

Statement of Chairman Ron DeSantis
“Battlefield Successes & Challenges: Recent Efforts to Win the
War against ISIS”
January 17, 2018

We are here today to learn more about the Trump Administration’s battlefield successes against the Islamic State. Since coming into office almost a year ago now, President Trump has made great strides in the war against ISIS. At the time of his inauguration, the Islamic State controlled major cities in Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State’s black flag flew over Raqqa in Syria and over Mosul in Iraq. Today, both cities are liberated. ISIS lost thousands of square miles in territory at an astonishing rate – a rate unseen during the Obama Administration.

Unfortunately, the American people are not seeing this good news story. Instead, they see nightly stories in the main stream media about Russian interference in our elections. The American people deserve to know the facts about what changed between Administrations and how President Trump is keeping us safe. We’re here then to talk about real successes and what the U.S. government can do to build on these wins to ensure the safety of the American people. We have before us a distinguished panel of experts with deep national security experience.

Dr. Sebastian Gorka served as Special Assistant to President Trump and advised the President on the existential threat posed by radical Islamic terrorism. Dr. Gorka has a distinguished career of service in the counterterrorism field and is on the advisory board of the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs. We look forward to Dr. Gorka’s testimony and thank you for coming.

We’ll also hear from Mr. Michael Pregent, an Adjunct Fellow from the Hudson Institute. Mr. Pregent is a former intelligence officer with nearly 30 years of experience and is an expert on the Middle East and North Africa. We hope Mr. Pregent can shed light on the future challenges we face against ISIS and what we can expect moving forward.

We’re also joined by Philip Lohaus, a research fellow in the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Mr. Lohaus is an expert on unconventional and emerging national security challenges. He served as an embedded analyst with the Department of Defense and the Multi-National Force-Iraq and also embedded with the US Army in eastern Afghanistan. We thank Mr. Lohaus for coming and testifying today.

We also have today Dr. Robert Pape, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago. Dr. Pape has studied this subject in detail and written numerous books on the topic. We look forward to his perspective on this matter and thank him for coming.

I’m confident we can do more in this battle against radical Islamic terror. I am heartened by President Trump’s dedication to our military and his emphasis on defeating – not merely “detering” ISIS as President Obama said over and over again. The days of feckless leadership, of underestimating our foe – those days are over. The naïve declarations that ISIS is the “JV”

squad – those days are over. Now we have a President who appreciates the danger posed by ISIS and who plays to win. I hope the witnesses can shed light on what the Trump team got right here, what we could improve on, and where the war on ISIS goes from here. Thank you and I yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Lynch.