

## We Must Choke Off The Islamic State

Written by Russ for Wisconsin  
Monday, 14 December 2015 15:50 -

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MADISON - In the days after Sept. 11, President George W. Bush delivered one of the best speeches I've heard from a president.

"Fellow citizens," the president said, "we'll meet violence with patient justice — assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come."

In a brief moment with Bush as he left the House chamber after the speech, I told him that "we will get this done together." I believed then, and now, that protecting America is a cause beyond politics.

For many years, fighting terrorism and preventing the emergence of affiliated groups has been one of my highest priorities. As a former member of the Senate Intelligence and Foreign Relations committees, I know firsthand that the way forward is to build a bipartisan strategy to protect America both now and for many years to come. And destroying the Islamic State — or ISIL — must begin immediately.



Our plan must make use of every type of resource — military, financial, intelligence-based and diplomatic. Every option must be on the table, because choking off the lifeblood of such a dangerous group will require a comprehensive and sustained strategy.

**Military:** First, we must continue to hunt down and kill ISIL's leaders. As part of an assembled coalition, targeted, limited military action should weaken and dismantle ISIL's leadership. I support Defense Secretary Ash Carter's announcement of an expeditionary targeting force to conduct precise raids. In addition, Congress must complete its responsibility to pass and send to the president an updated Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) to define our military engagement.

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**Financial and other assets:** Crippling ISIL requires blocking its access to supplies and income. As a member of the Senate, I worked with the Treasury Department on the issue of freezing the assets of terrorists, and we must do so now with ISIL. We also must destroy ISIL's ability to sell the oil resources they're stealing — including from their new outpost in Libya. And we must find ways to end arms sales to the group so it loses its ability to take or hold territory while brutalizing local populations.

**Intelligence:** Because our first priority always must be protecting the immediate safety of American citizens, we cannot use short-term thinking that only responds to threats one-by-one. Instead, our strategy to destroy ISIL and other groups must be a long-term, global plan that anticipates threats before they materialize.

So we must expand our intelligence efforts significantly, and that begins by increasing our funding of the collection and analysis of human intelligence to infiltrate ISIL. We also need to reallocate our intelligence gathering to make sure we aren't missing potential threats, and that's why I'm calling on Congress to enact the reforms envisioned by the implementation of the bipartisan Foreign Intelligence and Information Commission Act, which would strengthen how we gather information around the world. We cannot just defeat ISIL today, we also must anticipate the next radical group before it poses a threat. For example, we must not ignore affiliated groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, which pledged its loyalty to ISIL earlier this year.

**Diplomatic:** We must undertake a massive diplomatic effort to address the underlying political problems in the region and help foster stability and democracy in countries such as Syria and Libya, where ISIL has formed a new beachhead. We must assist Turkey in closing its border. ISIL must be debunked and demystified as a group that can govern — we have seen video of bread lines, as these terrorists care little about the people who live in the land they occupy. The world must see this reality of how ISIL fails even basic tasks of governance.

Here's the bottom line: Unless stability and democracy grow in the region, all other efforts will not succeed, because ISIL or its subgroups simply would return and exploit the same chaos.

Finally, if we are to win this fight, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the past with yet another rush toward a full-scale ground invasion led by tens of thousands of American troops. The last invasion of Iraq cost our country trillions of dollars, thousands of American lives and greatly destabilized the region to the terrible detriment of our security.

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Invading Iraq constitutes one of the biggest foreign policy blunders in the history of the United States, and proved that we cannot invade our way to safety in the 21st century. So our response to the threat from ISIL cannot be reactionary or one-dimensional. And as we saw in the years after the Iraq invasion, our military cannot act as a government in the middle of a country that lacks stability and democracy, because those conditions are a recipe for our troops to become targets for insurgents and lightning rods for unstable, anti-America sentiment. We also must avoid the type of mission creep that could cause our troops to remain indefinitely.

Instead, we need a modern, comprehensive and bipartisan strategy that harnesses all of America's strengths. The attacks in Paris and San Bernardino are a reminder that ISIL, al-Qaida, and their affiliates threaten all of us, but that we can only destroy them by working with our partners and allies, through cooperative intelligence, economic, diplomatic and military efforts. We will get this done together.

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By: Russ Feingold

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*Russ Feingold is the former Democratic senator from Wisconsin. He has announced he will run again against incumbent Republican Ron Johnson in 2016.*