THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

AL-QAIDA, THE ISLAMIC STATE, AND THE FUTURE OF THE GLOBAL JIHADI MOVEMENT

A CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR TINA KAIDANOW

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, September 16, 2015

Featured Speaker:

AMBASSADOR TINA KAIDANOW
Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism
U.S. State Department

Panelists:

WILLIAM McCANTS, Moderator
Fellow and Director, Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World
The Brookings Institution

DANIEL BYMAN
Senior Fellow and Research Director, Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

BRUCE RIEDEL
Senior Fellow and Director, The Intelligence Project
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. McCANTS: Hello, everyone. Welcome.

Today we're here to talk about al-Qaida, the Islamic State, and the future of the global jihadi movement. If you're tweeting about it online, the hashtag is #futureofjihad.

We're here today really to talk about where things stand in the fight against the global jihadist terrorism. It's a strange time for the movement, and it's also a strange time for those who have spent the past decade fighting against it. We've reached a point in our national collective memory where 9/11 is starting to recede into the past, and I would point to the New York Times as evidence of this. On 9/11, on the front page, there was not a single story that I could find, or a single headline, about 9/11 from the New York Times. That's no ding against the Times. I think it just goes to show that for many Americans, that event, while still traumatic, is receding into the past.

I'm the father of three little kids. They are going to be learning about it in textbooks, the same way I learned about the Civil Rights Movement. It is not going to be as fresh and visceral for them. But this is coming at a time when the Islamic State, which is an AK offshoot, is very much in the headlines, and is animating political discussions and policy debates in Washington, D.C. They, and other jihadist groups, are waging successful insurgencies across the Middle East, particularly taking advantage of the chaotic aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings.

But, they seem to be much more focused on their own backyard than they do on the United States. So we're in this, as I said, strange movement where for the United States it's almost the best of times because of our relative security and lack of threat of a major attack because of the focus of these groups in the Middle East. Compare that to the worst of times for the Middle East itself, but also for our European

allies who have to deal with the threat of many more foreign fighters coming back. But also, as we've seen in the past few weeks, a growing refugee crisis that is going to have a very long impact on European politics.

So what is the way forward for the United States? What is the long-term threat to our country? And what should we be doing today to forestall that threat? And how much can we really do as a government given the popular reluctance in this country to get involved in more major wars in the region? Is this really our fight anymore?

Joining us today for the discussion is Ambassador Tina Kaidanow, the coordinator for counterterrorism at the U.S. State Department. Ambassador Kaidanow was deputy ambassador in Afghanistan and the first U.S. ambassador to Kosovo, so she brings to our discussion a wealth of experience in dealing with terrorism, insurgencies, and reconstruction.

Dan Byman is a senior fellow and director of research at the Center for Middle East Policy here at Brookings. He is the author of an outstanding new book, *Al-Qaida, the Islamic State and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know*. It's part of the Oxford series. It's a great, great book. Dan likes to pass it off as, "Well, you know, it's sort of a -- it's an introduction." It is a fantastic, fantastic first book to read for people who don't know anything about the subject, but it is a fantastic book for those of us who obsessively study the subject. I really encourage you to pick it up.

And then finally, Bruce Riedel, who is director of the Intelligence Project and senior fellow, also here at CMEP, and also the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence. Bruce has an essay coming out in the next few weeks; right? Looking at D.C.'s favorite Saudi counterterrorist, Muhammad bin Nayef, which I'm sure will be outstanding.

Okay. So now we will hear from the panelists beginning with

Ambassador Kaidanow. Take a minute for me to get mic'd up and then we'll turn it over to her for her thoughts.

(Inaudible) global jihadist movement has been shifting over the past years. And in some ways, it's not the threat that we faced after 9/11. How has the United States responded to this shifting threat?

MS. KAIDANOW: Well, I'll address that, I think, in some of the longer remarks that I make. I don't know, would you like me to sort of do that now or how would you --

MR. McCANTS: Yeah, please do.

MS. KAIDANOW: Then let me -- is it okay if I do it at the podium?

MR. McCANTS: Yeah, you're very welcome to.

MS. KAIDANOW: I can do it this way. I'm flexible.

First of all, thanks very much for inviting me to talk on the panel today. I think it's really a useful time. And I'd like to thank Brookings, not only for inviting me to speak, but I'd also like to congratulate both Dan and Will on their recent book releases. I think we all benefit tremendously from the scholarship and the analysis that Brookings provides to this community. So on behalf of all of us, thank you. And I think we'll look at those books with a lot of interest.

The release of your books also I think provides an opportune moment to discuss both the nature of the terrorist threat, which continues, in our view, to change and evolve over time, as well as the administration's overall approach in responding to that threat. The president has discussed this in a variety of public statements, but I hope today that I can further flesh out both the nature of our effort and its implications.

The global threat environment in our view, again, is considerably different than it was in the past, and equally remarkable, if somewhat disturbing, is the

pace, and what I would call the dynamism of the changes that we've seen. On the positive side of the ledger, the prominence of the threat, as you pointed out, Will, I think, once posed by AK with its centralized hierarchical terrorist command structure has now largely diminished, mainly as a result of leadership losses suffered by the al-Qaida corps. But on the other side of the balance sheet, the past several years seen the emergence of a more aggressive set of al-Qaida affiliates and likeminded groups, as well as the growth of ISIL, about which I will speak a little bit more in a moment.

The emergence of these more radical and violent groups is, in most cases, associated with a loss of effective government control, as in Yemen, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Niger's northeast, and Somalia. Groups that have become active in these areas are mainly localized, but some pose a threat to western interests in Europe and in the United States, and we take those security concerns extremely seriously.

Given the subject of today's talk, I won't focus in this presentation on the terrorist threat posed by Iran and the Iranian-affiliated terrorist groups, including Lebanese Hezbollah, but suffice it to say that we remain vigilant and active with regard to those activities as well.

The very complexity of addressing this evolving set of terrorist threats and the need to undertake efforts that spam the entire range from security to rule of law, to efficacy of governance, as well as pushing back on terrorist messaging in order to effectively combat the growth of these emerging violent extremist groups, requires an expanded approach to our counterterrorism engagement. There is ample discussion and debate, and of course, understandably so, about the use of active U.S. kinetic measures to address terrorism, but the president has emphasized repeatedly that more than ever before, we need to diversify our approach by bringing strong, capable, and diverse partners to the forefront and enlisting their help in the mutually important endeavor of

global counterterrorism.

A successful approach to counterterrorism must therefore revolve, in our view, again, around partnerships. The vital role that our partners play has become even clearer over the last year with the emergence of ISIL, as a hugely destructive force in Iraq and in Syria, and beyond. ISIL's unprecedented seizure of territory in Iraq and Syria, its continued access to foreign terrorist fighters, its growing number of global affiliates, its use of social media to spread its message and radicalize and recruit, and external plotting through directed and inspired attacks has now elevated ISIL to one of our most pressing counterterrorism priorities.

In the last year, eight terrorist groups have announced their alliance to ISIL across the Middle East, North Africa, West Africa, Russia's northern caucuses, and South Asia. Most of these affiliates are in places where terrorist groups were already operating and some have their own local objectives. We're watching to see whether the extent of their interaction with the core of ISIL in Iraq and Syria might lead them to broaden their goals and gain access to increased financing and weapons.

Because these branches were formed mostly in places where terrorist groups were already operating, we and our partners already had regionally-based strategies in place to try and counter them. We've been continuously working with a range of partners bilaterally with governments and with militaries, multilaterally with the U.N., the Global Terrorism Forum -- I'll talk a little bit more about that later -- and regional organizations. And with elements of civil society, including NGOs, religious leaders, the private sector, and others to counter the terrorist groups that confront us. We continue to assess whether our approach should adapt even further given the new global circumstances that I just described. We've been undergoing, in fact, just such a fundamental review recently now that some of these local groups have joined or at least

nominally affiliated themselves with ISIL as opposed to al-Qaida.

