# SepOct18 – AT Terror DA

Generic impact D is omitted, you can find it on openev tho lol, left the ISIS stuff since F in the chat for them

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**Joscelyn 8/29** Thomas Joscelyn Is A Senior Fellow At The Foundation For Defense Of Democracies and The Senior Editor For Fdd'S Long War Journal., 8-29-2018, "Analysis: Losing a War," FDD's Long War Journal, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/08/analysis-losing-a-war.php> OHS-AT

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In keeping with this stern warning, the Trump administration has withheld funds, designated additional Pakistan-based facilitators as terrorists, and chastised Pakistani officials for inaction. It is possible that this has had some effect behind closed doors, but it certainly hasn’t changed Pakistan’s overall behavior. Moreover, America is generally unwilling to target senior Taliban leaders inside Pakistan. The last time the United States killed a Taliban leader inside Pakistan was in May 2016. This safe haven has been crucial, allowing much of the Taliban’s leadership to operate with impunity.

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### \*\*uq debate\*\*

### at: winning wot – we’re losing

#### US is not winning war on terror – upcoming cuts make massive, worst case losses in Africa a reality.

**Turse 9/12** Nick Turse, 9-12-2018, "U.S. Military’s Worst-Case Scenario: Large Parts of Africa Seized by ISIS, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram," Intercept, <https://theintercept.com/2018/09/12/boko-haram-isis-west-africa-africom/> OHS-AT

WHAT KEEPS U.S. Africa Command chief Gen. Thomas Waldhauser up at night? That remains unknown, but the analysts under his command are worried about terrorist organizations like the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram combining forces and destabilizing large swaths of the African continent.

Planning documents issued in October 2017 and classified by Waldhauser detail the worst-case scenarios imagined by the command. The forecasts, which are an update to AFRICOM’s Theater Campaign Plan and were obtained by The Intercept via a Freedom of Information Act request, center around potential gains by terrorist organizations in the north and west of the continent, specifically Libya, the Sahel, and the Lake Chad basin. They offer a nightmare vision of a destabilized, crisis-ridden region that could – if the worst happens — fall increasingly under the control of Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram.

North and West Africa have seen intense U.S. military engagement over the last decade. America has, as The Intercept reported earlier this year, conducted approximately 550 drone strikes in Libya since 2011 — more than in Somalia, Yemen, or Pakistan. In July, Politico disclosed that for at least five years, Green Berets, Navy SEALs, and other commandos — operating under a little-understood budgetary authority known as Section 127e — have been involved in reconnaissance and “direct action” combat raids with local forces in Cameroon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Tunisia. Between 2015 and 2017, there were also at least 10 previously unreported attacks on American troops in West Africa, the New York Times revealed in March. Last October, four U.S. troops were killed in an ISIS ambush in Niger. Two months later, Green Berets fighting alongside local forces in that same country reportedly killed 11 ISIS militants.

The disclosure comes as Waldhauser has submitted a proposal, in response to the Trump administration’s strategy to increasingly focus on threats from China and Russia, to drastically cut the number of U.S. commandos on the continent and shutter several bases, according to a recent report by the New York Times. AFRICOM did not respond to requests to interview Waldhauser.

The AFRICOM documents imagine a future in which the Islamic State consolidates control over eastern Libya – a region destabilized by a 2011 NATO military intervention that overthrew autocrat Muammar Gaddafi. ISIS, in this scenario, would dominate major cities and develop close ties with local militias and “tribal elements.” According to the files, ISIS could then use oil revenues to finance a wide-ranging terror campaign. “ISIS and their associated branches might then begin to plan and conduct large scale, high-impact attacks against Western targets in North Africa and Europe,” according to the files.

Experts say that the scenarios are generally plausible, but lack sophistication. There is little evidence to suggest that much time or effort was expended in scripting the nightmare forecasts. Key aspects — like probable safeguards that would likely keep such dire projections from coming to pass — go unmentioned. One former U.S. intelligence analyst, who asked not to be named for fear of jeopardizing relationships with current officials, described a scenario involving Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa as “ludicrous” due to its utter improbability. Additional checks on militants, like vigilante groups and local self-defense forces, would, he said, almost certainly prevent that worst-case scenario from coming to pass.

AFRICOM’s worries include a potential alliance between ISIS and Ansar al-Sharia-Benghazi, or ASB, whose members reportedly took part in the deadly assault on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, in September 2012. Such a merger, the command warns, would provide the Islamic State with sophisticated supply networks and a large contingent of experienced, well-armed fighters. The combination of ASB’s local power and ISIS’s “aggressive tactics” could allow the group to expel the Libyan National Army, led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar, from Benghazi.

