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UNITED STATES STRATEGY TO DEFEAT THE ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND THE LEVANT

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

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Secretary Kerry's Opening Statement SFRC Hearing on Iraq, Syria, and Threat Posed by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing on an issue where the stakes are so high and a full understanding of the ISIL threat and our strategy for defeating it is so important.

During the years I had the privilege of serving here, working with different Administrations, it always struck me that American foreign policy works best when there's a genuine discussion, a dialogue, a vetting of ideas back and forth between Congress and the executive branch. So I want to make sure that by the time we're done here today, I've heard from you, you've shared your views and ideas, and that you also have a clear understanding of what we've done so far, what we're doing now, and where we go next – because your input and your support are absolutely critical to the success of this effort.

I want to underscore at the start – there are some debates of the past 20 years that could and probably will fill up books and documentaries for a long time. Iraq is one.

Iraq has caused some of the most heated debates and deepest divisions of the past decade – a series of difficult issues about which people can honestly disagree. But I didn't come here today to rehash those debates. The issue that confronts us today is one on which we should all agree: ISIL must be defeated. Period. End of story. And, collectively, we're all going to be measured by how we carry out this mission.

I'd also underscore – the same is true on an international level. And even in a region that is virtually defined by division, leaders who have viewed the last 11 years very differently – and who agree on very little in general – are more unified on this subject than just about any other.

So as President Obama described last week when he spoke directly to the American people, we have a clear strategy to degrade, defeat and destroy ISIL. But the United States will not go it alone. That is why we are building a global coalition. And as I traveled around the world this week, the question foreign

leaders were asking me was not whether they should join the coalition, but how they can help.

We are also not starting from scratch. This is an effort we have been building over time, both on our own and with the help of our international partners: Even before President Obama delivered his speech last week, nearly 40 countries had joined in contributing to the effort to strengthen the capacity of Iraq including military assistance, training and humanitarian assistance.

We have been focused on ISIL since its inception as the successor to AQI in 2013. Back in January we ramped up our assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces, increasing our intelligence surveillance reconnaissance, or ISR, flights to get a better picture of the battlefield and expediting weapons like Hellfire missiles for the Iraqis to bring to bear in this fight.

Early this summer, the ISIL threat accelerated when it effectively erased the Iraq-Syria border and the Mosul Dam fell. The President acted deliberately and decisively. We further surged our ISR missions over Iraq. We immediately set up joint operation centers in Baghdad and Erbil. And our special forces conducted a very detailed field assessment of Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish forces.

By the time ISIL launched the offensive in the north, President Obama authorized limited air strikes against ISIL and humanitarian missions to protect American personnel, prevent major catastrophes and support Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish forces that were fighting bravely to do the same. To date, we've launched more than 150 airstrikes. And it is because of the platforms we put in place back in June that those strikes have been highly precise and incredibly effective, including in the operations to break the siege of Sinjar Mountain, retake Mosul Dam, and resupply the town of Amerli.

These actions blunted ISIL's momentum and created time and space for us to put in place the two pillars of a comprehensive strategy against ISIL: an inclusive Iraq government, and a broad international coalition.

We redoubled our efforts to help move the Iraqi political process forward. We are clear-eyed about the fact that any strategy against ISIL would only succeed with a strong, inclusive government in Iraq, with an ambitious national agenda, prepared to unite the country against ISIL.

With our support, after several weeks of complex negotiations, President Masum nominated Haider al-Abadi to serve as Prime Minister. Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister al-Abadi – again with our support – was able to form his cabinet and present it to the parliament, and, last week, that government was approved.

This was a long and difficult process, led by the Iraqis, with our help as needed. The result was something Iraq had never before seen in its history: an election deemed credible by the United Nations, followed by peaceful transition of power, without any US troops on the ground.

I traveled to Baghdad last week, immediately after the new government was approved, to meet with Prime Minister al-Abadi and other leaders throughout the Iraqi government. And I was very encouraged to hear them discuss in detail the government's National Plan to unite the country against ISIL, and empower local communities – particularly in Sunni areas – to mobilize, defeat ISIL, and maintain security control in their area.

Throughout the entire process, we were in touch with regional leaders to ensure that a new and inclusive government would receive support from the region. Today, after years, even decades, of relative isolation from their neighbors, the Iraqis have begun to reintegrate with the broader Arab community. For example, last week, they were not just invited but warmly welcomed in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudis have now said they'll reopen an embassy in Baghdad.

With this new, inclusive Iraqi government in place, it's time for the defensive strategy we and our international partners have pursued thus far to transition to an offensive strategy – one that harnesses the capabilities of the entire world to eliminate the ISIL threat, once and for all.

