

Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood's Global Affiliates:
A New U.S. Administration Considers New Policies
The Muslim Brotherhood, Qatar, and the Tools Congress
Can Use to Combat Illicit Activities
May 23, 2017

DUBOWITZ: All right, folks, we're going to keep moving the agenda forward and I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to introduce Chairman Ed Royce. My name is Mark Dubowitz. I'm the Chief Executive of FDD and many of you know Chairman Royce. He is the chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has been so since 2013; he's a senior member of the House Financial Services Committee and we've really been honored over the years to work with Chairman Royce, who has a reputation of bipartisanship; who works really across the aisle, works closely with ranking member Engel on these issues and it's a breath of fresh air, obviously in this town, which is so polarized and so political that we have a chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee willing to find bipartisan solutions. So, Chairman Royce, thank you. Welcome.

ROYCE: Thank you, Mark.

DUBOWITZ: Wonderful to have you here. Let's get right into the questions. We heard Secretary Gates refer to the Muslim Brotherhood as "science fiction shape shifters" which was an interesting characterization and he said that the Muslim Brotherhood make themselves look like whatever you want them to be. An interesting characterization. We, the theme of this conference, Chairman Royce, is going to be, how do you actually deal with the Muslim Brotherhood and my colleague at FDD, Jonathan Schanzer, has really talked about identifying the elements of the Muslim Brotherhood, the affiliates that actually are involved in terrorism and designating those affiliates. Do you think that's the right approach?

ROYCE: I think the approach definitely needs to be focused on those affiliates that are associated with terrorism directly. And actually Brian Mast, Congressman Brian Mast and myself have legislation that we're introducing later this week that will designate any countries that are agencies or platforms for the operations of the Muslim Brotherhood or who fund the Muslim Brotherhood, those terrorist elements of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas in particular, as sanctionable by the United States.

But the question becomes what institutions were influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood originally and then evolved away from terror, versus those, and there are many of them, that link their terrorist activities back to the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood some hundred years ago and have that same commitment to violence.

So to get into the details just for a moment, there are political parties, in Jordan, for instance, or in Tunisia or Algeria, Morocco, who are a part of a governing coalition or are parliamentary in nature, who maybe once had, as a foundation, some of the work of the Muslim Brotherhood, but are not committed to violence. That is a different type of

institution, Mark, than Hamas or these other specific brotherhood-related entities right now that are trying to overthrow governments throughout the Middle East. And so I'm just getting to the details a little bit, but your question is a rather complicated one.

But I think that the actions of passing legislation that holds to account those who are providing a platform for Hamas or other extensions of the Muslim Brotherhood that are actively involved in terror is absolutely appropriate and necessary.

DUBOWITZ: So Chairman Royce, it seems to be a wide consensus that if there is a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate involved in terrorist activities, they should be designated under U.S. law.

ROYCE: Yes. Right.

DUBOWITZ: Secretary Gates also talked about the Muslim Brotherhood as the ideological forerunner of ISIS and al-Qaeda and so –

ROYCE: Right.

DUBOWITZ: I think you're getting at this. I mean, the more complicated question is, what do we do with those elements of the Muslim Brotherhood who are not today explicitly involved in activities that would constitute terrorism and therefore would justify a designation, but are involved in extremism, involved in ideological warfare.

ROYCE: One of the things we're trying to do, and you see this with the attempt to set up this, this center in the Middle East, is to draw all of these governments into a pact where we realize that this problem has to be confronted, first and foremost by them and establish some level of accountability for those who are assisting and moving in the right direction versus those governments that are instead working with the violence-prone Muslim Brotherhood organizations, Hamas and others that are carrying out attacks and I think that this becomes part of the solution, doesn't it? Because if we're successful in setting up such an effort country-by-country, then we begin to isolate those clerics who are teaching their students to kill.