There's a lot of discussion also underway about the meaning and the impact of what some have called or some have termed "global ISIL." The core effort to degrade and defeat ISIL, which will be a multi-year and multi-dimensional campaign, must, of course, focus on Iraq and on Syria. Under the leadership of Special Presidential Envoy General John Allen, we've assembled a global coalition of more than 60 nations and international organizations. While it may be the coalition's kinetic action that will understandably receive the most attention, it really is the aggregate effect of the coalition's activities across multiple lines of activity and effort beyond just the military dimension that will ultimately diminish ISIL as a relevant force. This includes disrupting the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, disrupting access to financial and economic resources, providing humanitarian relief and stabilization support, and countering ISIL's messaging.

I'd also note that while we need to counter the aspects of ISIL's network that are truly global, we can't lose sight of the fact that the manifestations of ISIL support that we're seeing in different regions outside of Syria and Iraq are largely routed in specific political, economic, and social dynamics unique really to those regions. The situation in North Africa is significantly different from Southeast Asia to state pretty much the obvious.

Our approach and our CT partnerships -- our counterterrorism partnerships -- must therefore be tailored to the specific region, country, and even the communities with which we are operating -- or in which we are operating. And our counterterrorism efforts cannot be divorced from broader efforts in those regions to mitigate conflict, promote stability, and strengthen good governance.

If there is a single aspect of the dynamic terrorist threat that most

concerns many of our foreign partners and has serious implications for us as well, it's the new phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters traveling to conflict zones, most prominently to Syria and Iraq, and the potential -- or maybe not so potential given some of the lone offender attacks that we have experienced in recent months -- impact of these foreign fighters as an adverse element upon return to their home countries or in the recruitment and the radicalization of those susceptible to extremism.

Since the conflict in Syria and Iraq began, more than 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 countries have traveled to that region. There are reportedly over 250 Americans who have traveled, or attempted to travel to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIL and al-Qaida or its affiliate since 2012. While the numbers are really quite deeply troubling, the good news -- if there is any good news -- is that the global community recognizes the dangers posed by this shared threat and has mobilized to address it more effectively.

When the state department appointed its first senior advisor for partner engagement on Syria foreign fighters back in February of 2014, a position that we have since expanded and empowered, much of the work focused on highlighting the nature of the threat and encouraging our partners to take it seriously. We've moved well beyond that kind of consciousness-raising in the meantime, and we're now engaged in what I would consider a sustained effort to give countries the expertise and the capability and the capacity that they need to tackle this challenge.

The state department and the Bureau of Counterterrorism, in particular, that I lead, is responsible for most of the origination, funding, and coordination of civilian programs to promote our partners' CT capacity in law enforcement, in border security, information sharing, and combatting violent extremism, otherwise sometimes referred to as CVE. In this, we work extremely closely with the full array of U.S. agencies, including

the intelligence community, the NFC, DoD, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI, among many, many others, to determine the nature of the threat, to prioritize the allocation of our resources, and ultimately, to devise a strategic-level response.

Given the growing need to guard against the movement of terrorists across borders, or even sometimes within countries, as well as who may be planning attacks, we place a particularly high value on the need for information sharing. The U.S. now has information-sharing agreements with over 40 international partners to identify and track the travel of suspected terrorists, and we're working on many others.

We're also encouraging our partners to further increase security at their borders to better identify, restrict, and report travel of suspected foreign terrorist fighters. That means sharing passenger name records and advanced passenger information. It means taking greater advantage of Interpol's, resources, and screening passengers against their foreign terrorist fighter database and their stolen and lost travel document system. And as a result of all this effort, we've seen what we consider to be a significant increase in coordination among our partners to add suspects to terrorist watch lists and to share that information more broadly.

We've supplemented the bilateral capacity building, and I can give you all much more for those of you who are interested in the particulars of our specific assistance to given countries or given regions with multilateral approaches that engage our partners and empower them to bring their own ideas and their own initiatives to the table. We've used the Global Counterterrorism Forum -- I referenced it before -- a very focused group of 29 countries and the European Union, to good effect in this regard. Through the GTCF, we last year launched a foreign terrorist fighter working group, which subsequently drafted a set of best practices known collectively as the Hague-Marrakesh

Memorandum, that countries can undertake to protect against the travel of FTF, or foreign terrorist fighter travel. The Hague-Marrakesh Memorandum gave practical effect to U.N. Security Council Resolution 2178, adopted in September 2014, during a high-level U.N. Security Council meeting chaired by President Obama. Some of you may recall it last year, and it's coming up on a year's anniversary.

This Chapter 7 resolution requires that countries that certain steps to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat, such as preventing suspected foreign terrorist fighters from entering or transiting their territories and implementing legislation to prosecute foreign terrorist fighters.

Ultimately, however, we need to do more than just identify and stop foreign terrorist fighters from arriving at their destination; we have to prevent them from getting into those pipelines in the first place. To address this, we're working with partners both inside and outside of government to increase outreach efforts to youth, to women, and to victims, in order to address the spread of violent extremist recruitment and the conditions that make communities susceptible to violent extremism, and thus, discourage radicalization to violence.

Effectively preventing and countering the growth and the spread of violent extremism requires a comprehensive approach that involves international organizations, national and local governments, civil society, religious leaders, the private sector, and affected communities. Earlier this year, the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism brought together over 60 movements and a range of civil society and private sector actors, to launch an action agenda for countering the radicalization to violence. This has spared a wide range of activity, which will culminate at the U.N. General Assembly later this month.

ISIL's particularly effective use of the Internet and social media to

radicalize, to recruit, to fund-raise, and to propagandize, poses unique and specific challenges for our efforts. Countries around the world differ, I have to say, on the most effective ways to deal with the terrorists' use of the Internet, ranging from heavy regulation to promoting alternative messaging from independent and moderate voices. In general, we, here in the United States, believe that alternative viewpoints are a more effective response to objectionable speech than suppression of that speech, and in the United States, the Interagency Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication, which is an entity that's housed in the Department of State, engages online using counterarguments of various kinds, to challenge and disrupt the terrorist narrative.

I think we need to be perfectly honest though, and that is that given the scope and the complexity of the CT challenge that we face, modest programs undertaken in disparate locations and government resources alone are not going to mitigate the current trends of violent extremism. This is a long-term fight, one that involves a multitude of actors and requires a continuous mustering of political will.

The good news is that the imperative to take these steps has truly impressed itself on our foreign partners, and I see this very much every day in our interaction with them. It's become easier to illustrate to them, regardless of some of their continuing concerns over data privacy, the frequent suspicion that they have of nongovernmental actors and so on. Even despite all that, it's become easier to illustrate that this is a vital set of actions that requires their full participation and their engagement. We need to use that window of opportunity to press for further action and to think strategically about what will generate the most impact as we take on this collective challenge.

To build the CT partnerships that we need globally, the administration has requested additional resources for what we have termed a "counterterrorism

partnership fund," or CTPF. Everything has its acronym. We remain hopeful that Congress will provide funding for both DoD (Department of Defense) and State, as part of the fiscal year 2016 appropriations bill. As DoD expands its train and equip efforts for foreign militaries, it's absolutely critical, believe me, that State has adequate resources to build complementary criminal justice sector capacity to enable the effective arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of terrorists. It's also critical we build civilian capacity and resilience overseas to counter violent extremism as a vital complement to those security efforts. And the CTPF, if it is fully funded, could give us those resources to pursue this kind of comprehensive and integrated approach.

