



## JOEL C. ROSENBERG'S FLASHTRAFFIC

### THE WAR AGAINST ISIS: ARE WE WINNING?

Updated: September 11, 2016

#### **President Obama & Senior Administration Officials Continue To Insist That We Are Either Containing ISIS Or Winning The War Against ISIS.**

- “We have contained them.” – President Barack Obama, one day before ISIS launched attacks in Paris killing 130 people and wounding 368. (see interview with George Stephanopolous on ABC’s “This Week,” November 13, 2015; [video clip](#) posted on RealClearPolitics.com)
- “The momentum of this campaign is now clearly on our side.” – Defense Secretary Ashton Carter (see Rowen Scarborough, [“Ashton Carter: ‘We are systematically eliminating ISIL’s cabinet,’”](#) *Washington Times*, March 25, 2016)
- “[W]e are winning.” – Secretary of State John Kerry (see Rebecca Shadad, [“John Kerry insists U.S. is ‘winning’ ISIS fight despite Brussels attack,”](#) March 25, 2016, CBS News)
- “[W]e are making significant progress....ISIL continues to lose ground....continues to lose money....ISIL’s ranks are shrinking....Their morale is sinking.” -- President Obama, two days after Omar Mateen, an ISIS loyalist, murdered 49 Americans and wounded 53 more in Orlando, Florida. (see [“Remarks by the President After Counter-ISIL Meeting,”](#) June 14, 2016)

#### **However, Experts Say While Progress Has Been Made, We Are Not Actually Winning The War on ISIS.**

- **CIA Director John Brennan:** “Despite all our progress against [the Islamic State] on the battlefield and in the financial realm, our efforts have not reduced the group’s terrorism capacity and global reach....[ISIS] has a large cadre of western fighters who could potentially serve as operatives for attacks in the west ... the group is probably exploring a variety of means for infiltrating operatives into the west, including refugee flows, smuggling routes, and legitimate methods of travel.” (see Bridgett Mudd, [“CIA Director Affirms Obama’s ISIS Strategy Is Not Working,”](#) Daily Signal, June 16, 2016)
- **Former DIA Director Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn:**

- “President Barack Obama’s former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency believes the United States is ‘losing the war’ on and off the battlefield against the Islamic State. ‘The enemy has more than doubled in capacity and capability and geographical footprint around the world,’ said Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn in an interview with The Daily Caller News Foundation. ‘We’ve lost the strategic initiative in this war. And the enemy has the strategic initiative.’” (see Richard Pollack, [“Former Obama Intel Chief: ‘We Are Losing’ Against ISIS: ‘We’re In A War,’”](#) Daily Caller, July 14, 2016)
- ““So we take a little bit of desert back from them in places called Ramadi or Fallujah — and I don't know how many times we’re gonna have to fight for Fallujah in Iraq — but we take these little tactical bastions back from them, and what do they do? They counterattack in Paris, in Belgium, in Turkey, in Orlando, in San Bernardino,’ [former DIA Director] Flynn told *Business Insider* in a Monday interview, referring to recent terror attacks tied to the group. ‘So their battlefield is actually geographically dispersed globally, and that's how they are fighting us,’ he added. ‘ISIS is in this global fight,’ Flynn said. ‘Their battlefield is not just Iraq and Syria. Their battlefield is Europe, it’s southeast Asia. ... So you have these activities and events going on around the world, and it’s based, really, on the ideological underpinnings of radical Islamism.’” (Pamela Engel, [“Former intelligence chief explains why Obama is wrong when he says we're winning the war against ISIS,”](#) Business Insider, July 13, 2016)
- **U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley:** “There is progress. But progress is not yet winning. No one should think this is over. It is not. There’s a lot of work to be done,” (Kristina Wong, [“Top general: US not winning ISIS war yet,”](#) *The Hill*, April 7, 2016)
- **Former CIA Director Michael Morell:** “During congressional testimony before the House Armed Services Committee Wednesday, former senior intelligence officials said ISIS is expanding. ‘ISIS has gained affiliates faster than Al Qaeda ever did -- from nothing a year ago, there are now militant groups in nearly 20 countries that have sworn allegiance to ISIS,’ former CIA deputy director Mike Morell said. ‘They have conducted attacks that have already killed Americans.’” (Catherine Herridge, [“Officials: ISIS may be testing chemical weapons as terror group rapidly expands,”](#) Fox News, January 12, 2016)
- **Richard Engel, the chief foreign correspondent for NBC News:** “Engel said on Tuesday that President Obama’s claim that the United States is winning in the fight against the Islamic State is an ‘overstatement.’ Host Thomas Roberts asked Engel for his thoughts on Obama’s claims that the terrorist group is on the defensive. ‘And Richard, is the president correct when he says that we are winning the fight against ISIS?’ Roberts asked. ‘Uh, winning? That’s probably an overstatement,’ Engel said. ‘There are a lot of gains being made but the problem is they are being made incrementally and they are being made by, in an

