



ISIS: ONE YEAR LATER

ARE WE SAFER?

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE
RESEARCH BRIEFING BOOK
AUGUST 7, 2015

Paid For By The Republican National Committee. Not Authorized By Any Candidate
Or Candidate's Committee. 310 First Street SE, Washington DC 20003 www.gop.com



ISIS: ONE YEAR LATER

ARE WE SAFER?

ONE YEAR AFTER OBAMA'S MILITARY STRIKES BEGAN... ...ISIS IS NO WEAKER

One year ago, President Obama authorized military strikes against ISIS. Today, the troubling fact is that ISIS remains strong. As an *Associated Press* headline read on July 31, “Despite bombing, Islamic State is no weaker than a year ago.”

The president's strategy — or lack thereof — doesn't seem to be working.



ISIS REMAINS STRONG

“After billions of dollars spent and more than 10,000 extremist fighters killed, the Islamic State group is fundamentally no weaker than it was when the U.S.-led bombing campaign began a year ago, American intelligence agencies have concluded.”

— THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 7/31/15

By almost any measure, ISIS is not getting weaker, even after a year of military strikes. It remains well funded and has little trouble finding new recruits, according to *The Associated Press*.

The situation has been called a “strategic stalemate” by intelligence analysts. In fact, the Islamic State, also called ISIS or ISIL, has been expanding into new countries and territories from Libya to Afghanistan.

“ISIL has plenty of money”

— DANIEL GLASER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TERRORIST FINANCING AT THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT

ISIS has simply adapted its operations to defend against U.S. attacks. “Fighters no longer move around in easily targeted armored columns; they embed themselves among women and children, and they communicate through couriers to thwart eavesdropping and geolocation...” reports the AP.”

This is certainly not what we’re hearing from the White House. Likewise, we’re not hearing much explanation of why the President’s “strategy” isn’t working.

“The Islamic State’s staying power also raises questions about the administration’s approach to the threat that the group poses to the U.S. and its allies.”

— THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 7/31/15



CITIES FALL, REBELS GIVE UP

Despite U.S. efforts, ISIS continues to advance, capturing and holding strategic cities in Iraq and Syria.

JUNE 2014:

ISIS militants captured Mosul, Iraq's second largest city

AUGUST 2014:

President declared anti-ISIS strikes

MAY 2015:

Iraqi city of Ramadi fell to ISIS

MAY 2015:

Syrian city of Palmyra seized by ISIS

JUNE 2015:

One year later, ISIS is still “completely entrenched” in Mosul

“Alarm bells should be going off.”

— REP. ADAM SCHIFF (D-CA), MAY 2015

Key rebels are ready to give up in frustration with the U.S. program to train fighters against ISIS.

Training anti-ISIS rebels in the region was an important part of the plan to defeating ISIS. Unfortunately, that hasn't been working as hoped. Rebel groups are getting frustrated with the U.S. efforts and demoralized by ISIS's advance.


The Daily Beast reports: "A key rebel commander and his men are ready to ready to pull out in frustration of the U.S. program to train a rebel army to beat back the terror group in Syria."

Despite the president's denials, even members of the Obama administration aren't optimistic:



"It's as serious – if not more serious a threat – than al Qaeda."

— ATTORNEY GENERAL LORETTA LYNCH, JULY 2015



"The Islamic State group's effort to inspire troubled Americans to violence has become more of a terror threat to the U.S. than an external attack by al-Qaida."

— FBI DIRECTOR JAMES COMEY, JULY 2015

But the president doesn't seem to want to face reality:



"No, I don't think we're losing."

— PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, MAY 2015



WHERE'S THE STRATEGY?

When America needed a strategy to defeat ISIS, the White House seemed focus on finding a strategy to win the PR war.

By the president's own admission, he has no strategy to defeat ISIS. In August 2014, he conceded, "We don't have a strategy yet."

Almost one year later, in June 2015, he said, "We don't yet have a complete strategy."

It's sad, but perhaps not surprising, considering the President didn't take ISIS seriously for so long. At first, he dismissed them as the "JV team" that could simply be "managed."

"The analogy we use around here sometimes, and I think is accurate, is if a jayvee team puts on Lakers uniforms that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant."

