

The Economic Club of New York

447th Meeting
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The Global Coalition to Counter ISIL:
A Year in Review

General John R. Allen

Special Presidential Envoy for the
Global Coalition To Counter ISIL

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Questioners: Marie-Josée Kravis
Hudson Institute, Inc.

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Introduction

William C. Dudley

I want to welcome all of you to the 447th meeting of the Economic Club of New York in our 108th year. As you know the Economic Club of New York is the nation's leading nonpartisan forum for economic policy speeches. More than 1000 guest speakers have appeared before this club over the last century and we have established a very strong tradition of excellence.

I want to recognize and thank the 228 members of our Centennial Society. These club members have made an extraordinary contribution to insure the financial stability of the club into its second century. Their names are on your program and on our website.

I would also like to welcome the students from West Point. I was up at West Point this weekend and I enjoyed it very much, NYU Law School and the CUNY Graduate Center. I want to thank Marie Josée Kravis and Frank Brosens for making these people's attendance possible today.

Now to address a subject we hear and read about every day, ISIS or ISIL. I am very pleased to introduce General John R. Allen. General Allen was named Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL by President Obama about a year ago. General Allen is a distinguished fellow in the foreign policy program at Brookings. From July 2011 to February 2013 he commanded the NATO International Security Assistance Force and United States forces

in Afghanistan.

Prior to assuming command of the NATO and US forces in Afghanistan, the General commanded at every level of the Marine Corp. through Marine Corp. expeditionary brigade. As a General Officer, Allen served as the Principle Director of Asia Pacific Policy in the office of the Secretary of Defense, a position he held for nearly three years.

He holds a BS in Operation Analysis from the US Naval Academy, an MA in National Security Studies from Georgetown University, an MS in Strategic Intelligence from the Defense Intelligent College and an MS in National Security Strategy from the National Defense University.

General Allen will now speak on the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL a year in review, General Allen. (Applause)

General John R. Allen

Special Presidential Envoy for the
Global Coalition To Counter ISIL

Well I want to thank you Chairman Dudley for your very kind and generous introduction. And for inviting me here today, this afternoon, to join the New York Economic Club—over a century

of gatherings, over a century of impact, in an environment where some of the countries most esteemed and accomplished individuals in business and philanthropy and politics, diplomacy, and the arts have had the opportunity to interact with this August body. Which leaves me a bit baffled as to why I am here today.

It is an honor to be with you. I have just returned from Baghdad and Amman and Erbil and I leave in just a couple of days for the Gulf where I will be meeting with our Gulf partners. My travel has been nearly constant. And it has been very important to stay in touch with our partners in this conflict.

Let me congratulate the leadership for having so many students here today because they, of course, are the future for us as a government, is for a people. So it is good to have them here. I had the chance to spend a moment with the young West Point cadets. What Bill didn't say about my history is that I went to Annapolis. Not only went to Annapolis, but I was the Commandant at Annapolis. The only Marine to do so. I guess we do have a Commandant now who is a Marine. And so I had the chance to meet with those magnificent young West Point cadets who are indeed the future, not only of our wonderful Army but also the joint force. And we are all getting excited about the upcoming Army/Navy game, desperately hoping for a different outcome than the last ten years. (Laughter) But in the end it is all about "Go Army" and "Go Navy". Well done to you.

Of course it is good to be back in New York. It was just two weeks ago that I was here during the UN General Assembly, where President Obama convened the heads of more than 100 nations and 20 international organizations and institutions and from 120 different civil society groups from around the world and partners from the private sector to tackle violent extremism, and the abomination of ISIL. I will refer to it, hereafter, by its Arabic acronym, DAESH.

Last year President Obama called on the international community at the World UN General Assembly to recognize that the world was at a crossroads and the work that I have been honored to perform over the past year as the President's Special Envoy to Counter DAESH has impressed me deeply by the diverse partnership that has emerged with so many different nations who have joined this campaign, and by the willingness of so many to step-up and to take leading roles in dealing with DAESH. And we sent a very clear message to this organization, a very clear message to the world, which is that we refuse to stand idly by to these atrocities. We reject its toxic and its false ideology and we abhor its vicious and continued assault on human dignity. This can never become the new normal. We must never tolerate this organization. We must be continuously outraged at what we see.