You know, the attack at the Manchester Arena, that young man, that suicide bomber who carried out that attack and the ISIS members who posted about that attack some hours before the attack, they were taught by someone and there's an infrastructure behind that teaching. There's a platform. There is, there's an organization. There is recruitment. These are not ideas that just people adopt without a fair amount of brainwashing, to convince a young man that he should target teenagers and young girls for death because of the concept that they're infidels. That is not the natural thought process; that kind of hate takes a great deal of focused energy and resources. So part of the answer here is to work with those governments that are trying to reform and set up schools, universities, to train clerics and to confront those who believe that this justifies, the fact that someone's an infidel justifies their death, which is what was on the platforms,

the ISIS, along with the ISIS flag, on the platforms that appeared before the Manchester Arena, making reference to the impending Manchester Arena event.

So I think we're moving in the right direction there. But my focus, my argument would be, let's look at the state sponsors who refuse to become part of the solution and, and let's put the pressure there.

DUBOWITZ: So let's talk a little bit about Hamas. I mean, it's obviously widely recognized Hamas is a terrorist organization. They've designated by the United States, by the European Union, by Canada and it's – but there's clearly a movement afoot to try and whitewash Hamas. You saw the recent charter that was unveiled in Qatar, again, an attempt to sort of try to pretend that Hamas is anything but a terrorist organization.

I know there's been a lot of work in Congress on Hamas. There's been legislation that's been passed in the past and there's sort of legislation that is being worked on today. Can you give us a sense of what's happening on the Hill with respect to Hamas and some of the ideas that you and your colleagues may be rolling out?

ROYCE: Well, again, of the extensions of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is an example. Their charter is an example of their commitment to violence and there's probably over 400 civilians, by my count, that have lost their lives to violence directed by Hamas and Hamas is happy to take credit for it, happy to claim that slaughtering civilians is part of what they do. Nine of them were Americans. And I was encouraged by the coverage of the event that Qatar, you know, sponsored there, where you had Hamas come out and try to claim they were taking a new course of action because the New York Times, I thought, set the right tone by explaining why this was so absurd.

You know, they went through it point-by-point in terms of what the claim was, in terms of Hamas's new commitment versus the reality of what they were in the process of doing, in terms of the mayhem that they espouse and, for example, the destruction of the State of Israel. I mean, none of that has changed. It was a, it was a PR event without any noticeable effect. Now, I don't know, it may have had an effect on the university campuses. That's a separate world from the real world, the academics there. But in terms of how it was received in media accounts, it was exposed, I think, very effectively and immediately.

But we in the House and Senate continue to have hearings on the role that they play in violence and the role, the destabilizing and horrific record, including, you know, the, the targeting of women and children.

I'll just tell you my own observation. I went over to Gaza with Eliot Engel, right after the conflict there, the most recent conflict and we were in one of those tunnels and I inquired as to where this tunnel led, into a small village, but specifically it led underneath a kindergarten. All right? An elementary school. Their plan, Hamas's plan was to take those children, seize them, take them back through the tunnel, hold them in Gaza and

force the IDF, Mark, to fight, to fight building-by-building, to try to get back those hostages. Who thinks like that?

And then I had an opportunity to talk to some of our officers, retired generals in the region, who had visited the region in order to do an assessment and one of the things they were focused on was Hamas intentionally using human shields while the Hamas cadre were down below the ground. They were taking the Palestinian people and putting them up and forcing them to stand near the rocket launchers. They would then launch those rockets at a civilian target, you know, or a village. Their officer corps would go underground and allow, you know, if there was counter battery work to suppress that launcher, they were going to use civilians.

The use of human shields. I mean, this is the nature of Hamas. This is – and I don't I don't see how that differs much from the modus operandi of al-Qaeda or ISIS or these other organizations that believe that targeting civilians is part of what they're commanded to do. But in this particular case they sacrifice their own people; their own people become part of the – at gunpoint – of their schemes. So we continue to get this information out. The Taylor Force Act is another bill that will expose exactly the modus operandi of others in the region who are using the same tactics.

DUBOWITZ: So we can expect more bipartisan legislative action on these issues.

ROYCE: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: So Chairman Royce, as you know, you don't have to go to Gaza to meet senior Hamas officials. You can go to Doha and we've certainly been doing a lot of analysis on, on Qatar. FDD has described Qatar as a frenemy. Do you think that's a fair characterization?

