National Security: The Wrong Presidential Memorandum on Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and an Uncertain Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces

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The furor over the Executive Order on Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry to the United States, much of which is focused on legal issues and human rights, is one of three Presidential national security actions that raise serious questions about their contents, the rush to draft them, and the lack of clear coordination with the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and Justice.

Another one of the three aforementioned Presidential national security actions is far too narrow. On January 28, 2017, the White House released National Security Memorandum 3—Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. It too focuses on Islamic Extremism, but almost exclusively on defeating ISIS (ISIL or Daesh) in Iraq and Syria without any regard to the consequences, the overall threat of Islamic extremism, or the other threats in the region.

The full text is attached in Appendix A, but its key weakness is clear from the beginning. The Memorandum is addressed to every relevant Cabinet member and senior official, but no mention is made of their ongoing role in dealing with immigration, or in a massive review of U.S. military forces and readiness. The Memorandum is tailored exclusively to fighting what the President and his advisors have sometimes called “a war on ISIS.” Key portions state that,

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, is not the only threat from radical Islamic terrorism that the United States faces, but it is among the most vicious and aggressive. It is also attempting to create its own state, which ISIS claims as a “caliphate.” But there can be no accommodation or negotiation with it. For those reasons I am directing my Administration to develop a comprehensive plan to defeat ISIS.

ISIS is responsible for the violent murder of American citizens in the Middle East, including the beheadings of James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and Peter Abdul-Rahman Kassig, as well as the death of Kayla Mueller. In addition, ISIS has inspired attacks in the United States, including the December 2015 attack in San Bernardino, California, and the June 2016 attack in Orlando, Florida. ISIS is complicit in a number of terrorist attacks on our allies in which Americans have been wounded or killed, such as the November 2015 attack in Paris, France, the March 2016 attack in Brussels, Belgium, the July 2016 attack in Nice, France, and the December 2016 attack in Berlin, Germany.

ISIS has engaged in a systematic campaign of persecution and extermination in those territories it enters or controls. If ISIS is left in power, the threat that it poses will only grow. We know it has attempted to develop chemical weapons capability. It continues to radicalize our own citizens, and its attacks against our allies and partners continue to mount. The United States must take decisive action to defeat ISIS.

At the same time, a third Presidential Directive is global in scope, but far too limited in calling for effective action and sets an unrealistically quick and potentially wasteful path for change. A Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces was issued on January 27, 2017. It calls for a very necessary review of the impact of years of inadequate resourcing of key areas of U.S. military capability. The review, however, is not tied to any aspect of U.S. strategy,
with the possible exception of nuclear weapons on a global level. Furthermore, it does not address the war on terrorism and Islamic extremism.

Neither of the two Memorandums references the Executive Order on Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, or its potential future impact on U.S. strategic partnerships. Neither addresses the fact the United States is fighting a war in Afghanistan, or that the U.S. plays a significant military role in Libya, Yemen and Somalia. The end result is to layer one level of effort over another, and spread their impact out over an unknown number of Fiscal Years in ways where resources may be spent with no clear strategic goals.

Planning to Fight One Enemy Out of Many, with No Strategic Context

The Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria does focus on a key U.S. national security interest, one where more resources are almost certainly required. There is no doubt that ISIS is a very real threat. Moreover, many experts inside and outside the Department of Defense question both the decisiveness with which the Obama Administration acted against ISIS, and the level of resources it provided.

A Rigidly Narrow Focus on ISIS and Only in Iraq and Syria

The key problem is that the Memorandum is poorly worded, sets the wrong goals, and does so out of context. ISIS is only one part of the threat posed by Islamic extremism, and only one of many threats and problems that affect U.S. interests in the Middle East.

Moreover, the Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria only addresses the threat from ISIS in two countries where there are other serious threats, and major internal divisions—Arab vs. Kurd, Sunni vs. Shi’ite, and relatively secular vs. other violent Islamist extremist movements. Iraq and Syria are also two countries where outside actors play a major role that threatens U.S. interests: Iran, Hezbollah, Russia, and Turkey are all cases in point.