Just to finish up, the terrorism challenges we face continue to evolve at a rapid pace as I've said, and we can't really predict in honesty what the landscape will look like one decade, or frankly, even a year from now with any real understanding and analysis, although we're certainly trying to look at it. However, we believe we can best protect America's interests and people over the long run by engaging in robust diplomacy, expanding our partnerships, building bilateral and regional capabilities, and promoting holistic and rule-of-law based approaches to counterterrorism and violent extremism. We plan on pursuing exactly that plan of action as we go into the U.N. General Assembly session and the CTPF Ministerial, which we will have again next week as we head into the U.N. session. I could go on, but there you have it.

MR. McCANTS: Thank you very much, Ambassador Kaidanow. That was a great overview, and it's given me flashbacks of my time at the State Department, the CT office, and reminding me just how complicated this problem is and how massive your portfolio is. There's so many different pieces to pick up on.

Bruce, I want to turn first to you and get your thoughts on the U.S. response to the problem. But I also want to get your thoughts on the nature of the

problem and how it has shifted over the past 14 years. And then a special request. If you could touch on what Ambassador Kaidanow raised about working with our partners to deal with it because some would say that some of our partners that we have to work with very closely to deal with this problem are also, themselves, part of the problem. So if you could deal with some -- talk about some of the challenges of working with them.

MR. RIEDEL: Sure. Thank you.

I want to start where you started, actually, Will. You reminded us that last Friday was the 14th anniversary of September 11th and how low key the response was in the United States.

I think of it slightly differently. Back in the days leading up to September 11th and in the very bizarre and crazy days right after, we at least had the degree of comfort that the enemy's location, their sanctuary, their safe haven, was relatively bound. Back in September -- back in 2001, the enemy's location was Afghanistan and Pakistan. We knew that the al-Qaida Organization also had smaller outposts in the Arabian Peninsula, although there was a lot about that we didn't really have a good handle on, and maybe something or other in East Africa, but it wasn't very clear.

But by and large, the enemy was concentrated in one particular area. Fourteen years later, al-Qaida and the Islamic State associated movements now have sanctuaries spread across the Arab world -- Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, the Sinai. And others that are brewing. We see Islamic State activity inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for example. We see al-Qaida in Yemen growing stronger and stronger in the Hadhramaut least.

What happened? How did we go from a finite number of sanctuaries and safe havens to an exploded number of sanctuaries and safe havens? Well, I'm sure later tonight you will hear 11 people all blame it on Barack Obama, and I'm sure they're going

to be very entertaining in doing that. But I really don't think it is Barack Obama's fault. I think a much more fundamental issue happened, and that's this issue.

The Arab world -- the Muslim world in general, but the Arab world in particular -- has suffered for over a half century from abysmal governance. I don't mean bad governance. I mean abysmal governance. Some of the worst governance ever created in the history of the world. For example, the Assads of Syria. The Assads of Syria took as their role model when they were, again, back in the 1960s, Stalinist Russia. Now, if that's your role model of what good governance is, don't be surprised if the outcome is terrible. And it has been terrible.

Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Muammar Gaddafi's Libya, a country blessed with enormous resources and which has now fallen apart and disparately poor because of extremely bad governance. That governance had lasted for a long time, and in the spring of 2011, finally hits "sell by date" expired and it exploded everywhere. Initially, this looked like a threat to al-Qaida because here were productive, progressive changes coming without jihad. But, of course, it didn't work out that way. And the Arab Spring, in fact, became an argument for al-Qaida. See, look, Twitter, Facebook, mass demonstrations, peaceful change elections. It don't work. We just tried it. They don't work. The counterrevolutionaries won't let them work. The only answer is jihad.

If I'm right and that the basic source of this explosion of strongholds and safe havens is in the Arab world itself, in the Muslim world itself, then one has to be, as you right said, Ambassador, at the end, humble about how much "Made in America" or "Made in Washington" or "Made at the UNGA" solutions are going to be for these problems. And I fear we haven't reached the end of the line yet because those Arab states, policed states that survived the Arab Spring, largely survived the Arab Spring because they had one thing in common. They had enough oil money in the bank that

they could buy off their populations. A good example, Saudi Arabia. King Abdullah, very wisely, as soon as the Arab Spring began, spent $130 billion to buy off the citizens in Saudi Arabia. $130 billion is an awful lot of money. People say, "Do the Saudis fear the Arab Spring?" I'd say $130 billion shows me they're deadly afraid of the Arab Spring.

King Solomon, upon accession to the throne this year, immediately gave every Saudi government employee, and pension and university student, a two-month bonus. That amounted to $30 billion to buy support at home. Well, the bad news for (inaudible) like that is the price of oil has fallen through the floor. Forty dollars a barrel oil, you cannot sustain that kind of welfare state in those kinds of countries, and we're going to see the instability of the fundamental revolutionary currents in the Arab world and also in other Muslim countries continue to move forward at a pace that may actually step up.

Algeria. Another very good example. Algeria is an ultimate police state. It's a police state in which power is in the hands of generals who we don't even know who they are. The Algerian people don't know who they are. They refer to the people who run the country as *le pouvoir*, the power, because they don't really know who's running the country. You have a president on his fourth term who in his only election appearance appeared to try to pick up a teacup and put it back down. That was as much physical energy as he could put forward. Algeria did not have an Arab Spring because it had enough money to buy off its people again, but Algeria doesn't have that kind of money in the future. And, of course, the $64 million question is about our number one partner, Saudi Arabia.

Which gets to your question of partnerships. Saudi Arabia is one of our most effective partners in fighting al-Qaida. The last two attacks that I know of that are in the overt world on the American homeland were both thwarted to a large extent with the help of Saudi Arabia. Certainly, the attempted attack on Chicago back in 2010 was

thwarted largely through the help of the Saudis. But at the same time, the Saudis spread a version of Islam which is, to put it mildly, intolerant, gender unequal, and which stokes sectarianism with an enormous amount of energy and speed.

My bottom line on all of this is where the ambassador ended up. She said we need an approach which is comprehensive and which is long term. I think that's absolutely right. We're going to need to do all the things that she laid out I think quite nicely -- improving our defenses. And by defense, I mean more than just how many X-rays do you have at the airport. It's more important to make sure that the person who is getting on the flight at the other end is X-rayed and all the other things that go with it.

But a real solution to this problem of extremism and al-Qaidism and Islamic State is much more going to be dependent upon political and social and economic changes in the Arab world, changes which are largely out of the control of Washington, even if it is under Donald Trump. (Laughter)

MS. KAIDANOW: I don't think I'm going to touch that one.

MR. McCANTS: Thank you, Bruce.

Dan, I want to get your assessment of the changing jihadist threat, but particularly as it pertains to the U.S. homeland because my sense is the threat we face today is much less than the threat we faced on September 10, 2001; that al-Qaida central does not have near the capability it used to have. It still has the intent, certainly, and that other jihadist groups -- ISIS and their lead -- are much more focused on the Middle East than they are about carrying out major operations in the United States. They're happy to inspire lone wolves, but it seems to me because of our defensive capabilities that the ambassador talked about, and the shifting priorities of the Islamic State and its copycats, that we're a relative island of security. Is that right or am I misunderstanding the nature of the threat today?

MR. BYMAN: Several of my colleagues up here kind of began by invoking 9/11 as a perspective. Because I'm a bit more forward leaning I'm going to start with September 12, 2001. And one thing you heard on September 12, 2011, was a lot of people like me tell you that the United States is going to be hit. It's going to be hit again. It's going to be hit repeatedly. And it's going to be hit hard. That has not happened. So there's a fundamental question which is why were so many people, unlike me, so many smart people, who -- fundamentally wrong about arguably the dominant national security issue of the time.