President Obama outlined this strategy in detail, so – while I am happy to answer any questions you may have – I will be brief in walking through it again now.

At its core, our strategy is centered on a global coalition that will collaborate closely across a number of specific areas – including, certainly, on direct and indirect military support.

To be clear, military assistance comes in a range of forms, from training and equipping, to logistics and airlift. And countries from inside and outside of the region are already providing support in these veins. So I have no doubt whatsoever

we will have the capabilities and the resources we need to succeed militarily. And President Obama made clear we will be expanding the military campaign to take on ISIL in Iraq, in Syria – wherever it is found.

But this is not the Gulf War in 1991, and it is not the Iraq War in 2003 – for a couple of reasons. Number one, U.S. ground troops will not be sent into combat in this conflict. From the last decade we know that a sustainable strategy is not U.S. ground forces – it is enabling local forces to do what they must for themselves and their country. I want to be clear: the U.S. troops that have been deployed to Iraq do not and will not have a combat mission. Instead, they will support Iraqi forces on the ground as they fight for their own country against these terrorists..

And in Syria, the on-the-ground combat will be done by the moderate opposition – which serves as the best counter-weight in Syria to extremists like ISIL. We know that as ISIL gets weaker, this moderate opposition will get stronger, which will be critical in our efforts to bring about the political solution necessary to address the crisis in Syria once and for all. That’s one of the reasons why it’s so critical that Congress authorizes the opposition train-and-equip mission when it comes to the floor. But it’s also critical that the opposition makes the most of the additional support – the kind of support they’ve been requesting for years – and take this opportunity to prove to the world that they can be a viable alternative to Assad.

Number two, this is more than just a military coalition because the objective requires more than a military victory. This mission isn’t just about taking out an enemy on the battlefield. It’s about taking out an entire network – decimating and discrediting a militant cult masquerading as a religious movement.

It’s similar to what we have been doing to Al Qaeda these last years.

The bottom line is we will not be successful with a military campaign alone. Nor are we asking every country to play a military role – we don’t need every country to play a military role and we don’t want every country to play a military role.

Only a holistic campaign can accomplish our objectives. That is why we are focused on multiple lines of effort.

In addition to the military campaign, it will be equally important for the global coalition to dry up ISIL’s illicit funding, to stop the foreign fighters who carry

passports from countries around the world including the United States, to continue to deliver urgently needed humanitarian assistance, and finally, to repudiate the gross distortion of Islam that ISIL is spreading, and put an end to the sermons by extremists that brainwash young men to join these movements and commit mass atrocities in the name of God. I was very encouraged to hear that Saudi Arabia's top clerics came out and declared terrorism a "heinous crime" under Sharia law – and that perpetrators should be made an example of. Preventing an individual from joining ISIL for example, or from getting to the battle field in the first place, is the most effective measure we can take.

I want to emphasize – when we say "global coalition," we mean it. This is not a threat that a single country or region can take on alone. And there is a critical role for nearly every country to play.

So we are committed to working with countries in every corner of the globe to match the campaign's requirements with the capabilities they are willing to bring to bear. I spent the past week in the Middle East and in Europe, meeting with dozens of leaders whose partnership will be essential to our success.

And I can tell you today: every single person I spoke to over the course of my trip expressed strong support for our mission and a willingness to help in some way. We had excellent meetings, beginning at the NATO Summit in Wales, and then in Jeddah. The Jeddah Communique represents a strong, comprehensive and unified statement of all the ways in which the region is committed to supporting this fight. Our meetings in Baghdad, in Cairo, and in Ankara also advanced the process. And at the conference earlier this week in Paris, we took another step along the road to the UNGA and the UNSC sessions next week.

We have a plan and we know the players. Our focus now is determining what role each country will play.

Later this week we will have more to say about our partners and contributions, and we fully expect the coalition to grow, evolve and coalesce well beyond UNGA. That's why we've asked one of our most respected and experienced military leaders – General John Allen – to come to the State Department and oversee this effort. And he's already hitting the ground running – he was at work last Friday at 7:00 am, less than 24 hours after we sealed the deal for him to do this job, and he and I had a long meeting yesterday, just a few hours after I landed in DC. General Allen will be working with one of our foremost Iraq experts, Ambassador Brett McGurk, as well as Assistant Secretary Anne Patterson, who

was so much a part of the effort against Al Qaeda when she was our Ambassador in Pakistan.

The fact is that, if we do this right, then this effort could become a global model for isolating and undermining other extremist threats around the world. But now we must be laser focused on ISIL. And I'm confident that, with our strategy in place and our international partners by our side, we will have all that we need to succeed in degrading and ultimately destroying this monstrous organization – wherever it exists.

