign policy, or nuclear policy...”¹⁹

#8: Banning Muslims from Entering the U.S.

Statement: “Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on.”²⁰

Response: Donald Trump’s proposed ban on Muslims is meant to incite hysteria, not solve any problems. We are not at war with Muslims or Islam. There are millions of Muslims currently living in the U.S. who contribute to our democracy. Outside of America, there are many Muslims fleeing near certain death, rape, and torture at the hands of ISIS. They are not our enemy; they are our friends.

- The U.S. has a robust vetting system for processing refugee applications. Refugees go through an 18 to 24 month screening process with several U.S. agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI’s Terrorist Screening Center, the State Department, the Defense Department and the Department of Homeland Security.
- Muslims make up nearly one quarter of the global population. Citizens from major Muslim countries like Malaysia and Indonesia would be banned under Trump’s plan. Banning them would alienate an entire group and potentially lead to radicalization.

Banning Muslims would make it extremely challenging to use diplomacy and work with important Muslim allies like King Abdullah of Jordan and activist Malala Yousafzai. We need allies like these to win this fight against ISIS; we can't make it impossible to work with the U.S. Donald Trump's call to ban Muslims from entering the country is thoughtless and will do nothing to prevent terrorist attacks.

#9: Starting a Ground War in the Middle East

Statement: "I would listen to the generals, but I'm hearing numbers of 20,000 and 30,000 [in Iraq and Syria]." ²¹

Response: The U.S. is still drawing down troops from a war in Afghanistan, and Donald Trump wants to put the military into another ground war without any exit strategy. He doesn't understand there's an effective way to defeat ISIS without putting our U.S. military servicemen and women in the middle of a civil war.

- The U.S. is implementing a tough and smart strategy to defeat ISIS without resorting to tens of thousands of ground troops. U.S. and coalition forces are hitting nearly 20 ISIS targets on average every day. The U.S. currently has about 3,800 forces in Iraq aiding Iraqi security forces to take the fight to ISIS on the ground.
- This is not our fight alone. Our regional allies will have to step up their contributions in the fight against ISIS. The U.S. can't get pulled into another long-term ground war.
- The current U.S. strategy has taken out over 20,000 ISIS fighters since operations began in 2014. ISIS has lost 45% of its territory in Iraq and more than 25% in Syria. Introducing thousands of U.S. ground combat troops to take on ISIS would be reckless and irresponsible.

#10: Only Trump Can Solve Terrorism

Statement 1: "Another radical Islamic attack, this time in Pakistan, targeting Christian women & children. At least 67 dead, 400 injured. I alone can solve." ²²

Statement 2: "...My primary consultant is myself, and I have a good instinct for this stuff" ²³

Response: Donald Trump has the most inexperienced foreign policy team of any major presidential candidate. He has the backing of no prominent military leaders, past or present. No leading elected official who has made national security a priority has endorsed him. Beyond his foreign policy team, he has no experience tackling these issues himself. He lacks the experience and has put no policy ideas forward to address the national security challenges facing the U.S.

- Prominent and respected Republican national security leaders have said they cannot support Trump because of his national security views. They've called his views "inconsistent," "hateful," and "dishonest." ²⁴ World leaders on the frontlines of terrorism have chastised Trump and distanced themselves from him. His fiery rhetoric is now a recruiting tool for terrorists.
- No person alone can defeat ISIS and other terrorist networks. It takes an extremely collaborative effort across nations, like the 66-nation coalition President Obama has amassed to defeat ISIS by hitting the group from the air, and working with regional partners on the ground to take back territory. This strategy has cut back ISIS's territorial gains by 45% in Iraq and more than 25% in Syria and significantly diminished their financial resources.
- Donald Trump's claim that only he can solve terrorism is naïve and thoughtless. He has no proposal to defeat ISIS, and what little he has said on ISIS and foreign policy would amount to war crimes. Donald Trump has no experience combatting Islamic extremism and he has not chosen to surround himself with experts that could educate him on the topic.

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COUNTRY PROFILES

NATIONAL SECURITY DEBATE BOOK



Iraq and Syria

While the conflicts in Iraq and Syria arose from two separate civil wars, their fates are now intertwined as a result of the rise of ISIS, which poses the greatest security threat to the region and the U.S. Neutralizing the threat from ISIS and restoring stability to Iraq and Syria requires a multi-pronged strategy to:

- Defeat ISIS militarily through air strikes, special forces raids, and support for local forces;
- Reach a lasting political settlement to end the war in Syria and bridge the Sunni-Shia divide in Iraq; and
- Prevent international ISIS attacks against the U.S. homeland.

Defeating ISIS and resolving the broader conflict in Syria and Iraq is vitally important to the United States. The 9/11 attacks happened because al Qaeda used Afghanistan as a safe haven from which to recruit fighters, train them, and plan attacks. ISIS is a terrorist group that controls its own safe haven. It has the will to attack the West, and the November 2015 Paris attacks demonstrated its ability to do so. Moreover, the group's ideology has spread, raising the specter of more homegrown terrorists which are very hard to detect.

Background

Iraq in Context

Iraq and Syria declared independence in the 1940s, ejecting the European colonial powers who had established their boundaries.¹ In the 1960s, a new political party called the **Baathists** seized power in Syria and then Iraq. The Baathist leader in Iraq was Saddam Hussein, whose Sunni government ruled over a Shia majority population.

After the United States overthrew Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq's Shia majority won Iraq's first elections. These events unleashed sectarian tensions that had been kept in check by Hussein's brutal rule. The Sunni minority that had been in charge was now ruled by the Shia. Prime Minister **Nouri al-Maliki** fired many of the best Iraqi military officers, often because they were Sunni, and replaced them with more loyal officers, most of whom were Shia.²

After his inauguration, President Obama pledged to leave 5,000 U.S. troops in Iraq beyond the 2011 deadline set by President Bush, but only if U.S. troops received legal immunity. The majority of Iraqis and representatives in

parliament did not want U.S. troops to stay.³ In late 2011, Maliki withdrew from negotiations to provide U.S. forces immunity, forcing President Obama to bring U.S. troops home.⁴ A smaller number of American troops returned in 2014, however, after ISIS captured Iraq's second-biggest city, Mosul. Under pressure for his sectarian policies, Maliki stepped down and was replaced by **Haider al Abadi**, who remains the Prime Minister. Abadi has promised to end corruption and mend ties between Iraq's various ethnic groups.

Syria in Context

After Syria became independent in the 1960s, Baathist leader **Hafez al Assad** became Syria's powerful dictator. Assad's regime was **Alawite**, a Shia minority. Most Syrians were Sunni, not Shia, and many of them hated Alawites.⁵ After the United States deposed Hussein's government in 2003, Iraqi Baathists fled to Syria, where Assad's son, **Bashar al-Assad**, was now president. During the American occupation of Iraq, Assad became a chief adversary of the United States, allowing foreign fighters to travel through Syria to fight U.S. forces in Iraq.

After the 2011 Arab Spring protests toppled governments in Tunisia and Egypt, Syrian protestors took to the street to demand that Bashar al-Assad introduce democratic reforms in Syria. Assad's troops soon began firing on unarmed protestors, and a popular rebellion rose up against the central Alawite government. This civil war has engulfed Syria for over five years, and has killed hundreds of thousands of people. Assad's forces are responsible for the vast majority of deaths, killing civilians through indiscriminate carpet bombing, artillery barrages, and chemical weapons attacks.⁶

Despite a temporary Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) in February 2016 between the Syrian government and a large number of rebel groups, the conflict soon resumed. In September, a weeklong ceasefire was agreed to, but quickly unraveled again as reports came to surface of attacks on both sides. The ceasefire was to lead to joint U.S.-Russian airstrikes against ISIS and peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition groups. In addition, humanitarian aid was unable to be delivered to Syrians in need, particularly in the rebel-held town of Aleppo, during most of the weeklong ceasefire. The U.S. mistakenly attacked Syrian forces, killing 60. An aid convoy was attacked, killing 20 people and destroying 18 trucks

containing humanitarian assistance. The U.S. has indicated that Russia was responsible for the attack.⁷ Secretary of State John Kerry called for a grounding of all military aircraft where aid needs to be delivered in Syria but the ceasefire has effectively collapsed for the time being.