It was certainly true for several years. We've heard this, and even today, you regularly see these sorts of reports. Now, there were certainly a few close calls; right? There were airplanes that largely due to the incompetence of the attackers rather than defensive measures could have gone down. But again, if you look at what was predicted and what actually happened, you see a big gap. So there are a few things to me that explain at least part of this. I think we have to start with the enemy. One of the hardest things for me to do in my book was to actually capture a very simple question, which is, who is the enemy? Right, so I'm an al-Zawahiri, sure. Right? Baghdadi, sure. But where does this begin and end; right? For those of you who had either the joyful bureaucratic experience or the voyeur experience of examining the attack that killed Ambassador Stevens and three other Americans in Benghazi, it's an exceptionally confusing issue; right? There's the question of you have a range of individuals involved, some of whom have some very loose ties to a number of groups that are linked to al-Qaida to various degrees, and so it's a question of where does this organization begin and end? Where does the problem begin and end?

And so I think I can plausibly sit here and tell you certainly the al-Qaida core is a relatively small, definable problem that can be taken care of. When you start to

include people they've trained, when you start to include affiliates, when you start to include spinoffs like the Islamic state, and then when you go to sympathizers, you get huge numbers, but many of these people are not really focused on the United States. One of the strengths of this movement is also one of its great weaknesses, which is it's been able to take all these disparate causes. You know, you don't like Israel? You don't like the al-Saud? You're angry about the U.S. intervention in Iraq. Whatever it is, they say, "We're for it. Join us." But the result is their energies are diffused. They fought many battlefields. And for the most part they've had, at best, limited success, and it's in part because they haven't been able to concentrate their resources.

But they have a second problem, and there's a technical, I'll say, police intelligence label I'm going to use which is that many of their operatives, especially in the U.S., are choclites. Okay? And what do I mean by that? These are people who are always stupid but are usually untrained. And when you're making a bomb and you're untrained, that's a very dangerous thing to do. This is something exceptionally hard. The example I'd like to use is the attempted attack on the Glasgow International Airport where two of the leaders -- one was a doctor, another an engineer. Right? These are highly competent individuals. Right? You know, if one of you gets hurt right now you'd want that person, not me, to help you; right? And what happens? They filled a car up with a bunch of propane canisters and basically light themselves on fire as they try to ram themselves into the airport.

Some of you have seen jersey barriers and you've seen movies, right, where you hit the jersey barrier really hard with a car and you go through. That doesn't actually work; right? So the car basically gets flattened. They light themselves on fire, and they effectively, you know, destroy their own plot. Previously, they had tried to bomb a nightclub. They had parked a car in a no parking zone, and so the car bomb got towed.

It was leaking propane so people at the impound lot said, "Hey, something is going on." And they had left their cell phone there, which, of course, gave the police the numbers and locations of everyone else involved in the plot. And so they're comical. And this sort of person is the norm, not the rule for attacks in the west.

There are certainly exceptions, and actually, rather scary exceptions. But frequently many of the plots we look at, many of the individuals make stupid mistakes and are much less effective than the initial concerns we had on September 12th that there are hundreds of trained operatives or sleeper cells in the United States waiting to act on a moment's notice. Right? That's been a very different domestic threat.

They also are a remarkably divisive group of people. They spend a huge amount of time killing one another, or at least issuing a fatwa against one another and driving people from the movement and alienating broader communities. Right? If one of your rallying cries is you don't like the U.S. intervention in Iraq and you don't like Israel's policies towards the Palestinians, you have a lot of people on your side in the Middle East. Right? Those are not kind of way-out views. And if you're saying, "Oh, and by the way, the vast majority of ordinary Muslims are not real Muslims and deserve to be killed," you've just lost everyone. Right? And these groups have a tendency in that direction. This is something the al-Qaida leadership historically has fought against. It's really tried to unify. But the Islamic State has gone in the other direction. Right?

So, even as you can gain individual recruits who are very zealous and who do horrible things in the name of purification, you lose the broader community movement. It makes you less effective politically, even though it makes you, at times, more successful on violence.

And so when thinking about some of what this means in terms of why the U.S. hasn't been attacked, you also have to think of the U.S. response. One huge and

overwhelming shift between September 10th and September 12th is the United States is actively trying to stop terrorism on a massive level. Right? On September 11th, there were, I would say, some very dedicated individuals scattered throughout the U.S. government trying to do this, but it was by no means a priority. That changes in one day. And huge trucks of money and huge numbers of personnel enter the government agencies responsible for this. So there are thousands of people, tens of thousands, working on these problems. Right? And as a result, things that would have been below the radar screen are now right front and center. And this is true not just in the United States but around the world.

So the ambassador mentioned the dangers of social media, for example, and how the Islamic State uses it very effectively. And there's no question that's true. And this is a real, I would say, recruitment benefit for the Islamic State. However, it's also an intelligence dream. People are self-identifying as supporters or members of an existing terrorist group. They are communicating to other potential supporters. They're often in criminating themselves in the process. You know, "Dude, here's a picture of me with a bomb." Right? And so not surprisingly, you will find, if you read the papers very carefully, again and again, you know, "Suspect blank, arrested at the airport." Why was he arrested? Because he tweeted to his friends, "I'm off to Syria, Dudes." And surprise, surprise, his friends were not the only ones paying attention.

So there is a much more effective government apparatus that when combined with the weaknesses of the other side, make the threat I would say less than it was on September 10th. However, the threat is not zero. And one danger people have talked about somewhat obsessively is this issue of lone wolf, which is certainly quite real. The question from a U.S. point of view is these are almost exceptionally difficult to stop, and they're not at the scale of 9/11. They are disruptive beyond the immediate area of

the incident, beyond the immediate lives lost. They're disruptive as much as our society will allow them to be disrupted.

And one thing we've gone backward on since September 11th is societal resistance. There's a wonderful book called *Days of Rage* that's about these left-wing terrorist groups in the 1970s and it's almost like reading a book of comedy. It's hysterical. And they pull off hundreds of attacks, and society just kind of shrugs them off. And so very few of us remember the 1970s as that horrible era of terror that destroyed the fabric of American society. But there were far more terrorist attacks in the 1970s in the U.S. homeland than there have been the last 10 years. But things like the bombing in Boston, right, where three people died in the blast, become this incredible focus, not just appropriately of security personnel but of the media and of politicians. These become blame games, so the death of Ambassador Stevens is something that becomes a major political issue when, of course, in the past we've had the tragic loss of ambassadors and diplomatic personnel through terrorism, and it's understood that it's a dangerous world out there. And we, as a country, if we want to engage that dangerous world, have to take on some on some risk. And so one thing I would say we have really failed at is this issue of resilience. So ironically, as terrorism has grown in importance, our ability to respond to it at a societal level has decreased.

And the last thing I'll say is that so much of the terrorism problem today is actually not about terrorism. So if you look at the Islamic State, this is a group that, shockingly enough, wants to create a state; right? It's its name. It is trying to conquer territory. It is using military force to do so. When it conquers territory, it governs and tries to use the resources to expand its territory. This is not terrorism; right? It is a god-awful evil group; right? There was a New York Times story about their systematic use of child rape; right? It made me think that hellfire missiles were too good for these people; right?

That these are just evil people. But thinking with a traditional counterterrorism lens does not work particularly well here; right? Most of what's needed from a military sense is conventional military power; right? Whether from local actors or U.S. actors, if you want to push them back, that's going to be much more effective than the drone campaign that to me was very effective against the al-Qaida core.

And the range of measures the ambassador mentioned about state building, capacity building, conflict resolution, these are things that need to be part of our overall toolkit. So much of the kinetic side we do so well only works in a complete sense for relatively small groups. And if you're going to engage the civil war problem and the state weakness problem, you need to go beyond traditional counterterrorism. Thank you.