The text is remarkably narrow, to the point where it focus on short term tactical goals, bordering on the strategically ridiculous:

Policy Coordination. Policy coordination, guidance, dispute resolution, and periodic in-progress reviews for the functions and programs described and assigned in this memorandum shall be provided through the interagency process established in National Security Presidential Memorandum – 2 of January 28, 2017 (Organization of the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council), or any successor.

(i) Development of a new plan to defeat ISIS (the Plan) shall commence immediately.

(ii) Within 30 days, a preliminary draft of the Plan to defeat ISIS shall be submitted to the President by the Secretary of Defense.

(iii) The Plan shall include:

(A) a comprehensive strategy and plans for the defeat of ISIS;

(B) recommended changes to any United States rules of engagement and other United States policy restrictions that exceed the requirements of international law regarding the use of force against ISIS;

(C) public diplomacy, information operations, and cyber strategies to isolate and delegitimize ISIS and its radical Islamist ideology;
(D) identification of new coalition partners in the fight against ISIS and policies to empower coalition partners to fight ISIS and its affiliates;

(E) mechanisms to cut off or seize ISIS's financial support, including financial transfers, money laundering, oil revenue, human trafficking, sales of looted art and historical artifacts, and other revenue sources; and

(F) a detailed strategy to robustly fund the Plan.

(b) Participants. The Secretary of Defense shall develop the Plan in collaboration with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

(c) Development of the Plan. Consistent with applicable law, the Participants identified in subsection (b) of this section shall compile all information in the possession of the Federal Government relevant to the defeat of ISIS and its affiliates. All executive departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, promptly comply with any request of the Participants to provide information in their possession or control pertaining to ISIS. The Participants may seek further information relevant to the Plan from any appropriate source.

As previously mentioned, the Memorandum's implementation is not designed to even deal with ISIS outside of Iraq and Syria, much less address other Islamist extremist threats. It ignores all of the other cases where ISIS is active—such as Afghanistan, Libya, and Yemen. It ignores ISIS' affiliates. It ignores the fact that ISIS may well mutate into an underground and "virtual caliphate" if it is defeated in Iraq and Syria. Above all, it ignores how small a portion of the Islamic extremist threat ISIS really is, the aftermath of defeating ISIS on the ground, and its impact on Iran and the other threats in the region.

**Putting the Threat from ISIS/ISIL/Daesh in Perspective**

The dangers of such a narrow focus on the current shape of ISIS in only two countries become all too clear the moment one looks at the broader trends in global and regional terrorism. During the period between the start of the upheavals in the Arab world from early 2011 to late 2015, the START terrorism database that the U.S. State Department uses to report statistics on terrorism lists a total of 62,022 incidents.¹

Such numbers do present serious uncertainties. The START database is one of the best and most transparent unclassified data bases on terrorism. However, a review of the START database does show it is forced to rely on uncertain media sources, and fails to focus on key issues like identifying the extent to which attacks are made by specific religious extremist groups, or are the result of sectarian fighting.

The detailed data in the START database’s chronologies do identify perpetrator groups where this is possible, but START—like most other unclassified efforts—must draw heavily on media reporting that often avoids making such distinctions for political reasons. As a result, the input data and outputs of the START model are sometimes “politically correct” at the expense of reality. As a result, there is no reliable way to tie counts of terrorist incidents and deaths specifically to Islamic terrorism, or to broadly quantify the religious beliefs of the perpetrator or the target.

However, the database does represent the best unclassified source on the patterns in the total attacks in largely Muslim states in the Middle East, North Africa, Sub Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and East Asia. Moreover, some of these broad patterns are all too clear. The states in these regions account for 52,295 of the 62,022 global incidents, or 84 percent of all
incidents. Moreover, if one focuses on the total number of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, these attacks account for 22,953 incidents or 37 percent of the global total.

If one looks back to the period before ISIS emerged as a leading group, the total number of ISIS attacks only totaled some 4 percent of the total terrorist attacks worldwide between 2000 and 2015. They accounted for some 12 percent of the almost exclusively Islamist extremist attacks in the MENA region.2

If one concentrates on 2014-2015—which will probably represent the peak years in the strength of ISIS—the organization did rank as the second leading cause of terrorism out of the top five perpetrators in the START database. However, ISIS only carried out 2,021 attacks out of a global total of 5,889 (34 percent).