The Rise of ISIS

ISIS has its roots in al Qaeda, which emerged in Iraq for the first time after the U.S. invaded in 2003. When the United States disbanded the Iraqi military in May 2003, thousands of former Iraqi soldiers joined the insurgency against the U.S.-led coalition.⁸ Al Qaeda chief Osama **bin Laden** sponsored a new Iraqi terrorist group led by Abu Musab al **Zarqawi**, who became leader of **Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)**. Foreign fighters from outside Iraq flocked to join AQI, as did former Iraqi military officers. After U.S. forces killed Zarqawi in 2006, AQI reorganized as the **Islamic State in Iraq (ISI)**.⁹ The forerunner of ISIS established itself well before U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq.

In the summer of 2011, civil war descended across Syria and threw the entire country into chaos. An al Qaeda offshoot called **al Nusrah Front** set up operations in Syria. After announcing that it was absorbing al Nusrah, the Islamic State in Iraq changed its name to the **Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**. Al Nusrah resisted this power grab, and al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan formally disavowed ISIS in February 2014.¹⁰ ISIS began attacking all militant groups across Syria, including al Nusrah, capturing vast territory and recruiting scores of foreign fighters.

ISIS seized control of Syrian territory adjacent to Iraq's **Anbar province**, where Sunni tribes welcomed protection from brutal treatment by the Iraqi government.¹¹ In 2014, former Iraqi officers, now ISIS commanders,¹² used their relationships with Sunni tribes to capture two of Iraq's largest cities,¹³ bulldozing the border between Iraq and Syria.

By late 2014, ISIS managed a large proto-state, a first for any similar terrorist group.¹⁴ The group received \$80 million per month through oil smuggling, kidnapping, and other criminal activity.¹⁵ It commanded 25,000-35,000 fighters, including over 200 U.S. citizens,¹⁷ who are responsible for unspeakable atrocities. They have executed American journalists, conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Christians and Yazidis, set fire to a captured Jordanian pilot, bombed crowded markets, and shot down a Russian airliner over Egypt.

A Tough and Smart Approach to Iraq and Syria

The U.S. is pursuing a multi-pronged strategy to defeat ISIS and restore stability to Iraq and Syria by: (1) leading a coalition to strike ISIS from the air and mounting special forces raids; (2) arming and training Iraqi security forces; (3) arming and training moderate Syrian rebels; (4) cutting off ISIS financing; and (5) pursuing lasting political reconciliation.

Airstrikes and Special Forces to Dismantle ISIS

In August 2014, the U.S. began conducting airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria and gathered a coalition of 66 countries to counter ISIS. As of September 2016, the United States and its coalition partners¹⁷ have launched over 15,000 precision air strikes against ISIS. The United States conducted 76% of the attacks, using over 20,000 bombs or missiles and hitting over 30,000 targets.¹⁸ Special operations forces in Iraq and Syria have also been raiding ISIS targets to gather intelligence and kill ISIS leaders.

Iraq: Train Security Forces

Some parts of the U.S. strategy must be tailored to each country. About 4,000 U.S. personnel are currently stationed in Iraq to train and share intelligence with Iraqi security forces, Kurdish Peshmerga troops, and Iraqi tribal militias. This effort cost \$1.6 billion in 2015.¹⁹ A coalition training center in northern Iraq has trained approximately 8,000 Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, and continues to train 800 more every 25 days.²⁰ Congress has appropriated an additional \$715 million to support Iraqi and Kurdish forces. This fund does *not* aid Shia militias sponsored by Iran.

These efforts have helped to turn the tide against ISIS in Iraq. Iraqi forces have retaken one of Iraq's largest cities, Ramadi, Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, and the Baiji oil refinery complex. The Kurdish Peshmerga have severed a key ISIS supply route connecting its headquarters in Syria with its secondary stronghold in Mosul, Iraq. The Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, believes Iraqi forces will be ready to begin the operation to retake Mosul from ISIS by October.²¹

Syria: Arm Syrian Arabs and Kurds

Since 2013, the Obama administration has provided assistance to some Syrian rebels.²² Adding to this, Congress in 2014 authorized \$500 million to train and arm Syrian rebels who can fight ISIS. The Obama administration trained only those rebels who promised to fight ISIS

alone, and not Assad, but the program failed to produce more than a handful of fighters. The U.S. has refocused on arming vetted groups already fighting inside Syria, delivering dozens of tons of ammunition and weapons to Syrian groups, who have retaken 550 square miles from ISIS.²³ The Obama Administration recently sent an additional 250 special operations forces to Syria to build on this momentum.²⁴

Cut Off ISIS Financing

U.S. officials are working to cut off ISIS financing in several ways. Loss of territory has reduced ISIS tax revenue by 30%.²⁵ U.S. airstrikes are targeting oil infrastructure used by ISIS, cutting the group's oil revenue by over 30%.²⁶ The Treasury Department has frozen assets of individuals associated with ISIS. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has expanded sanctions previously aimed at al Qaeda to include members of ISIS, vastly expanding the reach of counter-financing efforts. In addition, U.S. aircraft have mounted airstrikes to destroy ISIS cash reserves.

Achieve a Lasting Political Settlement

Preventing ISIS from rising again means achieving political reconciliation both in Syria and Iraq. The United States and Russia are leading international negotiations to end, or at least pause, the civil war in western Syria. In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution endorsing a peace process,²⁷ which led to a series of shaky ceasefires that have failed to take hold. Should UN peace talks progress, a political transition away from Assad's rule will be necessary to ensure legitimacy of the central government.

In Iraq, defeating ISIS for good will require building trust between Iraqi security forces and the Sunni tribes who currently live under ISIS. As the 2007 "Sunni Awakening" demonstrated, Sunnis should know that if they rise up against ISIS, Iraqi forces will back them up. Going forward, Iraq's central government must prevent sectarian divides by enforcing inclusive policies that don't alienate its Sunni and Kurdish population. Iraqi security forces must continue training to better defend Iraq from internal and external forces. The U.S. must use its diplomatic leverage to ensure that foreign actors such as Saudi Arabia and Iran do not exacerbate the sectarian tensions that will allow insurgent groups like ISIS to revive itself.

Stopping ISIS from Hitting the Homeland

Terrorist groups across the world have sworn allegiance to ISIS. The November 2015 Paris attacks, the March 2016

Brussels attacks, the ISIS-inspired San Bernardino attacks, and other ISIS plots show the group has the will and capability to hit the U.S. homeland.²⁸

Protect Communities

Our local agencies need to be fully prepared, trained, coordinated, and funded to protect Americans against ISIS and other terrorist threats on the homeland. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is on the frontlines at the federal level, protecting Americans from these threats, and will require increased funding as the threat continues. The Department must work hand-in-hand with local law enforcement, the intelligence community, and the National Counterterrorism Center to ensure all levels of first responders and agents have the information and training necessary to prevent and respond to a terrorist attack on U.S. soil. Congress will need to continue providing increased funding to these agencies to make sure the U.S. is not vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association should establish a joint task force on counterterrorism that works with the federal government to address gaps in security. This would allow local leaders and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to share best practices in strengthening communities, identify and address shortfalls in funding and training, enhance training of local law enforcement, and further develop federal-city relationships.

These measures taken together will enable our local agencies to avert an attack while preparing for the worst. This short-term plan will lessen the immediate threat that ISIS and other terrorists pose to Americans on the homeland.

Stop Terrorists from Entering the U.S.

Until recently, the Visa Waiver Program allowed citizens of 38 participating countries to enter the United States without a visa.²⁹ The heinous terrorist attacks in Paris revealed how foreign terrorists might exploit the Visa Waiver Program to enter the United States undetected. The administration worked with Congress to fix this vulnerability, changing the program to require that any citizen of a participating country who is also a citizen of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen must now apply for a visa before traveling to the United States.³⁰ Those who have been to any of these countries in the last five years are also now required to apply for a visa. These applicants will undergo an interview, fingerprinting, and screening by the U.S. State Department to determine

if they should be allowed to enter the United States. In addition, there are now tighter information-sharing requirements between the U.S. and the 38 participating countries. Changing this program was essential, adding another layer in travel regulations to prevent potential terrorists from reaching our shores.