The initial action we took last year to impede and to halt DAESH's momentum was immediately essential, but by no means sufficient to counter the enduring danger which DAESH represents. At root, DAESH is not an Iraqi problem or a Syrian problem, DAESH is a regional problem with global implications. And since I began serving in this role I have now traveled to 30 capitals,

many of them repeatedly, and during that time we have assembled a global coalition welcoming just three new members, during the recent UN General Assembly of Nigeria, Tunisia and Malaysia. Bringing the total now to 65 nations and international organizations, and the two international organizations is the European Union and the Arab League.

Now unlike other coalition campaigns of which I have been a part, we had to build this coalition from _____. When I served as the Commander in Afghanistan we relied upon a UN Security Council resolution for our authorities to wage hostilities and we relied on the organizing mechanisms of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to give us a form. The unprecedented nature and the urgency of this effort required that we bind the international community in both the mortality of our purpose, and the agility of function, to confront the dangers at hand and thus we do not have a UN Security Council resolution, though we leverage many that exist. And we don't have the NATO structure and we have assumed one for ourselves. This was because of the emergency of the moment.

While it is the coalition's kinetic actions that often receive the most attention, it is the aggregate affect of the coalition's activities across multiple lines of effort that will, in the end, determine the coalition's success. And these move along five separate lines of effort.

A military component, to deny DAESH safe haven and provide security assistance to local partners. Providing stabilization and humanitarian relief to liberated areas. Disrupting DAESH's

access to final financial resources. Countering DAESH's messaging or defeating the idea of this organization. And disrupting the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. Each one, an enormous undertaking in and of itself. But let me provide an overview, if I may, of the coalition's progress over these central lines of effort, and some of the ways the coalition is evolving to confront DAESH as it adapts. There is no question that we still have a long-term effort ahead of us to degrade and to defeat DAESH. If you recall the situation one year ago was truly dire. DAESH had advanced unimpeded into Iraq. Threatening Erbil and threatened Baghdad. We saw horrendous atrocities the like of which in my 40 years of service I had never seen before. Truly cities of our allies were at risk. Tikrit had fallen. Kirkuk was threatened, the Mosul Dam was taken. They had laid seeds to the Sinjar Mountain, threatening genocide of the Yazidis people.

A year later, with support to local forces on the ground, the coalition has applied significant pressure, hitting DAESH with multiple air strikes across the entire of its surface area. In Iraq 18 coalition members have to date trained more than 13,000 Iraqi and Peshmerga soldiers. And DAESH in Iraq has lost access to 30% of the ground and the population that it controlled this time last year. The city of Tikrit has been liberated with 75% of its population—internally displaced persons—returning. And Iraqi forces are making gains on Ramadi the Capital of al Anbar and I spoke to those commanders at the end of last week, about their anticipated activities. We anticipate that Ramadi will be the next liberated city in Iraq.

In Syria, DAESH has lost significant territory in Norther Syria and is now cut off from all but 68

miles of the nearly 600 mile border of Syria and Turkey. This is significant in reducing the flow of foreign fighters to Syria and squeezing DAESH's supply lines. Though the Russian presence in Syria could complicate this significantly and we will see that unfold.

We are also supporting counter DAESH forces in Norther Syria as well, which include Syrian Arabs, Kurds, Turkoman in their efforts to take back their homes and their territory. And these anti-DAESH forces in Norther Syria have liberated Kobani from DAESH in the West, and connected it to the East by taking the border crossing of Talabiad—the main crossing into Turkey and into Syria—which ultimately stopped the flow of foreign fighters to the center of gravity of DAESH, its capital called Raqqa. And we have elements of those fighting forces within 30 miles of Raqqa today.

Coalition strikes have taken out a number of senior DAESH leaders including the number two in the organization, Haji Mutaz, as well as Abu Sayyaf, a key Amir if you will, the Chief Financial Officer of the organization who was involved in financing for the organization. And in so doing, we captured his wife, liberated a Yazidis slave, and recovered 7 terabyte of information from the objectives. We have also eliminated Junaid Hussain, a DAESH member who sought to target western interests in the United Kingdom and the United States. And we must not forget Turkey – a critical partner in this fight – who recently increased its participation in the coalition opening its bases to US and coalition members and conducting air strikes against DAESH targets alongside other coalition aircraft in our air campaign. This cooperation has proved to be very

important to our capacity to prosecute that air campaign against DAESH in Syria as we continue to empower ground forces of the Syrian opposition.