###

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Prepared and delivered by Amb (ret) Robert S. Ford

for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing held on
September 17, 2014

Mr. Chairman, Senator Corker, members of the Committee,

It is an honor to be invited to speak with you today about what we should do in the face of a growing threat from the Islamic State.

I spent almost five years working with in Baghdad as the senior political advisor and later deputy to ambassadors John Negroponte, Zalmay Khalilzad, Ryan Crocker and finally Chris Hill. I left Iraq in 2010.

And I then served on the ground in Damascus for a year before we had to close the embassy in February 2012 and I returned home to head for two years the State Department team working on the Syria crisis.

It's been a grim three years, but I see some positive signs in Iraq that suggest guideposts as we think about next steps in Syria.

These signs result from policy approaches to contain and reduce extremist groups that also worked when I was in Iraq years ago.

Over the past several months in Iraq we identified groups on the ground in Iraq that rejected the Islamic State and that were sturdy enough to build upon.

The Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga were not extremely well organized in June 2014 - they had multiple command chains and there was confusion at the time of the fall of Mosul. And to be clear, the political goal of an independent Kurdistan shared by many Kurds is not one that the U.S. Government has endorsed.

Still, the peshmerga represented a reliable core group that could use our help to confront the Islamic State's fighters on the ground.

And despite the collapse of many Iraqi army units, there were reliable special operations army units that again could usefully utilize our help to fight the Islamic State.

These peshmerga and Iraqi special operations forces together with a limited, judicious use of airstrikes pushed Islamic State fighters away from the Mosul dam, from Erbil and Kirkuk parts of Diyala province.

The fight is not at all over, but the Islamic State's advance in Iraq has been blunted.

It's going to be a long fight.

The President, very wisely in my opinion, insisted that we could not fight the Iraqi battle against the Islamic State for them, however. He conditioned big American help on the Iraqis finding a political deal to set up a new government - a sort of unity government - that could rally all Iraqis to fight the Islamic State.

The President rightly understands that it is vital to undercut extremist recruiting among the disaffected Sunni Arab population by means of Iraqi political leaders figuring out a political deal.

I am very encouraged that various tribal figures in Anbar and Hawija, elected provincial councils in Mosul and Salah ad-Din all have come forward to offer to mobilize Sunni Arab fighters against the Islamic State if the new government in Baghdad will join with them. The initial statements I have seen from the new Prime Minister are also encouraging.

The regional states pledging to act with us in Iraq is also encouraging - and something we didn't really have when I was in Iraq years ago. Just the symbolism of the Iraqi Foreign Minister - a senior Shia politician - appearing in Riyadh at Saudi invitation with other Sunni states' representatives was very positive. We're in a better spot in this regard than we were in 2003 or 2007.

But as I said, if there are encouraging signs, we also need to understand that just as it took years to contain and reduce al-Qaida in Iraq, so it will take years again in Iraq. Patience and firm insistence on our political conditions are vital.

Turning to Syria, it's a much harder problem than Iraq and we are long past the chance to find easy answers or sure bets. Still, the same elements used in Iraq offer the best path forward:

- we need to identify friendly forces on the ground and boost their ability to fight the Islamic State;
- we may need to use, judiciously, our own airpower;
- as in Iraq the real fighting will be on the ground, so equipment, ammunition, logistics and even cash matter just as much if not more;
- a sustainable solution requires a new Syrian government via negotiations between Syrians with outside encouragement.

Many Americans question whether there are any moderates left in the Syrian armed opposition.

There are. They are fighting the Islamic State and the Asad regime both, they are, not surprisingly, hard pressed, and they could very much use our help.

I find it odd that the media don't talk about them much. Units like the Hazem Brigade fighting in northwestern Syria that actually helped expel the Islamic State out of that part of Syria last spring. The Hazem Brigade issued a manifesto last March saying it was fighting for a pluralistic Syria where minorities' rights would be protected. Or units like the 101st and 13th divisions, fighting in both northern and southern Syria, led by former Syrian military officers. Or units like the Omari and Yarmouk brigades which are fighting regime forces in southern Syria. There are others too, of course.

Right now, some of these units, and others are locked in battle with the Islamic State near Aleppo in northern Syria. It's a hard fight - US equipment the Islamic State captured from the Iraqi army is being used against those Free Syrian Army fighters. However, these units also have received help from outside and they have fought the Islamic State to a standstill in that part of Syria. It's a desperate fight - the Islamic State is trying to capture vital supply lines for the moderate armed opposition coming down from Turkey.

Helping those units, right now, around Aleppo could secure supply routes and boost the morale of the moderate fighters. Asad's forces are some distance away and far too stretched already to hold ground northeast of Aleppo. Thus, we and our friends ramping up help there would not benefit Asad nearly as much as the moderate opposition.