MR. McCANTS: Thank you, Dan.

Ambassador Kaidanow, I want to give you an opportunity to respond, but I also wanted to pick up on something you said in your opening remarks, and that has to do with the policy problems that are raised by the globalization of ISIS. It's one thing when it's in Syria and Iraq. You have an AUMF that kind of covers it; maybe two AUMFs that kind of cover it. But if you could, talk about the policy problems that arise today with the globalization of the group, not just in North Africa but in South and Southeast Asia as well.

MS. KAIDANOW: Sure. Well, just to maybe take a step back for a moment, I mean, just to comment on a few of the things that my colleagues have said, you know, I agree entirely that the phenomenon that we see now is really substantially different than perhaps what we saw in the past. I always, you know, sort of -- I'm a little hesitant to describe, you know, the threat we see as less or more, different. Different, for sure. Less or more, harder to judge I would say. And the questions there really have to do, again, with what I pointed to at the beginning of my remarks, and that has to do with

the dynamism of the changing pace, if you will, of how we see the evolution of terrorism. I mean, I want to, first of all, emphasize that, you know, there are threats that we take extremely seriously still to the U.S. homeland. Components, particularly of al-Qaida that have the ability to do both the capacity and intent to undertake attacks. And we know it. We've seen it repeatedly, and unfortunately, as a result even of the situation on the ground in Yemen, make it that much harder, for example, to judge exactly, you know, how the al-Qaida affiliate there is doing some of its work.

So, then that's not the only, you know, sort of external plotting component. But, you know, I do want to make sure that that element of this is not lost. So all of the good work, as you say, that's being done within the U.S. government to try and discern both what the nature of the threat is and then what the proper response is, both on the kinetic side and on these other dimensions, I think needs to continue because that threat is real.

That said, I mean, again, if you think about where we were six months ago, even a year ago, and if you tried to predict, for example, the emergency of ISIL in the way that it has emerged, in much the way, Dan, that you described about, you know, it being almost a territorial component. In other words, not simply a standard terrorist group but one that has now taken on aspects really of military force, if you will, and that sort of dynamic is new. It's, again, evolving at pace that I think we have yet -- we've never experienced really previously. It makes it that much more challenging to follow and to discern and to think about what the proper responses are because, you know, the nature of it changes again so quickly. That said, it makes it more imperative that we have those discussions and that we try and address this strategically.

So I think, you know, it's important not to lose sight of the fact that all of these things, though I think there are mitigating factors, and I certainly hope we can take

advantage of some of those; nevertheless, those threats exist. They are real. The U.S. government takes them extremely seriously, as do our partners. And I think that's, again, what I was trying to frame in a number of my remarks.

You asked about global ISIL. That actually fits within this framework. I mean, if you think about it, there is a number -- or there are a number of groups that have either associated themselves with ISIL or ISIL has claimed them in one way or another as being affiliated with them. These have popped up in a whole variety, as I mentioned in my remarks, of areas around the world.

I would say a couple of things. First of all, again, in addressing ISIL and the momentum of ISIL, it really is critical. I just don't think there's any real question about this; that we do it primarily in the context of Iraq and Syria. To the extent that ISIL can portray itself as gaining ground, as, you know, making strides against either the U.S. military or affiliates in the Iraqi Army, then we are just fighting an uphill battle.

But that said, we do need to look at it in the context of these other elements that have popped up. What I would argue is that in those areas we need to really evaluate strongly what it means in that regional context. Not every ISIL affiliate means the same thing, has the same import, has the same impact. It's clear. There are places in the world where we would obviously be more concerned as a function of several things -- what the ties are that we see between those local affiliates and the central core of ISIL in Iraq and Syria -- whether there are resources flowing back and forth, personnel that have been, you know, dedicated to some of those groups. Other groups I think, you know, it's more a function of, again, they feel like that branding, if you will, gives them additional momentum locally. They may hope that ISIL core will give them resources down the road. That's something to watch. But it's less clear that the impact in the local regional context is as meaningful in the sense that ISIL is not directing

their activities. It's still very much locally, I think, directed and locally oriented in terms of the objectives of those groups.

So that's an assessment that we continue to make from place to place. I also will say -- and I said this again in my remarks -- that in addressing those affiliates, or in addressing the problem posed by those affiliates, you really need to address it in the regional context. So if we're looking at Libya, where, for example, ISIL has, you know, made an appearance now in a significant way, in our view, again, we need to be doing an awful lot to support the political process that will create, we hope, under the U.N. and its auspices, a long-term solution to the Libyan political issues. Because, frankly, other than that, you're playing a little bit of what we like to call "terrorist whack-a-mole." You get at, you know, sort of the immediate problem. You can use kinetic measures. You can use other measures. You can try and develop a security plan. You would do that anyway. But you would also, I hope, you know, want to see a long-term systematic approach that will get you a government in place that you can then interact with on a sustained basis in order to be able to tackle these both governance issues that we've referenced and the terrorism and the other, you know, the other things that unfortunately appear with it, the extremism.

So it's got to be a strategy that is encompassing of the regional components as they pertain specifically to that. And if you look at it sort of as a global phenomenon it's all very scary. What you're losing, I think, is the sense of what really matters, where we have to develop our resources, because frankly, we're not unlimited in our resources, though we have many. And we need to, again, develop the right partners in order to be able to address those threats for the longer term.

MR. McCANTS: Thank you.

So, Bruce, I remember after the Arab Spring you wrote one of the early

assessments that uprisings were going to -- the impact they were going to have on the jihadist movement. And I remember reading it thinking, oh, man. Bruce is such a downer. He's just seeing doom and gloom. And what about peace breaking out? And democracy. And there's none of that in here because Bruce's basic argument, sadly prophetic argument, was all of these security vacuums are opening up. People are getting out of jail, weapons are moving around. This is going to be a huge boom to the jihadist movement. Setting aside whatever good may come of the protests. And I think, Bruce, that's been borne out. In listening to you today, I hear a lot of the same pessimism about the United States' ability and our allies' ability to really get our arms around this problem given that it is, as the ambassador alluded to, a function of the broken politics in a number of these countries. Rather than set you up for another pessimistic prognostication, I wonder if you can identify any silver linings to any of this. (Laughter)

MR. RIEDEL: I think sales at bars in the region around here are probably going to go really high as soon as this event is over and all of you want to get a drink. That's the one concrete manifestation I could come to.

I think the silver lining in all of this, and both of my colleagues have addressed this, is a much greater degree of awareness among allies, among partners, and even among frenemies, that the danger of jihadism has to be addressed. I don't -- I'm not confident that they've taken, in many cases, the measures that they need to take, but I think the consciousness of this issue is much higher than it has been before.

You know, we'll use a good example, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the initial days after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Saudis were in denial. I met with senior Saudi officials who seriously said this is an (inaudible) plot. And they actually meant it. They had persuaded themselves in what was for you

the day from September 11th to September 12th, they had persuaded themselves this didn't happen. Or at least it had nothing to do with Arabs. It was all a plot by other people.

Another good example. The government of Pakistan. The government of Pakistan is the ultimate frenemy. They support counterterrorism measures. They've been very helpful. They've brought justice to a large number of the al-Qaida core. But on the other hand they support and sponsor a lot of terrorist organizations, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, which killed 130 people -- 150 people in Mumbai just a few years ago.

Even in Pakistan, which seems to me -- which I would argue is the slowest of the slow learners, there is an increasing awareness that as former Secretary Clinton said, "If you allow snakes to run around in the backyard, you may find that it's very dangerous to go out there walking without your boots on." Even those places which 12-15 years ago were in denial about it, are now increasingly beginning to become somewhat aware of the need for doing this.

But on the whole, I remain fairly downbeat. I agree with Dan's point that a lot of these terrorists are -- what was your term?

