

# **ISIS: An Emerging Global Sunni Caliphate?**

**2015**

INTER-UNIVERSITY CENTER  
FOR  
**TERRORISM**  
STUDIES



AT THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
LAW INSTITUTE

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**Dr. Wayne H. Zaideman**  
Former FBI Legal Attaché in the Middle East

Like Professor Alexander mentioned, I was overseas in the Middle East in the Legal Attaché (LEGAT) program. The LEGAT is the FBI director's representative in foreign countries. I covered Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel at different times. For approximately seventeen years I was a Special Agent in the FBI, handling counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence cases concerning the Middle East. I was then a Supervisory Special Agent assigned to FBI Headquarters as a Supervisor, a Unit Chief, and an Assistant Section Chief.

With this background, I would like to say that I agree with Professor Wedgewood; it may sound strange from someone with a law enforcement background, but law enforcement is not the answer to our current counter-terrorism challenges. I found it very disturbing when I heard President Obama recently say following the abhorrent beheading of James Foley, that he is going to make sure that we identify the perpetrator, locate the perpetrator, and bring the perpetrator to justice. This, to me, is reminiscent of the old days, the pre-9/11 days of the FBI, where the slogan was "it blows up, we show up." Investigations were totally reactive. A crime occurs, (a terrorism event) and then the whole unit, including analysts, supervisors, and managers, work for years developing evidence, and presenting "prosecutive summary reports" to the United States Attorney. The case will then be brought to court and they may or may not ever locate the perpetrator(s). If they do, they will bring them to US district court. There may then be problems as to whether there is adequate evidence (beyond a reasonable doubt.) There may also be problems presenting evidence due to "sources and methods." For example, if the FBI is working with the CIA, Military Intelligence, NSA, or other intelligence agencies, much of the information is provided for "intelligence purposes only." The intelligence agencies do not want to end up testifying in court; they do not want to destroy their confidential sources, so they will not want to furnish the evidence to be used in a criminal prosecution. On the flip side, the US attorneys and the grand juries want to maintain the secrecy of their evidence before the grand juries and do not want to share it. So, it provides one of the biggest problems of information sharing. I hope that we do not return to treating terrorism investigations as criminal cases. After 9/11 there was a huge culture change within the FBI, and we began treating them as intelligence investigations. No longer is the primary desire to identify somebody, locate them, and convict them in a court of law in the United States. This new policy is to disrupt and defeat terrorism before it occurs; to be proactive, to prevent terrorist actions from occurring in the United States. Some of the examples that were mentioned—Kenya, Tanzania, (East African bombings), the USS Cole, Khobar Tower—these were all treated as criminal investigations. And it was a dismal failure.

It should remain a (War on Terrorism). I emphasize "war on terrorism" because it is not "law enforcement." We must identify our enemies and remember who our friends are. We have to return to the use of terms such as "terrorism" and "Islamic extremism." Shortly after President Obama came into office, these terms were stricken from the vocabulary from the FBI and other US government agencies. It is no longer "terrorism," it is "man-made disaster," or "work place violence;" and there is no more "Islamic extremism" because it is not politically correct. We must identify our enemy. The enemy is not Islam; it is not all Muslims. That is understood. However, our number one enemy is Islamic Extremism. While not all terrorists are Muslims, it is

certainly the case, that in recent years, almost all terrorist incidents have been conducted by Islamic Extremists.

Guantanamo Bay Facility (Gitmo): When President Obama took office, he pledged that he was going to immediately close down Gitmo. This was a policy that was doomed to dismal failure, because they are not criminals, they are enemy combatants. It would be a grave mistake to bring detainees to the United States and put them on trial in a civilian court. If the evidence is not strong enough, or due to sources and methods, evidence is withheld, the person may be acquitted. If this happens they go free. We would then have terrorist threats in the legal venues – in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc. One of the reasons for Gitmo is that the home countries of the enemy combatants do not want them back. These were terrorists that received training and battle experience in places such as Afghanistan against the Soviets, the Bosnian- Serbian war, and all the various Al-Qaida manifestations. Their home countries do not want them back. This is a problem we have with ISIS and other Islamic Extremist groups; a lot of the terrorists have British passports, US passports, and Canadian passports. Do WE want them back? If they all came back here after fighting in Syria, Iraq or Lebanon etc., we will have a huge problem. We now have an FBI with reduced resources and a military with reduced resources; and we will have to keep track of all these people in addition to the ones we are already monitoring.