Now, our airplanes flying out of Incirlik can be overtop of Northern Syria in 18 minutes, where before, flying out of the Gulf, the transit was well over four hours. As a geographic choke point in the flow of foreign fighters, Turkey has increased its detentions, its arrests, and prosecution of suspected foreign fighters as well as information sharing with international partners and has taken steps to improve Turkey's security along the southern border. But as the horrific suicide bomb attacks of the peace rally over the weekend in Ankara portray, Turkey is now under direct attack. The US and NATO stands resolutely with Turkey at this moment of crisis and our thoughts and our prayers are with all those affected by this typically cowardly attack. And with all the Turkish people.

So to confront DAESH in this new battle space is part of why the stabilization of communities liberated from DAESH is so important and why Coalition support for these activities is a central line of effort.

The Coalition has helped Iraqis plan and resource these efforts. The Germans and the Emirates are helping to organize contributions for more than 20 Coalition partners to provide stabilization support to recently liberated populations and Tikrit the most recent.

The Italians are leading efforts to train an effective Iraqi police force, essential to the stability of populations recently liberated. And the Canadians have stepped forward to insure protections and protection programs for women and girls and insure that they are incorporated into the thinking of the Iraqis as they recover these lost populations. Several nations, including the United States, have made sizeable contributions to the stabilization fund now originated by the coalition and administered by the United Nations development program. This funding mechanism allows Iraq to meet the urgent needs of returning Iraqis, such as water and electricity and healthcare; services that were destroyed or substantially deteriorated under the occupation of DAESH in just a short year.

Already we are seeing progress. Displaced Iraqis are returning to Salahuddin Province, since Tikrit has been liberated, three-quarters of the cities population has returned and I will tell you that, that city was virtually empty when it was recovered from DAESH several months ago. The Coalition and partnership with the United Nations is working tirelessly to insure that these liberated communities, liberated from DAESH's control, are secure, and stable, and hospitable enough for Iraqis vast displaced communities; to summon the will to return home once they feel safe to do so. This is an important objective of our efforts.

The process won't be quick or easy, but it will continue to be moved forward. Liberating areas from DAESH will never be enough and we must help the Iraqi government to restore stability, allow people to return home and address the lack of security that fostered extremism in the first

place in Iraq. Squeezing DAESH's access to financial resources and networks in both Syria and Iraq is one of the best ways to disrupt their operations and to free populations from their hold.

The raid which our special operators, your special operators, our magnificent troops ran on the Abu Sayyaf compound in April, against this Amir for finance, has provided the coalition with a wealth of information on the organization's financial and economic portfolios. We know DAESH leadership places enormous focus on closely monitoring its finances and is riven by well founded fears of internal corruption. And you should see the documentation that we have seen that requires DAESH leadership sign for everything. So that they are held accountable across the board.

We know from media reports that some of DAESH's leaders have fled the fight in Iraq and Syria, absconding with millions of dollars. One DAESH financial Amir fled from Syria to Turkey with over \$1 million raised from extortion schemes. Another Amir from eastern Syria fled with \$10 million. We must expose DAESH's venal and vicious predilections, and the institution that it is, and highlight its hypocrisy to its would be recruits.

We also know that there are dozens of active oil fields, primarily centered in eastern Syria, right by the nerve center of Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor. These fields are estimated to produce about 40,000 barrels of oil a day, worth somewhere on the order, depending on the price of a barrel, of one million dollars. Coalition efforts to constrain DAESH's ability to profit from these resources includes a combination of air strikes on the modular refineries and increased border security by

neighboring states to curtail smuggling. These measures have forced DAESH to rely upon the most rudimentary forms of oil production and refining, including open pits and primitive stills that produce limited yields of poor quality product and are also under a near constant aerial attack.

But DAESH has proved more resilient and capable than we initially estimated and we learned that from the exploitation of the material we took off the Abu Sayyaf compound. This underscores the importance of maintaining pressure on the group and their supporters in this enterprise, from the military, the diplomats and law enforcement and indeed the employment of the private sector as well. Maintaining that pressure is essential. Now beyond its energy resources, DAESH also continues to draw on diverse sources of financial support. Extorting its subjugated populations by imposing taxes on virtually all aspects of its life; salaries, commerce, real estate, cash, infusions at the banks, cash withdrawals from banks, and let's not forget the usual cash producing kidnaping for ransom, human trafficking, a slave trade for which it is very proud, and profit from the sale and taxation of plundered antiquities.