Just to the south, in the countries of the Sahel region, AFRICOM’s nightmare scenario involves the union of ISIS and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM, rival terror groups that have previously competed with each other. The plans express a fear that “AQIM and ISIS operatives team up to plot attacks against U.S., Western, and local authorities in a bid to demonstrate the impact of the merger.” Such a wave of violence, the documents warn, would allow the hybrid terrorist organization to make inroads in Algeria, Mali, and Tunisia, “unifying extremists across the region.” This, in turn, would allow for the ability to launch large-scale assaults on United Nations peacekeepers as well as kidnapping and “assassination operations” against Westerners in the region.

“Within five years, the groups will reestablish control over Northern Malian territory as far south as Timbuktu and will maintain close and cooperative relations with Malian rebel groups as they provide effective governance over captured territory,” according to AFRICOM’s worst-case projection.

Under the terms of Waldhauser’s reported proposal to slash the number of U.S. commandos operating in Africa by 25 percent over 18 months, and by 50 percent over three years, troop cuts would fall heavily on Central and West Africa, beginning with countries like Cameroon and Niger. This region is precisely where AFRICOM, in its 2017 planning documents, envisioned what appears to be its most dire scenario.

**Donald Trump is planning to expand fighting in Syria and potentially Iran, causing more destabilization in the Middle East**

Timm **17** executive director of the Freedom of the Press Foundation, 2017 (Trevor, “Donald Trump's bloodlust for war in the Middle East risks chaos,” The Guradian, 27 Jun 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/27/donald-trumps-bloodlust-war-middle-east-iran-chaos>, accessed 7/9/18, GDI-ML)

Lost among the deluge of stories about the Russia investigation and the Republicans’ push to take healthcare away from millions of people, the Trump administration is laying the groundwork for a disastrous regional proxy war against Iran in Syria, and possibly beyond. Foreign Policy reported recently that key officials within the Trump administration are “pushing to broaden the war in Syria, viewing it as an opportunity to confront Iran and its proxy forces on the ground there”. The strategy was being advocated over objections from the Pentagon, but it doesn’t seem to be deterring the White House. As the Washington Post made clear just a few days ago, Iranian and US forces have already been directly clashing in the region, and officials are busy planning the “next stage” of the Syria war once Isis is defeated – a plan that centers around directly attacking the Iranians. On Monday night, the White House seemingly laid down its marker. In a surprising statement that seemed to catch even the Pentagon off guard, press secretary Sean Spicer warned that Syria was planning another chemical weapons attack and “would pay a heavy price” if it came to pass. UN ambassador Nikki Haley quickly chimed in on Twitter saying that any further attack would “be blamed on Assad, but also on Russia & Iran who support him killing his own people”. The White House is almost looking for a reason to launch yet another potentially catastrophic war in the Middle East, right in the middle of the most complex civil war we’ve seen in decades. There is no telling what chaos and destruction such a move would bring, but you can see the war wagons aligning within Trump administration circles as they prepare to move ahead with it anyway. Just this weekend, Politico quoted key Republican senator Tom Cotton saying: “The policy of the United States should be regime change in Iran.” The CIA has already expanded its Iranian covert operations, while the main White House liaison to intelligence agencies, Ezra Cohen-Watnick, has reportedly “told other administration officials that he wants to use American spies to help oust the Iranian government”. And US secretary of state Rex Tillerson, in little noticed comments to Congress last week, called for “regime change” in Iran as well (albeit a “peaceful” one – whatever that means). Trump’s bloodlust for war against Iran has been brewing since the start of his administration. They have been sabre-rattling ever since disgraced ex-national security adviser Michael Flynn showed up in the White House briefing room unannounced less than two weeks into Trump’s term to declare that Iran was “on notice”. The New York Times reported in February that the Pentagon had outlined a brazen plan to start boarding Iranian ships in international waters – a clear act of war – that was only put on hold because the plan leaked. And it’s only a matter of time before they find a way to rip up the nuclear deal signed by the Obama administration. The Trump administration’s plans may not stop in Syria either. Some officials have allegedly also been pushing for the Pentagon to step up its support of Saudi Arabia’s appalling war in Yemen, which has left 20 million people on the verge of starvation – all to go after Iranian-backed forces in the region as well. All this comes as the Trump administration ramps up war across the Middle East. They are conducting drone strikes at a rate almost four times that of the Obama administration; civilian deaths from US forces in Syria have skyrocketed; special operations in Somalia have been ramping up; and the Pentagon is sending thousands of more troops to Afghanistan. Six months ago it may have been hard to imagine a more destabilized Middle East, but leave it to the Trump administration to somehow make things worse. If they follow through on their stated desire to start a war with Iran, it will be a deadly folly of historic proportions.