As mentioned, the other intelligence agencies are reluctant to cooperate if they are not assured the evidence is going to be used in the way they want it to be used; and that is no less relevant for foreign cooperation. As a LEGAT working overseas, I met with intelligence agencies, security agencies, and police agencies from the host countries, and in many cases they cooperate with us because it is reciprocal; we help them, they help us. But they also say in most cases, that it is not for law enforcement purposes, it is for intelligence purposes only. They have a right to restrict its use if they are giving us information; they can limit how it is used. It does not lend itself well to law enforcement purposes.

Rendition: This is another activity that has been widely condemned by some circles within the US administration. Rendition is the transfer of captured terrorist suspects from one country to another for detention, arrest, and interrogation. They will be afforded the legal protection in place in the country detaining and interrogating them. In other words, they are not subject to US laws; if they are in Egypt they are subject to Egyptian laws, in Jordan they are subject to Jordanian laws, etc. The information the host countries obtain can be provided to US intelligence, and/or law enforcement personnel. If we insist on preventing the host countries from dealing with it their way, and bring the terrorists to the United States, they will be immediately subject to US law. They get Miranda warnings, they are furnished an attorney; and we will ensure that the perpetrators are going to keep their mouths shut, and furnish no information. You are not going to get any intelligence information; you are not going to potentially save lives as a result of getting information – information that could possibly save American.

The host countries do the interviews, not us. We can provide them with questions, and provide them with things we are looking for; hopefully they will then provide us with the answers. It would be a mistake to eliminate renditions as a useful tool. In 2007, former CIA Director Michael Hayden stated that “The renditions have been conducted lawfully, responsibly,

and with a clear and simple purpose: to get terrorists off the streets and gain intelligence on those still at large.”

What about the targets? We are talking about ISIS now, but we have to understand that Islamic Extremists are basically of “one mind.” Whether it is ISIS/ ISIL or Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Boko Haram, Al Nusra or Al-Qa’ida, they all believe the world to be within the abode of Islam Dar Al-Islam, or Dar-Al Harb, the abode of war. They mean that there has to be a continuous jihad, interrupted only by occasional hudnas – temporary truces– until the world is made up of counties either ruled by Islamic law, or the non-Muslims convert to Islam, or at least that they are willing to submit to Islamic law.

An example of “one mind” is Hamas. Hamas holds that all of Palestine is an Islamic waqf and no part of it can be negotiated or compromised away by any leader. To do so would be an act of heresy, and the leader would be labeled as an infidel, or worse yet, a “mushrik,” which in Arabic means polytheist or pagan. It is no surprise that they have no desire to sincerely negotiate with Israel. It also shows how Christians and Jews, for example, have been re-labeled. They were traditionally called People of the Book, and by being People of the Book, they were allowed certain protections while living within Islamic countries. But, if the Islamic Extremists re-brand them as “mushrikim” (pagans), they are no longer true Christians or Jews, and all bets are off. They lose protection and can be subject to persecution, injury and/or death; Islamic Extremists can do anything they want to them, including beheading.

Also, Islamic Extremists have no desire to limit civilian casualties. In the 1070’s, the terrorists were in left-wing groups; they wanted to play up to the media and reduced civilian casualties in order to gain support and sympathy for their causes. However, for the Islamic Extremists, their audience is not the international community. Their audience is God, and they presume to know what God wants them to do. The act of terrorism becomes a sacred act.

In the United States, there was always a reluctance to shut down Islamic front-groups; they were called “Islamic charities”, even though the FBI and other agencies knew that they were furnishing “material support” to terrorist groups. It was believed that shutting them down would not pass the “smell-test.” In other words, if you see in the New York Times or Washington Post, that over the weekend we shut down charities and poor little children and women - orphans and widows would not get their money. So the government took no action. This is true, even though the monies were not used to buy bread and cheese; they were used for bullets, bombs and missiles. One notable exception was the Holy Land Foundation case, in Texas, where there was a successful prosecution. But there are many, many other front groups in the United States, and one of the more visible front groups is CAIR, which you see on the news frequently. Unfortunately, there are many elements within the US government that use groups like CAIR as consultants or as partners against terrorism. It is truly misguided. This partnership will never succeed; we must remember who our friends are, and who our enemies are.