ROYCE: I think the characterization I would use on Qatar is, it is a country that is – from which financiers have helped finance al-Qaeda, ISIS, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and other similar organizations, including the Taliban and I don't understand why. I can't, for the life of me, figure out why Qatar wants to give a platform to the Taliban. And the ambassador from Afghanistan has talked to me about this, I mean, they've allowed them to put a new name on it. I forget, it's Emirate of Afghanistan, or something like that. But why would you host a terrorist organization like the Taliban that is using those kinds of tactics against the civilian population as well as military in Afghanistan, to overthrow a government? Why would you give them a platform? Why would you host their so-called leaders on Al Jazeera? Why would you do that?

Now, I know that the argument is being made that Qatar will be, you know, part of helping finance our new anti-terror center and so forth in the Middle East and I think that's good. I think it's – there's always the possibility that you can change behavior. But I would say when the behavior is so wrong on so many different issues, if there's going to be a change, it needs to be immediate. There needs to be a course correction here

because the consequence is the loss of human life across Central Asia, in the Middle East and beyond. These – clearly, for Hamas to continue its operations, to have a life line to Qatar, it makes no sense to think that this, in any remote way, could be part of the solution. To be able to harbor the worst of the worst among the Hamas leadership – the most intransigent, the most vicious, why do that? So I think there's going to be a great deal of pressure on Qatar to change its behavior.

DUBOWITZ: So Chairman Royce, there's been a sort of diplomatic offensive of recent weeks, trying to convince certainly people appearing at this conference and others, that Qatar has changed its behavior, it's changed its stripes. Do you see any evidence of a substantial change in Qatari behavior?

ROYCE: We need to see a change in behavior immediately. And my hope, Mark, is that focusing on the support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood will, as well as the platform for the Taliban and so forth, will assist in getting that change in behavior. It would be good to see a change in behavior and as I indicated, we're always open and there's new commitments that have just been made and the Gulf States have uniformly, you know, made these commitments. All right, now let's see those commitments kept.

DUBOWITZ: So, let's talk about another important asset, a U.S. asset that is actually located in Qatar and that's the Al Udeid Air Base. Secretary Gates just earlier this morning, said there is no irreplaceable military facility. Clearly this is – d

ROYCE: That's a true statement.

DUBOWITZ: I wanted to ask about this. I mean, clearly the Qataris have leverage over us because of Al Udeid. Are you and your colleagues open to looking at other basing options?

ROYCE: Oh, I think if behaviors didn't change there would absolutely be a willingness to look at other options for basing.

DUBOWITZ: So we want to also talk about some other Muslim Brotherhood affiliated parties and organizations and you know, Chairman Royce, you mentioned this sort of, this model now that we're seeing where Muslim Brotherhood political parties have taken on a more prominent role in certain countries. But the one country that I want to really focus on with you is Turkey and the AKP Party or the AKP –

ROYCE: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: Is the Muslim Brotherhood Party, President Erdogan, as you know, has been involved in a severe crackdown on civil liberties in Turkey and like in Doha, if you want to meet senior Hamas officials, Turkey would be a good place to go because Turkey has hosted Hamas officials, including those who were responsible for the killing of Israelis and that actually triggered the last Hamas war.

So you've got a situation in Turkey, a deteriorating civil society. You've got a government led by Erdogan, who has been supporting terrorist organizations and we also saw that recently, where some of Erdogan's thugs beat up peaceful protestors in Washington only a little while ago.

ROYCE: We're working on a resolution, Mark, by the way, to address that issue in the House and I hope to have that ready soon.

DUBOWITZ: Well, good. Because I think that – and there are a number of people in this town sort of asking, what is the right approach in dealing with Erdogan? I mean, clearly important NATO allies, I would argue, unlike Qatar, the loss of Turkey would probably have significant strategic consequences for the United States; I'm sure you would agree with that. But he seems to only respond to decisive, strong actions, like Vladimir Putin's pretty tough approach, after the downing of a Russian jet. I mean, do we have to get equally tough with Erdogan to see some kind of change?

ROYCE: I think that we need to make it clear that we're going to stand up for our values. You know, it is certainly a shock to see on camera the tactics deployed to suppress freedom of speech in Turkey, deployed here in Washington, D.C. or in the United States, when his delegation was present, by his bodyguard, to see that kind of violence and to see protestors kicked in the head here in the United States.