### at: winning wot – can’t predict attacks

#### Bitcoin subverts counterterrorist intelligence efforts and makes terrorists impossible to detect until they attack

**Saravalle and Rosenberg 1/9** Edoardo Saravalle, Elizabeth, 1-9-2018, "Bitcoin can help terrorists secretly fund their deadly attacks," Fox News, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2018/01/09/bitcoin-can-help-terrorists-secretly-fund-their-deadly-attacks.html> OHS-AT

One of the latest tools terrorists are using isn’t a new kind of bomb, gun, suicide vest or other device that can kill and maim. The tool is bitcoin, the virtual currency created and exchanged using a decentralized network of computers, without the involvement of government and banks.

Because bitcoin transactions can be completed anonymously, the virtual currency is an ideal way for criminals – including terrorists – to hide their financial transactions from government agencies and law enforcement.

Bitcoin can be sent anywhere, converted into cash, and deposited in banks. It’s as if cash was made invisible in one location, secretly taken to another location undetected, and then made visible again.

Terrorists can then use the cash they get from their converted bitcoin to buy weapons, clothes, food, pay rent and cover their other expenses.

As a high-tech money laundering device, bitcoin is a terrorist’s dream come true. But it’s a nightmare for financial regulators and for counterterrorism forces in our military, law enforcement and intelligence community trying to find and stop terrorists.

As a result, bitcoin may be ushering in a new era when the United States finds it nearly impossible to stop the financing of terrorism. That’s a frightening development that could allow terrorists to go undetected – until they strike.

### \*\*link debate\*\*

### no link – exemption

#### Normal means balances exemptions to prevent terror with journalist protection

Wimmer ’13 Kurt Wimmer, [Kurt Wimmer is a technology, privacy and media lawyer at Covington & Burling, where he is a partner in the Washington office and the co-chair of the firm's privacy and data security practice group. He is chair of the First Amendment Advisory Committee of the Media Institute, and is a director of the Media Law Resource Center. In past lives, he was general counsel of Gannett Co., Inc., the country's largest news publisher, and managing partner of Covington's London office. He represents a 70-company and association coalition advocating the Free Flow of Information Act. ] 10-29-2013, "Five Myths About the Federal Shield Law," HuffPost, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/kurt-wimmer/five-myths-about-the-federal-shield-law\_b\_4172107.html

Myth: The bill would not protect national security reporters, because its “national security exception” denies the privilege to any reporting about national security or classified documents. Fact: False. The bill’s national security provisions are the more speech-protective to emerge from Congress’s nine years of working on this legislation. The bill, in fact, would prevent courts or agencies from forcing journalists to disclose sources in national security leak investigations in the vast majority of cases. The “national security’ exception in leak cases is very narrow — it applies only if an independent federal judge finds that the disclosure would materially assist the federal government in preventing or mitigating an act of terrorism or other acts that are reasonably likely to cause significant and articulable harm to national security. The bill would not require disclosure merely to identify the source for later prosecution. And the bill explicitly states that the court cannot order disclosure of the source’s identity merely because that source is capable of disclosing more classified information in the future. This “exception” for national security interests is narrowly tailored, and it will provide significant and important protections for investigative reporting on national security issues. In all, I recognize that Internet memes are pretty hard to slow down once they begin. But the meme that Congress is somehow seeking to undermine bloggers and to stop non-traditional journalists from being protected by the First Amendment is simply belied by the facts. The best remedy might be to do something truly radical — try reading the bill. And then look at the reporters, such as author and New York Times reporter Jim Risen, who right now are threatened with imprisonment for doing their jobs. The next step is simple: Support the bill.

### link turn – deterrence

#### Leaks deter terrorists

**Pozen 13** - Pozen, David E. [Professor of Law at Columbia Law School] “The Leaky Leviathan: Why the Government Condemns and Condones Unlawful Disclosures of Information.” Harvard Law Review 127 (2013): 124. ekl

