



September 11, 2014

Obama's IS Strategy Gets Mixed US Reaction

by Mike Richman



President Barack Obama's proposed strategy for an expanded U.S. military effort against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria has drawn a mixed reaction from congressional lawmakers.

Obama announced his plan late Wednesday in a nationally televised speech and urged Congress to support the mission against the group, which had previously been known as ISIL or ISIS.

Republican Ed Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told VOA he and many other Republicans believe the president waited too long to take action.

"The unfortunate thing is that in waiting for the last seven months, ISIL has been able to get their hands not only the weapons, but also on the cash, taken from the Central Bank in Mosul, by robbing a lot of other banks along the way," Royce said. "So they have become a bigger challenge, a bigger threat because now they have resources which al-Qaida never had, the types of resources that this al-Qaida affiliate, offshoot has at its disposal."

New York Democrat Eliot Engel told VOA President Obama gave a "very compelling" argument for going after the Islamic State.

"Certainly it's in the American national interest to destroy ISIS," Engel said, "because just the way the Taliban plotted and planned with al-Qaida, plotted and planned from Afghanistan, and headed the worst terrorist attack delivered in the United States, if we don't disrupt and dismantle and destroy ISIS, they will also use Iraq and Syria as a no man's land [a safe haven] to plot terrorist attacks against the United States' homeland and our allies."

Threat posed by Islamic State militants Tennessee Republican Marsha Blackburn told VOA she is glad the president is realizing the threat of the Islamic State group. But Blackburn said she would have liked him to give more details about his strategy for combating the group, such as those related to the international coalition.

"When he talks about following the strategy that they used in Somalia and Yemen, that hasn't yielded the results that we would like to see, that's gone on for several years now," Blackburn said.

"AQ/AP [Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula] in Yemen is the strongest of the al-Qaida affiliates. We need to be more aggressive with that, and we have to be certain that we destroy, and that we push back ISIS," she said.

The White House said Obama has told congressional leaders he can expand military operations against the Islamic State group without the approval of U.S.

lawmakers. However, Obama must go to Congress to gain the increased military aid for moderate Syrian rebels that he called for in his speech Wednesday.

Royce said Congress will vote "overwhelmingly" to support the rebels, who are fighting both ISIL and the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Republican House Speaker Boehner said he believes Congress should give the president what he asked for - the authority to train Syrian rebels. But he said a lot of members are skeptical that the strategy Obama laid out Wednesday night will be enough to defeat the Islamic State.

"An F16 is not a strategy, and airstrikes alone will not accomplish what we are trying to accomplish," Boehner said. "The president has made it clear he does not want U.S. boots on the ground, well somebody's boots have to be on the ground."

VOA Congressional correspondent Cindy Saine contributed to this report.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-islamic-state-strategy-gets-mixed-reaction/2446093.html>