One of President Obama’s policies that puzzles me, and I will never understand why he chose it, is that he invited the “Ikhwan Muslimin” (Muslim Brotherhood), into Egypt, into Tunisia, etc. He decided that the Muslim Brotherhood would be a partner for peace. Anyone who

has read anything by the Muslim Brotherhood, or heard any of their speeches knows that their ideology is totally incompatible with US policy.

Another mistaken policy was the decision to overthrow Muammar Qaddafi's regime and to allow him to be killed. This was after Qaddafi decided to align himself with the West, and agreed to disarm and dismantle his nuclear program. Does this make any sense to anybody? After former President Bush went into Iraq, Qaddafi in effect said, "I changed my mind, I want to ally with the West, and here are the keys to the nuclear sites. Then we go in and take over the regime, and kill him. This is at the same time that we are trying to convince Iran to disarm and dismantle their nuclear weapons program. What kind of lesson did we send to Iran? If I were Iran, I would probably be reluctant to agree to disarm and dismantle.

During the confirmation hearings of Secretary of Defense Hagel, he made what the news media said was a slip-up. He said that the US policy toward Iran is "containment", and then he was brought a note from one of the White House aides saying, "the policy is not containment, it is "prevention." "It is not containment, we are going to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons President Obama has promised." Sadly, it now is obvious that Secretary Hagel was really telling the truth. He was not supposed to admit to the true policy. In the current nuclear negotiations, rather than demanding Iran to dismantle, which was always our request, they are allowing Iran to continue to enrich uranium. We are giving Iran extension after extension, allowing them to stall for time and develop the components of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, the current White House forgets our friends, like Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, and often treats them as our adversaries. We "beat up on them," while we embrace with both arms Islamic Extremist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. We must remember that the Ikhwan does not believe in contemporary nation states; they believe artificial boundaries prevent the golden ideal of the Islamic Caliphate. Any lands at any time controlled by Muslims, including Lebanon, Israel, Spain, (Andalusia), parts of Europe, etc., must be regained by jihad. Populations must convert to Islam or at the very least submit to Muslim rule. We have the Muslim Brotherhood saying basically what ISIS or ISIL is currently saying.

We must examine our policies and get back on the right footing, and understand that, (1) We must continue to treat terrorism as an intelligence investigation, (2) We must identify the enemy and eliminate them as a threat to the US and/or our US allies. (3) We must know our real allies and make use of them in a coalition, such as Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and parts of Saudi Arabia – I say that because the Saudis have factions that support the West, and have factions that do not support the West. Some passively support Islamic Extremists. Finally, (4) We must target front groups and follow the money trails and material support of terrorism.

**Ambassador (Ret.) Edward Marks**

Formerly, U.S. Department of State Deputy Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism

Good Afternoon. As Yonah said, I am a rather standard issue American professional diplomat – or rather, a retired one. Therefore, I will address this question from my professional perspective – sometimes called a professional deformation – as does everybody else who deals with the subject. I will try to look at it from the perspective of international politics, international trends, historic trends, and the role of diplomacy. Not a terribly popular perspective these days, but as we learned in the last 10 or 12 years, we have ignored these questions at our cost.

The precedent of the international system was begun by the Peace of Westphalia, and is so ingrained in our worldview that we tend not to think about it very much – although references to the Treaty of Westphalia and the nation-state system are usually de rigeur for diplomats, academics, and up-scale op-ed writers. But the system which began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was so accepted that it became the basic anti-colonial argument of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The disappearing colonial regimes – particularly in the Middle East, largely European – were quite consciously replaced by replica nation-states, although of varying colors – nationalist, leftist, authoritarian, collectivist, theocratic and once in a while even democratic. The growth in the membership of the United Nations from the original 50 to the over 190 today is a record of that growth and change in the international political structure. Everybody wants to be a nation.