We have made progress in recent weeks targeting these sources of income. Two weeks ago the Treasury and State Department designated 25 key DAESH leaders and facilitators; including some engaged in facilitating the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, not just in Iraq but also in the caucuses of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia and Algeria. The State Department has authorized a reward of up to \$5 million for information that helps us to significantly disrupt DAESH's elicit

oil and antiquities trade. And hopefully generate more actionable intelligence on smuggling networks, methods and routes which underlie these many activities.

Our understanding of DAESH's financial networks is quickly improving as we process a greater share of that 7 terabyte of information. And as we operationalize more of the information.

Coalition partners in the counter finance efforts will accelerate as time goes on.

Our counter-messaging effort is also advancing as Coalition partners coordinate to contest DAESH narrative across platforms and languages. Here it is important that key credible Muslim voices and scholars speak out and publically reject DAESH's ideology. As his Majesty the King Abdullah II of Jordan has said very publically and in a leadership role, "It is vital that the voice discrediting DAESH has an Arab face and a Muslim voice". Already we are beginning to see DAESH media enterprises begin to diminish, as social media companies become more vigilant and responsive to removing objectionable content. And coupled with the efforts of many of our coalition partners, we are seeing impact. And just as important as preventing individuals from joining the fight, is helping to amplify the stories of those who have fought under DAESH and have broken free from its ranks. The State Department center for Strategic Counter Terrorism Communications, managed a multimedia campaign of DAESH defectors. The campaign leveraged the testimonies of former DAESH members through US government messengers, coalition partners, and third party NGO's. Generating more than 900 news articles and reaching an estimated 90 million people worldwide. The United Arab Emirates has launched a joint

messaging center with the United States in Abu Dhabi called the Sawab or in Arabic the Right Path Center. Which is coordinating and driving counter ISIL, counter DAESH messaging activities in the region. Through direct online engagement the center is countering DAESH's efforts to recruit foreign fighters, raise funds and terrorize local populations. And as we learn from Sawab's operations we will explore establishing additional messaging and counter messaging hubs in Southeast Asia and in Europe.

Wherever DAESH's message can maneuver in the information space, we will challenge it, and we will seek to counter it. No matter how much progress the Coalition makes over the other lines of efforts; we cannot truly be satisfied until the very ideal of DAESH has been thoroughly delegitimized.

The final line of effort I will mention today is an area that evokes nearly universal concerns in my conversations with our coalition partners. And that is, the effort to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

To give you a sense of the scale of the current threat, some 20,000 foreign fighters joined the fight in Afghanistan over the course of the Soviet/Afghan war in the 1980s. And some 10,000 foreign fighters traveled to Afghanistan over the 13 years of the most recent conflict in which the United States was involved. But since the start of the conflict in Syria, somewhere on the order of 30,000 individuals from 100 countries have traveled to fight in Syria and Iraq. And while we

have taken back Talabiyah along the Syrian/Turkish border, the number one crossing point for foreign fighters, we recognize that much more needs to be done. And our effort to close that final 68 miles of the Turkish border will play an important role in continuing to stem the flow and the free movement of foreign fighters into the war in Syria and Iraq.

But we need all nations working together at each link of the chain, of the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, from the point of radicalization to the point of violence and to the point of return to their home states and ultimately to their rehabilitation if that is possible. And since the passage of the UN Security Council Resolution 2178 a year ago as the coalition was coming together, which requires countries to take steps to address the foreign fighter threat, 22 countries have enacted laws to create greater obstacles for traveling to Syria and Iraq for the purposes of fighting in this war. And at least 34 countries have arrested foreign fighters or aspirants or members of foreign fighter facilitation networks and prosecutions are successful in many of these countries today.

Today through Interpol's Counter-Terrorism Fusion Center, 52 countries now share foreign terrorist fighter profiles. And bilaterally the United States has concluded arrangements with 40 international partners to provide a mechanism for the sharing of terrorist travel information. But we must continue to do more, and to adapt to the different circumstances and contexts that we find as extremism continues to arise with this conflict.

