

Testimony

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By

General John M. Keane, USA (Ret)

on

Global Challenges and U.S. National Security Strategy

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Mr. Chairman, ranking minority and members of this distinguished committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on such a critical issue as America's global security challenges. Am honored to be here today with General Jim Mattis and Admiral Fox Fallon, both highly respected military leaders who I have known for years.

The U.S. is confronting emerging security challenges on a scale it has not seen since the rise of the Soviet Union to superpower status following WWII, with radical Islam morphing into a global jihad, Iran seeking regional hegemony and revisionist powers capable of employing, in varying degrees of sophistication, disruptive methods of war that will severely test the U.S. military's traditional methods of projecting and sustaining power abroad. Given U.S. defense budget projections, the U.S. will have to confront these challenges without its long standing decided advantage in the scale of resources it is able to devote to the competition. Indeed the Budget Control Act (BCA), or sequestration, is not only irresponsible, in the face of emerging challenges, it is downright reckless.

Let me briefly outline the major security challenges and what can be done about them.

1. RADICAL ISLAM

As much as nazism and communism both geopolitical movements, ideologically driven, were the major security challenges of the 20th century, radical Islam is the major security challenge of our generation. Nazism was defeated by overwhelming brute force and communism was defeated by better ideas. Radical Islam will take a combination of force and better ideas to ultimately add it to the trash heap of unrealized and unfulfilled ideological movements.

Radical Islam as I am defining it for today's discussion consists of 3 distinct movements, who share a radical fundamentalist ideology, use jihad or terror to achieve objectives yet compete with each other for influence and power.

- First, the Shia based, Iranian sponsored radical Islamist movement that began in 1979 with the formation of the Islamic State of Iran. In 1980 Iran declared the U.S. as a strategic enemy and its goal is to drive the U.S. out of the region, achieve regional hegemony and destroy the state of Israel. It uses proxies, primarily, as the world's number one state sponsoring terrorism. Beginning in the early 1980's it began jihad against the U.S. by bombing the Marine barracks, the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Embassy Annex in Lebanon, the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, the AF barracks , Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia and attacking the U.S. military in Iraq using Shia militias trained in Iran with advanced IEDs developed by Iranian engineers. To date, the result is, U.S. troops left Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iraq while Iran has direct influence and some control over Beirut, Lebanon, Gaza, Damascus, Syria, Baghdad, Iraq and now Sana'a, Yemen (as you can see on the map.)

Is there any doubt that Iran, is on the march and is systematically moving toward their regional hegemonic objectives. Iran has armed Hezbollah and Hamas with thousands of rockets and missiles in order to attack Israel, has propped up the Assad regime with Quds force advisors and fighters plus tons of military supplies, was the first to come to the assistance of the beleaguered Iraq government after the ISIS invasion and today has hundreds of Quds force advisors on the ground in Iraq , backing Iranian trained Shia militias, with Qasem Soleimani, the head of the

Quds force, a frequent visitor and now using the Houthis, has managed to topple the Yemen government, an ally in the fight against Al Qaeda.

The Iranian strategy of using proxies to conduct jihad and to launch conventional military attacks while propping up countries it desires to influence is a winning strategy. Despite 30 years of proxy attacks against American interests in the region and an almost 10 year kidnapping campaign in the 80's resulting in the death of CIA station chief Buckley not a single American president, republican or democrat has ever countered.

Iran also has been on a 20 year journey to acquire nuclear weapons, simply because they know it guarantees preservation of the regime and makes them along with their partners the dominant power in the region thereby capable of expanding their control and influence. Add to this their ballistic missile delivery system and Iran is not only a threat to the region but to Europe as well, and as they increase missile range, eventually a threat to the U.S.