Early media reports suggested that Syrian refugees were involved in the Paris attacks, and although this was not confirmed, it sparked a debate in the United States to ban the entry of refugees. The U.S. has an incredibly robust vetting system in place for processing refugee applications compared to Europe. For the United States, applicants go through the most thorough and stringent vetting, with an 18 to 24 month screening process before arriving to the country. Syrian refugees in particular go through a heightened level of screening.³¹ Several agencies are involved in reviewing each applicant, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the U.S. State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the National Counterterrorism Center.³² Interviews are conducted, biometric data is compiled, and background information is cross-checked against terrorist databases. A year after they arrive to the U.S. – if they are approved by U.S. agencies through this vetting process — refugees are required to apply for a green card, beginning another round of security vetting.³³ A foreign terrorist is unlikely to try to use this stringent process to enter the United States.

One of the San Bernardino terrorists arrived to the United States through a K-1 visa, or the “fiancée visa.” The screening process for these visas typically takes about six to nine months, and involves an extensive background check and security investigation.³⁴ The administration has ordered a review of the K-1 visa program at the U.S. Homeland Security and State Departments to address gaps in this program. In addition, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has begun a pilot program to review K-1 visa applicants’ social media accounts as part of the vetting process.³⁵

Going forward, more can be done to ensure terrorists are unable to enter the United States. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security should send agents to countries at high-risk of terrorist activity to provide advanced screening of visa applicants. Increased information-sharing between intelligence agencies will give countries a better grasp of the foreign terrorist fighter problem, their movements, and how to stop them from entering the United States. To address potential security gaps in the visa application process, Congress can task the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review the programs, including the fiancée visa, and provide an assessment to identify ways for Congress to address any shortcomings.

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Libya

Five years after the 2011 NATO intervention that helped overthrow the regime of Muammar Qadhafi, Libya recently installed unity government remains unsteady. A civil war has created a security vacuum and safe haven for ISIS and other terrorist groups. A tough and smart approach to Libya requires:

- Destroying ISIS in Libya; and
- Strengthening the UN-brokered unity government.

Libya's ongoing civil war has turned portions of the country into a terrorist safe haven. ISIS has expanded along Libya's central coast, and is vying for control of key oil infrastructure. Europe lies just across the Mediterranean Sea, and refugees fleeing for Italy provide cover for terrorists seeking passage to the West. According to the top U.S. commander in Africa, groups like ISIS will continue to "flourish until the [government] and appropriate security forces are operational within Libya."¹ Recent U.S. airstrikes and Libyan unity government operations have made significant strides in pushing back ISIS gains, but it will be difficult to rid the country of ISIS and ensure stability until Libya's unity government is able to govern.

Background

Recent history in Libya traces back to 1969, when Libyan strongman **Muammar al Qadhafi** seized power in a military coup, and began sponsoring terrorist attacks across the globe, including at least two—destroying an airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, and a nightclub in Berlin—that killed American citizens. In 1992, the United Nations responded with tough economic sanctions on Libya, but those were lifted in 2003 after Qadhafi admitted involvement in the attacks and abandoned his program to obtain nuclear weapons, surrendering his centrifuges.

The 2011 "Arab Spring" spawned a rebellion against Qadhafi's regime. In March 2011, the United Nations Security Council passed **Resolution 1973**, which authorized member states "to take all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians from regime forces.² The United States led an air campaign that destroyed Qadhafi's air defenses and command-and-control infrastructure, helping Libyan rebels overcome pro-regime militias.³

By the end of 2011, rebel militias had killed Qadhafi, and began preparing for a new government. Some foreign nations suggested placing peacekeeping forces in Libya, but the country's new leaders rejected any foreign presence.⁴ Six months later, Libyans had elected a new General National Congress (GNC).

Unfortunately, the elections did not restore stability. The GNC decided to pay militias left over from the war, who refused to disband, depriving Libya of a unified military command. Weapons looted from Qadhafi's arsenal flooded into the black market.⁵ In September 2012, militants attacked the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, killing a U.S. Ambassador and three other Americans.

Libya has since descended into a chaotic civil war between opposing alliances of nationalist militias and Islamist militias. Without a secure central government, ISIS exploited the chaos to grow a new franchise in Libya. The United Nations brokered a "unity" government in December 2015—the Government of National Accord—to end the conflict, but some militias haven't endorsed it and an August 2016 vote in parliament refused to approve it.⁶

A Tough and Smart Approach to Libya

A tough and smart strategy in Libya means maintaining pressure on ISIS with targeted military operations, while working with local allies and European partners to bolster the unity government. The foremost national security threat to the U.S. in Libya is ISIS, which controls thousands of fighters and has gained a foothold near Libya's oil export facilities.⁷ An ISIS presence so close to Europe simplifies its task of attacking Western interests. The United States should:

- Support local anti-ISIS efforts by using special forces to rebuild intelligence capabilities;
- Arm and share intelligence with vetted Libyan militias who oppose ISIS, but only if they agree to integrate into a centralized security force;
- Work with European allies, particularly Italy, to continue using airbases close to Libya for airstrikes against ISIS training facilities, like the one that occurred in February 2016;⁸

In recent months, there have been considerable successes in defeating ISIS in Libya. Earlier this year, the U.S., European Union, and United Nations prevented ISIS from potentially accessing chemical weapon precursors by removing the material from Libya. In addition, with the aid of U.S. airstrikes and special forces, Libyan troops aligned with the Government of National Accord have recently begun pushing back against ISIS in their stronghold of Sirte and have made significant gains. However, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified that political disunity and conflict among militias complicate U.S. efforts to do more in Libya. Thus, the United States must complement its military efforts in Libya by:

- Using its unique authority to convene European allies and Libyan militias of all shapes and sizes;
- Pressure European and Arab states to limit any foreign aid to only those armed groups who commit to join a centralized, neutral security structure.¹¹
- Devote sustained, high-level attention to long-term peace negotiations needed to broaden support for the UN-brokered unity government.

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan is at a transition point as our military winds down its combat mission and the post-Karzai coalition government solidifies control. The U.S. goal should be to help Afghans take over security for their country to prevent terrorist safe havens from forming there.

- As our military leaves Afghanistan, total disengagement would repeat our past mistakes.
- Afghanistan's unity government appears to be pragmatic and effective, and a better partner for the U.S.
- Securing Afghanistan is complicated, so the President needs flexibility in determining how to address Afghan requests for continued assistance.

Background

Afghanistan has had a tumultuous modern history. In the mid-1990s, Taliban warlords took power after a messy Afghan civil war, bringing repressive rule and a safe haven for Al Qaeda. After 9/11, the U.S. drove out Al Qaeda and the Taliban government. But beginning in late 2002, the U.S. diverted its attention and resources from Afghanistan to Iraq, letting the security situation in Afghanistan atrophy. In 2004, with the election of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, soaring corruption, narcotics trafficking and a violent Taliban insurgency, maintaining the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership became increasingly difficult.¹

In 2009, President Obama steered U.S. focus back from Iraq to Afghanistan, sending a “surge” of 33,000 American troops to suppress the raging Taliban insurgency and stabilize Afghanistan. Taliban attacks nevertheless increased during the surge years.²

In 2014, at the end of President Karzai's tenure, the U.S. helped mediate a power-sharing deal in a national unity government between the top candidates, now-President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, the now-Chief Executive Officer.³ After years of struggle with an increasingly difficult Karzai, Ghani, a technocrat with an American doctorate and decades of experience as an academic and World Bank staffer, appears to be a more promising partner for the U.S. and the other regional players that will have to be part of a negotiated settlement. He signed a bilateral Status of Forces Agreement with the U.S. on September 30, 2014, one day after being inaugurated.⁴

On January 1, 2015, NATO ground forces (International Security Assistance Force or ISAF) officially ended their combat mission in Afghanistan, replacing it with a train-and-advise mission known as Operation Resolute Support (ORS). ORS has 12,905 NATO troops, of which 6,800 are Americans. The U.S. had a total of 9,800 combat troops currently deployed to Afghanistan. That number was scheduled to fall to 5,500 by the end of 2016. In July, President Obama announced that 8,400 combat troops would remain in Afghanistan through January 2017, adapting to the security situation on the ground and ensuring the country doesn't become a safe haven for terrorists.⁷

Still, past experience suggests that America must continue to help Afghanistan provide for its own security.