Now this essentially consensual international system does not operate with anything close to perfection. It has been challenged several times in the past: by Napoleon and his revolutionary mode and most recently by the Soviet Union, which attempted to replace the nation-state system with a governance system founded upon a version of a theory of economic class. Today however, while it is still the universal system in the world, it has been challenged on several fronts. First of all – at least in some regions, particularly in the Middle East – by sheer incompetence and by social-political pressures. This is particularly marked in the Middle East – the Arab Middle East, which is apparently in a state of disintegration – as ancient conflicts reoccur between Arab-Persian, Turk-Persian, Turk-Arab, Sunni-Shia, secular-religious, modern-traditional, democratic-authoritarian, national-tribal, rich-poor. As a gazetted outsider, because I am not a Middle East expert by any means, I am struck by the obvious observation that the three most obviously competent nation-states in the region – Iran, Turkey and Israel – are not Arab.

But the most dramatic challenge to the Westphalian system is resurgence of another ancient experiment in governance: the Islamic Caliphate. The original Islamic Caliphate preceded the Westphalian system by many centuries. Although in some respects it resembled its imperial peers, the Persian and Byzantine Empires, it was fundamentally different as it claimed global universality on the basis of a revealed religion. Essentially, the Islamic Caliphate denied the legitimacy of governance to every other system of governance. Pursuing that vision, the Islamic Caliphate spread over all of what we now call the Middle East, and over much of what we now call Europe, until it was rolled back from the Iberian peninsula, and then finally, as has been noted, by Vienna in 1683. But by the time of the last siege of Vienna, the Caliphate had lost a good deal of its purely Islamic religious character. Under the Mongols, who were not Muslims when they arrived on the scene, the Caliphate had morphed into a more traditional empire – a more political-military, power organized empire.

In any case, the Ottoman Empire, as its Caliphate identity died, disappeared itself in 1922, to be replaced – surprise – by a consciously national nation-state in its heartland and French and English created colonial protectorate regimes elsewhere in the region. As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century moved on, these European-colonial protectorate regimes, were replaced by a collection of extensively Westphalian nation-states. However to many in the area this was an alien framework, which to this day still competes with religious and tribal identities. But at the same time this decolonization was happening, the counter-revolution of Islamic governance was being reborn. Intrinsic in the teachings of the Salafists or jihadists or whatever you want to call them, was a call for the return of Islamic governance and the Islamic Caliphate. While this claim was recognized by many, this aspect of the challenge was submerged, and ignored in the focus of immediate threats of violence on a local level. Sub-state violence exercised by various groups – some of them jihadist – arising from various local backgrounds: Sunni, Shia, Turkish, Syrian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Palestinian, and so on.

But the caliphate problem is obviously more fundamental than local fights for power. ISIS is clear about its long-term expansionist and exclusionary caliphate project. This ambition has become clear to the governments of the area as well as concerned outliers, like the United States – and we are an outlier. Obviously, something is missing or wrong in the existing social political orders in the region. Wrong so that the revolutionary – or maybe it is reactionary – Islamic governance model by ISIS is somehow able to growing numbers of adherents. The trite phrase ‘root causes’ comes to the tongue easily, but is nevertheless pertinent. National leaders in the area must somehow identify and deal with these root causes as matters of urgent necessity.

Certainly among them is Sunni discontent. And the appeal of the ISIS promise is to return them to a dominant position in the area. In the history of Islam and the Middle East, the caliphate marked a period of Sunni dominance, and is being touted by ISIS as the proper form of government for all *real* Muslims: and implicitly, therefore, a return to Sunni dominance. However this challenge also has a very immediate tactical aspect that grabs the attention of the media and all of us. The violence of this threat is approaching anarchy and chaos, attracting the four horsemen of the apocalypse, and that aspect of it must be dealt with today, somehow and somehow. So defeating ISIS requires Muslim nations to see ISIS as the threat it really is to them. This has been a problem up till now, as most, including like Iraq, have been mired in religious and national competitions and divisions of their own nature and their own optic. Many have had their own relations with extremists of one sort or another. ISIS has received financing from a number of people, donors in Kuwait and Qatar. Saudi Arabia has furnished weapons, not worrying about where they are going. Turkey allowed ISIS weapons and fighters to flow across porous borders.