Another way of looking at the threat from ISIS and the total Islamist extremist threat is to count the number killed. If one compares a set of estimates of terrorist attacks versus deaths, drawn from the START database by the Institute for Economics and Peace in its Global Terrorism Index 2016; a total of 72 percent of the deaths worldwide occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria—countries with high levels of Islamist terrorism.3

Data reported in the Arab Human Development Report for 2016—which also compares attacks, killed, and wounded—uses a slightly different definition of the Arab world. It finds that 36.1 percent of the terrorist incidents (26,058 out of 72,184) between 2000-2014 occurred in the Arab world. So did a total of 43.68 percent (74,080 out of 169,589) of the killings, and 49.12 percent (127,957 out of 260,496) of the wounded.

These latter calculations are important for several reasons. They cover the full period from 9/11 to the peak of ISIS gains; well over 90 percent of the area involved is Muslim; the authors and consultants drafting the Arab Development Report are largely Arabs and Muslims; and they chose to use the same START database used by the U.S. State Department and many analysts in the West.4

The START database shows that ISIS was only one of several key Islamist extremist threats. According to the START database, three Islamist extremist movements—ISIS, Boko Haram, and Taliban—accounted for 55 percent of deaths in 2015. ISIS killed 6,141 in 2015, or average of 6.7 deaths per attack. ISIS accounted for 62 percent of deaths in Iraq, even though the perpetrator in 37 percent of the cases was unknown. Boko Haram killed 5,478, some 75 percent in Nigeria, an average dead of 11 per attack. The Taliban killed 4,502, a figure 18 percent above its total in 2014, and an average of 4 deaths per attack.

Once again, if one looks at 2014-2015—the peak years in the strength of ISIS—it killed 12,378 out of a total of 33,161 (37 percent), injured 11,869 out of a total of 25,920 (46 percent), and kidnapped/taken hostages of 7,939 out of a total of 12,512 (63 percent).5

These data do show that ISIS is all too real a threat. However, they also show that even a total defeat of ISIS would scarcely defeat Islamist terrorism. Virtually every expert agrees that many ISIS fighters will disperse at the result of even the most successful real world fight, and will continue to be a threat in another form. Virtually all of the causes of terrorism have grown substantially worse since the political upheavals in the MENA region began in 2011. There are good reasons why many experts in the U.S. counterterrorism community feel that Islamist threats
will be all too real for at least the next decade—the equivalent of the “long war” that many senior officers and U.S. intelligence experts foresaw after 9/11.

**The Need to Tie Any Campaign Against ISIS, and Other Violent Islamic Extremist Movements, to Broader U.S. Strategic Objectives**

What is truly dangerous, however, is to focus on the tactical defeat of the ISIS “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq without asking what will happen once ISIS is defeated. The tasking in the *Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* would be dangerous if the only thing it did was to omit an explicit assessment of the current strategy and effort; its strengths, faults, and risks; and the problem of dealing with ISIS once its "caliphate" is defeated, they are dispersed, and ISIS may shift to an underground or "virtual" caliphate.

Its strategic flaws, however, go much further. The Memorandum ignores the need to explicitly consider the role of foreign actors like Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and Turkey. It ignores the fact that any success against ISIS—even in Syria and Iraq—is only the beginning in reaching some stable form of security and stability. Defeating ISIS in two war shattered countries with deep divisions, no clear path to recovery, and deep ethnic and sectarian divisions in the areas where ISIS must be defeated risks repeating the same disaster that occurred in U.S. planning for the invasion of Iraq: Failing to plan for the strategic outcome of victory, and to address the key civil and military consequences.

Syria has now been involved in a far broader civil war for half a decade. It is a war between the Assad forces—allied with Iran, Russian and Hezbollah—and deeply divided rebel forces. These divisions include sharp divisions between most Arab and Kurdish factions. The Syrian and Arab rebels force are also deeply divided between many different factions, and include major factions with ties to al Qaeda.