- Second , the Al Qaeda (AQ), Sunni based movement, declared war on the U.S. in the early 90's, desires to drive the U.S. out of the region, dominate all Muslim lands, and as the most ambitious radical Islamist movement, eventually achieve world domination. The U.S. has a 20 year history with AQ who began its jihad in the early 90's with the attack on the WTC, U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USS Cole, the 9/11 attacks and a number of planned attacks since 9/11 that were either thwarted or bungled. As you can see on the map, AQ and its affiliates, exceeds Iran in beginning to dominate multiple countries. AQ has grown fourfold in the last 5 years. Unable to project power out of the region due to US drone attacks, in

Pakistan, AQ central franchised out to AQAP in Yemen, by providing some key leaders, the responsibility to conduct out of region attacks e.g. in the U.S. and Paris, France. No one is suggesting that the red on that map is under the direct control and influence of AQ central. They are not. But what binds them together is a shared and common ideology using jihad to accomplish their political objective, which is the overthrow of their host governments.

Third, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is an outgrowth from Al Qaeda in Iraq which was defeated in Iraq by 2009. Conducting assessment visits for GEN Petraeus many times in Iraq, on one occasion in late 2008 I was shown a number of AQ message intercepts where AQ admitted defeat and was advising AQ central not to send any more “brothers” because it is “over.” In 2011 the U.S. unplugged its sophisticated intelligence capability, and pulled out the CT force whose main task was to hunt down AQ leaders. A week after the last troops left, General Caslen, then U.S. commander indicated, the first suicide bomb in over 6 months went off in Baghdad. And so it began the beginnings of ISIS as a terrorist organization in Iraq, moved into Syria in 2012, and began seizing towns and villages from the Syria/Iraq border all the way to western Syria from Aleppo to Damascus. We tracked this by day and by week at the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) providing briefings to CIA, DIA, CJCS, DOS, congressional intelligence committees and to members of this committee.

After many terrorist attacks and assassinations in Mosul and Anbar province in 2013 to set the conditions for follow on operations, ISIS launched a conventional attack back into Iraq beginning in 2014 with the seizure of Falujah and culminating in the seizure of Mosul and many other towns and villages.

- Why Are We Failing: Is it possible to look at the map and claim that U.S. policy and strategy is working or that “AQ is on the run.” It is unmistakable that our policies have failed and the unequivocal explanation is U.S. policy has focused on disengaging from the Middle East. The Arab Spring, a strategic surprise, began in 2010 in a region where democracy does not exist in the Arab world, as the people in the streets were seeking political reform, social justice and economic opportunity. No one was in the streets advocating radical Islam or jihad but the radical Islamists saw political upheaval as an opportunity to gain control and influence. Meanwhile the U.S. in terms of policy emphasis was conducting the so called “pivot” to the east. We failed to see the Arab Spring as a U.S. opportunity to influence political reform and social justice. The radicals filled that vacuum as the Arab Spring became an accelerant for them. As such ISIS reemerged in Iraq, then Syria, after U.S. troops pulled out, the White House announced a similar pullout of all troops in Afghanistan. In Libya, the moderate regime, friendly to the U.S., that replaced Qaddafi requested assistance to form an effective security force to safeguard the government and protect the people from the armed militant groups. We refused and the radical Islamists (AAS) tried to kill the UK Ambassador, burned down the U.S. consulate and killed Ambassador Stephens, and, now, the country is being taken over by the radical Islamists, forcing the shutdown of the U.S. Embassy. In Syria, in 2010, moderate rebels (now, the FSA) had the initial momentum against the Assad regime, many believed the regime was about to fall. Then Iran, Hezbollah and the Russians assisted the Assad regime thereby forcing the FSA to request arms and training assistance. They never requested any U.S. “boots on the ground” or even, at the time, any use of air power. As late as

the summer of 2012 Director Petraeus, Secretaries Clinton and Panetta and General Dempsey recommended we assist the FSA, who the CIA vetted. The President of the United States refused and ISIS and other radical groups to include AQ moved into Syria while the Assad regime was systematically killing 200,000 Syrians and displacing more than 13 million from their homes, a human catastrophe by any definition. Even after the Assad regime used chemical weapons (CW) to kill Syrians by the thousands, thereby crossing the infamous U.S. “red line,” the U.S. failed to engage. Our allies in the region lost confidence in U.S. leadership and question, to this day, U.S. resolve. U.S. policy makers chose to ignore the very harsh realities of the rise of radical Islam. In my view, we became paralyzed by the fear of adverse consequences in the Middle East after fighting two wars. Moreover, as we sit here this morning in the face of radical Islam, US policy makers will not only accurately name the movement as radical Islam , we further choose not to define it, nor explain its ideology and most critical, we have no comprehensive strategy to stop it or defeat it. We are reduced to a very piecemeal effort using drones in Yemen and Pakistan, a vital tactic but not a strategy and air power in Iraq and Syria , while assisting an indigenous ground force. This approach almost certainly guarantees we will be incrementally engaged against one radical group after another, with no end in sight.