An end to the combat mission should not mean that the U.S. will turn its backs on Afghanistan. The U.S. should continue to help Afghanistan improve its *own* security forces and governance capabilities. Complete disengagement could risk a return of chaos and give rise to terrorist safe havens.

Late 1980s: After the Soviets ended their decade-long occupation in Afghanistan, the U.S. stopped arming *mujahideen* insurgents and turned away as the country fell into civil war.

2003-2009: The U.S. focused more on the Iraq war effort than responsibly overseeing Afghanistan's war.

Post-2011 Iraq: Iraq and Afghanistan are very different contexts, but the Iraqi unraveling after U.S. withdrawal provides a cautionary tale. Iraq's lack of political accountability, massive corruption, and ineffective national military are components that could easily undermine a post-war Afghanistan.

International disengagement may produce another Afghan civil war or a regional proxy war. This is why the U.S. must continue to carefully monitor the geopolitical situation in and around Afghanistan. Also, Afghans must understand that the military transition doesn't mean disengagement, and that there is non-military support the U.S. will continue to provide.

Congress should seriously consider the recommendations made by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)—particularly related to financial oversight and anti-corruption efforts.⁹ Congress can also offer incentives where possible to help bolster the Afghan army and curb the chances of troop recidivism.

Despite considerable challenges, Afghanistan's new government appears to be a more pragmatic, cooperative partner for the U.S., and key regional actors, than Karzai's.

As many analysts have warned, Afghanistan faces a huge fiscal gap,¹⁰ relying on foreign aid for at least 50 percent of its gross national income.¹¹ President Ghani understands this, emphasizing in his 2014 (and also 2009) presidential bids the importance of government economic investment and the related conditions needed to achieve it: transparency, accountability, strong infrastructure, and a merit-based political system.

Ghani is a well-respected academic and development expert who studied and lived in the U.S. for two decades.¹² His deep familiarity with international organizations and long-time experience as a technocrat should provide a firm basis on which to understand Afghanistan's considerable economic and governance challenges. He's also showing that he understands the pragmatic approach necessary to oversee meaningful Afghan governance reform.

Both Ghani and Abdullah agree that they must confront the rampant patronage and corruption endemic in Afghanistan's government. Within Ghani's first 100 days in office, he visited the western region of Herat to investigate corruption complaints, firing two dozen high-level, well-connected bureaucrats and police chiefs on the spot, and announced that they will be prosecuted.¹³ He did this to send the message that he's serious about cutting out the corrupt leaders that Afghans are used to.

The White House is rightly committed to drawing down, but it needs some flexibility to adapt to the security situation in Afghanistan and consider President Ghani's personal requests for additional support.

After 15 years fighting in Afghanistan, U.S. commanders agree that the war won't end on the battlefield but in some sort of peace deal at the negotiating table.¹⁷ President Ghani understands this but has requested "some flexibility in the [U.S.] troop drawdown timeline."¹⁸

Afghanistan's National Security Force (ANSF) and Police have grown considerably over the last decade. But after massive U.S. investments to train and equip them, ANSF and the police still lack our sophisticated counterterrorism tools, not to mention the kind of airpower needed to effectively respond to Taliban insurgent attacks. For much of 2014, the under-resourced Afghan forces suffered heavy losses in battles with the Taliban, who've sought to reassert control in their traditional stronghold regions. In addition, about 3,700 Afghan civilians died last year, marking a 25 percent jump from 2013 and the deadliest year for Afghans since 2002.²⁰

Without undermining a responsible drawdown, Americans should be sensitive to Ghani's explicit requests, given the huge challenges that he is inheriting. This would buy him some badly needed time to strengthen his unity government, giving him a better chance of suppressing Taliban resurgence and stabilizing the security situation.

Conclusion

Afghanistan remains a serious geopolitical challenge with few simple solutions. The U.S. is finally drawing down its military forces, but must remain flexible enough to address the new Afghan government's personal requests for some continued support.

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Yemen

The United States has two strategic interests in Yemen:

1. Preventing terrorists from using its ungoverned spaces as a launch pad for attacks against the U.S.; and
2. Preventing civil conflict that might destabilize Arab allies, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The United States has had a strong counterterrorism presence in Yemen for years. U.S. drone operations have focused attacks on al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which emerged in Yemen in 2009 and evolved to become the most dangerous al Qaeda affiliate. However, U.S. efforts to address AQAP and, more recently, ISIS, have been complicated by an ongoing civil war that has morphed into a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen.

Counterterrorism

Yemen is a key battleground against the two most dangerous terrorist groups: al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS. For many years, the absence of rule of law throughout Yemen has allowed terrorist groups to proliferate there, and today it is one of the most active terrorist breeding grounds.

In October 2000, al Qaeda bombed the American destroyer *USS Cole* while it sat in a Yemeni port. After 9/11, the United States decimated al Qaeda in Yemen, but by 2006 the group had recovered, and in 2009 it merged with al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia to become AQAP. Like ISIS in Syria, AQAP has taken advantage of instability in Yemen to seize territory, create safe havens, and conduct operations overseas.¹

Fort Hood shooter Nadal Hassan emailed with Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born al Qaeda leader who was killed in Yemen in 2011.² AQAP trained the Christmas Day Bomber, who tried to destroy a Detroit-bound airliner in 2009.³ The United States has thwarted several other plots, including an attempt to destroy U.S.-bound cargo planes in 2010,⁴ and a 2012 plot to bring down an airliner with an underwear bomb.⁵ More recently, AQAP claimed responsibility for the attacks on the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*¹ in January 2015, as well as the November 2015 suicide attack on a Mali hotel.⁶ Over the past decade, AQAP has suffered significant losses

at the hands of American counterterrorism operations, including:

- Jalal Baleedi, top commander for AQAP (February 2016)⁷
- Nasser al Wuhayshi, leader of AQAP (June 2015)⁸
- Shawki al Badani (November 2014)⁹
- Saeed al Shirhi (July 2013)¹⁰
- Fahd al-Quso (May 2012)¹¹
- Anwar al Awlaki (September 2011)¹²

Before 2012, the United States used Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, or drones, to attack AQAP from the sky, while the Yemeni military fought on the ground.¹³ The current conflict in Yemen forced the United States to withdraw personnel from the country while drawing the focus of the Yemeni military away from AQAP. The lack of a ground presence has restricted U.S. insight into terrorist operations.

Meanwhile, ISIS has expanded into Yemen, claiming responsibility for a horrific car bomb in March 2015 that killed over 130 people.¹⁴ Vying with AQAP for control, ISIS has bombed Shia mosques across Yemen.¹⁵ In December 2015, it claimed responsibility for assassinating one of Yemen's regional governors.¹⁶ Even more recently, ISIS took responsibility for the January 28, 2016 car bombing outside the Yemeni president's residence, killing eight people. U.S. officials are divided on whether ISIS or AQAP present the more dangerous threat to the U.S. homeland.¹⁷

Both AQAP and ISIS take advantage of the chaos created by Yemen's civil war, aligning with local Sunni tribes who also oppose the Houthis, who are Shia and backed by Iran.¹⁸ Until the warring sides can agree on a political solution, the widespread instability will offer a terrorist safe haven while denying on-the-ground intelligence necessary to accomplish U.S. goals.

* AQAP was not responsible for the November 2015 Paris attacks, which killed 130 victims and were attributed to ISIS.