Reconstruction and recovery cannot really occur until the fighting between the pro-Assad and pro-rebel factions is resolved, regardless of what happen to ISIS. The nation, however, is already a disaster in terms of security and stability. Some five million Syrians are registered and unregistered refugees, and close to another seven million are independently displaced persons or IDPs.

Many areas have been devastated by wartime damage and the economy is probably less than 25 percent of the size it was when the civil war began in 2011. Outside pressure from Turkey focuses heavily on the Syrian Kurds that are the primary allies of the U.S. in Syria, which has influence in only a small part of Syria. What comes after ISIS is at least as critical as defeating ISIS, and a plan that ignores this is unacceptably dangerous.

The situation in Iraq is better, but there also are critical divisions between its Arabs and Kurds, and Arab Sunnis and Shi’ites. Iraq, too, faces immense stability and security challenges in moving towards full recovery and reconstruction. Iran plays a critical role in Iraq and has very different strategic goals from the United States, and Turkey again plays a destabilizing role in dealing with Iraq's Kurds.

What comes after ISIS is critical even if one only looks at Syria and Iraq, but this is not a practical approach to fighting violent Islamic extremism. This is why it is so critical that the memorandum does not address the overall threat from Islamic extremism, or keep ISIS in perspective relative to other threats. It does not deal with the wars in Afghanistan, Libya,
Somalia, or Yemen. It does not address U.S. strategic partnerships with virtually every moderate Arab nation in fighting terrorism in the region. It does not address the fact that Israel faces such threats, or the impact of the causes of Islamic extremism. The Memorandum not only leaves Syria and Iraq hanging, it does so with virtually every U.S. partner and ally in the region.

Moreover, Islamic extremism is only one military threat in the region. Many other threats are actively involved in Syria, Iraq, and other regional states. Yet, the Memorandum does not touch on the need to shape a plan that is coordinated with U.S. efforts to deal with the other regional threats from Iran and from outside powers, or produce some kind of grand strategic outcome that can produce some kind of lasting security and stability in spite of the massive forces that now create instability in nations like Iraq and Syria once ISIS is defeated.

Finally, the memorandum would be inadequate if only because it makes no reference to the ongoing reviews of the immigration from the key states in the region called for in the Executive Order on Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States, and in the Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces for an examination of the overall readiness of U.S. military forces and the need to alter U.S. force, modernization, and readiness plans on a global level along with changes U.S. strategy.

**Focusing on Readiness Without a Strategy or Asking Readiness for What?**

This second Presidential Memorandum also creates a very different set of problems from the first. The Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces calls for immediate action to improve U.S. military readiness, and for a far more comprehensive effort to improve readiness by the time FY2019 programs are implemented. It also calls for an effort to shape a nuclear strategy, new programs for missile defense, and mentions a future effort to develop a new U.S. strategy and force plan.

To be specific, Memorandum’s text calls for the following activities:

Section 1. Policy. To pursue peace through strength, it shall be the policy of the United States to rebuild the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sec. 2. Readiness. (a) The Secretary of Defense (Secretary) shall conduct a 30-day Readiness Review. As part of this review, the Secretary shall:

(i) assess readiness conditions, including training, equipment maintenance, munitions, modernization, and infrastructure; and

(ii) submit to the President a report identifying actions that can be implemented within the current fiscal year and that are necessary to improve readiness conditions.

(b) Concurrently with the Readiness Review, the Secretary, together with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), shall develop a Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget amendment for military readiness, including any proposed reallocations.

(c) The Secretary shall work with the Director of OMB to develop levels for the Department of Defense's FY 2018 budget request that are necessary to improve readiness conditions and address risks to national security.

(d) Within 60 days of the date of this order, the Secretary shall submit to the President a plan of action to achieve the levels of readiness identified in the Secretary's Readiness Review before FY 2019. That plan of action shall address areas for improvement, including insufficient maintenance, delays in acquiring parts, access to training ranges, combatant command operational demands, funding needed for consumables (e.g.,...
fuel, ammunition), manpower shortfalls, depot maintenance capacity, and time needed to plan, coordinate, and execute readiness and training activities.