There is also a more direct way in which leaks may serve security objectives: through what security strategists call “deterrence by deni- al.”449 Originally theorized during the Cold War, **deterrence by denial aims to prevent adversarial action by increasing not the expected cost of punishment but the expected odds of failure**. Instead of scaring off enemies through threats of ex post retaliation or preempting their plots through ex ante detection**, deterrence by denial seeks to convince rele- vant populations that such plots are unlikely to yield significant benefits, and thus that they are not worth hatching in the first place**.450 On this approach, **the U.S. government should want prospective terrorists to believe it has terrific capabilities of surveillance**, infiltration, inca- pacitation, and so forth, **regardless of the true state of those capabili-ties**. Indeed, the larger the gap between our actual expenditures on de- fensive measures and our adversaries’ perceptions of their potency, the more efficient our system of deterrence. In as much as **leaks are systematically skewed toward publicizing the aggressive, effective, or legally dubious aspects of our national security efforts** — as seems impressionistically to be the case — **they may be well suited to delivering this sort of deterrence**. Media leaks can allow U.S. officials to send dissuasive signals, purposefully or in- advertently, to a distributed network of known and unknown enemy cells, without incurring an obligation to proffer details, substantiate claims of success, or permit a full legal accounting. So long as they are not both tangible and general in form, **leaks typically provide enough information to put adversaries on notice of a given plan or policy, but not enough to enable a sophisticated assessment.** As Professor Samuel Rascoff notes, **if terrorists did not know of the existence of certain surveillance modalities, they could hardly be deterred by them**, and yet “conveying the precise scope and methodologies of counter-terrorism programs . . . might tend to undermine the deterrent effect being sought.”451 Because they are not subject to the same discourse con- straints as official disclosures, leaks may hit the sweet spot between these two poles. Whether or not **leaks are ideal instruments of deterrence by denial, they have become integral to its practice**. Such **deterrence is possible only when we “publicly disseminate at least some information regard- ing our defensive measures**.”452 However, the scope of the classifica- tion system ensures that almost all relevant facts about those measures will technically be unsusceptible to public dissemination. Authorized disclosures to the press enable the administration to bypass some of these restrictions; unauthorized and quasi-authorized disclosures en- sure the reporting is seen as credible. **Leaks help overcome a fundamental obstacle to fulfilling the communicative dimension of national security.**

#### Stuxnet proves

**Pozen 13 -** Pozen, David E. [Professor of Law at Columbia Law School] “The Leaky Leviathan: Why the Government Condemns and Condones Unlawful Disclosures of Information.” Harvard Law Review 127 (2013): 124. ekl

Consider two recent examples. In May 2012, **the New York Times followed the Associated Press in revealing that the United States had successfully planted a double agent in al Qaeda’s Yemeni cell and thereby thwarted an airplane bombing**.453 Less than a month later, **the Times revealed that the United States had helped plan and execute the Stuxnet cyberattack on Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities**.454 In both cases, **critics asserted the leaks would have devastating conse- quences for our national security**. The opposite cannot be ruled out. However reprehensible the underlying disclosures might have been, these **stories** dramatically **showcased the U.S. government’s power** **and resolve**, **without necessarily revealing anything significant about the limits of either.** (Whether the stories compromised any sources or methods of intelligence collection is unclear at this writing.) As Bill Keller of the Times speculated — in self-interested fashion, to be sure, but plausibly — **the “double-agent revelations may well have been good for American security”** to the extent that **they “sow[ed] some cor- rosive mistrust among the fanatics” who plan such suicide bomb- ings**.455 Professor Goldsmith’s analysis of the Stuxnet leak is particu- larly apposite: ‘While many in the U.S. government are no doubt genuinely angry that the U.S. government hand in **Stuxnet** was revealed, this revelation probably **has the happy effect of enhancing U.S. cyber deterrence**. For **it demon- strates that the U.S. government has sophisticated cyberweapons that** — despite legal and other obstacles — **it is willing to deploy, even in a preemptive fashion**.456’ In demonstrating such decisiveness, the episode suggested that those who wish to menace the United States will find it very tough sledding. One of the most assailed disclosures in recent history, **a dis- closure that helped prompt a vituperative congressional hearing and widespread calls for criminal prosecution,457 may have been an im- portant instance of deterrence by denial.**

### at: turns case – surveillance

#### Terror attack won’t ramp up security or increase fear – Boston bombing proves.

Hayes 13 — Danny Hayes, associate professor of political science at George Washington University, focusing on political communication and political behavior; co-author of *Influence from Abroad*, a book about Americans' views toward U.S. foreign policy, 2013 (“Why the Boston Marathon bombing won’t erode civil liberties,” Wonkblog, The Washington Post, April 28th, Available Online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/04/28/why-the-boston-maraton-bombing-wont-erode-civil-liberties/>)

