

**HEARING ON “ADAPTING TO DEFEND THE HOMELAND AGAINST  
THE EVOLVING INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST THREAT”  
DECEMBER 6, 2017, 10AM, SD-342**

Good morning, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member McCaskill, and members of the Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss:

1. The changing threat landscape with respect to the destruction of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)’s physical “caliphate”; and
2. Efforts by the Department of Defense (DoD) to counter terrorist threats within this changing threat landscape.

1. Changing Threat Landscape

- The liberation of Raqqa and remaining ISIS strongholds in the Euphrates River Valley are important milestones in our fight against the scourge of ISIS. Our Iraqi and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) partners deserve much of the credit for these efforts. Nevertheless, the elimination of the physical caliphate does not mark the end of ISIS or other global terrorist organizations. Their defeat on the battlefield has dispelled ISIS’s claims of invincibility but their ideology remains, and their branches and affiliates will continue to seek opportunities to spread this toxic ideology and attack all who do not subscribe to it.
- As ISIS loses territory in Iraq and Syria, its operations will become more distributed and more reliant on virtual connections. Their terrorist cadres will migrate to other safe havens where they can direct and enable attacks against the United States, our allies and partners, and our global interests. They will also continue to radicalize vulnerable individuals and inspire them to conduct “lone wolf” (or “stray dog”) attacks. We will continue to see ISIS and al-Qa’ida threats to our homeland, as well as our allies and partners, from locations in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Balkan States, among other locations.
- The United States and its allies and partners including those in the 74-member Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS must continue to combat this threat with a shared commitment against our common enemies. We must continue to deny ISIS and other terrorist organizations safe-havens from which they can plot

attacks and prey on vulnerable populations. We must continue to work with credible, indigenous voices to delegitimize their ideology. And we must discredit their narrative so they cannot recruit and radicalize alienated or vulnerable populations. Finally, to achieve enduring results, we must ensure that our successes on the battlefield are complemented by well-resourced post-conflict stabilization efforts. These efforts, principally led by the Department of State and USAID, are critical to cementing military gains and preventing terrorist organizations from re-establishing themselves.

- As we look back on our recent operations, the major lessons we have learned from the fight against ISIS thus far are:
  1. Defeating the group requires a whole-of-government approach and cannot be achieved through military efforts alone;
  2. Our “by, with, and through” approach with local partners continues to be effective; and
  3. We must address ISIS globally.

## 2. DoD Efforts to Counter Terrorist Threats

- Turning now to DoD’s efforts in the counterterrorism (CT) realm, I want to reiterate that an enduring defeat of these terrorist organizations cannot be achieved solely through military force. We must continue to promote and support whole-of-government solutions involving political, developmental, economic, military, law enforcement, border security, aviation security, and other elements.
- With respect to military efforts, of course, DoD maintains the finest and most capable special operations forces in the world. These forces are capable of conducting focused direct action, including precision airstrikes and other CT activities, wherever they are required. I’d be happy to provide additional details, if needed, in a closed session.
- Our other CT efforts are focused on building our partners’ capabilities and capacity and enabling their operations. DoD’s CT approach abroad is characterized generally as working “by, with, and through” key partners. This means that:

- Military operations against terrorist organizations are conducted **by** our partners or host–nation forces;
  - U.S. forces work **with** our partners to train, equip, advise, enable, and when authorized, accompany them on operations and improve their effectiveness and professionalism;
  - And **through** this cooperative relationship, the United States and our partners achieve our shared strategic objectives.
- Secretary Mattis has placed a significant emphasis on building and strengthening these partnerships. In addition to strong bilateral relationships with our partners, we also seek to work with regional security organizations and collective security missions, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the G5 Sahel Task Force. Our NATO Alliance also provides us a ready set of partners for a variety of CT efforts. Together, these partners help to reduce the need for large U.S. forces and unilateral direct action.
- Our “by, with, and through” approach provides the foundation to build CT capacity in key regions, such as in Africa’s Lake Chad Basin, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and increasingly in Southeast Asia. As we build the capacity of other partners to bring the fight to violent extremist organizations (VEOs) in the short-term, we are also shaping them to sustain their own security in the long-term. Ultimately, filling the security void in these regions will advance our desired CT end-states.
- All of these challenges require flexible, adaptable tools. We are grateful for Congress’s efforts to provide DoD and the Department of State a variety of flexible authorities to support CT operations and build capacity with partners. For instance, efforts to reform U.S. security cooperation authorities in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 have led to a suite of streamlined authorities to fund CT training, equipment, and other support for partner CT forces across the globe.
- Regarding legal authorities, the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) remains a cornerstone for ongoing U.S. military operations and continues to provide the domestic legal authority needed to use force against al-Qa’ida, the Taliban, and their associated forces and against ISIS.
- Finally, while focused principally on operations against terror abroad, DoD also supports its Federal law enforcement and interagency partners in this shifting

threat environment. One of the ways we do this is through robust information-sharing practices, including biometric data. These information-sharing arrangements contribute to the U.S. Government's expanded screening and vetting efforts. Biometric data collected on the battlefield, whether by the United States or its international partners, may be provided through DoD databases to U.S. Federal law enforcement agencies. Similarly, DoD maintains a robust antiterrorism/force protection posture, based in part on information provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), gleaned from its investigations, that may have bearing on threats to DoD personnel or facilities.

### 3. Closing

- Thank you for the opportunity to testify to this Committee on a topic of such critical importance. The Department of Defense appreciates your leadership and oversight in this area.
- I'll be happy to address any additional questions.