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**Remarks on**  
**“After the Caliphate:**  
**A New Global Approach to Defeating ISIS”**

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Thanks, Bruce, for the warm introduction. It’s a real pleasure to be here today. I’d like to thank Brookings for hosting me and all of you for joining me.

On March 23, the President announced the liberation of the last territory held by ISIS in Syria and Iraq. This is an important milestone in our fight against global terrorism, and it was made possible by this Administration’s decision over two years ago to take the gloves off.

But this is not the end of the fight. ISIS is down, but it’s not out. We need to prevent it from reconstituting itself as a fighting force in Iraq and Syria, and we need to keep it from leveraging its international networks to recover from this crushing defeat. Because ISIS is evolving in order to stay alive.

We saw a horrific example of this last week, on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka. Let me pause for a moment here to give you an update on the investigation.

A cell of ISIS-inspired terrorists carried out a sophisticated series of bombings at churches and hotels around the country, using backpacks laden with explosives and shrapnel. Two of the attackers were sons of a wealthy Sri Lankan spice dealer. In all, some 253 men, women, and children lost their lives, including four Americans, and hundreds more were injured. It was one of the world’s deadliest terrorist attacks since 9/11.

It’s becoming clear that the terrorists behind this atrocity were inspired by ISIS’s vile ideology. Last Tuesday, ISIS claimed responsibility for the bombings. And just yesterday, the group’s leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi resurfaced in a video to say that the attack was retaliation for our victory in Syria. We’re also aware of media reports that one of the attackers may have trained with ISIS in Syria, and we’re looking into it.

The risk of follow-on attacks remains high. The Sri Lankan government has arrested over 100 suspects, but authorities are still on the lookout for dozens more. In recent days they've recovered enough equipment for terrorists to conduct up to ten additional attacks – explosives, detonators, knives, binoculars, and military-style camouflage. The United States is standing side-by-side with the Sri Lankan people – we already have an FBI team on the ground, helping with the investigation.

Today I'll begin by telling you where we are in the battle against ISIS. Then I'll explain how ISIS is evolving, our next steps in the fight, and what we must do to complete the defeat of ISIS globally. We've won great victories on the battlefield. Now we need to match them with victories in our courtrooms, at our borders, in our banks, and online.

### **The ISIS Threat Today**

Let's consider what the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and its partners have accomplished. Together, we've liberated all the territory ISIS held in Iraq and Syria – nearly 42,000 square miles, a swath of land nearly the size of England. We've freed approximately 7.7 million men, women, and children from ISIS's brutal rule. And more than 4 million displaced people in Iraq have returned home.

More than half of these gains have come since January 2017, reflecting the Trump Administration's strategic decision to accelerate the campaign.

Together, we've crushed ISIS's ability to raise significant funds through taxation, extortion, and exploiting oil and gas resources in Iraq and Syria. We've also stopped ISIS's slaughter and enslavement of innocents, their genocide of religious minorities like Christians and Yazidis, their exploitation of child soldiers, and their use of rape as a weapon of war.

Yet despite these successes in Iraq and Syria, ISIS remains a global threat capable of launching terrorist attacks against us and our allies. ISIS is battered and weakened, but it's not gone. Even as we defeat them on the battlefield, ISIS has shown a dangerous ability to adapt. The group's leaders and followers see the loss of their false caliphate as a setback, not a defeat, and they're actively looking to continue the fight from ISIS branches and networks around the world.

Let me give you a few examples of the trends we're seeing.

In Afghanistan, ISIS-Khorasan has become one of the deadliest ISIS branches in the world. In the past year, they've carried out dozens of attacks, killing approximately 760 people and injuring another 1430.

In Africa, ISIS-linked groups are on the rise. They've increased the lethality of their attacks, expanded into new areas, and repeatedly targeted U.S. interests. We assess that Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa have been responsible for over 35,000 deaths since 2011, and the displacement of nearly two million people in the Lake Chad Region. ISIS-West Africa has begun to impose sharia law in the areas it controls, and it has killed hundreds of Nigerian forces in the past year.

In neighboring Niger, ISIS-Greater Sahara was responsible for the deaths of four American soldiers in an ambush in October 2017. In Somalia, ISIS has conducted several small-scale attacks and assassinations. Meanwhile, local armed groups in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique are aligning themselves with ISIS.

ISIS-Sinai remains intent on attacking targets in mainland Egypt, including tourist sites and churches. Two years ago, on Palm Sunday, ISIS-Sinai suicide bombers attacked a pair of Coptic churches, killing dozens of worshippers. Using small arms and IEDs, the group carries out almost daily attacks against Egyptian security forces in the Sinai.

In South and Southeast Asia, ISIS continues to carry out attacks and, through propaganda campaigns, inspire regional groups to commit acts of terror. Sri Lanka, I'm sorry to say, is not alone. In the Philippines, ISIS claimed the horrific attack on a Catholic cathedral in January of this year that claimed 23 lives. Last May in Indonesia, three families, inspired by ISIS, conducted suicide attacks with their children. Let me say that again, with their children.