- What Can Be Done: To stop and defeat a global radical Islamist movement and Iranian regional hegemony requires a broad, long term, comprehensive strategic approach with strategic objectives both near and long term supporting the strategy. We should be informed by the successful defeat and collapse of another ideology, communism. World leaders understood how

formidable the communist, Soviet threat was to the world order and formed political and military alliances i.e., NATO and SEATO to counter it. The power and influence of countries working together against a common enemy is the preferred way to achieve a comprehensive and synergistic outcome. Forming political and military alliances or using a combination of existing alliances offers the opportunity by member nations to develop a comprehensive strategy to discuss and set goals for necessary political and social reforms, and to share intelligence, technology, equipment and training. The alliance is mostly about supporting countries in the region to make internal changes and to assist comprehensively in countering radical Islam. This is not about major military intervention by the U.S., it is about assisting alliance members with training their counter-terrorism force and their conventional military in counterinsurgency and yes conducting U.S. CT operations as required. While killing and capturing terrorists is key, so is the strategy to organize an alliance wide effort to undermine the radical Islamist ideology, to counter its narrative, to counter recruiting and to target outside financing.

- ISIS/ AQ/ Iran in Iraq/ Syria: The ISIS advance is stalled in Iraq due to effective air power with modest gains in retaking lost territory. However, a successful counter offensive to retake Mosul and Anbar province is a very real challenge. No one knows for certain how the indigenous force consisting of IA, Peshmerga, Sunni tribes and Shia militia will perform. The U.S. should plan now to have U.S./coalition advisors accompany front line troops with the added capability to call in air strikes. Direct action SOFs both ground and air should assist by targeting ISIS leaders. U.S. and coalition combat brigades should be

designated for deployment and moved to Kuwait to be ready for employment if the counter offensive stalls or is defeated.

The Syria policy is a failure. There is wide disagreement in DOD, DOS, and the NSC over the current Syrian policy. ISIS is continuing to advance throughout Syria and is gaining ground, taking new territory. The plans for training and assisting the FSA, is not robust enough, 5,000 in one year, and permitting Assad to continue to bomb the FSA faster than new members are trained makes no sense. The U.S. should heed the advice of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan and Turkey to establish a No Fly Zone (NFZ) to shut down Assad's air power and a buffer zone to protect refugees.

ISIS, AQ and Iran are competing in Iraq and Syria. Their competition raises the stakes for all of them. They do not cancel each other out. They make each other stronger and induce them to act with greater impunity. Their competition risks hijacking the internal struggles within Iraq and Syria. The longer these wars go on, the better off they will do. Their struggle will also raise the stakes for Saudi Arabia and disrupt the regional balance of power in the Middle East.

The wars in Iraq and Syria cannot be contained. ISIS and AQ are trying to bring them to Europe. Not just through terrorist attacks, but through polarizing identity. They are deliberately working to radicalize sympathizers. Providing security against terrorism and stopping radicalization is a rising challenge for our European allies, and, fortunately, less for the U.S. This is a war of ideas, but it is also a war in which military might matters. These groups have laid down stakes in Iraq and Syria. They will be very hard to lose without tipping the region into a sectarian war. The barriers to their entry have to hold.

We are living through a time when the regional refugee crisis is out of control. 13 million Syrians displaced. That's well over 60% of Syria's pre-war population displaced or killed. Iraq is on the rise with 3 million Iraqis internally displaced as of late 2014. This is not a stable system, and the chaos favors these three groups.