We do need multiple changes in approach. Larger, more reliable logistics help, including provision of ammunition and cash, are a must if we hope to make any headway against the Islamic State. And just as important, regional allies must stop competing with each other for influence by provisioning different groups in an

uncoordinated fashion and instead blend their efforts in a broader strategic plan with the Syrian fighters' commanders.

And we must understand two vital points going in:

- the moderate armed opposition's biggest enemy is not the Islamic State. It is the Asad regime which has killed far more Syrians than has the detestable Islamic State. And they won't stop fighting the Asad regime even as they advance against the Islamic State.

- moreover, in the desperately hard-fought battle against the Asad regime, moderate forces have and will tactically coordinate with the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front on the ground. This is due to operational necessity, made more urgent by the shortage of supplies.

This coordination has nothing to do with ideological sympathy - indeed, groups such as the ones I mentioned have criticized the Nusra Front's politics and even refused to work with its leaders in towns recaptured from the regime.

Until the moderate elements are so strong that they don't need Nusra to pressure the regime successfully, the moderate elements will accept working militarily with Nusra.

As we think medium- and longer-term, a large moderate opposition force will be vital to holding ground seized back from the Islamic State. It will also be necessary to contain the Nusra Front one day. I do not see any other force that could do this short of a US-led foreign force and even that would be extremely hard to sell politically in the region and in the broader international arena. I therefore welcome the Administration's proposal to move to a Title 10 program.

However, just as in Iraq, the sustainable solution is to find a way to rally more Syrians against the Islamic State. The Asad regime's brutality has helped the Islamic State's rapid growth in Syria. Working with the Asad regime would be a golden gift to help the Islamic State's recruiting in Syria and beyond. And there aren't Asad forces to spare for central and eastern Syria anyway.

Instead, as in Iraq, the endgame in Syria has to be a new government able to rally the armed opposition and the remaining regime forces together to fight the Islamic State.

And we should know from the Libya experience, and our Iraq experience, that negotiating the creation of that new government in Syria, not trying to topple it, is the only way to preserve what remains of the Syrian state.

Getting to negotiations will be very, very hard. Our Geneva efforts failed quickly. But seven months later, the regime's forces have taken heavy casualties at the hands of the Free Syrian Army and the Islamic State. Asad's remaining forces are more stretched and tired. There are new signs of dissent among Asad's ranks.

Asad's supporters may be tired but they don't see a place to jump. They fear extermination at the hands of the Islamic State and the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front. I don't blame them.

The best way to give them a sense that there is a third way for a new government - one that is neither the current regime nor an Islamic extremist state - is for the moderate opposition to reach out to Asad's supporters and to put forward ideas about how together they could assemble a new government.

Asad won't like this, but that's not the point. The point is that others inside the regime's ranks should and could drag the top Syrian leadership back to negotiations.

Thus, as we ramp up help to the Syrian moderate armed opposition, we also should insist that the opposition redouble efforts to reach out to regime elements and pursue discussions about a deal for a new government. There are steps the moderate opposition could take right now to send the right signal - treating prisoners well and offering to exchange them would be an excellent start.

I do not think any of this will be fast or easy. I do think that both sides are tiring, and that could help get to the negotiations for a new government. The conclusion of a few local ceasefire deals here and there indicates that local commanders at least are willing to talk.

Lastly, I welcome the Administration's decision which, when implemented with real resources and actions, will gain support of regional allies. In Iraq when I was there we worked without regional support with the exception of Kuwait. The Administration is making a strong pitch for regional political and material backing. If we show determination, the regional states who have long wanted to see the Syrian crisis resolved will back us, even if some necessarily do it quietly.

Going forward, we have to be determined and committed. The first step is for the Congress to approve the President's proposal to help Syrian moderate armed groups. And as we begin our efforts under Title X and back moderate fighters on the ground, we will need to be strategically patient and very tough with our allies and the moderate opposition when they stray outside the agreed lines of scrimmage. The Islamic State problem has grown over the course of three years. Putting it down again in Iraq and Syria likely will last years more. But based on what I saw in Iraq years ago, it is achievable.

Defeating the Islamic State in Iraq

Ben Connable

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The RAND Corporation

Defeating the Islamic State in Iraq²

**Before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate**

September 17, 2014

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and distinguished committee members, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today on this critical topic.

This afternoon I will first discuss how the self-described Islamic State, or IS, was able to sweep through northwestern Iraq with such rapidity, and then I will outline options the U.S. and its coalition allies might take in order to attempt to free northern and western Iraq from IS dominance. The thrust of my proposition here is that the success or failure of any coalition effort to defeat IS—and ultimately to stabilize Iraq—hinges not on tactical considerations or tribal engagement efforts, but on the more critical issue of Sunni Iraqi reconciliation. I believe the new anti-IS coalition can succeed if it predicates all of its actions in Iraq on national reconciliation between Sunni and Shia' Iraqis. If political reconciliation is not the core aspect of an anti-IS strategy then coalition efforts are likely to fail in the long run.