MR. BYMAN: Choclite.

MR. RIEDEL: Choclite. They aren't the smartest people in the world. After all, if you're dedicated your life to mass murder and the committing of suicide in order to achieve it, you're not probably one of the top performers in your age group. (Laughter)

But, we've also been incredibly lucky. And I'll give you my concrete manifestation of that. The closest we came to a catastrophe in the United States was, of course, Christmas Day 2009. And there we had a terrorist who had volunteered. And this is why I worry so much about groups that are, yes, mostly internally focused, mostly

thinking about how do they compete to battle to win some village five miles away from where they are, but if a young Nigerian walks into their camp and says, "Hey, I want to blow up an airplane over the United States of America, all I need from you is the bomb and enough cash to buy a one-way air flight." I don't think Mr. Baghdadi, I don't think Boko Haram, I don't think any of these terrorist groups are going to say to that man, "No, no, no. That's not our priority today. Sorry. Can't help you." I think they're all going to say, "We'll give you the best bomb we can. Here's $2,500. By the way, we've checked. The only flight you can find anywhere in the United States on Christmas Day will take you to Detroit. So good luck." And you're on your way.

The luck in that case was that the guy also was incompetent in the end and failed to detonate the bomb correctly. But that was pure luck. And if you look back at the last five years, can you imagine how different the debate in this country would be if on Christmas Day 2009 an airliner had been blown up over Detroit and killed 150 people in the air and who knows how many people on the ground? I think the whole course of American history from that day would have changed profoundly. We will not always be lucky.

I've been in the counterterrorism business for a long time. I remember one of my British friends, who spent even longer in it fighting against the IRA, used to say all the time, "In this business, we have to be lucky 100 percent of the time. The terrorists only have to be lucky 1 percent of the time."

MR. McCANTS: Another bummer. Thank you. Thank you, Bruce.

(Laughter)

Dan, I'm mindful of the time, and I want to open up for questions, but I have a last one for you.

One of the most interesting sections for me in your book has to do with

counterterrorism policy, and it's one of the most accessible, succinct explanations of the different tools that people in the counterterrorism community have to deal with terrorist organizations. So my question to you is I'm wondering if given the transition of the Islamic State and some of these other organizations from terror groups to insurgencies, is that going to encourage the U.S. government to put all of its very finely honed and crafted CT tools on the shelf and bring out the blunt instrument of large military, again to deal with the counterterrorism problem? Or is the popular mood such that there would be no more of that kind of large invasion and it would create an impetus for even more creativity in the counterterrorism realm? And what might that creativity be?

MR. BYMAN: The question of the Islamic State for counterterrorism is that much of its appeal comes from its success. It's a winner. Right? It has arguably done more in its own terms than al-Qaida ever did. Right? It governs a large territory. It has done so in the face of rather furious counterattacks. It has created what it declares to be an Islamic government, which some people accept as true. And part of the reason people flock to it us because it seems to be winning.

So one of the ways to fight it is actually, to make it seem to be losing. The problem is, of course, that perception must be matched by some reality; right? There's no, you know, brilliant propaganda campaign that can turn, you know, the defeats of the Iraqi government into successes.

So what does it mean to actually set them back? Some of that has to be military if it's going to have any meaning. So I think the military challenge is actually not particularly difficult in its simplest form. It's a relatively small group of fighters. They're not particularly well trained. They're not particularly well armed compared to any high-quality military.

So what are the caveats? One, as Will alluded to, there's no desire

politically to put significant ground troops into the region. And two, the toughest question, of course, is what comes next? I think the Islamic State can be pushed back, but that doesn't mean that something magical grows in the void that is desirable. And so far, at least, the United States has not shown a particular skill at having the kind of post-invasion, post-military efforts be particularly successful. So I think there's understandable reluctance to have that relatively straightforward conventional solution.

But then you get to questions of can you use local forces? Get them to do much of the fighting, much of the dying, and augment them? And you can augment them through airpower, other standoff means. You could augment them through training. And the answer, of course, is yes, but you're going to have problems. The local forces have their own goals and priorities.

So in Syria, shockingly enough, many of the Syrians want to fight the Assad regime, which is killing far more Syrians than the Islamic State. So if we're going to intervene in Syria, we have to recognize that the locals have different goals. Sometimes it's, as in Iraq, that they are very concerned about their military being a strong, independent actor, and the government wants to control it and wants to politicize it. And as a result, it's going to be less effective.

We also have to recognize that there's a certain degree of fatigue among the American people, and this fatigue though, the problem I will say from a policy point of view is it oscillates. To go back to Bruce's point, we came close to several terrorist attacks, so there's a political question, which is let's say, God forbid, tomorrow the United States doesn't get lucky. There will be tremendous political pressure to step up involvement against, say, the Islamic State. But what does that actually mean in the sense of actually producing an effective policy? And so to me, part of the goal should be to have intelligent options, both for ratcheting up and also ratcheting down pressure.

And so to me a lot of the counterterrorism effort has to be seen in terms of what incremental advances can we have? But we have to recognize we're going to have failures; right? This is not going to go forward the way we want. That, at best, we're going to make limited progress. And that some attacks may come through. And all that is unpleasant; right? We, America, likes solutions; right? We like to solve problems. And this is a problem that in the near term at least is not likely to be solved.

MR. McCANTS: All right. Thank you.

I'm going to open it up for questions now. We're going to gather a few around the room. We've got folk with the mic. Okay.

So let's take here in the gray suit.

SPEAKER: Thank you. And thank you for doing the briefing. My name is (inaudible). I'm a Russian reporter here in Washington, D.C. I wanted to ask you about Russia, whether you cooperate with your Russian partners. The question is for the ambassador, whether you cooperate with your Russian partners, whether the cooperation includes anything aside from information sharing, because one of your colleagues, when he came for the White House briefing suggested as much.

And secondly, on Syria, because our leaders are now thinking about cooperating with Syria, what is your professional opinion? If the current regime, the Assad regime falls today, what will be the result for the power in Baghdad -- in Damask, I'm sorry.

MR. McCANTS: Thank you.

We'll take a few more questions. Over here in the black suit.

SPEAKER: Hello. Several of you mentioned the importance of working with partners in the region to combat terrorism. I was wondering if you could speak on the current situation in Egypt and ISIS. Has the CC regime's crack down on Egyptian

society in any way affected the movement's discourse or recruitment in the country or elsewhere? And then specifically to Ambassador Kaidanow, how has the U.S. government navigated this issue in its cooperation with the Egyptian government in combatting groups in the region?

MR. McCANTS: Thank you.

All right. Let's go in the back.

MS. DAWKINS: Thank you. Pam Dawkins from Voice of America.

Ambassador Kaidanow, in recent days there have been audiotapes from the leader of al-Qaida suggesting that he's open to some sort of collaboration between al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. First of all, has the U.S. seen any tangible evidence of this type of collaboration? And then secondly, what kind of impact would it have on U.S. counterterrorism operations against the Islamic State?

And then secondly, in terms of Russia's apparent stepped up military action in Syria, what is your view on the probable impact that this could have on U.S. counterterrorism operations?

MR. McCANTS: All right. So let me take those three and then we'll open it back up for questions.

So Ambassador Kaidanow, you have a few, and then Bruce and Dan, you can jump in where you like. But Ambassador Kaidanow, you have one about cooperation with Russia on counterterrorism. There's a question about what happens if Assad falls in Syria. And then there's a question about ISIS in Egypt and whether CC is hurting recruiting or helping it. And then a final question about al-Qaida being open to working with the Islamic State and have we seen any evidence of that. So take your pick.

MS. KAIDANOW: Well, I can try and address the Russia question sort of collectively.