— PRESIDENT OBAMA, DISCUSSING ISIS, JANUARY 2014

The President was rightly criticized for downplaying the very serious threat of ISIS. *The Washington Post's* David Ignatius told CNN that his "JV" analogy "should haunt him." *The Wall Street Journal* criticized him for "underestim[ing]" the threat.

The White House could have corrected the comment and apologized for the "JV," comment, and demonstrated a new focus on driving back ISIS. Instead, they just tried to drive a new PR narrative. Both President Obama and his press secretary claimed he wasn't talking "specifically" about ISIS. But *The Washington Post's* Fact Checker gave them "Four Pinocchios." PolitiFact rated their spin "false."



FAILED LEADERSHIP, BAD REVIEWS

President Obama's handling of ISIS has been widely panned.

From newspapers and reporters, to former administration officials, and even top military leaders, President Obama's handling of the ISIS threat is not viewed kindly. If Americans are looking for leadership, they're not getting it from President Obama.

"It has been apparent for some time that the United States lacks a strategy to fulfill President Obama's pledge to 'degrade and ultimately destroy' the Islamic State...."

— THE WASHINGTON POST

"The policy doesn't match the rhetoric."

— NBC'S CHUCK TODD

"There is no strategy."

— BOB WOODWARD

"We certainly don't have a strategy."

— FORMER OBAMA ADMINISTRATION DEFENSE SECRETARY ROBERT GATES

"It's clearly not working."

— FORMER OBAMA ADMINISTRATION DIA DIRECTOR LT. GEN. MICHAEL FLYNN

“The news from Iraq is, quite frankly, terrifying. And it was utterly predictable.”

— OBAMA'S FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ, RYAN CROCKER

“We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea.”

— COMMANDER OF U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST MAJ. GEN. MICHAEL NAGATA

“Too cautious.”

— U.S. SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN (D-CA)

“We're not making tremendous progress.”

— REP. ADAM SCHIFF (D-CA)





HILLARY CLINTON SUPPORTS OBAMA'S (LACK OF AN) ISIS STRATEGY

“I would have advised him to do exactly as I believe he is now doing.”

— HILLARY CLINTON, JUNE 2014

In June 2014, Hillary Clinton expressed her support for President Obama's handling of the situation in Iraq, saying, “I would have advised him to do exactly as I believe he is now doing.” In September 2014, Clinton reaffirmed her support. According to CBS News, she “publicly backed President Obama's strategy to degrade and destroy Islamic militants in Syria and Iraq.”

“Bill, Hillary Clinton Back Obama's ISIS Strategy”

— CBS NEWS HEADLINE

She again backed him in February when she said he was making “the right moves” on ISIS and she continues to support the President, despite the obvious shortcomings of his approach to the situation. Former Clinton advisor Neera Tanden said in May 2015 that Clinton thinks he “has the right strategy.”

So if Clinton would have done “exactly” the same thing as Obama, why should Americans expect things to get any better if she's president?

For her part, Clinton deflects any responsibility for the situation, despite serving as Secretary of State until January 2013. “I could not have predicted, however, the extent to which ISIS could be effective in seizing cities in Iraq and trying to erase boundaries to create an Islamic state,” she claimed in June 2014.

By all accounts, President Obama's approach to ISIS isn't working, yet by her own admission, Hillary Clinton wouldn't change a single thing.



FACT-CHECK: IRAQ IS A CLINTON “ACCOMPLISHMENT”

Clinton supporters struggle to name Hillary Clinton’s accomplishment as Secretary of State. But the White House and a pro-Clinton group have credited her with ending the War in Iraq. That, of course, is an interesting claim considering the ongoing struggle there.

As recently as June 2015, White House National Security Advisor Susan Rice credited Clinton with helping “to bring to conclusion two long and costly wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

A year earlier, then-White House Deputy Press Secretary Josh Earnest said something similar: “So in terms of important foreign policy accomplishments for which Secretary Clinton can rightly claim her share of the credit, I would put ending the war in Iraq....”

The poorly named pro-Clinton research group, Correct the Record, also maintains that Clinton ended the wars.

But that claim is “up for debate,” as *The Hill* put it as far back as June 2014. *The New York Times* in September 2014 called it an “incomplete war.” “We’re back in an Iraq war,” wrote the *LA Times*’ Doyle McManus.

And of course, in the last year, President Obama has authorized sending troops back to Iraq as ISIS continues to grow in influence.

In other words, Hillary Clinton’s “accomplishment” isn’t that much of an accomplishment at all.