From the moment that Boston bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was pulled out of a boat in Watertown, Mass., the debate over civil liberties and domestic anti-terrorism policies, largely dormant in recent years, was reignited. Noting that “the homeland is the battlefield,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) urged the Obama administration to designate Tsarnaev, an American citizen, as an enemy combatant. Civil liberties groups then objected when authorities decided not to read Miranda rights to the Boston Marathon bombing suspect, invoking a public safety exception. Speculation also arose that police might now find it easier to persuade the public to support the use of surveillance technology and domestic drones. “After Boston,” Ryan Gallagher wrote this week in Slate, “the balance in the struggle between privacy and security may swing back in their favor.” But research conducted shortly after 9/11, combined with some recent polling data, suggests that Americans may be unlikely to trade civil liberties for a greater sense of security as a result of the bombing. That’s because the attack hasn’t made the public significantly more fearful of future domestic terrorism, and because trust in government is low. After 9/11, concern over terrorism skyrocketed. In a Gallup survey fielded in the days before the attack, less than one-half of one percent of Americans said terrorism was the country’s most important problem. But in October 2001, 46 percent did. These worries boosted support for legislation, such as the USA PATRIOT Act, that expanded law enforcement’s power to investigate suspected terrorism, even as those measures were criticized for eroding civil liberties protections. In a survey conducted between November 2001 and January 2002, political scientists Darren Davis and Brian Silver designed a series of questions to explore the tradeoffs between security and civil liberties. They began by asking people whether they agreed more with the statement that “in order to curb terrorism in this country, it will be necessary to give up some civil liberties” or that “we should preserve our freedoms above all, even if there remains some risk of terrorism.” Forty-five percent of Americans chose the first option, indicating a willingness to give up some freedoms in exchange for greater security. When respondents were asked about the tradeoffs involving specific measures, there was wide variation. Davis and Silver found that very few Americans – eight percent – believed that the government should have the power to investigate people who participate in nonviolent protests. And just 18 percent said they supported racial profiling. But when asked, for instance, whether they agreed that “high school teachers have the right to criticize America’s policies toward terrorism” or that “high school teachers should defend America’s policies in order to promote loyalty to our country,” 60 percent said teachers should back the government. Perhaps not surprisingly, the biggest influence on whether people were willing to offer pro-security over pro-civil liberties responses was their fear of a second attack. Respondents who believed another terrorist act was imminent were more likely to support tradeoffs in favor of security. Importantly, Davis and Silver found that the relationship was strongest among people who expressed high levels of political trust: People who believe the government typically does the right thing and who were fearful of another terrorist attack were the most willing to relinquish civil liberties protections. Those findings are consistent with a series of studies by Stanley Feldman, Leonie Huddy and their colleagues at Stony Brook University. In one survey conducted between October 2001 and March 2002, the researchers found that 86 percent of Americans said they were “very” or “somewhat” concerned about another domestic terrorist act. The greater the concern, the more likely respondents were to support the use of government-issued ID cards and allowing authorities to monitor phone calls and e-mail. But in contrast to 9/11, polling since the Boston Marathon suggests that the bombing has made Americans only slightly more fearful of future terrorist attacks than they were beforehand. Fifty-eight percent of respondents in a Pew poll conducted April 18-21 said they were “very” or “somewhat” worried about another attack on the United States. That was no higher, however, than when the same question was asked in November 2010. And it was significantly lower than the 71 percent who said they were worried in October 2001. A slightly different question in a Washington Post poll taken April 17-18 found that 69 percent of Americans said that the possibility of a major terrorist attack worried them either “a great deal” or “somewhat.” That figure was only a few percentage points higher than when the same question was asked in 2007 and 2008. In addition, political trust is lower today than it was in 2001, when public confidence in government rose sharply after the terrorist attacks. If Davis and Silver’s findings are correct, then greater skepticism of government – produced in part by the struggling economy – should limit the public’s willingness to give law enforcement more latitude. Ultimately, the scope of the Boston tragedy was smaller than 9/11, which could help explain its limited effect on the public. It may also be that because Americans believe terrorist attacks are now a fundamental part of life in the United States, any single event will have a more muted effect on public opinion. And because the Tsarnaev brothers have not been connected to any known terrorist organizations, Americans may feel less under siege than they did when al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden were identified as the perpetrators of the 2001 attacks. Regardless of the reason, all of this suggests that policymakers are likely to face a more difficult task than they did after 9/11 in persuading the public to support additional security measures that infringe on Americans’ freedoms.

### \*\*impact debate\*\*

### at: all terror

### at: bioterror

### at: terrorists use nukes

### at: retaliation

### at: retaliation – no attribution

### at: retaliation – advisors check

### at: chem terror

### at: cyberattacks – no capabilities

### at: cyberattacks – no impact

### at: cyberattacks – no nuclear plant destruction

### at: ISIS

#### NO, Isis is not a threat

**Engelhardt 14** (Tom Engelhardt, 10-7-2014, Reporter at ‘The Nation’ "No, ISIS Is Not a Threat to the US," Nation, <https://www.thenation.com/article/no-isis-not-threat-us/>)

All of this passed so quickly that I didn’t begin rolling her comment around in my head until we were looking at the sublime pointillist paintings of Georges Seurat and his associates. Only then did I think: ISIS, a danger in New York? ISIS, a danger in Washington? And I had the urge to bolt down the stairs, catch up to her and say: whatever you do, don’t step off the curb. That’s where [danger lies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_motor_vehicle_deaths_in_U.S._by_year) in American life. ISIS, not so much.