I recently received across my email chain, an email, which rather sarcastically but accurately described the situation. A title line on the email was “Are you confused by what is going on in the Middle East?” and the text says, quote:

“Let me explain. We support the Iraqi government and the fight against ISIS. We do not like ISIS. But ISIS is supported by Saudi Arabia, who we do like. We do not like Assad in Syria, we support this fight against him, but ISIS is also fighting against him. We do

not like Iran, but Iran supports the Iraqi government in its fight against ISIS. So some of our friends support our enemies, some enemies are now our friends, and some of our enemies are fighting against our other enemies, who we want to lose. But we do not want our enemies who are fighting our enemies to win. If the people we want to defeat are defeated, they could be replaced by someone we like even less. It is quite simple, really. Do you understand now?"

All that has to stop, and there are signs of that happening in recent days as the challenge is now being recognized around the circuit of chanceries. The media is full of verbal and practical adjustments under way, from Tehran to Ankara to Jeddah and beyond. The Sunni-Shia, Persian-Arab, and other spats are being reevaluated, and alliances are being reconsidered. The Saudis made a significant financial contribution to UN Anti-Terrorism programs, there have been recent public statements by Iranians, Saudi leaders, Iranian and Saudi leaders together, Turkish policy towards the Kurds has been evolving; and there has been a lot of highly public agonizing going on in Washington. You may have noticed that in the Washington Post in the last week or so.

So the threat, the challenge of ISIS must be met at several levels immediately as well as over time. Defeating or even substantially frustrating ISIS will require a broad coalition of nations, and addressing not only military threats but political and religious issues.

This will require some sort of grand strategy. First step in creating this grand strategy is identifying its authors and its participants. A coalition of the willing is required. Actually, a coalition of the threatened, but that phrase lacks a certain élan, a certain enthusiasm. And it must be based on the Muslim countries of the region. Such a grand strategy must be multilateral, and as much political as military, in fact even more so. If ever military activity is supposed to be the extension of politics – and not indulged in for its own sake – this is the situation, and this is the time. We must not let tactics eclipse strategy. A long-term strategy marshaling allies and addressing the region's political dysfunction is required, and the operative word is long-term.

The need to organize such a grand alliance is currently a matter of high priority in presidential palaces and chanceries all around the world. This task is very difficult, if only because it requires a serious reconsideration of many previous and existing policies and practices. Including, for the United States, eventually we must consider questions not only of what, how much and how soon, but with whom? We can only imagine the amount of scrabbling there must be going on in offices, of staffs being driven crazy by principles, screaming for information and answers. We may be in a moment of historic change, or shift, of relationships and pressures. We shall see.

Meanwhile, as this is going on, the response to the immediate challenge is being termed by the key policy question that lies just below the surface of everything we are talking about and everyone concerned: "When does the enemy of my enemy become my ally?"

And at what cost?"

### **Dan Raviv**

CBS News (Radio), formerly based in Israel and Europe; author of books on Israeli security agencies

I am Dan Raviv. I am the journalist and historian on the panel who has not been a diplomat or a soldier but has watched all of this unfold. A lot of people wonder if it is history repeating itself, and the same things keep happening and we do not learn lessons. I do not really feel that way. Part of what is fascinating about news and history is that it is new. There is something new. The ISIS movement really deserves major concern. Sure, it grew out of previous events, especially in Iraq, that we did not pay enough attention to, that we sort of knew were not resolved, and that Sunni Muslims would be angry and they would find alliances, ways to form even a new organization that shows many aspects of being an army. So that is ISIS.

So what is the biggest concern? The biggest concern, if you are a democratic nation, is protecting your own people. That is how we come back to one of the biggest issues here at the Potomac Institute and that is terrorism and what might happen in our own country, in the United States, and in our allied nations. And there really is a danger. I do not want to repeat the obvious, it has been in the news of course, that ISIS has Western citizens with Western passports. They might come back to England, France, Italy, and even the United States and they could commit terrorism here. It is a real danger. And if job number one for a Western democratic government is to keep its citizens safe, then this merits major public attention.