Meanwhile, homegrown terrorists who've never set foot on a battlefield but have embraced ISIS's toxic ideology have planned and executed attacks against soft targets, including hotels, restaurants, stadiums, and other public spaces. In December 2018, an attack on a Christmas Market in Strasbourg left five dead and 11 wounded. It's just one example of the ability of ISIS-inspired terrorists to strike in the heart of Western Europe.

## **A Global Campaign**

In short, the war against ISIS isn't over, it's just entering a new phase. As Secretary Pompeo said recently, we're in an era of "decentralized jihad." And as ISIS adapts, we'll have to adapt too. Let me explain how the United States will approach this next phase of the fight, and our vision for the role that the 80-member Defeat-ISIS Coalition can play going forward.

In the next stage of the campaign, we'll focus on confronting ISIS branches and networks around the world, while consolidating ISIS's territorial defeat in the Core. To accomplish this, we must pivot from a strategy that relies largely on military force to one that includes a broader mix of instruments, especially civilian counterterrorism capabilities.

Increasingly, the fight against ISIS will take place in courtrooms and prisons, as we boost efforts to investigate, prosecute, and incarcerate ISIS fighters. We'll fight ISIS at our borders, as we look to stop terrorist travel and eliminate facilitation routes. We'll fight ISIS in banks, as we cut off the flow of money to its networks and deny them the resources they need to plot attacks. And we'll fight ISIS online, in the realm of ideas, as we look to combat its vile and violent ideology.

The United States can't do this alone. We need our Coalition partners to help share the burden of this new fight, and they're ready to do so. Let me read you part of the statement adopted at the Coalition's Ministerial meeting in Washington in February:

We ... acknowledge the Coalition's collective responsibility and role in severing ISIS's trans-regional efforts and thwarting its global ambitions. We recognize that this will require us to continually evolve and adapt our efforts in order to deliver an enduring defeat to a pandemic enemy.

In this new phase of the fight we'll need to focus on four key areas:

- First, across the Coalition, we need to prosecute ISIS leaders, fighters, and financiers for the crimes they've committed.
- Second, Coalition members need to harden our collective borders against ISIS travel.
- Third, we need to combine our efforts to cut off the flow of money to ISIS networks around the world.
- And fourth, we need to deny ISIS the ability to radicalize and recruit the next generation of fighters.

Make no mistake: We're talking about *supplementing* the military mission, not *replacing* it. The United States is prepared to use force to disrupt immediate ISIS threats to Americans or our partners in places like Libya, Somalia, and Afghanistan. And when I say military force, I mean action by, with, and through our local partners, an approach that has proven successful in Iraq and Syria.

## **Prosecuting ISIS**

Law enforcement is a key counterterrorism tool. And as ISIS networks grow more diffuse, civilian criminal justice finishes will grow more important. We'll need our partners to successfully respond to, investigate, and prosecute ISIS figures for the crimes they've committed – no matter where they're located.

Let me flesh out what we're doing to build law enforcement capacity in key front-line states.

- In Afghanistan, we trained and equipped Kabul's premier police crisis response unit, "CRU 222," to respond to terrorist attacks in real time. On April 20, this unit countered an ISIS-Khorasan attack on the Ministry of Communication, neutralizing four ISIS terrorists and safely evacuating over 1250 civilians.
- In Tunisia, our work with the National Guard Special Unit has helped them conduct effective raids, detain suspects, confiscate weapons, and prevent terrorist attacks. In October, they responded to a terrorist wearing a suicide belt who intended to carry out a large-scale attack in Tunis.
- In Somalia, our training of the Joint Investigative Teams led to their successful investigation and prosecution of an ISIS bomber and his two accomplices in April 2018.
- In the Balkans, we helped governments across the region update their counterterrorism laws to cover offenses related to foreign terrorist fighters, or FTFs. These governments have now successfully prosecuted more than 165 terrorists. In Kosovo, U.S. Resident Legal Advisors provided case-based mentoring to local prosecutors, resulting in the indictment or trial of more than 33 FTFs.

- North Macedonia has become one of the first countries to repatriate its FTFs from Syria. Just last month, all seven of them pled guilty to terrorism-related crimes, and they received sentences ranging from six to nine years.

This is an example the rest of the world should follow. We need our Coalition partners to repatriate their FTFs and prosecute them for the crimes they've committed. The Syrian Democratic Forces are currently holding more than 1,000 ISIS foreign fighters – a number that is certain to grow after the successful campaign to liberate Baghouz. The United States calls on all countries, especially members of the Coalition, to take their citizens back, prosecute them when possible, and, above all, prevent them from ever returning to terrorism.

To help enable these prosecutions, the United States has launched an important new initiative on battlefield evidence – how to collect it, store it, analyze it, share it domestically and across borders, and finally how to introduce it into civilian courts to obtain convictions. We've begun working with the United Nations and NATO to promote the use of battlefield evidence in other countries, and we need our Coalition partners to join us in this effort.

## **Securing Our Borders**

Next, we need to harden our borders to prevent terrorist travel and disrupt facilitation routes. ISIS seeks to exploit gaps in border security, particularly FTFs who are fleeing the battlefield. Since 2015, some 1,200 ISIS fighters are estimated to have gone home to Europe. Likewise, hundreds of FTFs have traveled back to Southeast Asia. And other terrorists who've been inspired by ISIS are looking to cross international borders.

