
Obama talks tougher gun control & fighting ISIS in key address; slammed for lack of new strategy

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Trends [Global terrorism](#), [Islamic State](#)

"On Wednesday, 14 Americans were killed as they came together to celebrate the holidays. They were taken from family and friends who loved them deeply," Obama said. "So far, we have no evidence that the killers were directed by a terrorist organization overseas or that they were part of a broader conspiracy here at home, but it is clear that the two of them had gone down the dark path of radicalization, embracing a perverted interpretation of Islam that calls for war against America and the West."

[READ MORE: San Bernardino shooter Tashfeen Malik pledged allegiance to ISIS, passed DHS screening - reports](#)

Obama noted that the suspects had stockpiles of assault weapons, ammunition, and pipe bombs. He added that terrorism has evolved into *"a new phase."*

"Terrorists turn to less complicated acts of violence like the mass shootings that are all too common in our society. It is this type of attack that we saw at Fort Hood in 2009, in Chattanooga earlier this year, and now in San Bernardino."

Obama called for tougher gun control measures, urging Congress to pass legislation that would prohibit individuals on the US no-fly list from purchasing a gun. *"What could possibly be the argument for allowing a terrorist suspect to buy a semiautomatic weapon? This is a matter of national security,"* he said.

"What could possibly be the argument for allowing a terrorist suspect to buy a semi-automatic weapon?" —[@POTUS](#)

From 2004 to 2014,
**more than 2,000 people
on the terror watch list
were able to purchase guns.**

Source: Government Accountability Office

Sympathy isn't good enough: **It's time to act to #StopGunViolence.**

Moreover, Obama said that the US needs more stringent laws when it comes to buying powerful assault weapons, similar to those used in the San Bernardino massacre.

"I know there are some who reject any gun-safety measures, but the fact is that our intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, no matter how effective they are, cannot identify every would-be mass shooter, whether that individual was motivated by ISIL [Islamic State / IS / ISIS] or some other hateful ideology. What we can do, and must do, is make it harder for them to kill," Obama said.

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Saying that the battle against Islamic State is far from over, Obama called on Congress to authorize continued use of military force against the terrorist group.

He also said that the US will press on with airstrikes, special forces missions and the training of local military and rebels fighting IS on the ground in Iraq and Syria. *"We will continue to provide training and equipment to tens of thousands of Iraqi and Syrian forces fighting ISIL on the ground so that we take away their safe havens."*

Obama claimed the US is also working to cut off IS financing and quash its recruitment efforts.

Other measures Obama listed in his speech aimed at overcoming the *"real threat"* of terrorism to *"make our country safe"* include making it more difficult for people enter the US without visas, with special attention paid to whether they have travelled to war zones.

US anti-ISIS propaganda campaign 'in disarray,' ineffective & needs change – review panel <http://on.rt.com/6yj5>



The San Bernardino terrorist attack saw 14 people killed and 21 injured at a holiday party for the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health. Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife Tashfeen Malik, 27, are believed to have been behind the massacre. Farook worked at the department as an environmental specialist.

Both suspects were killed in a shoot-out with police about four hours after the bloodbath.

Malik reportedly pledged allegiance to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a Facebook post immediately before the attack.

Neither [#SanBernardino](#) suspects were under [#FBI](#) investigation prior to attack <http://on.rt.com/6ylu>



While the suspects scrubbed their social media accounts and destroyed their cell phones, computers and other electronic devices prior to the attack, the FBI is hoping to piece together enough digital information to find a motive.

Sunday's speech is just the third Oval Office address to the nation of Obama's presidency. The first took place in June 2010, when Obama described the national response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill following press criticism of how his administration was handling the environmental disaster. The second Oval Office address was in August 2010, when he marked the end of the US combat operations in Iraq.

Nothing new?

However, as the US president's live speech was broadcast, it came under immense criticism from both critics of Obama's policies and those who felt the American leader was announcing no change in US strategy at home and abroad.

Republican Senator and presidential hopeful Rand Paul dismissed the address as *"an attempt to turn a necessary discussion on terrorism and national security into a[n] ineffective gun control debate."*

Republican hawk, Senator John McCain, was quick to tweet that Obama's speech *"again failed to offer any clear strategy to defeat ISIL."*

Former New York governor, presidential candidate George Pataki – who was recently sparked

controversy by saying *“we must declare war on radical Islam”* and *“kill them”* – went as far as comparing the speech to a *“hostage video.”*

Many viewers were skeptical about Obama being able to convince Congress to pass any gun control measures. Chris Baginski from Pittsburgh tweeted: *“Obama calls on Congress for gun law reform. Spoiler: It won’t happen. This country has already decided it likes guns more than people... So just hope that the next mass shooting doesn’t include you or anyone you care about, because that’s all you can do. America.”*

‘Obama won’t take responsibility and admit US needs coalition with Russia & Syria to defeat ISIS’

Obama’s speech came at a time when Americans feel the terrorist threat is getting closer to home and polls are show most US respondents think the White House strategy on fighting IS is failing.

US officials have had to acknowledge recently that the Pentagon’s training of so-called ‘moderate’ Syrian rebels has utterly failed. Moreover, a year of US-led coalition’s airstrikes has not stopped IS from capturing more territory in Iraq and Syria nor has it disrupted the illegal oil trade or funding of the extremists from abroad. Consequently, even the Democratic camp appeared happy with the current strategy, which shows so little success on the ground.

Hours before Obama’s speech, former secretary of state and Democratic presidential front-runner, Hillary Clinton, told reporters that the US is *“not winning”* the war against Islamic State. Clinton implied that Congress should let the US president do more by updating the use-of-force authorization passed in the wake of 9/11.

However, there was a lot more missing in the outline of the US government’s strategy on fighting IS, believes the director of anti-war ANSWER Coalition, Brian Becker.

One of the biggest concerns remains Obama’s inability to work with Russia and the Syrian government to fight against Islamic State, Becker told RT.

“This speech was not worthy for what it didn’t say. It didn’t say that the primary force in Syria fighting ISIL is the Syrian national army that has lost 65,000-80,000 men during the last four years,” Becker told RT.

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“It didn’t take responsibility for the US role in fueling the conflict in Syria, and of course the war in Libya, both of which, along with invasion and occupation of Iraq, gave the political space for ISIL. It didn’t mention that Russia military intervened in Syria in a way that irreversibly changes the military dynamic and allows for an international coalition. And that the US government even to this day refuses to join with Russia and Syrian Arab Army embattling ISIL.”

If IS really is an *“existential threat”* to the US, Obama’s government must acknowledge that there is a need for a broad international coalition, and that there is a responsibility to ensure that the American allies in the region, such as Turkey, are really into fighting IS.

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"If the US says that the existential threat is ISIL, if ISIL is the real party, then there must a congruence of interests with Russia and with the Syrian Arab Army to defeat it. And even though the rhetoric has shifted slightly by the Obama Administration since the Vienna summit... Obama won't take responsibility – and he could have done that tonight on the national television, and explain to the American people why that [coalition] was an imperative need, but he won't do that."