incoherent way.” (Jack Heretick, [“NBC: Obama’s Claim America Is Winning the War Against ISIS Is an ‘Overstatement,’”](#) Washington Free Beacon, June 14, 2016)

### **The Evidence Confirms That The ISIS Threat Is Expanding.**

- **ISIS, once regarded by President Obama as a [“JV team,”](#) is presently engaged in genocide, a fact that both Congress and the Administration now concede.**
  - March 15, 2016:
    - “The House approved a resolution...that declares the Islamic State is committing genocide against Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East — putting even more pressure on the Obama administration to do the same ahead of a deadline...
    - “The resolution passed the House with a unanimous vote of 383-0.
    - “The resolution came to a vote just days after the release of a [graphic new report](#) by the Knights of Columbus and In Defense of Christians on ISIS’ atrocities. The report made the case that the terror campaign against Christians and other minorities in Syria, Iraq and other parts of the Middle East is, in fact, genocide.”
    - (see [“House declares ISIS committing genocide against Christians, other minorities,”](#) Fox News, March 15, 2016)
  - March 17, 2016:
    - “The Islamic State is committing genocide against Yazidis, Christians and Shiite Muslims in Iraq and Syria, Secretary of State John Kerry declared on Thursday, a historic announcement that nonetheless is unlikely to spur greater U.S. military action against the terrorist network.
    - “The declaration is a rare one — the U.S. has a record of trying to avoid the term ‘genocide,’ which carries with it political, moral and some legal obligations. The only other time the U.S. has used the term in an ongoing conflict was in 2004, when it described the atrocities in Sudan’s Darfur region.
    - “[The Islamic State] is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology and by actions, in what it says, what it believes and what it does,” Kerry said in an appearance before reporters....“Naming these crimes is important, but what is essential is to stop them.”
    - (see Nahal Toosi, [“U.S. accuses Islamic State of genocide,”](#) *Politico*, March 17, 2016)
  - The number of Christians in Syria has dropped from 1.25 million to 500,000 in recent years, according to analyses by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) and the American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ).

- The number of Christians in Iraq has dropped from 1.4 million to fewer than 275,000 in recent years, which ACLJ notes is “an 80% drop.”
- In January 2016, the U.N. issued a [report](#) documenting the magnitude of the horror. “The violence suffered by civilians in Iraq remains staggering,” the report stated. “The so-called ‘Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’ (ISIL) continues to commit systematic and widespread violence and abuses of international human rights law and humanitarian law. These acts may, in some instances, amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possibly genocide.”
- Consider the numbers just in Iraq:
  - [18,802 civilians](#) were killed in Iraq between Jan. 2014 and Oct. 2015
  - [36,245 civilians](#) were wounded during this same period
  - [some 3,500](#) have been seized as slaves by ISIS
  - [3.2 million civilians](#) in Iraq have been displaced from their homes and villages, and are on the run for their very lives
- Consider, too, the numbers in Syria:
  - at least [470,000 people](#) have been killed in Syria as of Feb. 2016
  - [6.6 million people](#) in Syria have been displaced from their homes and villages and are on the run for their lives
  - [13.5 million people](#) in Syria need humanitarian assistance
- In February of 2015, the government of Iraq laid out their [case](#) to the U.N. Security Council that the Islamic State was not simply committing atrocities but outright [genocide](#).
  - “These terrorist groups have desecrated all human values. They have committed the most heinous criminal terrorist acts against the Iraqi people whether Shi’ite, Sunni, Christians, Turkmen, Shabak or Yazidis,” [Iraq’s U.N. Ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim said](#).
  - “These are in fact crimes of genocide committed against humanity that must be held accountable before international justice.”
- **NOTE:** ISIS is by no means responsible for all the casualties, destruction and dislocation in Syria over the last five years of the civil war. The Assad government bears major culpability, as do numerous rebel groups. That said, it’s important to note that among these actors, [only ISIS has publicly vowed to “break the cross” and eradicate Christianity in the Middle East](#), which makes it guilty of genocide.
- (see Joel C. Rosenberg, [“ISIS waging war of genocide against Christians in the Mideast. New UN report provides chilling details,”](#) Flash Traffic blog, January 23, 2016)