I have no idea what provoked her comment. Maybe she was thinking about a story that had[broken](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/iraqi-leader-says-terror-plot-targets-west-but-us-officials-express-skepticism/2014/09/25/9782e184-44d7-11e4-8042-aaff1640082e_story.html) just two days earlier, topping the primetime TV news and hitting the front pages of newspapers. On a visit to the Big Apple, the new Iraqi prime minister, Haider al-Abadi,[claimed](http://www.thewire.com/global/2014/09/iraqi-prime-minister-says-terror-attack-against-us-and-paris-subways-imminent/380762/) that his intelligence services had uncovered a plot by militants of the Islamic State (IS, *a k a* ISIS or ISIL), the extremists of the new caliphate that had gobbled up part of his country, against the subway systems of Paris and New York and possibly other US cities.

I had watched Brian Williams report that [story](http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/01/politics/great-american-freakout/) on NBC in the usual breathless fashion, along with denials from American intelligence that there was any evidence of such a plot. I had noted as well that police patrols on my hometown’s subways were nonetheless quickly reinforced, with extra contingents of [bomb-sniffing dogs](http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/After-subway-plot-report-NY-increases-policing-5781978.php) and surveillance teams. Within a day, the leading officials of my state, Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, were denying that they had any information on such a plot, but also taking very public rides on the city’s subways to “reassure” us all. The threat didn’t exist, but was also well in hand! I have to admit that, to me, it all seemed almost comic.

In the meantime, the background noise of the last thirteen years played on. Inside the American Terrordome, the chorus of hysteria-purveyors, Republican and Democrat alike, nattered on, as had been true for weeks, about the “direct,” not to say apocalyptic, threat the Islamic State and its caliph posed to the American way of life. These included [Senator Lindsey Graham](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2014/09/16/Lindsey-Graham-fears-ISIS-will-come-kill-us-all-in-a-not-at-all-hysterical-way/5011410890658/)(“This president needs to rise to the occasion before we all get killed here at home”); majority leader John Boehner, who [insisted](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2014/09/28/boehner-troops-ground-syria-isil/16382803/) that we should consider putting American boots on Iraqi and perhaps even Syrian ground soon, since “they intend to kill us”; Senator Dianne Feinstein, who [swore](http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/09/07/feinstein-confront-isis-action-terror-obama-column/15254223/) that “the threat ISIS poses cannot be overstated”; Senator Bill Nelson, who [commented](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/10/american-fear-mongering-war-again-isis) that “it ought to be pretty clear when they… say they’re going to fly the black flag of ISIS over the White House that ISIS is a clear and present danger.” And a chorus of officials, named and anonymous, warning that the terror danger to the country was “[imminent](http://www.buzzfeed.com/passantino/chuck-hagel-warns-isis-threat-is-beyond-anything-weve-seen#137g0vw),” while the usual set of pundits chirped away about the potential destruction of our way of life.

The media, of course, continued to report it all with a kind of eyeball-gluing glee. The result by the time I met that woman: [71%](http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/08/politics/cnn-poll-isis/) of Americans believed ISIS had nothing short of sleeper cells in the United States (shades of “Homeland”!) and at least the [same percentage](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/poll-public-supports-strikes-in-iraq-syria-obamas-ratings-hover-near-his-all-time-lows/2014/09/08/69c164d8-3789-11e4-8601-97ba88884ffd_story.html), if not more (depending on which poll you read), were ready to back a full-scale bombing campaign, promptly launched by the Obama administration, against the group.

If, however, you took a step out of the overwrought American universe of terror threats for thirty seconds, it couldn’t have been clearer that everyone in the grim netherworld of the Middle East now seemed to have our number. The beheading videos of the Islamic State had clearly been meant to cause hysteria [on the cheap](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175898/tomgram%3A_peter_van_buren,_back_to_the_future_in_iraq/) in this country—and they worked. Those first two videos somehow committed us to a war now [predicted](http://thehill.com/policy/defense/218656-pentagon-isis-campaign-could-last-years) to last for years, and a never-ending bombing campaign that we know perfectly well will [establish](http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175888/tomgram%3A_engelhardt,_the_escalation_follies/) the global credentials of the Islamic State and its mad caliph in jihadist circles. (In fact, the evidence is already in. From [North Africa](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-crisis-algerian-extremists-kill-french-hostage-herv-gourdel-over-airstrikes-in-iraq-9753717.html) to [Afghanistan](http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-allied-militants-behead-15-during-afghanistan-offensive-official-n212166) to [Pakistan](http://www.toledoblade.com/World/2014/10/04/Pakistani-Taliban-declare-allegiance-to-Islamic-State-and-global-jihad.html), the group is suddenly a brand name, its black flag something to hoist and its style of beheading something to be imitated.