Yemen's Civil War

After North Yemen and South Yemen united in 1990, the United States backed President Ali Abdullah **Saleh**, a strongman who helped U.S. counterterrorism officials target AQAP. Under Saleh, a group called the **Houthis** began a rebellion in north Yemen, which ended in a 2010 ceasefire.¹⁹ Arab Spring protests in 2011 forced Saleh to transition power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour **Hadi**.²⁰

The Houthis resumed their armed insurgency and captured Yemen's political capital of **Sana'a** in 2014. Hadi fled south to Yemen's economic capital, **Aden**, with the Houthis close behind. Saudi Arabia gathered several other Arab states²¹ and invaded Yemen in support of Hadi, intending to drive the Houthis out of south Yemen.²² The year-long war has killed over 6,500 people, including many civilian victims of Saudi airstrikes.²³ Peace talks in Switzerland have stalled.²⁴

Although the United States opposes the Houthis and is arming²⁵ the Arab coalition, U.S. forces are not participating directly.²⁶ U.S. officials have pressed the Saudis to avoid civilian casualties, but have yet to level any public criticism.²⁷ This reflects an American sensitivity to doubts by Arab leaders that the United States is committed to their security, particularly in light of the Iran nuclear agreement. However, there is no military solution to the conflict in Yemen. Although the Saudi-Hadi offensive has pushed the Houthis away from Aden, expelling the Houthis from the Sana'a will be much harder.

Yemen has emerged as a key focal point for competition between Shia-majority Iran and Sunni-majority Arab states. Iran has provided longstanding support for the Houthis, and continues to arm them with heavy weapons. The United States has warned Iran to stop such arms shipments.²⁸ Saudi Arabia eyes the Iran-backed Houthis on its southern border as an obstacle to regional dominance.²⁹ A Houthi state might invite Iran to base military forces on Saudi Arabia's southern border. Although the civil war in Yemen war is about politics, not religion, AQAP is determined to frame the fight as a Sunni-Shia struggle.³⁰ In the absence of stability, terrorists can plan to strike targets in the United States. A diplomatic solution that restores stability in Yemen is critical if the United States wants to resume counterterrorism cooperation with Yemeni security forces. To this end, the United States must use its diplomatic leverage to convince the warring parties to resume stalled peace talks.³¹

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Ukraine

Ukraine's military is currently at war with pro-Russian separatists who claim they are fighting for greater autonomy from Ukraine's central government. Russia's ongoing support for these rebels has convinced Ukraine to establish closer military and economic ties with the United States and the European Union. The Obama Administration is pursuing a tough and smart approach to allow Ukraine to defend itself without risking a broader war with Russia by:

- Sanctioning Russian companies and officials;
- Supporting Ukraine with economic and military aid; and
- Bolstering NATO defenses.

Background

Ukraine has been a sovereign country since the early 1990s. But many Russians see Ukraine as an essential part of Russia going back centuries. Both countries share their origin in the city of Kiev, and millions of Ukrainians speak Russian. However, in 1994, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in return for commitments by Russia and the United States to “refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine.”¹ This pact is known as the **Budapest Memorandum**.

In early 2014, the Ukrainian parliament ousted pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich after he reneged on a trade deal with the European Union.² Russian-speaking Yanukovich supporters in the Ukrainian peninsula of **Crimea** began protesting, and Russian military units soon took de facto control of transportation hubs, government buildings, and communications facilities throughout Crimea. U.S. officials claimed that Russia's actions violated the Budapest Memorandum.³ In a referendum the U.S. called illegal, Crimeans voted to leave Ukraine and join Russia.⁴

Ethnic Russians living in east and south Ukraine called for their own autonomy, sparking a bloody civil war between the new Ukrainian government and pro-Russian rebels. Russia has provided direct military support to these pro-Russian rebels, including heavy weapons, artillery strikes, and surveillance, all of which give them a huge advantage.⁵ In the summer of 2014, pro-Russian separatists shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, killing 283 civilians.⁶ To date, the war has killed over 9,000 people.

In early 2015, the Ukrainian government and Russia struck an agreement called Minsk II, which called for a ceasefire between Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists. It also committed both sides to withdrawing heavy weapons from front lines. Ukraine agreed to explore granting more autonomy to separatist territories if they accepted Ukrainian sovereignty. But both sides have repeatedly violated the ceasefire, and violence has continued across Eastern Ukraine.⁷ In December 2015, the European Union extended economic sanctions against Russia, claiming Moscow had failed to implement Minsk II.⁸

Our Current Tough and Smart Approach

The United States and its European allies have taken several steps to defend Ukrainian sovereignty and deter Russian provocations:

- **Bolstering sanctions against Russia:** The United States and its EU partners have enacted and will maintain harsh sanctions against Russia until its own forces and the separatists it supports honor Minsk II.⁹ Since 2014, the U.S. and EU leaders have imposed targeted sanctions against dozens of Russian companies, financial institutions, and government officials.¹⁰ The Russian economy shrank by 3.8% in 2015.¹¹
- **Strengthen Ukraine:** The United States has given \$265 million in training and equipment to Ukraine, and Congress has authorized \$300 million in additional assistance (including lethal aid).¹² U.S. personnel have trained three battalions of Ukrainian national guardsmen and recently began training six new battalions of frontline combat troops.¹³
- **Strengthening NATO allies:** The United States is rotating ground forces through the Baltic States and Poland, and the Pentagon is considering a permanent presence there. The Air Force has deployed its best fighter aircraft (F-22s and F-15s) to Germany and Romania, and the U.S. Army is currently moving hundreds of tanks and other armored vehicles into Eastern Europe.¹⁴ A string of multinational exercises is getting NATO and its partners ready for Russia's new “hybrid warfare.”¹⁵

What Else Can We Do?

We can be even tougher by improving European defenses while avoiding certain policies (such as including Ukraine in NATO) that might start a war with Russia:

- **Improve European defenses:** First, the United States must pressure its NATO allies to live up to their commitments. Currently, only four other NATO states spend the required 2% of GDP on defense: the United Kingdom, Greece, Poland, and Estonia.¹⁶ Second, the United States should arm its Eastern European allies with anti-ballistic missile defenses, counter-artillery radar, drones, and anti-drone technology that counter Russia's advantages in surveillance, ground-based missiles, and mobile artillery.
- **Improve U.S. ability to respond quickly:** Congress should meet the Pentagon's FY2017 request for \$3.4 billion for the European Reassurance Initiative, which pays for U.S. troop deployments to European states and pre-positioning of U.S. equipment.¹⁷ In addition, the Pentagon should redefine the role of the U.S. Army to focus its energy and resources on deterring Russia.
- **Stabilize Ukraine:** The United States has guaranteed a \$1 billion sovereign bond issued by Ukraine in May 2015.¹⁸ This is a relatively small amount for a country with a GDP of \$131 billion, and the United States could help Ukraine build long-term economic, political, and military strength with further loan guarantees. The Ukrainian government is also having difficulty recruiting high quality candidates. The United States should increase training of current military personnel and encourage greater military-to-military exchanges.

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Russia

Russia's aggressive moves in cyberspace and efforts to undermine European solidarity mean it remains a security challenge, despite its crumbling economy. A tough and smart Russia policy means using various aspects of U.S. power to push back against Putin in cyberspace and Eastern Europe, while keeping an open line to Moscow on issues that require cooperation, including:

- Counterterrorism and the civil war in Syria
- Reducing the threat of nuclear weapons
- Access to Afghanistan
- Space cooperation

Russia maintains the world's largest nuclear arsenal, and is the sole country—other than the United States—with the capability to completely destroy the planet. Its once-decrepit military has undergone significant modernization, outmatching U.S. forces in some areas.¹ Russia remains an influential international actor. With its permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Russia can veto U.S. proposals. In almost every area that is of concern to U.S. national security, U.S. officials must contend with Russia. Most often, that means dealing with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who controls state media, eliminates or silences his political opponents, and maintains an iron grip on political power.

Getting Tough On Eastern Europe and NATO

Russian aggression has revived NATO's purpose: countering Russia. Putin's military intervention in Eastern Ukraine has convinced Eastern European governments to boost defense spending and forge closer ties with the United States. In December 2015, NATO grew to include Montenegro, adding its first new member since 2009. Other European nations, like Finland and Sweden, have moved to strengthen their ties with NATO.²

Nevertheless, Russia benefits from close proximity to NATO allies, in particular Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Russian forces could capture substantial territory in a surprise invasion.³ The United States and its allies are hardening their defenses and updating war plans to address new Russian tactics,⁴ but in the short-term, we must avoid giving Russia a pretext to escalate tensions.

