

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“The Ideology of ISIS”**

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin by extending once again my deepest sympathies to the people of Orlando and to the families and friends of the 49 people who lost their lives in the horrendous attack at the Pulse nightclub more than a week ago now. Just hours before this tragedy, I was with my own family visiting the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. Seeing the names and faces of the more than 3,000 people who died that day brought back many painful memories from nearly fifteen years ago. Those memories were still at the forefront of my mind when I first heard the tragic news of the Orlando attack less than 24 hours later. Much like the 9/11 attacks, the Orlando attack has already had an impact on our country in several ways.

First and foremost, this attack was an act of hate meant to terrorize our LGBT community. We need to be mindful of the profound impact this has had on them in particular. The Orlando shooting was also another tragic case of gun violence that may have been prevented by common sense gun control measures. And it appears that the Orlando terror attack was another case in which a very troubled American, inspired in part by ISIS’s online propaganda, opted to carry out a massacre in the name of the most brutal terrorist group in the world.

While it is still not entirely clear why the killer carried out this attack, this tragedy reminds us that the greatest threat to our homeland comes not from overseas. It doesn’t come from Syrian refugees or from those who travel as tourists on the Visa Waiver program. The greatest threat to our country now comes from within—from American citizens and legal residents. My colleagues and members of our staff may recall the words of renowned counter terrorism expert Peter Bergen who testified before this committee in November of last year that, ‘Every person who’s been killed by a jihadi terrorist in this country since 9/11 has been killed by an American citizen or resident.’

Think about it. Many of these attacks are being carried out by Americans. Yet some have suggested that the way to stop these attacks is for America to ban entire groups of people from traveling to our country. They want to keep out people like two of our witnesses: Mr. Nahas and Ms. Murad; Syrian refugees who have been brutalized by ISIS, Al-Qaeda and the Assad regime and want nothing more than a safe space away from war.

That makes no sense. In fact, it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how to stop these homegrown attacks. The reality is that stopping homegrown terrorism starts with building stronger partnerships among all Americans and people residing here. We need to build partnerships between all levels of government and non-profit groups like Dr. Elghawary’s WORDE campaign, which seeks to educate and mentor young Muslim Americans who otherwise might be tempted by ISIS propaganda. And we need better partnerships with families, schools, religious leaders and community officials to build the kind of trust and awareness we need to combat extremism at the local level. We need to know that when somebody sees

something suspicious in their mosque or their university, they will know to say something and know who to say it to.

The Department of Homeland Security is doing just this with its Office of Community Partnerships. I am proud that this committee passed a bill that many of us supported to enhance the ability of the department to work with the Muslim community and others in order to counter the violent messages of ISIS and other terrorist organizations.

Stopping these attacks also requires that we use some common sense. It's quite simple actually. We just have to avoid doing and saying things that feed ISIS' propaganda. ISIS is essentially a group of several thousand savages who have perverted one of the great religions of the world for their own twisted goals. Their core recruitment message is that America is at war with Islam.

But nothing could be further from the truth.

However, when politicians bend over backwards to try to equate ISIS and Islam, they're playing right into ISIS's hands. We have to stop talking like ISIS and the atrocities they commit somehow represent a religion peacefully practiced by 1.7 billion Muslims around the world. I think we'll hear today about how incompatible ISIS's ideology is with Islam, and how ISIS tries to cherry-pick and reinterpret religious texts to justify their actions.

Finally, it's been pointed out that the attractiveness of ISIS's message is anchored in the group's ability to portray itself as a winner. That's why it's so important that we keep taking the fight to ISIS. Simply put, we must continue to degrade and destroy this horrible terrorist group. After scrambling for a while, the 60-nation coalition that we lead has found its footing. With almost each passing week, we are putting ISIS on the run in more and more parts of Iraq and Syria.

We've taken back more than 40 percent of the land they once held in Iraq, and our coalition forces appear to be close to running ISIS out of Fallujah. Mosul should be next. We've killed 25,000 ISIS fighters and more than 120 key ISIS leaders over the past two years. We've cut ISIS funds by up to one-third. And we've drastically slowed the flow of foreign recruits from a high of about 2,000 a month in 2014 to 200 a month today. Not that long ago in the U.S., roughly ten Americans per month were leaving this country to join forces with ISIS. Today, that number has dropped to one per month.

The battle is far from over, but we're on the right track. We need to make it clearer every day that ISIS is not the winning team that they present themselves to be. In fact, they are well on their way to becoming a losing team. All of us have a role to play in making that clear to all Americans, especially those who are susceptible to ISIS' siren song. I hope our witnesses can give us some additional insights into ISIS's ideology and help us to identify ways in which we can further counter their hateful message. Our thanks to all of our witnesses for your testimony today. We look forward to a productive and informative hearing today, one that will better enable us and our Senate colleagues to do our part in making America and the rest of the world a safer place in which to live.