Now, the Shia opponent of those jihadists had taken the hint and, not surprisingly, the very same path. The Iraqi prime minister, whose intelligence services had only recently been blindsided when IS militants captured huge swaths of his country, claimed to have evidence that was guaranteed to set loose the professional terror-mongers and hysterics in this country and so, assumedly, increase much-needed support for his government.

Or perhaps that woman I met had instead been struck by the news, only days earlier, that in launching a bombing campaign against the militants of the Islamic state in Syria, the Obama administration had also hit another outfit. It was called—so we were told—the Khorasan Group and, unlike the IS, it had the United States of America, the “homeland,” right in its bombsites. As became clear after the initial wave of hysteria swiftly passed, no one in our world or theirs had previously heard of such a group, which may have been a set of individuals in a larger Al Qaeda–linked Syrian rebel outfit called the al-Nusra Front who had no such name for themselves.

Whatever the case, it seemed that the Obama administration and connected intelligence outfits had our number, too. Although Khorasan was reputedly plotting against airplanes, not subways, transportation systems were evidently our jugular when it came to such outfits. This group, we were told in leaks by unnamed American intelligence officials, was made up of a “[cadre](http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ap-enterprise-al-qaidas-syrian-cell-alarms-us)” or “[collection](http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/al-qaeda-syria-khorasan/)” of hardened, “senior” Al Qaeda types from Afghanistan, who had settled in Syria not to overthrow Bashir al-Assad or create a caliphate, but to prepare the way for devastating attacks on the American “homeland” and possibly Western Europe as well. It was, as Director of National Intelligence James Clapper put it, “potentially yet another threat to the homeland,” and it was “imminent.” As US Central Command insisted in announcing the bombing strikes against the group, it involved “[imminent attack planning](http://www.nationaljournal.com/defense/defense-official-al-qaida-affiliated-group-was-in-final-stages-of-planning-attacks-against-the-west-20140923).” The Khorasan Group was, said Lieutenant General William Mayville, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “in the final stages of plans to execute major attacks against Western targets and potentially the U.S. homeland.”

Had we not hit them hard, they would be—so American intelligence officials assured us—on the verge (or at least the verge of the verge) of developing bombs so advanced that, using toothpaste tubes, rigged electronic devices, or possibly clothes soaked in explosives, their agents would be able to pass through airport security undetected and knock plane after plane out of the sky. Civilization was in peril, which meant that blazing headlines about the plot and the group mixed with shots of actual bombs (ours) exploding in Syria, and a sense of crisis that was, as ever, taken up with gusto by the media.

As Glenn Greenwald and Murtaza Hussain pointed out in a[devastating report](https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/09/28/u-s-officials-invented-terror-group-justify-bombing-syria/) at the *Intercept*, the whole Khorasan story began to disassemble within a day or so of the initial announcement and the bombing strikes in Syria. It took next to no time at all for that “imminent threat” to [morph](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/khorasan-a-terror-cell-that-avoided-the-spotlight.html)into “[aspirational](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/25/us-officials-terror-group-khorasan-syria)” planning; for reporters to check with their Syrian sources and find that no one knew a thing about the so-called Khorasan Group; for the taking down of those airliners to gain an ever more distant (and possibly even fictional) look. As ever, however, pointing out the real dangers in our world was left largely to [non-mainstream sources](http://www.democracynow.org/2014/9/29/how_the_us_concocted_a_terror), while the threat to our way of life, to Washington and New York, lingered in the air.

#### Unchecked Trump, not ISIS, is the greatest existential threat.

**Kuntzman 17** (Gersh Kuntzman, 2-17-2017, "Trump, not ISIS, is America’s greatest existential threat," nydailynews, a newspaper colomust for the daliy news since 2012 [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/trump-not-isis-america-greatest-existential-threat-article-1.2975318#](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/trump-not-isis-america-greatest-existential-threat-article-1.2975318))