We must appreciate that there is no one type of foreign fighter and no single method of

recruitment and no once source of support for them financially. DAESH succeeds...organizations like this succeed only when men and women feel little connection to their governments and to opportunities within their societies. And we must work together to offer different models to these populations.

I would also like to make a comment on what will undoubtedly be at the forefront of many of your minds and that is Russia's recent intervention in the Syrian Civil War. The top line message I want everyone here to understand is that we are going to continue to go after DAESH as a coalition. We are going to continue to reach out to the moderate opposition. We reject Russia's assertion that everyone opposed to Assad is a terrorist. We think that, that is a self-defeating proposition and will only draw Russia into a quagmire and can only be used as further a recruitment tool for foreign fighters to join groups like DAESH and Jabhat al-Nusra which is an al-Qaeda affiliate and other groups.

But let me be clear, Mr. Putin had to go to Syria not out of strength but out of weakness. Because his client Bashar al-Assad was crumbling. And only Iran is lining up with the Russians to support this plan. This is neither a smart nor a strategic move on Russia's part. Russia is making itself a target for violent extremists in Syria and violent extremism worldwide. Russia has committed its own forces into the situation, where not only the overwhelming majority of the Syrian people see the Bashar al-Assad regime as the enemy, but now one where these forces seem to be lining up against the Sunni population throughout the Middle East. And a supporter

and an enabler and an endorser of the dropping of barrel bombs landing on innocent civilians, women and children.

There may be the appearance of short-term tactical benefit as Russia stabilizes and props up the Assad regimen. But unless Russia assists Assad in crushing every component of the Syrian opposition, the Assad regimen will continue to require foreign support to survive. And as I said, so far that support is coming from Russia, Iran, and Lebanese Kesbewa and ladies and gentlemen, there is a problem with that list.

Let me also observe that Russia has spent not an insignificant effort attacking virtually all of the other opposition groups in Syria except DAESH. Which was the avowed reason for its intervention to begin with. But this is not a contest between the United States and Russia. It is not a reprise of the Cold War. It is in our interests for Russia to be responsible and to be an effective actor on the international stage. Our battle remains and will continue to remain with DAESH. And our battle along with the entire international community is to resolve the conflict in a way that could end the bloodshed, reduce the violence and end the refugee crises, and allow people to be at their homes. To go to work, to grow their food, to keep their children in their own shelter and to seek to send their children to school. That is the side we are on. And unlike Russia in those violent efforts, we are joined by 65 partners in a global coalition to defeat this abomination and to seek political transition.

As President Obama and Secretary Kerry have repeated, we are prepared to work with any partner, including the Russians and the Iranians as long as their focus is on defeating DAESH and on a clear understanding that the only way forward in Syria is a political transition away from Assad. Nobody pretends that this will be easy, but we believe it is still possible and we are keeping lines of communications open in that regard.

From a practical perspective the moderate opposition in Syria will need to be part of any political transition in that country. And the Russian policy to drive that opposition underground, or to create a situation in which their capacity is undermined, or more frequently and I think we will see increasingly the case, to drive the moderates into the arms of the jihadist organizations that are very well armed. This can only, in the end, strengthen DAESH's hand.

So as a Coalition we cannot eliminate the rivalry among nations and faiths or address many historic grievances, but in coordinating this global effort against DAESH with mutual interest and mutual respect, we can change how nations come and work together to fight this complex challenge of our time.

Having commanded a theater of war, and a major coalition effort in Afghanistan, I view this fight as a regional conflict. In that context it is not clear yet whether the Russian role will contribute to facilitate a political transition in Syria, or simply stabilize a murderous regime.

If it is the former, there is the potential for cooperation. If it is the latter, it is difficult to envisage a near-term political outcome that can end the violence and place Syria on a path towards humanitarian, economic, social and political recovery.

