

**Opening Statement of Senator John McCain  
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-106  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
9:30 am,  
Thursday, February 26, 2015**

**To receive testimony on worldwide threats.**

The Committee meets today to receive testimony on the nature and scope of the global threats faced by the United States and our allies.

I want to welcome James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, and General Vincent Stewart, the newly confirmed Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. Thank you for being with us today.

This Committee recently conducted several hearings with some of our most respected national security leaders to explore the need for strategic thinking to address the threats we face. In the course of those hearings, these military and foreign policy leaders all agreed that the current international environment is more complex and dangerous than at any time in recent memory.

On the terrorism front, ISIL continues to dominate much of Syria and Iraq, while spreading its dark and vicious ideology in its effort to become the dominant Islamic extremist group in the world. At the same time, the risk of attacks by foreign fighters returning from the battlefield, or lone-wolf threats inspired by ISIL's successes, only increases the danger to the West. In Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Africa, al Qaeda and its affiliated groups continue to take advantage of ungoverned spaces to plan attacks against the United States and western interests.

Simply put, we are engaged in a generational fight for civilization against brutal enemies, and defeating these enemies requires significant intelligence resources and focus given the diffuse and constantly evolving nature of the threat. But as we continue the fight against Islamic extremists, we must not lose sight of other strategic threats we face:

- As the world ponders how to respond to Russia's invasion and dismemberment of eastern Ukraine, Russia's provocations are only more worrisome in light of Vladimir Putin's intense focus on building up and modernizing Russia's military forces and doctrine, and the geopolitical ambitions that these new Russian capabilities are designed to further.
- In Asia, stability and security of a vital and economically-significant region is threatened by North Korea's continued aggression, build-up of its nuclear arsenal, and development of long-range ballistic missiles.

- A far greater challenge is China's dramatic growth and modernization of its own military capabilities, which appear designed to restrict the U.S. military's ability to operate in the western Pacific.
- Iran continues to exert malign influence throughout the Middle East and Africa, using proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen, Gaza, and Bahrain to undermine U.S. strategic interests. In fact, the Iranian influence and presence in Iraq have become one of the key factors and, it seems, limitations in U.S. policy planning in Iraq and Syria.
- We must also remain focused on the myriad potential threats of the future and thus maintain technological superiority against potential adversaries. Today, this is of most concern in the cyber and space domains – where we see increasingly capable and aggressive activities by nation-state adversaries in areas with few established norms.

I would appreciate our witness's thoughts on each of these major issues. As policy-makers, we look to the Intelligence Community to provide timely and accurate information about the nature of the threats we face, the intentions of our adversaries, and the likely effect of certain actions we could take. And in an age of increasing threats and flat defense budgets, the need for accurate intelligence about the plans and intentions of global actors becomes even more paramount.

I want to thank Director Clapper and General Stewart for testifying today. I look forward to your assessments of the nature and scope of the myriad threats we face, how the Intelligence Community prioritizes and approaches these many threats, and which of these many issues concern you the most.