Who is more dangerous to the American way of life: ISIS or Donald Trump? The answer is obvious: Trump. This is not some bit of clickbait. I realized anew during Thursday's press flagellation that Trump can wreak far more havoc on America, its vaunted institutions and its people than a terror group on the other side of the world. First, the facts: Alex Nowrasteh much-cited Cato Institute [analysis of terror attacks on American soil](https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa798_1_1.pdf) between 1975 and 2015 reveals that an American has a 1 in 3.6 million chance every year of being murdered by a foreign-born terrorist. The rate of death for victims of ISIS is even lower. You're also 19% more likely to be killed because your clothes catch fire than to be killed by a terrorist in this country. So let's dispense with this notion that our way of life is under siege by ISIS. Terror attacks are horrible and unjustified, but random acts of violence have zero potential to destroy our country. President Trump on the other hand... He's not a murderer. He isn't advocating beheading his opponents (yet). But his early moves — and his [obvious mental instability](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/shrinks-break-silence-president-trump-exhibits-traits-m-article-1.2957688) — threaten our way of life. Let us count the ways: In an otherwise self-laudatory and narcissistic press conference, Trump made it clear that he [does not value a free press](http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/press-conference-shows-wrong-president-article-1.2975095) — a major pillar of American democracy. The press, he said, "has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people. ... The press honestly is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control." That's right out of the totalitarian playbook: demean the press — and add in enough fake news like the "Bowling Green Massacre" or his lie that his 306 electoral voters represents the biggest landslide since Reagan — into the mix until the public doesn't know, and no longer cares, what's true and what isn't. But truth matters. Without it, a leader can claim that the Earth is not warming, that Russia did not steal Crimea, that illegal immigrants are all criminals — and draft policies that will reflect the lies. Lost in the fusillade of executive orders is a Trump-supported bill moving to his desk that would [overturn an Obama Administration move](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/senate-75-000-people-mental-disorders-buy-guns-article-1.2973373) to bar roughly 75,000 mentally incapacitated people from purchasing guns. These aren't people who should own guns; they are people whose schizophrenia, psychotic disorders and other mental health problems are so severe that they receive federal disability pay — "people who have conditions that make it impossible for them to work (or) manage their own affairs," as the Times put it. In other words, people who should not have guns. The rule was drafted in hopes of preventing another mass shooting like Newtown — committed by a person with severe mental incapacity. With a few strokes of his pen, President Trump has weakened basic environmental safeguards, meaning in the next few years, your water and air will be more toxic. On Thursday he signed a bill [allowing mining companies to pollute waterways](http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/319938-trump-signs-bill-undoing-obama-coal-mining-rule). His appointee to head the Environmental Protection Agency head spent most of his previous career suing the agency to prevent it from undertaking the first two words of its name. And Trump has signaled that he will undo other efforts to battle climate change — an irony considering that he's simultaneously [building higher seawalls](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/26/us/politics/donald-trump-international-business.html) to protect an Irish golf course. Taken as a whole, Trump's disregard for the environment can have disastrous, lasting consequences on our way of life. The World Health Organization estimates that there are [847,000 deaths annually](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/deaths-attributable-to-unhealthy-environments/en/) in the Americas from "unhealthy environments." That's far more people killed by ISIS. Every president loses some rounds in court — but only Trump has singled out judges in an attempt to undermine faith in America's independent judiciary and attack this other pillar of our democracy. "Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril," Trump [tweeted about](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/trump-blasts-political-courts-questioning-travel-ban-article-1.2967061) the "so-called judge" who suspended his travel ban. "If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!" Trump's attack on judges have been so vicious that [even his pick for the Supreme Court](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/supreme-court-pick-gorsuch-blasts-trump-demoralizing-judges-article-1.2967639) called it "demoralizing." It's worse than that. If Trump can convince more Americans that the judiciary is an unfair referee, he will have no one to stop him when he does something truly dangerous. Trump's coming [mass deportation](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-immigrant-communities-shaken-series-federal-raids-article-1.2970473) of undocumented immigrants — which has begun in major cities — also threatens our way of life. I get a lot of hate mail depicting illegal immigrants as criminals and job-swipers, but statistics show they are far less likely to commit a crime (beyond being here without documentation) and far more likely to perform jobs that American citizens don't want. Major cities can't operate without undocumented immigrants — and agriculture needs laborers to pick the crops. "The truth of the matter is that illegal immigrants are important to the U.S. economy," [reported The Hill](http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/203984-illegal-immigrants-benefit-the-us-economy). Even Texas — hardly a hotbed of progressive thinking — knows it depends on so-called illegal immigrants. "Without the undocumented population, Texas' work force would decrease by 6.3%" and its gross state product would decrease by 2.1%, said state Comptroller Susan Combs. So who is the greater threat to our way of life — a group that has killed a few handful of Americans or a President who will undermine our democracy with lies and attacks, poison our air and water, hurt our economy and ensure that mentally ill people get guns? To me, it's obvious.