

VFW Supports New Strategy to Destroy ISIL

Sep 11, 2014

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States supports President Obama’s new strategy to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and is demanding that Congress support the troops by providing them the necessary funding to execute the new mission, and to put an end to sequestration, which is set to restart in fiscal year 2016.

In a nationwide speech last evening, the president said “ISIL is not ‘Islamic.’ No religion condones the killing of innocents, and the vast majority of ISIL’s victims have been Muslim. And ISIL is certainly not a state. It is recognized by no government, nor the people it subjugates.”

But ISIL is brutal, the president explained, and “in a region that has known so much bloodshed, these terrorists are unique in their brutality. They execute captured prisoners. They kill children. They enslave, rape, and force women into marriage. They threatened a religious minority with genocide. And in acts of barbarism, they took the lives of two American journalists — Jim Foley and Steven Sotloff.”

The president’s four-part strategy relies heavily on American airpower, better training and coordination with Iraqi and Kurdish ground forces, counterterrorism coordination with regional partners, and humanitarian assistance to those noncombatants affected the most. All strong suits of America’s military, according to VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, but the greatest unknown isn’t so much an enemy that hides its face but the uncertainty of a divided Congress that can’t put aside their politics for the good of the troops they profess to support.

“Congress has essentially one work week left before the end of the current fiscal year, and the nation is still without any FY 2015 defense bills,” said Stroud, a retired Air Force first sergeant from Hawthorne, Nev. “All this unpredictability plays into our enemy’s strategy to exploit America’s political system as a weakness. Our enemies saw the damage to military readiness and morale that just six months of sequestration created last year, and what the three-week government shutdown did to the entire system just last October.

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“The VFW demands that Congress put their political differences aside and support the troops that we have in harm’s way around the globe, and their families back at home,” he said. “America must have a defense budget and an end to sequestration. Yes, it’s the political season, and yes, there’s posturing for the next presidential election, but right now we are in a fight against a new evil that only cares about destroying everything and everyone in its path,” said Stroud. “That’s the evil our world faces, and today, just as it was exactly 13 years ago, only a properly organized, trained and equipped American military can lead the world in that fight.”

Read the president’s new strategy at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1>.