Sec. 3. Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces. (a) Upon transmission of a new National Security Strategy to Congress, the Secretary shall produce a National Defense Strategy (NDS). The goal of the NDS shall be to give the President and the Secretary maximum strategic flexibility and to determine the force structure necessary to meet requirements.

(b) The Secretary shall initiate a new Nuclear Posture Review to ensure that the United States nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21st-century threats and reassure our allies.

(c) The Secretary shall initiate a new Ballistic Missile Defense Review to identify ways of strengthening missile-defense capabilities, rebalancing homeland and theater defense priorities, and highlighting priority funding areas.

**Putting the Readiness Cart Before the Warfighting Horse**

Technically speaking, this tasking asks the Secretary draft a major but narrowly focused budget amendment to the FY2017 defense budget and then to solve all of the readiness problems in the existing force by October 2018—when the FY2019 budget year begins. This could spend vast amounts on improving the readiness of the existing force posture before the Secretary has the opportunity to "produce a National Defense Strategy (NDS)."

There is no clear way to estimate what the nature and cost of such efforts would be until the 30-day and 60-day efforts are completed—hopefully by the same team and in a coordinated way. Given this rushed timing, however, such efforts would almost have to be based on the current shopping lists of the individual military services. There would be no time or basis for tailoring them to a new force posture or strategy, and no time for considering the priorities set for given commands by given threats, considering the role of allied strategic partners, and setting close mission priorities. The default position of the Department of Defense is to draft shopping lists based on past and existing Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force priorities, and the Memorandum seems almost designed to produce such shopping lists.

Moreover, no mention is made of the need to integrate this readiness effort with the preliminary draft of the “Plan to Defeat ISIS” called for in the previous memorandum. No mention is made of a broader effort to deal with terrorism and extremism. And, no mention is made of any of the other activities in the Overseas Contingency Operations budget like the war in Afghanistan, or the lower level U.S. military activities in countries like Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. These are all areas where immediate readiness and U.S. force strength issues present serious problems and further resources may be needed to meet real world tactical and strategic needs on a joint warfare basis.

**Calling for an Undefined and Potentially Damaging National Defense Strategy**

At the same time, the Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces does call for a new—if totally undefined—National Defense Strategy (NDS). A well-designed and executed version of such an NDS would take much longer that creating service-by-service shopping lists. It would also probably well for major changes in the overall posture of each service—with substantially different readiness requirements.
This would be particularly true if the new NDS actually generated real-world force and modernization plans, or laid the budget requirement for a Future Year Defense Plan (FYDP) to implement and pay for them.

One example would be actually implementing any form of then-candidate Trump’s call for raising U.S. Army manning from 450,000 active-duty soldiers to 540,000, Marine Corps manning from 182,000 marines to 200,000, Navy combat strength from 272 deployable ships to 350, and the number of combat aircraft in the Air Force (USAF) from 1,141 to 1,200. In gross terms, this would mean a 20% increase in the Army, 10% increase in the Marine Corps, 29% increase in the Navy, and 5% increase in the USAF. As a sheer guesstimate, this could add some $50 billion a year to the defense budget.

The Memorandum, however, makes no mention of such force goals as part of the NDS. It instead calls for (a) “a new "Nuclear Posture Review to ensure that the United States nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21st-century threats and reassure our allies," and (b) ”a new Ballistic Missile Defense Review to identify ways of strengthening missile-defense capabilities, rebalancing homeland and theater defense priorities, and highlighting priority funding areas."

**Failing to Focus on Key Threats, Allies, Missions, and Commands**

As for the NDS, its terms are defined so broadly that it is impossible to know what the resulting effort will actually do. The Trump force goals to date have been global goals for each military services without any justification in terms of strategic need, key threats, any break out by combatant command, any net assessment of capabilities, or any assessment of the capabilities of strategic partners. Like the Bush and Obama Administrations’ recent statements on strategy, the Trump force goals are not tied to any clear force plans, and the new Administration has also made no mention to date of the need to abandon the Budget Control Act-driven budget estimates that have shaped the nominal outyear projections in the Future Year Defense Plan (FYDP) since FY2012.