- **The global reach of ISIS terror attacks has increased dramatically.**
  - When ISIS began, its attacks were limited to inside Iraq and Syria.
  - But ISIS has now launched or inspired major terrorist attacks in 21 countries outside of Iraq and Syria – including the U.S. – as of July 2016.
  - ISIS has killed more than 1,200 people outside of Iraq and Syria, as of July 2016.
  - (see [“How Many People Have Been Killed in ISIS Attacks Around the World,”](#) *New York Times*, July 16, 2016)
  
- **The number of ISIS foreign fighters has grown from 20,000 in 2015 to 36,000 coming in 2016, and they are now coming from 120 countries, up from 90 countries in 2015.**
  - “A US intelligence official confirms...the number of foreign fighters has hit a new high -- more than 36,000 from 120 countries since the conflict began in 2011, including at least 6,600 from Western countries.
  - “A year ago, at the worldwide threat hearing on Capitol Hill, where the U.S. intelligence community publicly presented its global view on terrorism, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper said that since the conflict began, more than 20,000 foreign fighters from 90 countries had travelled to the region.
  - “A key figure is the number of countries affected, with the extremist ideology now drawing followers from 60 percent of the world's nations.”
  - (see Catherine Herridge, [“Officials: ISIS may be testing chemical weapons as terror group rapidly expands,”](#) Fox, Jan. 12, 2016)
  
- **ISIS fighters in Libya has increased by 50%.**
  - “The number of ISIS fighters in Libya doubled to between 4,000 to 6,000 in the last 12 to 18 months, Africa Command commander Army Gen. David M. Rodriguez said at a Pentagon briefing.” (Kristina Wong, [“Top general: US not winning ISIS war yet,”](#) *The Hill*, April 7, 2016)
  
- **After months of rumors, speculation and concern, it has been confirmed that ISIS has now acquired and is producing – and is using on the battlefield – chemical weapons.**
  - [“How the Islamic State Seized A Chemical Weapons Stockpile”](#) -- *Foreign Policy* magazine, August 17, 2016

- [“Iraqi officials: ISIS chemical weapons attacks kill child, wound 600”](#) – CBS News, March 12, 2016
- [“Top intel official confirms ISIS made, used chemical weapons”](#) – Fox News, February 9, 2016
  - “The nation’s top intelligence official confirmed Tuesday that the Islamic State has succeeded in making and deploying chemical agents in Iraq and Syria -- calling it the first such attack by an extremist group in more than two decades.
  - “The confirmation of mustard gas use came during Director of National Intelligence James Clapper's testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, where he spoke to the Islamic State's growing sophistication online and in the battlefield.
  - “He did not elaborate on where and when the chemical attacks occurred, though there has been mounting evidence the terror group was experimenting with chemical weapons.
  - “[The Syrian government] has used chemicals against the opposition on multiple occasions since Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. ISIL has also used toxic chemicals in Iraq and Syria, including the blister agent Sulfur mustard,” Clapper said.
- “There is growing evidence that ISIS is experimenting with chemical weapons as the number of foreign fighters hits a new high, according to current and former government officials.” (Catherine Herridge, [“Officials: ISIS may be testing chemical weapons as terror group rapidly expands,”](#) Fox News, January 12, 2016)
- [Report: U.S. Suspects ISIS Used Chemical Weapons in Iraq](#) – Reuters, August 14, 2015
- [Poisonous gas attack by ISIS leads to fears terrorists are mass producing chemical weapons](#) -- *UK Express*, August 14, 2015
- [Islamic State Suspected of Using Chemical Weapon, U.S. Says](#) -- *Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 2015

