



AFPC Conference: The state of U.S. counterterrorism policy

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Related Expert: Ilan I. Berman, James S. Robbins

On November 12, AFPC convened a well attended conference on Capitol Hill to assess the state of U.S. counterterrorism policy. The event, held in the Capitol Visitor's Center of the U.S. Congress, was timed to coincide with the one year anniversary of the Obama administration's strategy to combat the Islamic State terrorist group.

Former U.S. House Speaker (and AFPC Advisory Board member) Newt Gingrich kicked off the conference. The United States, Speaker Gingrich argued, now finds itself in a qualitatively new kind of conflict, and it requires "new words" – a revamped national security lexicon – to properly fight this "new war," as well as more robust national leadership to properly direct it.

Following the Speaker's keynote address, a quartet of leading counterterrorism experts delivered presentations regarding the threat posed by the Islamic State – and the nature of America's response to it so far.

AFPC's own James Robbins provided a "scorecard" of the Obama administration's efforts to combat the terrorist group, concluding that very few of the nine "lines of effort" articulated by the White House in the fall of 2014 have actually been attempted to date.

Vice President of the Middle East Media Research Institute Amb. Alberto Fernandez, examined the nature of the Islamic State's public messaging – and explained why the group's narrative has been so effective at recruiting disaffected Muslims the world over.

Thereafter, National Defense University's Celina Realuyo mapped out how the Islamic State raises money to fund its radical activities, and explained what has been done to disrupt the group's finances.

Finally, Marine Corps University's Sebastian Gorka outlined the vision and threat capabilities of the Islamic State – a challenge that, he argued, the U.S. has not yet begun to confront in earnest.

In all, the experts gave the Obama administration failing marks in its counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State to date and agreed, and will certainly preoccupy the next administration.