

# STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

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There is no better way to summarize the current position of al-Qaeda and its allies than to quote the words President Lincoln wrote in 1864 to underscore the Union's growing strength even after three years of increasingly bloody war with the Confederacy. In his annual message of 6 December 1864, Mr. Lincoln, in words that Osama bin Laden could use today, told the Congress that,

The important fact remains demonstrated, that we have *more* men *now* than we had when the war *began*; that we are not exhausted, nor in the process of exhaustion; that we are *gaining* strength, and may, if need be, maintain the contest indefinitely.

As America enters the eighth autumn of the war, the reality of a vital and undefeated Islamist enemy is apparent. And the reason for this fact likewise lies in plain sight: The government of the United States continues to fight an Islamist terrorist enemy – in al-Qaeda and its allies – that does not exist in the form Washington sees it; is not motivated by the factors Washington ascribes to it; and will not be defeated by the military forces and political tools Washington is deploying against it.

--Neither al-Qaeda nor its main allies, for example, are terrorist groups; they are insurgent organizations modeled on the Islamist insurgent organizations that defeated the Red Army in Afghanistan in 1989. These groups are larger, more sophisticated, better led and funded, more geographically dispersed, and more technologically proficient than any group the U.S. government has previously stuffed and crammed into its definition of "terrorist" organization.

--Perhaps the most obvious sign, but one mostly ignored, that America is not confronting a terrorist group like the Japanese Red Army or a geriatric Palestinian group like the PFLP-GC lies in the area of leadership succession.

--Since 2001, Americans have been able to flip on the radio almost any morning and learn that another Al-Qaeda No. 2, No. 3, or No. 4 leader has been killed in Afghanistan, Iraq, or some other place. In addition, the CIA's tremendously successful rendition program has removed a sizeable number of senior al-Qaeda leaders from the battlefield.

--And yet despite these successes, Admiral McConnell and General Hayden have accurately said al-Qaeda is as dangerous as ever and poses a “clear and present danger” to the continental United States. How can this be so?

--Well, there are several reasons, but a major one is that al-Qaeda is an insurgent group that – because it always faces a far more powerful foe – puts enormous time and resources into succession planning. When a senior al-Qaeda leader is captured or killed, a trained understudy takes his place and the organization proceeds. The new leader may not be as good as his predecessor, but he is not green and soon gets fully up to mark with on-the-job experience.

--No terrorist organization could have absorbed the punishment the United States has inflicted on al-Qaeda since 1996 and survived; indeed, that amount of punishment would have destroyed any organization the U.S. government has accurately defined as a terrorist group. It is best to think of al-Qaeda as we ought to think of Lebanese Hizballah and the Tamil Tigers; it and they are powerful insurgent groups which able to absorb enormous punishment from nation-state militaries and continue to thrive and attack. And al-Qaeda is more powerful and dangerous than either because, unlike Hizballah and the Tamils, bin Laden’s organization has no return address against which the U.S. military can deliver a devastating strike.

--And if I may say, parenthetically, recent statements from the State Department, the White House, and some Congressional offices claiming that Hizballah is more of a threat to America than al-Qaeda are inaccurate, perhaps deliberately so. Such remarks are made by those who want war with Iran, those who slavishly make Israel’s agenda their own, or those who have both attributes. Hizballah is not a threat to the United States unless Washington and/or Israel launch an attack Iran. Then, however, it would pose a substantial domestic threat because our open borders have made it impossible for law-enforcement agencies at any level of government to know the number and location of Hizballah operatives in this country at any given time.

To go on. Long before 9/11 and certainly since, the U.S. government under both parties has refused to accept that the main motivation of al-Qaeda and its allies – and the main source of their appeal to Muslims – is their perception that U.S. foreign policy is a deliberate attack on Islam and Muslims. From our enemies’ perspective, therefore, this is preeminently a religious war, notwithstanding the blather to the contrary of Western politicians, academics, policymakers, and pundits. And sadly, the Islamists’ leaders – Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and others – have left U.S. officials no excuse for failing to understand the mujahedin’s motivation. Not since General Giap and Ho Chi Minh has America had an enemy that has so fully, frankly, and consistently explained its motivation to wage war against the United States, and yet the U.S. government has been and is led by men and women from both parties who ignore the Islamists words and, in essence, tell Americans to “ignore what they say and listen only to us.” It might well be

suggested that, for a group of powerful individuals who have been reliably unable to differentiate Shias from Sunnis, this is asking Americans to accept an awful lot on trust.

What factors, then, are not among the main motivations of our Islamist enemies?

--Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and lack of positive future prospects are not major drivers of Islamist violence against the United States and its allies. The resurrection of Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes to conduct a contemporary and endlessly expensive New Deal in the Islamic world would at best produce mujahedin with better teeth and excellent postwar employment prospects.

--Hatred for America's liberties, freedoms, elections, women in the workplace, halls, and after-work pitchers of Budweiser do not motivate our Islamist enemies. They would have none of those things in their countries, but they likewise would be unable to attract fighters ready to die in a campaign to destroy Anheiser-Busch or to terminate the practice of early presidential primaries in Iowa.

--A universal desire to establish a worldwide Caliphate governed by what many Republican and Democratic leaders, as well as the many U.S. citizens more interested in Israel's survival than in America's, like to call Islamofascism also is not a main motivator of our Islamist enemies. The Caliphate is indeed a goal of bin Laden and most Islamist leaders – because God has said the world will eventually be entirely Muslim -- but they know that its attainment will not occur during their or their great-great grandsons' lifetimes, just as Christians know that a world in which all would love-thy-neighbor and turn-the-other-cheek is light years over the horizon. This said, it is correct to say that the world is rife with Islamofascists, but they are almost all allies of the United States, and ruling such countries as Egypt, Kuwait, the UAE, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and – as we will soon see – Iraq.