When it comes to Americans who apparently have joined Islamic radical movements in Syria and maybe in Iraq – keep in mind that to ISIS, the border does not exist -- so far, we have had two who have gotten media attention. This week there was the death of the man improbably named Douglas MacArthur, alright actually Douglas Macauthur McCain, from Minneapolis, who also spent time in San Diego. In Minneapolis, he apparently became a convert to Islam and thought it was really cool to hang out with Somalis, many of whom had become radicalized. He thought it would make sense to go to Syria and join the battle. We have heard about that kind of thing happening. Well McCain was confirmed killed in some battle in Syria this past weekend. And the State Department had to answer questions about it. The official reply said the United States government confirms and tried to offer consular services to the extent possible. And of course we are fascinated by what turned this guy; but, he is not unique. There have been others.

Another one who got some publicity a few months ago blew himself up in Syria. He was a young man from Florida who was born as an American Muslim. He is said to be a Palestinian American. His last name was Mohammad Abu-Salha. Perhaps you have seen his angry video because, in fact, at least one of the Islamic front organizations in Syria decided to make a big hero of him. He is a martyr to them, after all. So we have his angry speech, the lashing out. He claimed he would attack this country and that country. And after we take care of the *Al-Sham*, meaning the Levant area, we will turn to Israel and fight for Palestine. We are after you next, Israel, and all of that: grandiose ideas, and then he is assigned to drive a truck and push a button and blow himself up, apparently killing some Syrian soldiers.

I am not going to belittle or magnify these acts, but I will point out that at least those two examples – and also at least two others that US government sources say they have heard of now,

one in Syria and one in Iraq, that is a total of 4 at least -- they died over there. Not in Western countries, but out there in the Middle East.

Now, does that tell me that I can relax? That they do not have a plan, after all, to use foreign passports and Western faces to re-inject themselves into Western society and one day blow themselves up in a shopping mall? Because again, we have discussed that here at the Potomac Institute, it does not have to be 9/11. It does not have to be some brilliant, complicated attack. It does not have to be four buses and subway trains in London. It could just be something relatively small on the world scale. But you know, in the United States especially, that would shake things up incredibly.

So the main job of a Western democratic government is to keep our own people safe. Also, for the sake of keeping society safe, so the stock market does not crash 800 points when there is some act of terrorism in the United States. So the economy is important. So lives are important. So stopping bloodshed is important.

So how do you do that? Just war? Sending troops to where we have had troops before? No, clearly not just that. You have got to have a mix. As a matter of fact if ISIS is new, and to me, it is new, ignoring borders and being multinational and having these high ambitions and having Westerners as volunteers and I am sure some of them would be willing to kill themselves -- If they are new, then we need a new game and a complex one and one that does not just involve the military. And if it involves the military, then please, not 80,000 troops. But something more clever, and special operators, and people behind the lines, and folks whose missions are not acknowledged. To the extent that it involves the military.

Of course, it has got to involve our intelligence agencies. And of course we have learned -- dare I use the phrase, thanks to Edward Snowden? Is it okay to say that? -- we have learned some of the capabilities of the electronic intelligence, SIGINT parts of United States intelligence, and they are formidable. And we can listen and monitor and watch, unless your enemy, of course, is totally refusing to use electronic media and not using the internet and not using mobile phones. Well, that does not seem to be true. At the very least after all, this enemy, this growing enemy ISIS loves issuing propaganda videos and messages and beheadings. There is something to trace, there is something for intelligence agencies to work on in order to locate people, to identify people. It is not an impossible task.

Yet keep in mind: This is not an episode of "Homeland" on TV. It is not going to be solved in one hour or even thirteen episodes. It requires patient work, but there is a lot to do. A lot to actually come to grips with and things that we can use and leverage.

So, we need to monitor ISIS. It can be challenging. To the extent we can, we need to penetrate ISIS. Now use your own imagination here. If they welcome Western volunteers, it is not going to be incredibly impossibly difficult to penetrate ISIS, is it? As I said, use your imagination, people who are good at counterintelligence and counter terrorism do. Again it can require a mammoth amount of patience. And if you do have an agent inside -- either because somehow you turned somebody or managed to inject someone into it as a mole -- it does not mean you use them right away. Often it is a long-term activity. All of this could be going on.