-Iran : The long term goal for any alliance should be Iran's regime change or a collapse of the existing government framework, similar to the collapse of the Soviet Union. And the reason is clear; Iran's stated regional hegemonic objectives are incongruous with the peace, prosperity and stability of the Middle East.

Iran cannot be permitted to acquire a nuclear weapon or a threshold capability allowing rapid nuclear development. Sadly, we are already about there! Congress should do 2 things now in reference to Iran. 1) authorize increased sanctions now with automatic implementation if talks are extended or fail 2) legislate ratification of any deal by the Senate.

-Afghanistan: The political situation in Afghanistan has improved considerably with the reform leadership of Ashraf Ghani but the security situation remains at risk. While the security situation in the South is relatively stable with some exceptions, the situation in the East is not satisfactory. The problem is the area generally from Kabul to the Pakistan border which is the domain of the Haqqani network (HQN). Because the White House provided 25% less surge forces than requested and then pulled the surge forces out prematurely, these forces were never applied to the East as they were, successfully, in the South. As such HQN has not been rooted out of their support zones and safe areas in Afghanistan. This is a serious problem for the ANSF. It follows that the ANSF needs the funding to support its current troop levels of 352K and much needed U.S. and coalition troops to conduct CT and to advise, train and assist the ANSF beyond

2016. All we accomplished will be at risk, as it was in Iraq, if the troops are pulled out not based on the conditions on the ground. How can we not learn the obvious and painful lesson from Iraq ?

2. SECURITY CHALLENGES POSED BY REVISIONIST EUROASIAN NATIONS i.e. RUSSIA AND CHINA

- Russia: In Europe, Russia's recent behavior suggests that its 2008 military campaign against Georgia was not an aberration but rather an initial effort to overturn the prevailing regional order. By seizing the Crimea, supporting trumped up rebel forces in eastern Ukraine and engaging in military deployments that directly threaten its Baltic neighbors, Moscow has made it clear that it does not accept the political map of post- Cold War Europe. I believe we need to realistically conclude that Moscow is also willing to challenge the very existence of NATO.

- What Can Be Done: Given the dramatic drop in oil prices, Russia is beginning to suffer economically and is likely heading toward a recession if not already there. Additional tough sanctions should be put back on the table to coerce Russia to stop the Ukraine aggression. It is a disgrace that once again we have refused to assist a people being oppressed when all they asked for is the weapons to fight; that policy decision which the White House states could lead to an escalation in the conflict, makes no sense. We should robustly arm and assist Ukraine. Additionally, NATO military presence should be significantly shifted to the Baltics and Eastern Europe with plans for permanent bases. A clear signal of Article 5 intent must be

sent to Moscow. These actions will strengthen our diplomatic efforts which to date have failed.

- China: China's continuing economic growth has fueled a major conventional military buildup that is beginning to shift the local balance of power in its favor. As a result Beijing has been emboldened to act more assertively toward its neighbors, especially in expanding its territorial claims, which include not only Taiwan, but also most of the South China sea islands and Japan's Senkaku Islands. China has embarked on a strategy of regional domination at the expense of U.S. interests, as a pacific nation, and decades of partnership with allied countries in the region.

- What Can Be Done: Develop a regional strategy with our allies to counter China's desire for dominant control and influence. Recognize that China's military strategy to defeat U.S. reliance on military information networks which they believe alone may defeat the U.S. militarily and their exploding precision strike capability threatens surface and naval forces, forward staging bases, and air and sea ports of debarkation. The U.S. no longer enjoys the commanding position in the precision strike regime that it occupied in the two decades following the Cold War. We should stress test U.S. regional military defense to counter China's threat and recognize that a change in regional defense strategy is likely.

3. SEQUESTRATION:

It must be repealed and reasonable resources restored to meet the emerging security challenges. All the services have a need to capitalize their investment accounts and to maintain readiness which is rapidly eroding.

In conclusion, given the emerging security challenges and limited resources, the need for well crafted regional defense strategies in an overall integrated defense strategy and posture is clear. Yet this is not what we do. What we do is the QDR, every four years, which is largely driven by process and far too focused on the budget.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.