In December 2017, the UN Security Council adopted a tough new resolution on terrorist travel – UNSCR 2396. Under this historic resolution, UN members are required to use tools to help them spot terrorists hiding in plain sight – watchlists, biometrics, and Passenger Name Record data, or PNR. Here in the U.S., we've been using these tools for years. Resolution 2396 internationalizes these American policies and practices. It's the most important resolution on terrorist travel the UN has ever adopted.

Just a few words on PNR. This is the information you give an airline when you book a ticket – a phone number, an email address, and so on. PNR can help identify suspicious travel patterns and illuminate hidden connections between known terrorists and their unknown associates. If investigators had applied these

techniques to PNR and related data before 9/11, they could have uncovered the ties among all 19 of the hijackers.

We call on all nations to meet their UNSCR 2396 obligations swiftly. And we're ready to help. In November, the United States called on the International Civil Aviation Organization to adopt a PNR standard by the end of 2019. We're also willing to share the systems we use to collect and analyze PNR, and the UN likewise has tools to help countries use traveler data.

In addition, we need our partners to use INTERPOL's capabilities more effectively. The United States provides a great deal of information through INTERPOL's I-24/7 system. But too often the data only goes to centralized hubs in capitals. What we need to do is push it out to the front lines, so customs officials and cops on the beat know who they're dealing with when someone presents their passport at a border crossing or is stopped on the street.

This is why we're working with the G-7 to expand INTERPOL connectivity at ports of entry in 60 key countries by 2021. Likewise, at the State Department, we recently launched a pilot program to help partners develop systems to screen travelers against national-level terrorist watchlists. We call it WASP – the Watchlisting Assistance and Support Program.

### **Cutting off the Flow of Money**

The Coalition has done a lot to stop the flow of money to ISIS Core, but we need to do more to squeeze ISIS affiliates around the world. It isn't enough just to stop the gunmen. We also need to stop the moneymen who pay for the guns.

One of our most effective financial weapons is terrorist designations. Designations isolate and expose our adversaries, making it harder for them to raise money and move it through the international financial system. Responsible banks do a lot of this work for us, as they want to keep terrorists from tainting their networks.

Last year, the State Department completed 19 designation actions against ISIS-linked individuals and organizations. That includes ISIS-Greater Sahara, the group that killed four American soldiers, as well as ISIS-Philippines, ISIS-Somalia, and Jund al-Khilafah-Tunisia. At the Treasury Department, there were another 14 ISIS-related designations. We'll be looking to add to those numbers.

In addition, last year the UN listed 11 ISIS-linked individuals at the so-called 1267 Committee. That's good progress, but for UN designations to be truly effective, they need to be matched by designations in individual countries. And that means we need more partners to adopt domestic designations regimes that enable them to sanction known terrorists.

We also want to pursue joint designations with our partners to amplify the impact of our sanctions. For example, regional bodies like the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center in the Gulf can effectively target networks that operate in multiple countries, and deepen cooperation among partners. In October 2017, the United States and TFTC members jointly adopted a number of ISIS-related sanctions, including leaders, financiers, and facilitators of ISIS-Yemen.

In addition, we need to promote relationships between partner countries' financial intelligence units, to increase the sharing of intelligence and best practices. The Coalition has an important role to play here. It can help countries develop the necessary legal frameworks and capabilities, and push for stronger enforcement of international counterterrorism financing standards.

### **Countering ISIS Narratives and Ideology**

While ISIS's false caliphate has been destroyed, the group's ability to inspire attacks persists because its ideology persists. Countering this ideology is both a near- and long-term challenge. We need to collectively refute the hateful, intolerant, and supremacist messaging that helped give rise to ISIS in the first place.

As we say in constitutional law, the remedy for harmful speech is more speech. That's why we're working with partners to develop countermessages to rebut the ISIS narrative. One example is an online graphic novel that shows the realities of ISIS's brutal rule. It reached 17 million at-risk youth in the Middle East and North Africa in a 40 day campaign. And it produced real results: readers showed 50% less support for extremist groups and a 30-40% reduction in extremist beliefs.

Longer-term, targeted education-based initiatives are also key to countering terrorist ideology. Youth need critical thinking skills to recognize, reject, and refute the ideology. That means working with schools to train teachers to recognize signs of radicalization, and training university students how to design their own peer messaging and other prevention projects. Religious and community leaders also play roles in reaching youth, as well as amplifying positive narratives.



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In conclusion, the evolving conflict with ISIS's global networks will take different forms in different parts of the world. Each region and every country will require unique approaches to confront unique challenges. But we all, together, need to remain united in our goal – to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS.

To achieve that goal, it's imperative that the Coalition approach the effort to defeat ISIS globally with the same level of urgency and commitment that we saw in Iraq and Syria. We owe it to the past victims of ISIS to prevent future victims. And we owe it to ourselves. With that, I'd like to thank you all for your time today and I look forward to your questions.