Alongside these efforts, the 65 nations and organizations of the Counter DAESH or Counter ISIL Coalition will remain focused on the challenges ahead. This will be a long-term conflict with many aspects to be considered and some days we will have advances in this conflict and some days we will have setbacks. But like defeating DAESH's ideology, some aspects of this conflict may take a generation or more. But as an international community, I believe we can, and will rise to this challenge. Thank you again for the invitation to speak here today. This is an important topic for our time, for our nation, and for our people, and I look forward to taking your questions. Thank you very much. (Applause)

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

CHAIRMAN WILLIAM C. DUDLEY: Thank you very much General Allen for those clear and very comprehensive remarks. Just speaking for myself, I hope we show the persistence and effort to get this where it needs to be over the next coming years and decades. Now as our custom we have chosen two club members to ask questions. Marie-Josée Kravis of the Hudson Institute and a trustee of the Club and Patrick Foulis, US Editor of the Economist Magazine. If you have any questions, you can send them to questions@econclubny.org and our President Jan Hopkins will

read them. So Marie-Josée you are first.

MARIE-JOSÉE KRAVIS - Thank you Bill and thank you General Allen, not only for your remarks, but for your service to our country. You have talked a great deal about DAESH as a regional conflict. I am wondering if you could comment on how far you think DAESH could expand from a regional to a global threat, and what are the limits to its expansion?

GENERAL JOHN R. ALLEN: That is a very important question and it is something we are dealing with constantly. In fact, in Iraq last week I was on a video teleconference back to Washington on that issue, that very issue. One of the first things I learned and of course my dear friends from West Point will tell you, you never want to try to get between two fields of fire. So I am very conscious of the fact that really good questions are going to come from two directions here. I am going to do my very best to answer them with a minimum amount of casualties. When this all emerged last year and the coalition was formed, we believed at the time that DAESH was in essence a large, heavily armed, highly experienced criminal network with a capacity both to wage what looked like conventional war, insurgency and terrorism. Real capabilities that had been generated over many years of practice. But our sense was that this was a regional challenge, that organization, and in so doing that regional challenge was largely confined to the contiguous states of Syria which was largely, we believed a failed state and Iraq which was brought to the precipice of being a failed state by DAESH. In the meantime, and in June of last year, an important event occurred which was where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who leads the organization,

ascended into the Mosque, the Grand Mosque in Mosul, Noraldene(?) Mosque, and declared the emergence of the caliphate and himself to be caliph, which took the struggle in a different direction. It is still a heavily armed gang. It is still riven with corruption; it is still abhorrent at so many different levels. But there is a sense now of religious destiny if you will in that organization that has made it attractive to other organizations overseas because part of the doctrine and the theology of this organization is it must relentlessly be on the attack against the apostates and those elements that would seek to oppose the inevitability of this organization and in so doing it has to expand. Its territory has to expand; the numbers of people over which it has domination needs to expand. And what we have seen in the year since the formation of the coalition and in the year since the emergence of the so called caliphate and I don't even like to use the word because it gives them legitimacy far from anything that they should ever consider, is that organizations afield from the area contiguous to Iraq and Syria have now put their hands in the air seeking to join in the conflict. Some of these are in North Africa. The most prominent of them is the one in Libya, one is in the Sinai, _____, one is in the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, there might even be two now. There is one in South Asia that straddles the traditional borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, called the Khorasan. There is one now in the North Caucasus and we may be seeing one emerge in Southeast Asia. And what DAESH has done, what the so called Caliph has done is to designate them as distant provinces. And so for us, grappling with the emergence of these organizations by the way, virtually all of them previously existed as an insurgent organization of their own, the challenge for us is how we will deal with these organizations as they emerge. And the way to do this, we believe, is for the coalition to

continue to orient and bear down hard on what we call the core of DAESH, core ISIL. Bear down hard, because its ability to identify itself, its raison d'être its self identification if you will, is based on its location in Syria and Iraq and we want to bear down hard to shrink it, to liberate populations, to deny it the ability to talk about the success of its doctrine and its theology and meanwhile communities of nations with the United States leading on many occasions will work bilaterally, multilaterally and regionally to go after those what they call distant provinces to sever their connection to the core and also to diminish their capabilities. We have seen some of that be successful, we saw some of it be successful in Afghanistan, we have seen some success against Boko Haram, which has put its hand in the air and has been accepted as a distant province and we are beginning to do the work necessary ultimately on the other distant provinces. So your question is a really important one. DAESH is an organization that has its center of gravity in one region, but it has sought to expand in an organized way through the use of command and control, the use of the shifting of funds and foreign fighters to gain access to other areas. And it is our intent to sever those connections and to begin to diminish those distant provinces.