Being Smart on ISIS and Syria

In September 2015, Russian military forces began attacking Syrian rebels to help guarantee the survival of the Assad regime. Since then, Russia has continued to conduct operations in Syria and has even bombed humanitarian aid convoys supplying rebel-held areas.⁵ Russia's military involvement and commitment to the Assad government⁶ mean that any political solution to the civil war will likely require cooperation between Washington and Moscow. Although the U.S. and Russia worked together to broker ceasefires in February and September of 2016, those truces have frequently been violated by actors on both sides of the conflict.⁷

While ceasefires have been largely unsuccessful, the U.S. and Russia should continue to communicate to avoid confrontations between their air forces operating in Syria⁸ and work toward a future political solution to the conflict. In addition, any U.S. response to Russian actions in the Middle East must be mindful of the U.S. objectives of defeating ISIS and getting rid of Assad.⁹

Being Smart on Nuclear Weapons

Russia is indispensable to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, securing stockpiles of nuclear materials, and preventing nuclear terrorism. The United States and Russia have shared this commitment through various arms control agreements, including the New START Treaty. Russian cooperation has been and will continue to be essential to enforcing the terms of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Russia was responsible for removing 25,000 pounds of enriched uranium from Iran, effectively reducing Iran's stockpile to 300 kilograms — as required under the JCPOA.¹⁰ Russia will be a necessary player in any nuclear negotiations with North Korea as well.

Both the United States and Russia are modernizing their nuclear arsenals¹¹ and must work closely to maintain transparency into their weapons development. The U.S. and Russia signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987 in an effort to ban certain nuclear and conventional land-based missiles. In 2013, the U.S. reported that Russia was in violation of this treaty.¹² Although the U.S. has brought this violation to Russia's attention, nothing of consequence has been done.



The United States and Russia should revive previous cooperation to secure loose nuclear fuel, which they have all but abandoned, and continue to pursue efforts that prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.¹³

Being Smart on Afghanistan

Cooperation with Russia is necessary to assist the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. Currently, the U.S. plans to keep 8,400 U.S. troops in Afghanistan through the end of Obama's term,¹⁴ and special operations forces will also remain for the foreseeable future. Flying supplies into Afghanistan is expensive, so U.S. forces need ground access into the landlocked country. Convoys traveling through Pakistan (in blue) are exposed to insurgent attacks, and Pakistan has occasionally cut off access. The United States may need to depend on railroads running through Russia (in green) to supply U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Washington should not allow chilly relations with Moscow to put our military at risk and impede efforts against terrorists.

Being Smart on Space

The U.S. and Russia work closely on space exploration. Until 2017, when NASA plans to deploy its Orion space capsule, the Russian space agency will bring American astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS). Many of the space rockets used by American companies to loft U.S. satellites into orbit use Russian rocket engines, although the U.S. military cannot use them.¹⁵ The United States is working to reduce reliance on Russia for its space activities, but until that time, we must ensure that tensions on Earth do not affect its operations in space. Furthermore, as the two most experienced space-faring nations, the United States and Russia must work together to mitigate the impact of space debris that can damage or destroy space assets.

Getting Tough on Russian Hacking

Russia-based hackers have been tied to attacks on the Democratic National Committee,¹⁶ the penetration of voter registration systems in Arizona and Illinois,¹⁷ and even espionage operations against the U.S.'s power grid. Russian hackers have also targeted pro-U.S. governments – they crippled Ukraine's vote-tallying network before a crucial election,¹⁹ attacked NATO member Estonia's banking and telecom systems,²⁰ and assaulted Georgian servers as a prelude to Russia's invasion of that country.²¹

Though some believe the U.S. should respond in kind to Russian cyberattacks, such an approach should be reserved for attacks on critical infrastructure and voting systems. Using cyber weapons against Russia might provoke an "arms race" that could harm the U.S. technology sector and consume taxpayer resources.²² Rather, many cyber experts have suggested that the U.S. deploy an interdisciplinary response²³ to Russian aggression by using targeted sanctions,²⁴ prosecutions of enemy hackers,²⁵ and enhanced government cooperation with the private sector.²⁶ In addition, Russian cyber aggression may be checked by increases in funding for cybersecurity outlined in Defense Secretary Ash Carter's recent budget request.²⁷

Endnotes

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North Korea

North Korea's illicit nuclear and missile arsenal presents a serious threat, but the country's isolation and erratic behavior pose two major challenges: (1) no one knows the true intentions of the ruling regime and (2) no one has the leverage necessary to change its behavior. With so few options, the U.S. must:

1. Maintain a robust military presence on the Korean peninsula and developing missile defense systems;
2. Block transfers of advanced military and nuclear weapons technology to North Korea while trying to dismantle its current capabilities; and
3. Prepare for a possible collapse of the North Korean regime.

North Korea is a totalitarian military state, ruled by a despotic regime that exercises near-total control over the daily lives of its often-starving citizens. The United States currently stations over 85,000 troops—28,000 in South Korea and 54,000 in Japan—to defend those countries against attack from North Korea, something it promised to do after the Korean War.¹ While permanent bases in Northeast Asia were originally meant to deter an attack on South Korea and stabilize the region more broadly, they now help to protect the United States; North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have transformed its government into a serious threat to the U.S. homeland.

Background

Legacy of the Korean War

At the end of World War II, Soviet and American troops divided Korea into North Korea and South Korea. The Soviet Union installed the **Kim regime** as the Communist rulers of North Korea. In 1950, North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung invaded South Korea, starting a three-year war that killed nearly 2.5 million people—including 36,000 Americans.

In 1953, North and South Korea signed an armistice, but not a peace treaty, and the two countries technically remain at war. The border between North and South Korea at the 38th Parallel, known as the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ), is the most heavily fortified region in the world, dotted with millions of land mines.²

Over 28,000 U.S. military personnel live on dozens of bases across South Korea. The United States has signed two bilateral treaties that commit Washington to defending South Korea and Japan from any North Korean attack.

Nuclear Weapons Program

North Korea developed nuclear weapons to deter South Korea from a conventional conflict. Since 2006, North Korea has conducted five nuclear tests, most recently in September, with mixed success; none have rivaled the power of the relatively primitive Hiroshima bomb. North Korea's fifth nuclear test on September 9th, however, produced the largest explosive yield of the five, indicating North Korea's increasing capabilities. It has somewhere between **10-20 nuclear weapons**, a figure that could double by 2020.

It has also conducted a series of illegal ballistic missile tests to threaten the U.S. and its allies, the latest in February 2016.⁶ In February 2016, North Korea launched its second satellite into orbit, showing it might be able to fire a missile across the Pacific Ocean.⁷ Although many experts* doubt North Korea can build a nuclear warhead small enough to mount on a land-based missile, the regime is working hard to change that.⁸ It is also testing submarine-launched missiles, which, if deployed, would make it much harder to detect a North Korean attack prior to launch.⁹

Exhaustive diplomacy to dismantle North Korea's nuclear program has proved disappointing for the past three administrations. The **Non-Proliferation Treaty** (NPT) forbids signatory states from pursuing nuclear weapons. North Korea signed the NPT in 1985, but international inspectors uncovered a secret nuclear weapons program in 1992.¹⁰ North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003 and accelerated its weapons development.¹¹

Since then, North Korea has engaged in cycles of (1) demonstrating progress on its illegal programs and committing military provocations, (2) negotiating international agreements to roll back that progress in exchange for aid, (3) suspending talks and ejecting U.N. inspectors, and (4) withdrawing until the next round of threats.¹² Until 2009, negotiations were conducted through the **Six Party Talks** between North Korea, the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia.

Donald Trump has suggested that Japan and South Korea should develop their own nuclear weapons to defend themselves against North Korea. Such a proposal directly contradicts 70 years U.S. nuclear policy, which has tried to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons by extending the U.S. nuclear umbrella to cover vital allies—such as Japan and South Korea. Donald Trump also believes that China can reign in North Korea, but history has clearly demonstrated that the Chinese themselves are frustrated by their inability to control the Kim regime.