Islamic State Sweeps In To Northern Iraq

There are many tactical, or perhaps localized reasons why IS and its temporary nationalist insurgent allies were able to achieve so much success in June and July. These include a patient yet aggressive infiltration of IS assets into northern Iraq through the spring, major gaps in Iraqi Security Force (ISF) capabilities in Nineweh Province, and also a series of IS victories in Syria and western Iraq that generated operational momentum. The Iraqi Army units in the Mosul area had alienated local Iraqis and lost nearly all vestiges of popular support. These units may have also been stripped of some of their equipment and personnel to shore up units fighting in Anbar Province. Morale in the northern Iraqi Army forces was low, leadership was weak, and IS

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capitalized brilliantly on their own operational surprise. Other Iraqi Army units that might have responded to the IS invasion of Mosul were tied down in the west or were simply incapable of the kind of rapid planning and movement required for operational-level quick reaction. IS succeeded in part because of Iraqi Army weakness, but also in great part due to their own military competence and élan.

All of these military factors were important to the IS sweep into northern Iraq. However, they do not fully explain why IS has been so successful in dominating millions of Sunni with only a few thousand fighters. The mostly Sunni Iraqi provinces of Anbar, Salah al-Din, and Nineweh are known for rejecting outside influence and repelling invaders. But while most Sunni Iraqis reject IS methods and philosophy, only a few have turned against IS and tried to push them out of the Sunni provinces. The ongoing Sunni revolt against the Government of Iraq (GoI) has given IS a perfect opportunity to latch on to the Sunni host in a part parasitic, part symbiotic relationship. IS serves the purposes of the Sunni polity by fighting against the government, and the Sunni provide IS with at least a temporary accommodation.

Underlying Sunni Issues Present Opportunities to Extremists and to the Coalition

A similar phenomenon took place between 2003 and 2006, the period after the U.S.-led coalition invasion of Iraq. Millions of Sunni Iraqis suffered the growth and ultimately the dominance of AQI while quietly and fearfully rejecting the Al Qaida methods and philosophy. They underwent years of murder and intimidation, beheadings, robbery, and rape because at least in part they viewed AQI as the lesser of three evils: the extremist group did not present as great an existential threat as either a Shia'-led government or the foreign coalition. During this period many nationalist, or Ba'athist fighters reached temporary deals with AQI and even supported some of its military activities. AQI's power culminated in early 2006 after the destruction of the Golden Mosque in Samaara; they exploited the fear of Shia' oppression and took on the role of "defenders of the faithful" to fight for the Sunni.

Yet in late 2006 the Sunni Iraqis turned against AQI. Despite their best efforts to play on Sunni fears and sectarian animosities, AQI had worn out its welcome. Most Sunni Iraqi did not want to be part of an AQI caliphate and were only willing to accept AQI presence as long as the balance of fear kept them in check. The Awakening movement was the outward expression of the Sunni's turn against AQI. They accepted the promises of support and protection made by both the coalition and the government of Prime Minister Al-Maliki. Many members of AQI turned against the group itself, other insurgents rose up to fight AQI emirs, and in very short order AQI was defeated. While coalition and Iraqi Army military power helped turn the tide, the key to success in

2006 and 2007 was the shift in popular Sunni sentiment against extremism and against outsider domination.

Unfortunately, Prime Minister Al-Maliki abused the trust of the Sunni and undertook an active campaign to disenfranchise them. Between 2006 and 2013, the Sunni again lost faith in what they saw as an Iranian-influenced government. They again grudgingly allowed a foreign-led Sunni extremist group to enter and dominate their provinces, partly out of fear of IS and greatly out of fear of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). In late 2014 we now have a situation that closely resembles late 2004: Sunni Iraqis are disenfranchised from their government, they fear Iranian influence, and they do not yet trust the coalition. But underlying all of this is a desire to turn out the extremists. For now the members of IS float on the surface of the Sunni Iraqi polity; but they will never be integral nor will the Sunni Iraqis accept the IS caliphate. Tolerance of IS in Iraq is temporary. The ways in which they might be ejected, however, matter a great deal.