PATRICK FOULIS: I am flanking from the other side. Thank you for your speech General. You mentioned a year ago what appeared to be the worse case scenario which was ISIS at the gates of Baghdad, I wondered what you thought the worse case scenario was now? Three possibilities are often raised; one is a sort of Russia Shia access across the whole of the Middle East. Another scenario is the borders of Syria and Iraq dissolve into an anarchic situation which perhaps draws in other countries like Jordan and a final nightmare scenario might be some kind of direct

military confrontation between the US and Russia. What is your sense of the worst case scenario now?

GENERAL JOHN R. ALLEN: Well to your third scenario, at this juncture, we are not seeking a direct confrontation with the Russians. I think it is well-known in the public domain that we are in fact pursuing what we call deconfliction talks with the Russians. The deconfliction talks are intended just to insure that our operations at a very base level are safe, safety of flight, deconfliction of targets, etc., and that process is unfolding as we speak. We don't seek a confrontation with the Russians. We clearly have our own regional objectives. We are working closely with the coalition to deal with DAESH and so our intended course is to remain focused in that area until the circumstances may emerge that would perhaps cause us to have to adjust. Your first scenario I think that there could be the appearance of a Russian/Shia relationship which could strengthen sectarian conflict in the region; I think is probably the worse case scenario in many respects. As the Russians have come to light in the region, the list of the individual organizations with whom they have such close relations now all looks pretty much the same in many respects. We have Iran, we have Lebanese Kesbewa, we have extremist Shia militia elements and we have the regime. That is a pretty identifiable group. And in the greater potential for sectarian conflict in the region, we could see this as Secretary Carter said not long ago, be the pouring of gasoline on an already out of control conflagration. So that is a real concern for us. At the moment where we have sought to take action as a community of nations to reduce the flow of foreign fighters, what you are hearing is religious leaders across the Muslim world calling for

even more movement toward that fight, ultimately to attack the Russians and to attack this alliance that seems to be unfolding. This is a real problem, frankly. And it is one that we need to be thinking about. It is one they need to be thinking about. And for them to have emerged in this conflict in a way where we had thought there could be a conversation about a political transition, which could ultimately put the future of Syria in the hands of the Syrian people, while that could conceivably be somewhere on their agenda, what is first on their agenda clearly, is attacking the Syrian opposition elements that are in fact the future of Syria. So I think that is a real potential concern. Then the issue of the obliteration if you will of the Sykes Picot border between Syria and Iraq, if you were to have a DAESH character here right now, he would tell you that it is gone already. Our view and we actually thought hard about this, our view was that one of our principle objectives in this conflict was to restore the territorial integrity of Iraq, to stabilize it politically, because it was in serious trouble in the summer of last year, and to work closely with that government for ground level and top down reconciliation to restore the borders, the territorial integrity, and the capacity of the central government ultimately to extend the writ of governance to all the people in Iraq. So those are three scenarios that will certainly keep me up tonight. Thank you for that. (Laughter) Of the three, the one that worries me the most is a broader and potentially deeper movement towards sectarian struggle and conflict in the region.

MARIE-JOSÉE KRAVIS: Well I guess I have a followup question to that. In the face of this Russia/Iran/Syria/Hezbollah/Shia access, do you have any hope for a second reawakening, a Sunni reawakening in Iraq and perhaps eventually in Syria. I know you have just come back, so

tell us what is....

GENERAL JOHN R. ALLEN: The awakening was a movement of the tribes in al-Anbar in 2007 which with our support and assistance they turned on al-Qaeda and defeated al-Qaeda and it really turned the war around in many respects. So the question is, do we see a potential for a second awakening. I think what we would seek is a different approach for a second awakening. And you will recall well that the original awakening was an alliance between the Americans and the tribes at a time when the Maliki government was really incapable of extending its writ at all beyond Baghdad. So we were very closely aligned. Eventually turned the awakening...called the Sons of Iraqi...turned the awakening over to al-Maliki who turned on them because they were Sunni tribes and he of course had a different view. What we are seeking to do now and again I was just in Baghdad where I spoke with Iraqi leaders of all sects and confessions is to reprise if we can the emergence of the tribes at a local level, because in the end DAESH will be effective if it can control ground in population. The tribes are particularly valuable in denying DAESH access to the population, and if liberated, stabilizing the population. So we have established in particular in the al-Anbar province, which is the western province to Baghdad, which is the real vulnerability to Baghdad if it were to fall, we have established a training camp there. Our American Special Forces and Marines are there and they are bringing in tribes, tribal fighters and we are training them to work alongside, now the Iraqi police in the province and the Iraqi army. And in Amman, just several days ago, I had dinner with one of the Sheiks that I worked with so closely in '07 who was really prominent in helping us to defeat DAESH in the eastern part of al-