Concerns of Collapse

As North Korea's main trading partner, as well as a main source of food, arms, and energy, China has the most leverage over the Kim regime, minimal as it is.¹³ But although China is fed up with North Korea's behavior, it tolerates it in the name of stability on the Korean peninsula. Beijing fears that placing too much pressure on North Korea with sanctions might trigger a regime collapse, a refugee crisis in northern China, and a regional influx of U.S. troops.¹⁴

A Tough, Smart Approach to North Korea

We have to be wary when it comes to North Korea. A tough and smart approach means (1) maintaining a robust U.S. capability to defend regional allies and the U.S. homeland, (2) preventing the North from advancing its weapons programs any further, and (3) working with China to prepare for a potential regime collapse.

We Must Defend Our Allies and the Homeland

The current U.S. presence of 28,000 personnel in South Korea and 54,000 in Japan will deter a land attack by North Korea, shaving the cost of defending both countries. The United States also carries out regular training exercises with forces from both countries.¹³ The more dangerous threat comes from North Korean missiles. The United States, South Korea, and Japan all deploy short-range Patriot missile batteries to defend bases in the region from missile attack. In July, the U.S. and South Korea agreed to deploy the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea to counter North Korean missile threats.¹⁴

To defend itself, the United States is developing layered missile defenses to intercept a possible launch of the most advanced North Korean missiles. The first layer is a sea-based capability based on U.S. Navy cruisers and destroyers, which can take the first shot at a long-range North Korean missile before it gets close to the U.S. mainland.¹⁵

North Korean missile ranges

Kilometres, estimated

1 Nodong: 1,000km	3 Musudan: 4,000km
2 Taepodong-1: 2,200km	4 Taepodong-2: 6,000km



Sources: Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, Wikimedia Commons, Graphic News

Source: *The Guardian*

The second line of defense is the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system, based in Alaska and California, which was specifically designed to defend against missiles from North Korea. The GMD has had a troubled development, and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency is working to improve its reliability.¹⁹

We Must Slow North Korea's Progress on its Weapons Programs

The United States restricts the export of technology to North Korea,²⁰ but U.S. law cannot prevent other states from helping the regime develop its nuclear and missile programs. The Missile Control Technology Regime (MCTR)²¹ is an international agreement to prevent just that, but it has only 34 participating states.²² The United States must bring more nations into the fold. Two UNSC resolutions, passed in 2006 and 2009, respectively, created an arms embargo prohibiting any country from shipping weapons or missile technology to North Korea.²³ The UNSC should also pass a new resolution that requires states to search North Korean shipments and seize banned items.²⁴

We Must Prepare for North Korea's Implosion

Aside from North Korea's nuclear program, the greatest concern held by regional powers and the United States is that a collapse of the North Korean regime could create a humanitarian crisis that sends millions of refugees into South Korea and China. A regime implosion would also open its nuclear program to plundering by arms dealers who could sell the technology to the highest bidder. Thus, the United States must begin high level talks with China to plan for such a crisis. Because securing loose nuclear technology would require foreign intervention, Washington and Beijing must be able to coordinate and avoid any military confrontation.

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China

Developing relations between the United States and China will in some respects define the 21st century. But despite these important ties, the two countries frequently butt heads on four critical issues: Taiwan, the South China Sea, cybersecurity, and trade. The United States should:

1. Maintain a strong U.S. military presence in Asia and strengthen the capabilities of regional allies;
2. Hold Chinese hackers accountable; and
3. Push China to reform its economic, monetary, and trade policies.

China is in many respects the second most powerful country in the world. A nuclear power with the second largest military (with a budget of \$215 billion), the second largest economy (\$6.8 trillion), and the largest population (1.3 billion), China enjoys major influence the world's important issues. Its seat on the United Nations Security Council gives it a veto over policies that affect U.S. national security.

The Chinese military wants to be able to win a potential conflict with the United States in the western Pacific Ocean, and is modernizing to meet that goal. Together with China's aggressive territorial claims, its military expansion has alarmed its smaller neighbors, such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia, who look to the United States for protection.

Taiwan

After World War II, China had a civil war that ended with two opposing governments, a communist one in mainland China and a capitalist, pro-Western one in Taiwan. After initially siding with Taiwan, in 1979 the United States adopted the **One China Policy**, under which the United States has recognized Beijing as the government of China and acknowledged that Taiwan is part of mainland China. But the United States takes a neutral stance on Taiwan's independence, neither supporting nor opposing it. China has threatened to invade Taiwan should the smaller island declare independence.¹

Although the United States has no embassy in Taiwan, it maintains close informal relations via the **Taiwan Relations Act of 1979**, and periodically sells defensive weapons to Taiwan. The Chinese government views this as interference in China's internal affairs.² In 1996, two U.S. aircraft carriers sailed into the Taiwan Strait in response to Chinese missile tests. China backed down, but the United States has no legal obligation to intervene if China attacks Taiwan.

South China Sea

China has aggressively asserted separate territorial claims farther south, claiming ownership over nearly every island, and neighboring waterways, throughout the South China Sea. China has harassed its neighbors, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia, by detaining fishing boats and menacing aircraft flying through open skies.³ Its government has also claimed the rights to artificial islands it created by dumping sand onto reefs. If China continues bullying its neighbors and they do not push back, it might eventually have de facto control over vital sea lanes. A Chinese military presence in the South China Sea would allow Chinese forces to attack U.S. forces far before they reached the battlefield.⁴

Because other Asian states are wary of provoking China, their largest trading partner, the United States counters China's belligerent behavior on their behalf, increasing regional stability. The United States does so using bases in Japan, South Korea, and Singapore to patrol international waters and airspace.⁵ Australia and the Philippines may soon host U.S. forces,⁶ and India is considering joint patrols in the South China Sea. The commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific has proposed an informal naval coalition with Japan, India, and Australia, and the United States should push to formalize it.⁷

Cybersecurity

The United States has long accused China of either directing or sponsoring intellectual property theft through cyber attacks that target U.S. companies, as well as the U.S. government itself.⁸ In May 2014, the United States filed criminal charges against five members of the Chinese military for conducting economic espionage.⁹ In April 2015, President Obama signed an Executive Order to sanction foreign hackers.¹⁰ On September 25, 2015, China for the first time agreed to refrain from supporting cyber espionage against U.S. companies (although it admitted no fault, either).¹¹ It remains to be seen whether China will honor this commitment.

The United States is spending billions and has passed key legislation to better secure government computers.¹² President Obama's 2017 budget includes a \$3.1 billion fund to modernize outdated, vulnerable computer systems.¹³ President Obama has also implemented a Cyber National Action Plan (PLAN) as a comprehensive approach to addressing cybersecurity nationwide.¹⁴

Trade

China accounts for about 16% of all U.S. trade, but despite this strong commercial link, the U.S.-China trade relationship has become strained. Some observers in the United States claim that China is operating on an unfair playing field. China is slowly transitioning to a fully liberalized market economy, but major areas of concern include claims of currency manipulation, weak or unenforced intellectual property regulations, and China's use of state-owned enterprises. It's held that these policies have been central in the negative impacts on the U.S. and global economies as well as job losses. The U.S. remains committed to working with China through the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), an existing bilateral exchange, as well as continuing negotiations on the U.S.-China Bilateral Investment Treaty as well as continuing to encourage Chinese economic, monetary, and trade reforms.

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World Leaders: A Pronunciation Guide

This guide lists the names, titles, and pronunciations of a wide range of foreign political leaders in the following areas.