A Military Centric Anti-IS Effort Faces Formidable Challenges

In his 10 September speech, President Obama described a primarily military-focused effort designed to eject IS from Iraq and ultimately destroy them across the globe. This counterterrorism approach, which weaves together coalition airstrikes, Iraqi Army operations, and Sunni militia support, will certainly reduce IS influence and power in Iraq. Within months we can expect that IS armor, large artillery pieces, technical gun trucks, and overt fixed military positions will be reduced or eliminated inside of Iraq; they will no longer have the ability to conduct large-scale offensives of the kind we saw in Mosul and Tikrit. It does not necessarily follow, however, that IS will be weakened to the point of defeat. While many pundits and analysts have focused on IS technical and financial assets, their fighting power derives primarily from their overall morale and their aggressive, motivated small infantry units. Some of these can be destroyed from the air, but most can and probably will position themselves close to the civilian population in an effort to survive and increase chances of civilian casualties from airstrikes. As a result, airstrikes are insufficient to defeat or destroy IS.

The coalition plan also calls for increased support to the Iraqi Army, which will then help to drive IS out of Iraq. Equipment and trainers are already being prepared and deployed, and intelligence and air control support have already played critical roles in places like the Mosul Dam. All of these technical efforts will help Army units get back on their feet, and they will stiffen the resolve of some units that may be faltering. Consistent, overt U.S. military support can strengthen an allied partner in ways that cannot be measured and should not be underestimated. However, there are several reasons why the Iraqi Army will be challenged to achieve immediate or even

long-term success against IS. I propose three of what I think are the most important reasons for doubt.

First, the recent tactical victories in northern Iraq came only with the help of combined Kurdish and Shia' militia support. Iraqi Army units fought alongside Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) units, Pesh Merga units, and some sectarian Shia' fighters. It is possible but unlikely that Kurdish forces will directly support Iraqi Army advances into the mostly Sunni city of Mosul. It is even less likely they will support offensive thrusts further west into the almost wholly Sunni province of Anbar. They are most interested in protecting the Kurdish north. Similarly, Shia' fighters are most interested in protecting their sectarian cantonments in Diyala and other mixed provinces. While some Shia' militia may accompany Iraqi Army units west, their presence will only serve to reinforce the increasingly widespread—if perhaps exaggerated—belief amongst Sunni that the Iraqi Army is a Shia'-dominated, Iranian-directed force bent on eliminating Sunni Arabs. There are limits to Iraqi collaboration.

Second, the offensive capability of the Iraqi Army is questionable at best. They may well be able to mount a successful campaign into Mosul and Anbar, but it is more likely that they will move slowly, haltingly, and that they will have insufficient force to overcome hardened urban objectives. They remain, as some experts have noted, logistically challenged; this problem will require years of remediation. Iraqi special operations forces that have carried out the most aggressive and successful actions against Sunni insurgents are exhausted from nearly a year of constant combat, and they are too few in number to generate the kind of combat power necessary to seize a large urban area like Mosul, Fallujah, or Ramadi.

And third, the Iraqi Army is not structured, trained, or inclined to conduct the kind of thoughtful counterinsurgency campaign that appears necessary in the Sunni provinces. Instead they are likely to conduct the kind of *counterguerrilla* campaign they executed in Anbar in the first half of 2014. Counterinsurgency campaigns are designed to win support of the population by building government legitimacy and applying force in careful measure. Counterguerrilla campaigns are designed to kill guerrillas, or in this case IS. In early 2014 Iraqi Army units conducted Vietnam War era "sweep and clear" missions across Anbar Province with very little success. When they moved against the insurgent stronghold in Fallujah they used excessive force and still failed to retake the city. Surely they will be more successful at killing IS fighters with coalition air support and intelligence, but they will probably be no more successful at winning popular support than they were earlier this year.

There are also aspects of IS that will affect the likelihood of military success. I stated previously that they are militarily competent and resilient. They may collapse in the face of airstrikes and ground offensives, but it seems more likely that they will adapt their tactics and dig in to dense urban areas. They will also probably accelerate their use of terror attacks against both military and civilian targets in order to weaken political support for the coalition and to degrade Iraqi Army morale.

But while IS has many strengths it also has weaknesses. As pressure mounts against the group, and as young and unbalanced IS fighters are forced to manage hundreds of thousands of Sunni civilians, the likelihood that IS will alienate the Sunni Iraqis increases. And while IS may have a robust force of tens of thousands of fighters across Iraq and Syria, some IS fighters were either forcibly conscripted or have stronger loyalties to Iraqi nationalist insurgent groups like the Jaysh al-Rijal al-Tariqeh al-Naqshibandieh, or JRTN. These conscripts and nationalist fighters can be peeled away from IS with the right pressure and incentives. This will make the job of the Iraqi Army somewhat easier.