I think the question about Russia and counterterrorism, as I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, one of the appearances, if you want to call it that, of ISIL, has been, in fact, in the northern caucuses. I can't speak for the Russian government, wouldn't try to. I do think it's, as with any government, it's an item of concern. I think that there will be a fairly robust conversation at the UNGA assembly about the manifestation of ISIL in other places. What that may mean. As I've said, what the impact of that is and what the proper international responses are. And I think that that is a valid set of discussions that we can have with the Russians and with others because we need to and that also pertains to Egypt as well.

But, you know, again, with specific respect to the Syria and the Iraq question, I don't really want to get into too much of the Syria policy here, but I will say this. I mean, I think, you know, we've been clear that it is really important to address the ISIL problem in a coherent way in Syria. We have an effective coalition, we think, of 60 countries and more, you know, that are doing a lot of work, both on the military side and in an array of other lines of effort. I think it's very important that, you know, whatever is done in the anti-ISIL context particularly is done in a way that is supportive of coalition efforts. We've made that pretty clear to the Russians. We've said that to just about everybody. And I think the ultimate, you know, perspective here, and as much as I've said about Libya or any other places, you know, we need to look for a long-term solution to the Syria problem that will perforce involve Russia in a political dimension because they are, you know, they are a factor. But that said, you know, again, it has to come as a feature of a whole array of things that need to be accomplished and make Syria again a sustainable quotient for the future. Without that, it's going to be hard in the short-term or the longer term to address ISIL or any of the other al-Qaida affiliates that have popped up there in Nusra. That's just pretty clear.

MR. McCANTS: Thank you.

Dan, what about the CC's crackdown in Egypt and whether that's driving radicalization or not? You and Tamara Wittes, world's greatest boss, wrote a paper a year ago forecasting that the crackdown would really play into the hands of al-Qaida type organizations. Have we been seeing that or is CC going to surmount history and actually get a hold of his radicalization problem by more military force?

MR. BYMAN: One of the joys of not being in government -- well, I should say one of the curses is I have no actual power; right? One of the joys is I can say whatever I want.

So, with that in mind, CC's approach to counterterrorism is almost a textbook case of what not to do; right? It's almost if you were kind enough to hold out, you know, an example of "don't be this guy," that's what you would pick. Right?

And so I'd say a few things. One is, simply by the coup and the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, he's sending a message, which is peaceful participation in politics will not work if you are an Islamist; right? So the tens of millions of people who have some sympathy towards political Islam in Egypt are frozen out. The hundreds of millions of people around the Muslim world who believe that Islam has an important role to play in public life are frozen out. Right? So this is what Bin Laden, and then Iman al-Zawahiri, and Baghdadi have been saying all along; right? Which is there is no middle ground; right? If you want Islam to be -- to play a role in society, if you want Islam to be there, you can't do it peacefully. And CC would agree. And so CC has taken out, I think, the biggest political enemy of the jihadists, which are the more modern political Islamists. So in one stroke he did that.

He has also driven together some of the younger elements of the Muslim Brotherhood and the radical elements, whether they're local jihadists, those with an

affinity towards the Islamic State or those with some preference towards al-Qaida, which is by driving the Brotherhood underground, by killing, arresting large numbers of its members, it's driven some of them into the hands of extremists just out of revenge or out of a desire to act.

And the last thing is the actual military crackdown has been remarkably inept; right? If you look most horribly and recently at the accidental killing of the tourists, this is a regime that has not so far been effective at gathering the intelligence. I believe that will change. Right? It did so very effectively in the 1990s, the same sorts of individuals, and I think they can relearn those skills. But this is something they're not doing particularly well. By going after the more moderates as well as the more violent types, they've succeeded largely in suppressing the peaceful side but not the violent side. So I think this has been largely a disaster and something that hopefully U.S. policy can push in the right direction.

MR. McCANTS: Bruce, I want to ask you the question about the rapprochement between al-Qaida and the Islamic State. So Zawahiri last week I think it is, he comes out with a statement. Three-fourths of it is Islamic State is terrible. It's not a real caliphate. These guys are the worst. I would never follow this dude. But then he ends it with a little bit of an olive branch saying, "If I were in Iraq and Syria, I would be fighting alongside the Islamic State." So it might not be a caliphate but it is an emirate. It is an Islamic government. It's a wayward one, but that would not stop me from fighting alongside it. It sounded to me like a little bit of an olive branch. What do you think? Do you think there's a chance for a rapprochement or is there just too much blood that's been spilled between the two groups?

MR. RIEDEL: Well, like you, Will, I, for my sins, wasted more than an hour reading the entire statement. And Mr. Zawahiri, I've always referred to him as the

"chatty caddy" of international terrorism. He took a nice 10-month break from talking, but since he's gotten back on the international stage, we're just getting video -- we're just getting audiotape after audiotape after audiotape. And in all of them there is this very strong vitriolic attack on the Islamic State. And to really try to nail it, he brought Osama Bin Laden's favorite son, Hamza bin Laden, out and he did 45 minutes, which didn't specifically attack the Islamic State but which tried to paint al-Qaida as the antithesis of the Islamic State.

So be cautious about reading a whole lot into what was about 1 percent of one statement in which he said yes. If I lived in Iraqi and Syria, I would support the Islamic State. But I'll put two cautions on this. The first caution is this. The argument between the leadership is very intense. When you get to the operational field, particularly when you're operating in Western Europe and potentially in North America, I don't think the intensity of the vitriol matters all that much, and we saw that in Paris back in January, where we had two groups of attackers. One who identified themselves as AQAP and the other one identified themselves as Islamic State. And they were coordinating in a kind of vague way, and I think that kind of cooperation is likely to continue to exist. Not at the top but at the operational level, especially when they get to places like Western Europe where they need to work with each other, where the need to find someone who can get you a gun becomes a lot more important than should the caliphate be established in 2014 or should we wait for 2114, which is kind of a hypothetical debate.

The other place I would look carefully is Syria, because up until now, al-Nusra and the Islamic State have been more than competitors in Syria; they've been enemies in Syria. And they've fought each other. As they begin to smell that the Assad government -- I don't want to say is falling, because I don't think it's falling -- but is degrading, and significantly degrading, and retreating to a certain extent back into the

Alawi heartland to build an Alawi mini state, are they going to start to cooperate on the battlefield there? That's where I would look for concrete manifestations of cooperation between these two.

MR. McCANTS: Okay. Let's take a few more questions.

Eric?

MR. SCHMIDT: Eric Schmidt with the New York Times for Ambassador Kaidanow.

Two questions. One is you spoke about the steps that have been taken since the president's speech in UNGA a year ago to disrupt the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, and yet the intelligence community talks about an average of about a thousand additional fighters going into Syria and Iraq every month. I mean, how do you explain these achievements in the face of that?

And second of all, in your bureau's latest country report you talked about Iran had previously provided support to al-Qaida, presumably inside of Iran or Iraq. Is there any evidence that you've seen that that support has stopped? And can you comment on reports that Iran has traded five of its diplomats -- excuse me, five al-Qaida people under house arrest in Iran for an Iranian diplomat who was kidnapped by AQAP in Yemen? Thank you.

MR. McCANTS: I'll take a few more. Yes, please. Wait for the mic, please.

SPEAKER: I wonder -- it was only briefly alluded to, but I wonder how any of you feel about there are now 60 million refugees and that's certainly going to be a breeding ground for terrorists because there has been so little response, particularly on the part of the U.S. I might say, in taking them in, and these people are very hopeless and they don't have enough to eat and all that. So is that going to simply exacerbate the

problem?

MR. McCANTS: Thank you.

And one more in the red shirt, please?

SPEAKER: Thank you. Just wondering how much we've learned in this episode from 9/11 till now? Did we bring a lot of this on ourselves or was this going to happen whether we invaded Iraq or not?

