

Opening Statement for Chairman Ron Johnson
“Inside The Mind Of ISIS: Understanding Its Goals And Ideology To Better Protect The Homeland”

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Good morning and welcome.

Last month, 14 Americans were killed and 22 were seriously injured in San Bernardino, California, by two terrorists who claimed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. This barbaric attack demonstrated the serious threat that Islamic terrorists pose to our nation.

Over recent months, ISIS has been linked to a series of deadly attacks across the globe, including the downing of a Russian airliner over Egypt, the mass slaughter in Paris, and killings in Lebanon, Turkey and most recently Indonesia. In 2015, United States authorities reported a record number of terrorism-related arrests, the most since 2001.

It is clear that our nation—and the entire world—are facing a serious threat from militant extremists who act on behalf of ISIS and other Islamic terrorists.

As chairman, my top priority for this committee for 2016 is help ensure that the federal government is fulfilling its responsibility to do everything it can to keep our nation safe and protect the American people. To that end, this is the first of a series of hearings that we will hold this year to examine the threat posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, otherwise known as Daesh.

We will examine what the United States government is doing at home and abroad to prevent atrocities like the one perpetrated in San Bernardino. We will call on federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice, to learn what is working and what we can do better to protect the American people. And where necessary, I will ask my colleagues on this committee to join me in bipartisan reforms to strengthen our nation’s security.

To grasp the full dimension of this threat, we must first examine the root causes that fuel Islamic terrorism. We must understand our adversary—its ideology, its motivations, its ultimate goal, and its strategy for gaining and sustaining the power necessary to achieve that goal.

We are fortunate to have leading experts with us today who have studied ISIS to help us better understand the threat. I would like to thank each of our witnesses for joining us today, and I look forward to your testimony.