What About the Tribes? Considering a Second Awakening Movement

There are challenges to an Iraqi Army offensive, even if it is supported by coalition airstrikes and intelligence. But there are three proposed legs to the anti-IS military plan: airstrikes, Iraqi Army operations, and Sunni popular support. Ostensibly the Iraqi government and the coalition will try to rally Sunni support to turn against IS and, at the very least, defend their local areas to create space for the Iraqi Army to maneuver. Some hope to see a reprise of the 2006-2008 Awakening Movement. A mass Sunni uprising against IS would probably shift the balance of power in favor of the government and might rapidly push IS back across the international border to Syria. Indeed, this uprising, or revolt against IS is central to the possible solution I am laying before you this afternoon. However, it is important to eliminate misconceptions about the first Awakening movement before trying to encourage a second.

Conditions in 2006 and early 2007 were perfect for an Awakening. AQI had alienated the population, the U.S. had demonstrated its commitment to the Iraqis by announcing a surge of troops, and the Iraqi government pledged millions of dollars in reconstruction support to Sunni areas stricken by years of heavy combat. Finely tuned special operations targeting raids kept the insurgents on their heels while U.S. infantry and armored forces created safe zones for civilians and for burgeoning yet vulnerable Sons of Iraq militias. Prime Minister Al-Maliki offered reconciliation to the Sunni and seemed to prove his non-sectarian bona fides by moving against

Shia' militias. And probably millions of dollars changed hands through local reconstruction deals and direct payments to fund and motivate Sunni militia leadership.

What did not happen is just as important as what did happen. While Sattar Abu Risha did lead the Awakening council and was a charismatic figure, he was not a unifying figure for all Sunni nor did he generate the Awakening. At no point did U.S. interlocutors find "the right person" to talk with, thereby energizing a Sunni revolt against AQI. Instead, Abu Risha was a convenient public face for a broad grass roots shift in popular sentiment. And while the U.S. troop surge played an important moral and physical role in defeating AQI, the troop surge was not the critical component in the Awakening. While it would have been far more difficult, and would have taken longer, it is possible that the Awakening might have succeeded against AQI even with less U.S. or coalition support. Iraqi Sunni are competent and sometimes aggressive fighters. They nearly ejected the coalition from Iraq, and perhaps ultimately they could have ejected AQI from Sunni-dominated areas.

Conditions today are different in several critical ways. IS has alienated many Sunni, but it still has some support in various Sunni areas. There are some strong local Sunni leaders and even potential national leaders, but the Sunni political class is badly fragmented. Even tribal leaders have very limited influential power over their own tribal members, and many tribes are if anything more divided than they were in 2006. There are no U.S. ground troops to create "oil spots" of stability for fledgling militia forces, and ostensibly none of the supremely capable U.S. special operations direct action forces will help pick apart IS leadership in the dense urban or maze-like rural swathes of Anbar. Most importantly, though, is the absence of proof—so far—that the new Prime Minister of Iraq, Haider Al-Abadi, is serious about reconciliation.

Finding "the right person" to talk to amongst Iraq's Sunnis and handing over bags of cash to stand up militias or encourage Sunni to join a new national guard may lead to real short-term tactical success in some Sunni areas of Iraq. There may be visible signs of Sunni resistance against IS as tribal leaders come to the fore and, cash in hand, pledge to work alongside the Iraqi Army. It is possible that over time, with coalition airpower, the Iraqi Army and Sunni militiamen may be able to push IS out of Iraq without national reconciliation of any kind.

Ultimately, though, this quick tactical approach is likely to perpetuate rather than reduce instability in Iraq. While the world focuses on IS, it is important to remember that IS floats above the Sunni population and does not represent enduring Sunni grievances or narratives. There is an ongoing Sunni revolt against the Iraqi government that, if not addressed, will continue even if IS is ejected.

In this event the second Awakening is likely to end in the same way as the first: with armed, angry Sunni fighters turning against the government in a recurring cycle of violence.

I propose there is a way to encourage the Sunni to turn against IS in a way that will be more tactically effective, more cost effective, and ultimately more enduring than inducing quick and temporary allegiances with cash and military aid. I also propose that this approach will obviate the weaknesses inherent in a primarily military or counterterror approach to the IS problem.

Reconciliation is the Best and Least Costly Option for Success

The Iraqi state that existed in early 2014 now exists only in the Iraqi Constitution. There is a de facto split of Iraq along ethno-sectarian lines: Sunni, Shia', and Kurd. It may or may not be possible to bring the Kurds fully back in to the Iraqi state. Chances for successful Sunni-Shia' reconciliation are probably quite low. However, my interactions with Sunni Iraqis since 2003, and my targeted research on Sunni Iraqi perceptions over the past year indicate that all strata of the Sunni Iraqi population wish to remain within the state.