How do you make ISIS break up or surrender? Well it turns out, maybe especially in that part of the world, you want to humiliate them. You want them to look like losers. You want things to go wrong. You want the local communities, the Sunni Muslims of various nations to reject them, which would be an important part of the solution if that can happen.

Perhaps the Sunni nations will show some backbone. So part of the political solution, something the Obama administration mentions consistently, is having a better government in Iraq. It is meaningful that if Sunni Muslims – who are, after all, the minority in Iraq -- felt left out of things and felt embittered, they were either going to join the Islamic State or at least support ISIS or look the other way or offer hiding places or money or food or travel routes. It makes a difference if the local population turns against them.

How about in Syria? A better government certainly would be nice. Syria of course has had a civil war for three and a half years. It is like a big black hole. We know that terrorists will fill that kind of vacuum. There are so many costs to the Syrian civil war. Not the least of which: almost 200,000 people who have died. Just think about that for a moment. And of course many of them have died awful deaths that would make unbelievable stories in the world media. If we could get there and we could show them and we could show suffering children and families, etc. Of course, we in the media have done some of that. We have done some of the refugee stories from Turkey and Jordan and other neighboring countries. It has not changed much. But the background has changed. Who are the rebels in Syria? Are there still groups that we could support? Are there moderate rebels?

Well, I will share with you some of the knowledge that Israel has acquired. Because that is my specialty and what most of my books are about, and with my co-author Yossi Melman I blog at IsraelSpy.com. A lot of people think Israel is so good at intelligence and indeed Israel is at the point of a spear on the battle front. So they must understand ISIS. They must have understood Al-Qa'ida. Some people even make up a story that they must have known about Al-Qa'ida and its ambitions even before 9/11 and maybe the Israelis should have warned us about the World Trade Center.

No, no, you have got to understand what goes on. Israel is a country of eight million people. Think about where it is in the Eastern Mediterranean. It feels surrounded by enemies; certainly that is their self-image, and they have got their own problems. And so yes, Israel picks up information, they supply information to Western intelligence agencies. They have regular intel exchanges with the CIA and other agencies, true, but it is not Israel's first priority to understand Al-Qa'ida -- or some other loud-mouthed group that calls itself Islamic and lists among its demands that Israel be replaced by Palestine. Israel says, "Yeah, well, we are kind of busy."

They do gather files, I will give you that, but even Israel has been surprised by what has happened in Syria. You see at the beginning when the civil war began in early 2011, from an Israeli point of view, it all seemed pretty good. President Bashar al-Assad will be weakened. He is supported by Iran, he is closely linked with the Hizballah in Lebanon. So if Bashar al-Assad is having problems, good. Do we want him overthrown? Ahh, we are not so sure -- that is what

people in Israeli intelligence said. We are not so sure because we have him well monitored, because we know all his phone numbers, we know everything going on in the Assad regime. Maybe it is better to have the Devil you know.

However, as the years went by, Israel was fascinated with what was happening with the rebel groups and certainly that gave other opportunities for Israeli intelligence; to get to know them, to meet them in Europe, to meet them in Turkey. That is the way it works, to get together to have information, to have some exchanges: to stress that their common enemy is Assad. As I said, the Israelis did not want him overthrown, but they did want him crippled, hobbled, and distracted.

Somehow along the way last year, Assad went one step too far and killed a few thousand civilians with illegal chemical weapons. The Israelis were concerned. They felt that a line had been crossed. One of our neighbors, said Israel, has now used these weapons. This is terrible, we will have to watch that.

Then it all became quite lucky, from an Israeli point of view. Obama issued his big redline challenge and instead Russia stepped forward, brokered a deal in which Syria has given up its chemical weapons. Yes, I know, they still can use chlorine gas and other things that are terrible and brutal but think from an Israeli strategic point of view. Somehow this Syrian civil war has led to Syria not having chemical weapons anymore. Hurrah for that!

