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Testimony to the National Security Subcommittee for the US House Committee
on Oversight and Government Reform
Capitol Hill, January 17, 2018

Thank you for having me.

Let me begin with a summary of my key points.

As of today, ISIS has been defeated as a territorial entity in Iraq and Syria, since the group controls less than 3 percent of its former territory. This military victory makes America safer.

This military victory is due not to any one person or any one President. This is America's victory - due to the steadfastness of the American people and the superb execution of policy by our military and many parts of the US government. This is a victory for the Iraqi and Syrian people – whose forces and people endured many thousands killed and many more injured, mostly at the hands of ISIS, without buckling. This is an Allied victory – where regional partners like Qatar provided an airbase for US B-52 bombers and international partners in Europe and elsewhere committed critical over-the-horizon resources and power. This international coalition has grown every year since 2014.

The primary key to success was the application of a consistent hammer and anvil strategy, which was executed over three years and over three phases under the leadership of the United States spanning two Presidential administrations.

The Trump administration was key for the final push in Syria, but certain aspects of the campaign have fueled ISIS propaganda to inspire attacks against America.

Our military strategy was a classic case of “hammer-and-anvil,” where US and Western airpower, special forces and intel worked by, with, and through local ground partners. In essence, Western-led airpower, the hammer, and local ground power, the anvil, worked together to smash ISIS between them.

Our hammer and anvil strategy was executed over three phases. Phase 1 involved the successful containment of ISIS expansion in the fall 2014. Phase 2

was successful rollback of ISIS from Iraq and large parts of Syria, which occurred in 2015-Spring 2017. Phase 3 was the final push, completing the military defeat of ISIS as a territorial entity in Syria. The next set of maps will show the progressive success of our hammer and anvil strategy.

The containment of ISIS expansion in fall 2014. Once ISIS surprised the world by quickly taking Mosul, the most urgent problem was to prevent ISIS from going further to seize oil fields and other strategic resources like dams in Iraq, because even partial control of these resources could have vastly increased the group's power and threat. The Obama administration reacted quickly and decisively, leading a coalition to use air power, like a hammer, to smash numerous ISIS military offensives and contain it. The Obama administration also put US boots on the ground in Syria. This was required to properly work by, with, and through our partners on the ground to set conditions for rollback in phase 2 and the final push in phase 3.

Phase 2, rollback, occurred in Iraq and Syria from 2015 to May 2017. This phase occurred mostly under the Obama administration and continued under the Trump administration. It involved detailed coordination of air strikes and local ground forces, mainly with the Kurds in Syria and Iraq as well as Iraqi government forces. Together with our allies, America sequentially liberated Kobane in Syria in 2015, Ramadi in Iraq in spring 2016, and then Mosul.

Rollback was nearly complete in Iraq by the time the administrations changed. Mosul was the heart of ISIS in Iraq. As you can see, by February 2017, our Coalition had seized about 2/3rds of the city – the large areas to the west of the Tigris River – and we were already advancing from the airport to take the remaining third of the city.

ISIS suffered major losses by the end of the Obama administration. By the end of 2016, overall, over half of ISIS-controlled territory had been liberated. Equally important, these two years represent not only the degradation of ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq, but also the essential mobilization and coordination of local allies, particularly the Kurdish forces in Syria and Iraq as well as Iraqi government ground forces that would enable the final push in phase 3. The critical coordination between US and local partners in Iraq and northern Syria was established in 2015. So, when the Trump administration took office, ISIS was

losing fast and America's coalition was a well-oiled machine, in a position to finish off the group.

Phase 3, the final push in Syria, occurred from spring to fall 2017. By December 2017, there was virtually no ISIS control in significant areas in Syria as both US-allied ground forces and Syrian government forces independently controlling nearly all previous ISIS territory, essentially on different sides of the Euphrates River Valley.

Phase 3 completed ISIS's defeat as a territorial entity. The Trump administration took steps that accelerated this phase.