The Trump Administration is almost certainly correct in calling for more military spending when the United States is now spending only roughly half the percentage of its GDP on defense that it did during most of the Cold War, and new major threats are emerging. The need for a more realistic strategy, force plans, and defense budget is not a casual issue when the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) must deal with a steadily more challenging Russia; the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) must deal with China and North Korea; the U.S Central Command (USCENTCOM) must deal with Islamic extremism and Iran; the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) faces a growing need to help African states deal with terrorism and extremism; and the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) faces major areas of instability in Latin America.

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is stressed by a steadily growing role for Special Forces. The new NDS tasks the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) with dealing with Chinese and Russian nuclear modernization, growing theater nuclear threats and needs for U.S. extended deterrence, as well as new initiatives in national and theater missile defense. Lastly, the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) will have to reshape its joint mobility assets accordingly to meet the new needs of each of the other commands.
Tie the Pieces Together or Tear the Force Posture into Pieces

In many ways, the current version of the Memorandum is similar to a case where the horse takes over from its rider. One does not shape an effective national security policy by failing to fully think out key initiatives, by galloping off in all directions, by rushing one’s fences in the process, and by setting artificial deadlines for completing the gallop.

Similarly, strategy does not consist of concepts—or of service-by-service shopping lists—for which there is no real analysis of threats, allies, and mission requirements. In the real world, a successful strategy is also 15 percent planning and conceptual thinking, and 85 percent careful implementation.

About the best than can be said for the *Presidential Memorandum on Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* and the *Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces* is that nothing within them specifically precludes the Secretaries tasked with them from taking a better, more thought out, and more realistic path. Little within them, however, now seems to encourage such action. This places a heavy burden on the key Secretaries and Departments involved, as well as the U.S. military and intelligence community. Success requires both a far more strategic approach, and a far more careful approach to planning, cost, and implementation.
Annex A: Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
January 28, 2017

NATIONAL SECURITY PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM – 3

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY
THE SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY
THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OF STAFF
THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS
THE COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT
THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, is not the only threat from radical Islamic terrorism that the United States faces, but it is among the most vicious and aggressive. It is also attempting to create its own state, which ISIS claims as a “caliphate.” But there can be no accommodation or negotiation with it. For those reasons I am directing my Administration to develop a comprehensive plan to defeat ISIS.

ISIS is responsible for the violent murder of American citizens in the Middle East, including the beheadings of James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and Peter Abdul-Rahman Kassig, as well as the death of Kayla Mueller. In addition, ISIS has inspired attacks in the United States, including the December 2015 attack in San Bernardino, California, and the June 2016 attack in Orlando, Florida. ISIS is complicit in a number of terrorist attacks on our allies in which Americans have been wounded or killed, such as the November 2015 attack in Paris, France, the March 2016 attack in Brussels, Belgium, the July 2016 attack in Nice, France, and the December 2016 attack in Berlin, Germany.

ISIS has engaged in a systematic campaign of persecution and extermination in those territories it enters or controls. If ISIS is left in power, the threat that it poses will only grow. We know it has attempted to develop chemical weapons capability. It continues to radicalize our own citizens, and its attacks against our allies and partners continue to mount. The United States must take decisive action to defeat ISIS.

Sec. 1. Policy. It is the policy of the United States that ISIS be defeated.

Sec. 2. Policy Coordination. Policy coordination, guidance, dispute resolution, and periodic in-progress reviews for the functions and programs described and assigned in this memorandum shall be provided through the interagency process established in National Security Presidential Memorandum – 2 of January 28, 2017 (Organization of the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council), or any successor.

(i) Development of a new plan to defeat ISIS (the Plan) shall commence immediately.

(ii) Within 30 days, a preliminary draft of the Plan to defeat ISIS shall be submitted to the President by the Secretary of Defense.