Anbar and he indicated to me he has a 1000 of his young tribal fighters ready to come over and we are beginning to get them to come over. In Syria it will be different. Syria is a different societal lay down, the tribes play a different role in Syria. But we are working with the Turkomen, we are working with the Syrian Arabs, we are working with various groups that have been displaced out of the Euphrates River Valley and that partnership that we have with them to include the Syrian Kurds has delivered to us some not insignificant success and we are going to continue to work with them closely.

CHAIRMAN WILLIAM C. DUDLEY: Last question.

PATRICK FOULIS: Part of the coalition's strategy is premised on the idea of a rebel force in Syria that can be a natural ally. But performance of those rebels so far seems to have been quite disappointing. I wondered if you could talk about why the rebel groups have not lived up to expectations and also perhaps comment on whether there are other groups who might be Islamists but not Jihadi in Syria who the coalition should look to now include in its effort?

GENERAL JOHN R. ALLEN: We will be very careful about that. And as I mentioned in my remarks, the dynamics may be changing, pretty significantly as groups, in order to achieve some local capacity to defend themselves and generate combat power to fight the regime now supported by Russia, we may see some of these dynamics changing pretty significantly and we are going to keep a close eye on it. The recent announcement of the US pause to the T & E

Program put an effort on our part to recruit elements of disenfranchised primarily Sunni communities to organize them into a coherent force that could be the force of opposition. And for a variety of reasons which I think have been well treated in the public domain, we have elected now to put that program on pause. We will continue to look at it, and continue to look for opportunities whereby we may be able to reinvigorate it. But in the meantime, and it flowed from the defense of Kobani, Kobani last year, as you will recall was the Syrian Kurdish primarily, but there were Arab and other elements in that city, was the city along the border of Turkey and Syria which was beleaguered by DAESH. DAESH intended to, under the glare of international media, which was on the Turkish high ground looking down on the city, to in essence, wipe out that entire population. Just as they sought to do with the Yazidis. We made the decision as a coalition to begin immediately to bomb in support of the defenders of Kobani, and ultimately not just support the defense of the city, but the defenders pushed out hard, pushed against DAESH and DAESH really crumbled in that area. And we learned something about them. And from that initial relationship we began to create relationships with groups that had vetted leaders, which we could provide support to, and from a point last year, where virtually the entire border east of Kilis if you will, certainly east of the Euphrates was in the hands of DAESH. That border with the direct support of US and coalition fires and other support to those groups took that border back all the way from the Iraqi border to the Euphrates, closing the principle crossing point for DAESH and has pushed down to the south towards Raqqa the capital of DAESH and has pushed south past Chosica(?) in the east. That is an example where the right kind of group with the right kind of support can actually accomplish something in the battle space. And as you may have

seen of late, we are invigorating that support even more now. We do it though very carefully about the regional dynamics; we do it very carefully with respect to sensitivity certainly in Turkey and in the region as well. We are very conscious of that, we are very careful of that, but these are groups that we have come to know, these are groups that we can support, these are groups that can fight, these are groups that can win, and east of the Euphrates, slightly west and south of the Euphrates and hopefully in that 98 kilometer or 63 mile gap, there are groups there that we can work with and time will tell as we continue to sort them out.

CHAIRMAN WILLIAM C. DUDLEY: Thank you again General Allen. I think that we are very lucky to have you fully engaged in this very difficult problem. Thank you for taking your time out from...you have a lot of other things on your plate besides speaking at the Economic Club of New York. But I think one of the threads of our remarks is hearts and minds are really important and it is not just hearts and minds over there, it is also hearts and minds in the United States to make sure that we see this through to its conclusion. (Applause)

So I guess the bad news is that I have to follow this on November 12th speaking here at the Economic Club. I am next on November 12th. Then on November 18th we have Ben Bernanke to have a conversation with Alan Blinder about his new book on(audio ends here)