Africa	Middle East
Asia	North America/Central America
Australia/Oceania	South America
Europe	Multilateral Organizations

AFRICA



Egypt

President:
Abdel Fattah el Sisi
(AHB-dehl FAH-tah ehl SEE-see)
Since: June 8, 2014



Kenya

President:
Uhuru Kenyatta
(oo-HOO-roo kehn-YAH-tah)
Since: April 4, 2013



Libya

Head of Unity Government:
Fayez al Sarraj
(FAH-yehz al sahr-RAJ)
Since: February 15, 2016



Morocco

Head of State:
King Mohamed VI (mo-HAH-mehd)
Since: July 23, 1999



Nigeria

President:
Muhammadu Buhari
(moo-HAH-mah-doo boo-HAH-ree)
Since: May 29, 2015



Rwanda

President:
Paul Kagame
(kah-GAH-meh)
Since: March 24, 2000



South Africa

President:
Jacob Zuma
(JAY-khub ZOO-mah)
Since: May 9, 2009



Sudan

President:
Omar al-Bashir
(OH-mahr ehl baa-SHEER)
Since: June 30, 1989



South Sudan

President:
Salva Kiir
(SAHL-vah KEER)
Since: July 9, 2011



Zimbabwe

President:
Robert Mugabe
(RAH-behrt moo-GAH-beh)
Since: December 31, 1987

Prime Minister Designate:
Morgan Tsvangirai
(MOHR-gehn CHAHN-gihr-EYE)
Since: February 11, 2009

ASIA



Afghanistan

President:
Ashraf Ghani
(ahsh-RAHF gah-NEE)
Since: September 29, 2014

Prime Minister:
Abdullah Abdullah
(ahb-DUH-LAH ahb-DUH-LAH)
Since: September 29, 2014



India

Prime Minister:
Narendra Modi
(nah-REHN-drah MOH-DEE)
Since: May 26, 2014

**Burma**

President:
Htin Kyaw
(HOO-tin CHAW)
Since: March 30, 2016

Human Rights Activist:
Aung San Suu Kyi*
(AWN SAN SOO CHEE)
*1991 Nobel Prize recipient

**China**

President:
Xi Jinping
(SHEE GIN-PEENG)
Since: November 14, 2013

Premier:
Li Keqiang
(LEE KUH CHANG)
Since: March 15, 2013

**North Korea**

Supreme Commander of the
Korean People's Army:
Kim Jong Un
(KIM JAWNG-UHN)
Since: December 30, 2011

**South Korea**

President:
Park Geun-hye
(PAHK GOON HEH)
Since: February 25, 2013

**Indonesia**

President:
Joko Widodo
(JOH-koh WEE-doh-doh)
Since: October 20, 2014

**Japan**

Prime Minister:
Shinzo Abe
(SHEEN-zoh AH-bay)
Since: December 26, 2012

Emperor:
Akihito
(ah-kee-HEE-toh)
Since: January 7, 1989

**Pakistan**

Prime Minister:
Nawaz Sharif
(nah-WAHZ shah-REEF)
Since: June 5, 2013

President:
Mamnoon Hussain
(mahm-NOON hoo-SAY-N)
Since: September 10, 2013

Chief of Army Staff:
Gen. Raheel Sharif
(ra-HEEL shah-REEF)
Since: November 27, 2013

**Taiwan**

President:
Tsai Ing-wen
((t)S-EYE EENG WUHN)
Since: May 20, 2016

AUSTRALIA/OCEANA**Australia**

Prime Minister:
Malcom Turnbull
Since: September 15, 2015

**New Zealand**

Prime Minister:
John Key
Since: November 19, 2008

EUROPE**France**

President:
Francois Hollande
(frahn-SWAH oh-LAHN-deh)
Since: May 15, 2012

**Germany**

Chancellor:
Angela Merkel
(ahn-GAY-lah M-AIR-kl)
Since: November 22, 2005

**Greece**

Prime Minister:
Alexis Tsipras
(ah-LEHK-sees SEEP-rah)
Since: September 21, 2015

**Ireland**

Prime Minister:
Enda Kenny
(EHN-dah KEH-nee)
Since: March 9, 2011

**Italy**

Prime Minister:
Matteo Renzi
(mah-TAY-oh REHN-zee)
Since: February 22, 2014

**Russia**

President:
Vladimir Putin
(vlah-DEE-meer POO-tihn)
Since: May 7, 2012

**Spain**

Prime Minister:
Mariano Rajoy
(mah-ree-AH-noh rah-HOY)
Since: December 21, 2011

Head of State:
King Felipe VI
(fay-LEE-pay)
Since: June 19, 2014

**United Kingdom**

Prime Minister:
David Cameron
Since: May 11, 2010

Head of State:
Queen Elizabeth II
Since: June 2, 1953

MIDDLE EAST**Bahrain**

King:
King Hamad
(HAH-mahd)
Since: March 6, 1999

**Iran**

Supreme Leader:
Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
(Eye-ah-toe-LAH ah-LEE hahmehn-a-EE)
Since: June 4, 1989

President:
Hassan Rouhani
(hah-SAHN roh-hah-NEE)
Since: August 3, 2013

**Iraq**

Prime Minister:
Haider al Abadi
(H-EYE-dehr al ah-BAH-dee)
Since: September 9, 2014

President:
Foouad Massoum
(foo-AHD mah-SOOM)
Since: July 24, 2014

**Israel**

President:
Reuven Rivlin
(ROO-vihn RIHV-lihn)
Since: July 24, 2014

Prime Minister:
Benjamin Netanyahu
(behn-jah-MEEN neht-an-YAH-hoo)
Since: March 31, 2009

Defense Minister:
Moshe Ya'alon
(moh-SHEH yah-ah-LOHN)
Since: March 18, 2013

**Jordan**

Head of State:
King Abdullah II
(ahb-DUHL-lah)
Since: February 7, 1999

Palestinian Authority

President of the PA:
Mahmud Abbas
(mah-MOOD ah-BAHS)
Since: January 15, 2005

**Saudi Arabia**

Head of State:
King Salman
(SAHL-mun)
Since: January 22, 2015

**Syria**

President:
Bashar al-Assad
(bah-SHAHR ahl AH-sahd)
Since: July 17, 2000

**Turkey**

Prime Minister:
Recep Tayyip Erdogan
(reh- JEHP t-eye-YIHP ERR-doh-ahn)
Since: March 14, 2003

**Yemen**

President:
Abdurabu Mansur Hadi
(AH-bd RAH-boh mahn-SOOR HAD-ee)
Since: November 23, 2011

**Lebanon**

President:
Michel Suleiman
(mee-SHELL soo-lay-MAHN)
Since: May 25, 2008

Secretary General, Hezbollah:

Hassan Nasrallah
(HAH-sahn nahs-RAH-lah)
Since: February 16, 1992

NORTH/CENTRAL AMERICA**Canada**

Prime Minister:
Justin Trudeau
(Justin TROO-doh)
Since: November 4, 2015

**Mexico**

President:
Enrique Peña Nieto
(En-REE-kay PAYN-yah nee-EH-toh)
Since: July 2, 2012

**Cuba**

President:
Raúl Castro
(rah-OOL KASS-troh)
Since: April 19, 2011

**Nicaragua**

President:
Daniel Ortega
(dahn-YEHL or-TAY-gah)
Since: January 10, 2007

SOUTH AMERICA**Argentina**

President:
Mauricio Macri
(MORE-ree-SEE-o MAH-cree)
Since: December 11, 2015

**Bolivia**

President:
Evo Morales
(E-voh moh-RAH-lays)
Since: January 22, 2006

**Brazil**

President:
Dilma Rousseff
(JEEL-mah ROO-sehf)
Since: January 1, 2011

**Chile**

President:
Michelle Bachelet
(mee-SHELL bah-cheh-LET)
Since: March 11, 2014

**Colombia**

President:
Juan Manuel Santos
(HWAHN mahn-WEHL SAHN-tohs)
Since: August 7, 2010

**Peru**

President:
Ollanta Moises Humala
(oh-YAHN-tah oo-MAH-lah)
Since: July 28, 2011

**Venezuela**

President:

Nicolás Maduro

(nee-koh-LAHS mah-DOO-roh)

Since: April 19, 2013

MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

**European Union**

President, European Council:

Donald Tusk

Since: December 1, 2014

**International Monetary Fund**

Managing Director:

Christine Lagarde

(Krihss-TEEN lah-GAHRD)

Since: July 5, 2011

**United Nations**

Secretary General:

Ban Ki-Moon

(BAHN GHEE-MOON)

Since: January 1, 2007

**World Bank**

President:

Jim Yong Kim

Since: July 1, 2012

**NATO**

Secretary-General:

Jens Stoltenberg

(YEHNS STOHL-tehn-behrk)

Since: October 1, 2009



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