To return to where we began, the main motivation of our Islamist enemies is U.S. foreign policy and its impact in the Muslim world. And the strongest such motivators are the following:

--U.S. and Western exploitation of Muslim energy resources.

--U.S. and Western civilian and military presence on the Arabian Peninsula.

--Unqualified U.S. support for Israel.

--U.S. support for other powers that oppress Muslims, especially China, India, and Russia.

--U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other Muslim countries.

--U.S. support for the police states that govern much of the Arab and Muslim world.

Because Washington applies an inappropriate definition to America's Islamist enemies – terrorist vice insurgents -- and deliberately ignores their motivations, it is not surprising that the military and political tools with which Washington is waging war are failing.

--In the starkest of terms, U.S. policymakers mistakenly believe that the war they are fighting is something of a super-law-enforcement struggle in which – as we have heard from all presidents for two-plus decades – America will prevail by bringing our enemies to justice one man at a time. This is both lunacy and self-defeating. There are far too many of the enemy – and their numbers are growing – to capture or kill one at a time. As effective as U.S. Special Forces operations and the CIA's Rendition Program have been and will be, neither is a war winner; both entities are being worn out by overuse; both are being weakened by steady losses to higher-paying, less dangerous jobs in private-sector companies; and neither can kill the enemy in anything approaching adequate numbers.

--Which leads us to what probably is the U.S. government's number one military problem: A steady, stubborn refusal to accept that war has not changed since Alexander and Caesar and will not change; that the surest route to victory lies in quickly and efficiently killing enough enemy fighters and their supporters, and destroying enough of the infrastructure of both, to make them see that the wages of attacking America approach annihilation; and that U.S. armed forces are enlisted, trained, and armed to kill America's enemies until they are beaten and our country is secure, not to bring democracy to foreigners who do not want it; secularism to people who believe it is the road to hell; and protection to both sides in an Arab-Israeli religious war where the United States has no genuine national interest at stake.

To define the "way ahead" for the structure and composition of U.S. forces in our current war against al-Qaeda and its allies is at this time, therefore, a nearly impossible task. But because Washington is fighting an enemy whose motivation it willfully ignores; whose numbers it grossly underestimates; and whose ability to defeat or evade the tools of war it has chosen to half-heartedly use is apparent, we should not be too quick to decide that the current mix of U.S. forces is inappropriate.

--We clearly are going to need conventional, nuclear, and Special Forces for the foreseeable future. China, Russia, and other nation-states still potentially threaten the United States in scenarios that would require large U.S. conventional and nuclear capabilities for purposes of deterrence or actual warfare. In addition, our dependence on foreign oil suppliers means that there are places in the world – such as Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province of the Gulf of Guinea/Niger Delta – where interventions requiring the use of conventional forces could quickly and unexpectedly arise. It would be most unwise not to maintain the bulk of the U.S. military in a conventional form.

--We should learn from the military experiences of the Clinton and Bush administrations. These have proven that Special Forces operations and CIA covert-action programs cannot win wars, conventional or irregular. Those entities remain today what they historically have been: powerful and indispensable adjuncts to overall U.S. war-making capabilities. As noted, the Clinton and Bush administrations have ignored history and are wearing out both the Special Forces and the CIA in wars in which America is barely holding its own, in Afghanistan and – Generals Petraus and Odierno reminded us this week – in Iraq. A move to expand the size and use of Special Forces and CIA covert-action forces will simply give us more excellently trained, extraordinarily capable, and wonderfully lethal units that still will be unable to win wars for America.

--The wars in America's future will require conventional forces, Special Forces, and a strong and covert-action-capable CIA. The appropriate, precise, and affordable mix of those forces is beyond my skill and knowledge-base to determine. There does, however, seem to be an increasing danger that too many resources will be put into building forces designed to fight irregular wars, which are conflicts where even successful Special Forces and CIA operations have already proven insufficient to deliver a definitive victory, which of course must be the sole goal America pursues when it goes to war. This is in no way meant to denigrate the men and women who lead and staff those forces. It is simply to say that despite their courageous and frequently successful efforts, al-Qaeda is fully meeting the constituent goals of its strategy for driving the United States as far as possible out of the Muslim world; those are: to help bleed the United States to bankruptcy; to force the spread of U.S. military and intelligence forces to the point where they lack flexibility and reserves; and to cause a deterioration in domestic political cohesion as did the North Vietnamese.

--And no matter what mix of U.S. military and intelligence forces is ultimately decided upon, their ability to bring victory will depend on U.S. politicians mustering the moral courage to tell Americans that their armed forces are built for the purpose of annihilating America's enemies. The very fact that we are meeting here today, on the eve of the eighth autumn of this war, is largely the result of the lack of political will in both parties to unleash the historically unprecedented military power American taxpayers have sacrificed to pay for over many decades.

Finally, it is worth considering whether it might be smarter, cheaper, and less bloody to change the failed foreign policies that brought war with al-Qaeda and its Islamist allies, rather than maintaining those war-motivating policies as divine writ and building an ever-larger military to fight the ever-expanding wars that writ produces. Energy self-sufficiency, a fixed and even obdurate determination to stay out of other peoples' religious wars, and a much more narrowly defined set of genuine U.S. national interests would require far less frequent resort to war and would be much more consonant with timelessly wise foreign-policy goals of our country's Founding Fathers.