MR. McCANTS: Thank you.

Okay. And I will turn to Ambassador Kaidanow for Eric's question, but this is also, I think, a good opportunity to sum up and give any concluding thoughts as well.

Eric asked the question about the flow of foreign fighters, and also whether Iranian support for al-Qaida continues or not.

MS. KAIDANOW: Yeah. I mean, on the first part of your question, Eric, I think the numbers are -- increasingly we're trying to get a very good hold on them. It's a little difficult, frankly. I mean, you know, I think we're a lot better in estimating what the flow actually looks like than we certainly were ever before and a lot of attention is being paid to this. But, you know, how specifically accurate it is. I think the trend is still upward. That doesn't surprise me entirely. I mean, I think that we're going to see that for the whole gamut of reasons that we talked about up here, and that is the ISIL ability to recruit and to radicalize via the social media and the Internet, which is a new phenomenon. Very powerful. Very flexible. Hard to get at. You know, difficult to contextualize in very specific circumstances, and oftentimes, these are people that are responding in a given, local regional context. So really, you know, it's a very fine art to try and address the recruitment cycle that gets these people there.

That said, I mean, and I didn't really go through the entire act. It talks a

little bit about information sharing, which we have really stressed with a number of our partners. There's a huge array of things that we are doing together with our partners to try and again either stem that flow or give them the capacity to, you know, to hold that back. Or to at least, you know, get better eyesight on a lot of this. Border security is big, huge part of what we are doing now with a number of our partners, enabling them both through, you know, systems that we can help provide and that they can hopefully maintain to be able to better understand who is coming in and who is going out. Sharing that information, not just with us in a bilateral basis, but on a regional basis. I mean, arguably in, you know, wherever it is, Southeast Asia, someplace like that, you want these countries to be sharing information because it's crucial for all of them to understand who is moving around, who is coming back from the battlefield, who is going, and what threat that arguably poses.

So I guess I don't know, you know, what trajectory we should aim for specifically. Clearly, we want it to come down over time, but I do think countries have taken a number of effective measures. They've increased their legislative, you know, their legal regimes, to account for a lot of this. They've created, in some cases, legal basis for action that they never had before. I mean, a lot of countries never had a law that really dealt with the question of going to fight in a foreign conflict. How do you do that? What's the model for that? We've helped to provide some of that, and in a number of countries that I can point to, it's actually taken fairly well. Prosecutions, other kinds of things.

Again, I mean, this is an array of features. It's not like one thing that we can do. There's the recruitment component. There's the prevention of radicalization. That's a huge big issue that, you know, again, we're trying to get at with greater fidelity. It's a long-term effort. It's not going to be a short-term effort.

So, again, I think there are a number of reasons why the numbers have not immediately come down, but that said, I do think over time with the cumulative effect of a lot of this, our partners will have better eyesight and we will have better eyesight on who these people are, what kind of threat they pose and, you know, what may happen as a result of that.

The second question was more on the relationship between Iran and al-Qaida. That's a little harder to talk about in this particular venue, and I can't comment on the second specific question that you asked. But I will say, I mean, you know, again, we watch -- and I didn't talk, and it's important here, and I've mentioned it before in some of my remarks in other places -- we haven't really talked about the sectarian issue here. And the sectarian issue does matter. I mean, I think it sort of forms a part of the difference sometimes in World View or in perception of threat, if you want to call it that, between us and some of our partners, our closest partners in the Middle East, certainly in the Gulf, elsewhere. I mean, I think the preoccupation clearly and, you know, no surprise, this was I think in some ways amplified by the nuclear, you know, agreement that we've now come to with Iran -- the question of what is the Iranian threat? What does it pose both for them and for some of their partners and their allies in the immediate region and beyond? I don't think we, again, we take a lot of the -- and I've said repeatedly that the terrorist threat from Iran and some of its key proxies is real import. We care about it. We watch it.

With that said, I mean, again, we've tried to make the jihadi threat understandable and also to give them the sense that it has direct impact on them, not just because, you know, the Jordanians are threatened by ISIL, but because Saudi is now threatened by ISIL. Because a number of these countries have seen, and will continue to see, ISIL pop up on their radar screen in ways that are deeply discomforting. So I think

the sectarian quotient, the quotient of, you know, Iran and then the jihadi element really, it does frame a large part of how we think about these issues, and it's important for us to have that dialogue with our partners because if we don't, I think we're going to be talking past each other. And that would not be a productive way to pursue some of these goals. I think we have to do many things at the same time, unfortunately, as I kind of said at the outset.

MR. McCANTS: Bruce and Dan, we're at the end of our time. I want to give you a quick second to sum up. There was a question about refugees, but also what have we learned since 9/11, for good or ill.

Bruce?

MR. RIEDEL: I think the question about refugees is an excellent one. Why are all these people fleeing? Why do they want to get away from Syria and Iraq? I'll come back to where I started. Because of abysmal governance. Who would want to live in Syria? Who would want to raise children in Syria? Who would be able to say there's a silver lining out there somewhere? Maybe the Assad will be overthrown and Baghdadi will be running my country for the rest of eternity. Or the Americans will be bombing Baghdadi for the rest of eternity. This bad governance, misgovernance is having its tangible output in this mass wave of immigration. And it's not over either.

Yemen. According to the United Nations, 20 million Yemenis are now at threat of either starvation or dehydration. They are beginning to flee. You have Yemenis now fleeing to Somalia. I can't think of being so desperate in this world that I would think that Somalia was my way to a better ticket, but we're starting to see that. Even if the Saudis "succeed in Yemen," I think we're going to see a very significant blowback from Yemenis trying to get out or Yemenis who want to teach Saudi Arabia a lesson.

We know what happens with refugees. In 1949, there were

approximately 500,000 Palestinian refugees who went into camps. Generations of terrorists have been born in those camps and generations of terrorists will be born in those camps. Someday people are going to look back at the United States and the rest of the world community and say, "Why didn't you get it? Why didn't you understand? Why didn't you see that Gaza, Telzatar, that the camps in Damascus, the camps in Iman were breeding terrorists not just for today but for generations to come? Why didn't you do something about it?" I fear we're going to be asking that same question about Syria, Yemen, and Iraq someday in the future.

MR. McCANTS: Dan?

MR. BYMAN: I'll try to conclude with a very big question on what have we learned? Tactically, we've learned a tremendous amount. The day-to-day of counterterrorism, understanding the particulars of different groups and affiliates, there's no comparison between where we were before 9/11 and where we are today. It's truly night and day.

Strategically, I've learned at least that I don't know what we should be learning. Right? A lot of people would talk about how we need to address the root causes of terrorism. I kind of have yet to find one, right, where there are a lot of big picture things that happen, and sometimes they produce bad things and sometimes they don't. But there are all the things people often talk about -- about education, economic development. You know, study after study shows there is no direct linkage to international terrorism. So some of the big picture things to me aren't really there in a coherent way.

Another question, and a very difficult one from a policy point of view is the intervention question, which is if you look at countries that have a nation problem, do you intervene early to try to solve that problem, but in so intervening, perhaps take actors

locally who didn't really care much about you and make them hate you. Right? And I'll tell you what. For every case of those, in 10 years I'll tell you whether you did the right thing or not. Right? And I'll say it was obvious. Right? That we clearly should have stayed out here because we angered the local group, but here we should have intervened. Because the problem metastasized horribly because we did nothing. Right?

I don't think there's a simple answer to this that can be applied across cases. And I think even in particulars it's very hard to anticipate. So I would say tactically, doing very well. Strategically, there are real big questions about what we actually can learn, as well as what we should learn.

MR. McCANTS: Please join me in thanking the panel.

(Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2016