(iii) The Plan shall include:

(A) a comprehensive strategy and plans for the defeat of ISIS;
(B) recommended changes to any United States rules of engagement and other United States policy restrictions that exceed the requirements of international law regarding the use of force against ISIS;

(C) public diplomacy, information operations, and cyber strategies to isolate and delegitimize ISIS and its radical Islamist ideology;

(D) identification of new coalition partners in the fight against ISIS and policies to empower coalition partners to fight ISIS and its affiliates;

(E) mechanisms to cut off or seize ISIS's financial support, including financial transfers, money laundering, oil revenue, human trafficking, sales of looted art and historical artifacts, and other revenue sources; and

(F) a detailed strategy to robustly fund the Plan.

(b) Participants. The Secretary of Defense shall develop the Plan in collaboration with the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism.

(c) Development of the Plan. Consistent with applicable law, the Participants identified in subsection (b) of this section shall compile all information in the possession of the Federal Government relevant to the defeat of ISIS and its affiliates. All executive departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, promptly comply with any request of the Participants to provide information in their possession or control pertaining to ISIS. The Participants may seek further information relevant to the Plan from any appropriate source.

(d) The Secretary of Defense is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

DONALD J. TRUMP
Annex B: Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces

The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
For Immediate Release
January 27, 2017

Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces

NATIONAL SECURITY PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM
MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

SUBJECT: Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including my authority as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, I hereby direct the following:

Section 1. Policy. To pursue peace through strength, it shall be the policy of the United States to rebuild the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sec. 2. Readiness. (a) The Secretary of Defense (Secretary) shall conduct a 30-day Readiness Review. As part of this review, the Secretary shall:

(i) assess readiness conditions, including training, equipment maintenance, munitions, modernization, and infrastructure; and

(ii) submit to the President a report identifying actions that can be implemented within the current fiscal year and that are necessary to improve readiness conditions.

(b) Concurrently with the Readiness Review, the Secretary, together with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), shall develop a Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget amendment for military readiness, including any proposed reallocations.

(c) The Secretary shall work with the Director of OMB to develop levels for the Department of Defense’s FY 2018 budget request that are necessary to improve readiness conditions and address risks to national security.

(d) Within 60 days of the date of this order, the Secretary shall submit to the President a plan of action to achieve the levels of readiness identified in the Secretary’s Readiness Review before FY 2019. That plan of action shall address areas for improvement, including insufficient maintenance, delays in acquiring parts, access to training ranges, combatant command operational demands, funding needed for consumables (e.g., fuel, ammunition), manpower shortfalls, depot maintenance capacity, and time needed to plan, coordinate, and execute readiness and training activities.

Sec. 3. Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces. (a) Upon transmission of a new National Security Strategy to Congress, the Secretary shall produce a National Defense Strategy (NDS). The goal of the NDS shall be to give the President and the Secretary maximum strategic flexibility and to determine the force structure necessary to meet requirements.
(b) The Secretary shall initiate a new Nuclear Posture Review to ensure that the United States nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21st-century threats and reassure our allies.

(c) The Secretary shall initiate a new Ballistic Missile Defense Review to identify ways of strengthening missile-defense capabilities, rebalancing homeland and theater defense priorities, and highlighting priority funding areas.

Sec. 4. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) All actions taken pursuant to this memorandum shall be consistent with requirements and authorities to protect intelligence and law enforcement sources and methods. Nothing in this order shall be interpreted to supersede measures established under authority of law to protect the security and integrity of specific activities and associations that are in direct support of intelligence and law enforcement operations.

(d) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

(e) The Secretary is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

DONALD J. TRUMP

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2https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2010&end_yearonly=2015&start_year=&&start_month=&&start_day=&&end_year=&&end_month=&&end_day=&&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=20029&perpetrator=20030&perpetrator=20031&perpetrator=20032&perpetrator=40325&perpetrator=20033&perpetrator=20493&perpetrator=20496&


5 https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?start_yearonly=2010&end_yearonly=2015&start_year=&start_month=&start_day=&end_year=&end_month=&end_day=&asmSelect0=&perpetrator=20029&perpetrator=20030&perpetrator=20493&perpetrator=20522&perpetrator=20032&perpetrator=40325&perpetrator=20033&perpetrator=20496&