They tend to view their revolt against the government as an anti-Iranian rather than an anti-Shia' movement. Most are nationalists who believe they should play a prominent role in the central state. Further, the natural resources in the Sunni provinces are inconsequential in comparison to Kurdish and Shia' resources, and Sunni do not believe decentralization will result in equitable sharing. While they want more local power, they do not want to be permanently marginalized and disenfranchised from the state. It is therefore possible to leverage Sunni nationalism to foster lasting reconciliation.

One approach to Sunni reconciliation would be through negotiation. This might require finding a charismatic Sunni leader who represents a large majority, or at least large plurality, of the Sunni population. His influence would have to be sufficient to encourage tens of thousands of Sunni to turn against IS. As of late-2014, though, this leader has not emerged and the Sunni do not seem disposed to follow a single political figure. Another approach would be dispersed engagement, with coalition and Iraqi leaders fanning out across Iraq to drum up local support. I argue this approach will lead to tactical success but strategic failure. Instead, I propose that only intensive, one-sided national reconciliation efforts aimed at the broad Sunni population will lead to lasting success.

Earlier this month Prime Minister Al-Abadi enumerated a list of grievance resolution measures he intended to take in order to win Sunni support. These include general amnesty for innocent Sunni

caught up in the counterinsurgency campaign, a depoliticized justice system, amendments to anti-terror laws, reconstruction of damaged Sunni areas, the formation of a National Guard, and increased regional authorities. Sunni leaders have listed other grievances and want the immediate release of all female prisoners and Sunni politicians, restoration of full retirement pay for former regime officers, and other measures to reduce the impact of de-Ba'athification laws that have been used to target Sunni leadership. Some of these actions will require political ratification, but others will not.

President Obama and senior administration officials have correctly stressed that success against IS is dependent on Iraqi reconciliation and on positive Iraqi leadership. Prime Minister Al-Abadi has a window of opportunity now, in the early stages of the campaign, to make unequivocal moves towards genuine reconciliation. The coalition should encourage him to enact all grievance resolution measures within his authority in one fell swoop. This action, which should include prisoner releases and the real-time transfer of money for reconstruction and retirement pay, would demonstrate that he is taking a different path than his predecessor. At this point in the year-long Sunni revolt, only real and dramatic action on the above-named fronts will be sufficient to convince the Sunni that the more tangible things—cash payments, equipment—are part of a broader strategy to reunite the state.

Following this top-level Iraqi action, all coalition activities should be predicated on reconciliation. Every engagement should hinge on some kind of local or regional reconciliation measure, and every tactical military action should be planned to preserve and improve relationships between the Sunni and the state. This may mean taking some tactical risk, including strictly limiting damage to Sunni urban areas and curtailing aerial targeting. Advisors will find themselves in difficult positions as they attempt to rein in Iraqi Army air and artillery support. This approach will certainly preclude the use of Shia' and Kurdish militias in support of Iraqi Army combat actions in Sunni areas. Reconciliation first and foremost, in conjunction with coalition support, and Iraqi military and government efforts must be woven together into a holistic strategy with a definitive envisioned end-state.

There are many hurdles to successful reconciliation. Divisions in the Sunni polity will continue to undermine Sunni cohesion and may hinder efforts to develop militia support. Prime Minister Al-Abadi may not be willing or able to make the kind of dramatic measures necessary to gain Sunni trust. And IS and some of its allies will probably make every effort to foster discord between Sunni and Shia' in order to maintain Sunni support. They already conduct terror attacks that seem designed to deepen the divide between Sunni and Shia' Iraqis. However, there are also some positive underlying factors. While there are divisions between Sunni and Shia' Iraqis, there are

also strong inter and intra-tribal bonds between the two sectarian groups. Sunni leaders I have spoken with in the last year repeatedly emphasized their belief that Sunni and Shia' Iraqis are first and foremost Iraqis.

Conclusion

As I stated earlier, chances of genuine and lasting reconciliation in Iraq are admittedly low. However, reconciliation also offers the best and perhaps only chance to reconstitute the admittedly limited successes of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn. Absent reconciliation we can expect lasting instability in Iraq. We may physically defeat IS, but the ideas that cause young Iraqi men to support groups like IS and Al Qaida will live on. The group name will change—there were over 100 identified insurgent groups in Iraq during the 2003-2011 war—but the violence will continue to destabilize the region, give space for international terror groups, and deprive millions of Iraqis of even a modicum of normal life.

Stopping IS now is wise; current anti-IS actions should be applied aggressively to keep the group on its heels. In the case of IS, military force is necessary. Yet addressing root causes of any insurgency is also historically proven to be the best and most lasting way to defeat insurgent groups. Leveraging reconciliation—and using military force to support reconciliation rather than using reconciliation to support military force—seems to be the least costly and possibly the only way to defeat IS in Iraq and stabilize that country.