**Experts Say That Despite A “War On Terror” Spanning 15 Years, The Jihadist Terror Threat Has Grown Worse Since September 11, 2001.**

- **Richard Clarke, former terrorism advisor to three U.S. presidents:** “The threat is actually worse: It has metastasized and spread geographically,”

said Richard Clarke, a top terrorism adviser to three presidents and the man who famously warned the Bush administration about the growing risk from al-Qaeda in the weeks before 9/11. “Today there are probably 100,000 people in the various terrorist groups around the world, and that’s much larger than anything we had 15 years ago.” (Joby Warrick and Greg Miller, [“Fifteen years after 9/11, the jihadist threat looms larger than ever across the globe,”](#) *Washington Post*, September 11, 2016)

- **Former Governor Thomas Kean and Former Rep. Lee Hamilton, co-chairman of the U.S. 9/11 Commission:**
  - “Fifteen years after the Sept. 11 attacks, the battle against terrorism is far from over. The threat we face today is arguably worse than the one we confronted in 2001....
  - “According to the [Global Terrorism Index](#), terrorist activity reached its highest recorded level in 2014, the last year with available data, with 32,685 terrorist-caused deaths. In 2001, that figure barely exceeded 5,000.
  - “Out of 162 countries studied, 93 have suffered a terrorist attack.”
  - (see op-ed by Kean and Hamilton, [“2016 terror threat worse than 2001: 9/11 Commission chairmen,”](#) *USA Today*, September 11, 2016)

### **Experts Say The Obama Administration Has Not Demonstrated That They Know How To Counter The Ideology of Radical Islam.**

- **Former Governor Thomas Kean and Former Rep. Lee Hamilton, co-chairman of the U.S. 9/11 Commission:**
  - “The approach of the past 15 years, dominated by military counterterrorism operations, will not suffice.
  - “In the [9/11 Commission Report](#), we warned that terrorism would ‘menace Americans and American interests long after Osama bin Laden and his cohorts are killed or captured.’ We stressed that our strategy ‘must match our means to two ends: dismantling the al-Qaeda network and prevailing in the longer term over the ideology that gives rise to Islamist terrorism.’
  - “We have yet to match our military might with an equal focus on the ideological aspects of the struggle. Until we do, this threat will not diminish.

- (see op-ed by former Gov. Thomas Kean and former Rep. Lee Hamilton, [“2016 terror threat worse than 2001: 9/11 Commission chairmen,”](#) *USA Today*, September 11, 2016)
- **Joby Warrick, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS*:**
  - “[D]espite gains in safeguarding the U.S. homeland, efforts to counter the root causes of violent jihad largely have fallen flat. The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), which was created by the post-9/11 wave of intelligence reforms, mounted a series of efforts to map the radicalization paths of Islamist militants. But there are divided opinions on what came of that work.”
  - “A hard-learned lesson of the last 15 years, current and former officials say, is that the most effective counter-radicalization messages can only come from Muslims themselves — religious leaders and institutions as well as governments, which must address the political and social disparities that fuel extremism. But U.S. officials have been largely frustrated in their efforts to persuade Muslim allies to take more aggressive measures in their home countries.”
  - (see Joby Warrick and Greg Miller, [“Fifteen years after 9/11, the jihadist threat looms larger than ever across the globe,”](#) *Washington Post*, September 11, 2016)
- **Major General Michael K. Nagata, U.S. Special Operations commander in the Middle East:**
  - “We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it,” he said, according to the confidential minutes of a conference call he held with the experts.
  - “We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea.”
  - (see Eric Schmitt, [“In Battle to Defang ISIS, U.S. Targets Its Psychology,”](#) *New York Times*, December 28, 2014)
- **Malcolm Nance, author of *Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe*:**
  - “It was not that the U.S. cannot develop nimble messaging or confront the ISIS counter-narrative challenge; it was operating with its hands tied behind its back before the fight started.

- “The failure in U.S. counter-ideology policy is that the U.S. will not discuss the corruption of ISIS’s Islam, nor discuss any aspect of Islam at all out of fear of alienating Muslims.” (see [excerpts from his book](#))
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