So, what exactly changed? Two things, one good, one problematic. The good change was cooperating tacitly with the Russians and Syrian government, so that the Kurdish-led forces could take Raqqa and other area north of the Euphrates River, while Syrian government forces could take Palmyra and the area south of the river. This change made America's strategy of hammer and anvil more effective in Syria and accelerated ISIS loss of territory there. De-conflicting air power efforts with Russia was also important. As our respective ground allies neared each other, this brought Russian and Coalition air power closer together. This detailed coordination avoided problems and facilitated success.

The problematic change was over-escalation of air power. Both the escalation of airstrikes and spike in civilian casualties related to airstrikes occurred within weeks of the new administration.

The sharp increase in civilian casualties is not just a moral issue. These casualties pose a strategic threat to the United States, because they significantly amplify the propaganda that ISIS and other terrorist groups rely on to inspire people to attack America. This propaganda can be powerful.

Just last Nov 29, ISIS released "Flames of War II," a video targeting Westerners with powerful segments focused on how the escalation of bombing has killed children in ugly ways and the group calls for revenge. Under the Obama administration, we saw similar ISIS video propaganda related to drone strikes, which was leveraged to justify attacks against the West. But, nothing this extreme.

The main danger for the future is that we declare victory and walk away. ISIS remains as a threat because its remnants in Iraq, Syria, and many other countries

can use propaganda to inspire attacks against America. Further, the root cause of ISIS's power is not just ideology, but the exploitation of political grievances and disenfranchisement of millions of Sunnis. ISIS took advantage of these before, just as its predecessor, Al Qaeda in Iraq took advantage of the turmoil after we toppled Saddam. And without a political strategy to address Sunni disenfranchisement, a new ISIS 2.0 could emerge.

I am delighted to answer your questions.

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Witness Disclosure Requirement "Truth in Testimony"**

Pursuant to House Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5) and Committee Rule 16(a), non governmental witnesses are required to provide the Committee with the information requested below in advance of testifying before the Committee. You may attach additional sheets if you need more space.

Name: Robert A. Papp

1. Please list any entities you are representing in your testimony before the Committee and briefly describe your relationship with each entity.					
Name of Entity	Your relationship with the entity				
<u>Uni of Chicago</u>	<u>Professor of Public Security</u>				

2. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
Recipient of the grant or contract (you or entity above)	Grant or Contract Name	Agency	Program	Source	Amount
<u>CPOST</u>	<u>THE SOCIAL AND NEUROLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF MDR7/PROJ17</u>	<u>DoD - ONR</u>	<u>MINERVA</u>		<u>1,642,656</u>
<u>CPOST</u>	<u>THE OVER THE HORIZON PROJECT</u>	<u>DoD-ONR</u>			<u>588,419</u>

3. Please list any payments or contracts (including subcontracts) you or the entity or entities listed above have received since January 1, 2015 from a foreign government, that are related to the subject of the hearing.					
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<u>CPOST</u>	<u>INDCTEC REPORT</u>	<u>ASPI</u>			<u>3500</u>

I certify that the information above and attached is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature Robert A. Papp

Date: Jan 11, 2018

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ROBERT PAPE

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Robert A. Pape is Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago specializing in international security affairs. His publications include *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago 2010) (with James Feldman); *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House 2005); *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Cornell 1996), "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security* (1997), "The Determinants of International Moral Action," *International Organization* (1999); "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* (2003); and "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* (2005). His commentary on international security policy has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New Republic*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, as well as on *Nightline*, *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, and *National Public Radio*. Before coming to Chicago in 1999, he taught international relations at Dartmouth College for five years and air power strategy for the USAF's School of Advanced Airpower Studies for three years. He received his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1988 and graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Pittsburgh in 1982. His current work focuses on the causes of suicide terrorism and the politics of unipolarity. He is the director of the [Chicago Project on Security and Threats](#).