But, it also makes the Assad regime actually more tolerable from an Israeli point of view. And as for the alternative, the rebels, well, there is a phrase going around with Israeli intelligence analysts now: "The radicals are at the fence." Well the fence specifically means the Golan Heights Armistice line where the Yom Kippur War in 1973 stopped. And so Israel holds most of the Golan Heights but on the other side Syrian rebels have taken over and the Israelis are making sure to figure out who they are: the Al-Nusra front? Someone even more Islamic? Someone who might be the Free Syrian Army, the group that the United States, prodded by Senator John McCain, would like to help? The Israelis watched this, because now they are at the fence.

Do you know what the Israeli response has been, in secret, hardly talked about? Try to make contact with just about everybody. Try to be as friendly as we can. Have meetings in refugee camps, and you heard about the hospital in northern Israel that is treating some of the wounded from Syria's civil war? That is humanitarian and wonderful, and a good part of Israeli publicity? Well that is also an intelligence bonanza opportunity to interview people, to send people back in, to have meetings, and to treat only your favorite people – perhaps to be selective and help especially the family members of major rebel leaders you are trying to befriend. That is how you make friends in that part of the world, and the Israelis are masters at that game.

Yet the Israelis do not have all the answers. They cannot unlock the mystery we have been talking about, how to protect the United States, or Times Square, or Trafalgar Square, or the Eiffel Tower. No, they cannot do that. The Israelis are mostly concerned about their own neck of the woods.

But look at the mix of proactive strategies that they employ: they are monitoring, trying to penetrate, making friends wherever possible, playing one side against the other, sharpening their ability to listen, as always speaking the perfect Arabic dialect, and more. The United States and its Western allies concerned about job number one -- protecting our people at home -- have to employ similar strategies, and on a larger scale. Thank you.

**Professor Don Wallace, Jr.**  
Chairman, International Law Institute

I think of myself as part of the audience and I wonder whether you have had the same experience that I have had which I always have in these programs of Yonah. There is so much, you learn so much. You wonder, “can you be sure of yourself or are you more confused than you should be?” I will say one thing. I think Congressman Moran and his colleagues have their job cut out for them.

Three points—just very minor ones:

One, I think we should remain confident of ourselves. You know, sometimes I think that Americans are too hard on themselves. We think we are incompetent, inept. I am a Republican, I happen to admire President Obama. I do not think we are as inept as we think we are. I think it is awfully important that we keep our morale rather high, to be intelligent about ourselves.

Secondly, I think of course we have got to be intelligent about the threat. And I think one thing that comes through fairly clearly in spite of a very learned, diverse panel is that we do not really know that much about ISIS and ISIL. And although it seems like a storm which has blown up in the last few months, but as Yonah has pointed out, there are roots. But terror, which is one of Yonah’s great specialties, may be different from the ambition to have a caliphate, as pointed out by one of our speakers; but there may be terrorist threats to us here. But this is broader than just miscellaneous terrorists and we know very little about the geographic scope of ISIS. We are learning more and more from the papers every day; disaffected Sunni Baathists have joined them. I think we have got to learn a great deal more about them. Again, let us go back to the first point. How scared should we be of them? How concerned should we be? And I do not think we really know. I would not be complacent.

And third, of course is the issue, which Ruth and the others touched on. What should be our response? I am a law professor like Ruth. I use “like” very broadly by the way. Certainly law enforcement in and of itself is not the answer. If you are public international lawyers—as Ruth and I are—there is a real issue. Where does our response fit in to the UN’s system of the right to defend yourself, both in Iraq and Syria? They are different. In the case of Iraq we have been asked in by the government to put them down. And hopefully that government will be better as the weeks go on. In Syria, it is much trickier. You know, my enemy’s enemy may be my friend, but I am not sure that we would ever admit that Assad is our friend. Although the Israelis, quite realistically, have sensed that one should be fairly slow in just wanting to be rid of him.

So I think going back to my first point, I think we should have high morale, have confidence in ourselves, and we have got to beat them. And we will. And I think a program like this—we will learn more in a few minutes— gives us a sense of how large and amorphous and complicated this is, just like so many other things are today.

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## International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS)

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