I think that we should have a platform on social media, on television and radio, in which we allow a discussion about what is happening to liberties, rights in Turkey. I think the fact that the state suppresses and controls the information now from Ankara, has led to the ability to propagandize and sort of marginalize or restrict the ability of free people in Turkey to talk about what was once accepted as a pluralistic society. Political pluralism intolerance is no longer part of the discourse now that he has consolidated power and he's been doing this for many, many years.

And I think we have not been as forthright and strong an advocate for freedom in Turkey as we should have been and I've put out a lot of statements over the years, as you know and certainly connected to this last referendum, I did so as well, but we need something that will assist people in Turkey to at least be able to listen to Turks who want to explain why freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly are important. Anytime, anytime an authoritarian regime manages to capture through force and intimidation and coercion the platforms on social media and on radio and on television and people can no longer hear other points of view, you're in a situation where unfortunately the fatal conceit of those running such a system, who believe that they alone know best and therefore they should freeze out the voices of the people, this, this leads to a process of slow indoctrination and I would argue that people are being indoctrinated in Turkey, not just by Erdogan but by the political movement that is an arm and an outshoot as you properly explained, of the Muslim Brotherhood and that indoctrination process has led to a real, shall we say radicalization of viewpoint and a

great deal of intimidation and threat and arrest against those who disagree with the, with Erdogan's party's activities.

DUBOWITZ: So I mean, it's fair to say that we've got two examples of the Muslim Brotherhood or Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated party taking power; one with Morsi in Egypt, a second with Erdogan in Turkey.

ROYCE: The failure there.

DUBOWITZ: And not shining examples of how the MB is capable of actually assuming power through a democratic system and then respecting those democratic institutions and democratic processes.

ROYCE: That's correct.

DUBOWITZ: So getting back to sort of the first question of the discussion is, it seems to be easy to focus on those affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood that are clearly involved in terrorism and in supporting violence and you have agreed, Secretary Gates has agreed with Jonathan Schanzer's recommendation for designating those affiliates. I guess the real problem that we have is what do you deal, how do you deal with the sort of conveyor belt of terrorism? How do you deal with the political parties, like in Egypt or in Turkey, that take power from whom democracy is only a train that you don't have to get off?

ROYCE: Right. Yeah. Democracy is like a streetcar. You get off.

DUBOWITZ: That's right and Erdogan --

ROYCE: No matter what your destination.

DUBOWITZ: That was Erdogan's quote, right.

ROYCE: I remember when he came out with that.

DUBOWITZ: Right.

ROYCE: I'm a fan of the Elliott Abrams' thinking on this and Abrams thought is you do try to differentiate. If you can move the conveyor belt in the other direction, if you can, even if you have a political party in let's say, in Jordan and the roots were there, if you get the conveyor belt rolling in the other direction, away from authoritarianism, and towards inclusion in the political process. In those circumstances, it is in your interest and in the interest of the people of Jordan to try to work towards an embrace of non-violence, tolerance.

But with respect to, again, these organizations, I think you, once you have one that violates -- that advocates violence in any means, you look at shutting off their source

of funding. And no one is better, Mark, than you are, in terms of researching terror and its financing and how it's been used as a weapon, in a word, to put in motion, you know, violence. And boy, if we had been more focused in our history – think back to prior to 1979.

If the United States had been more fixated on the role that those who were supporting terror, the Ayatollah had, in the '79 revolution, if we had a conception of how many lives would have been lost in Iran, you know, by the Ayatollah's movement there, by the Shi'a revolution, the Iranian Revolution. And the subsequent support for terror, you know, if you think about the support for Hezbollah, the support for Hamas, the fact that a society in which two-thirds of the people say they want a western-style democracy without a theocracy, and that's the polling out of Iran and somehow, in a society like that, in '79, as a result of that revolution, we end up with a wellspring, with a fountainhead for the overthrow of government in Yemen.

There was an out. There was ally via the United States to support for the human rights atrocities that we see in Syria, you know, by the extension of the militias there and Hezbollah there, the support also for Hamas, this is a lesson plan. And whether the commitment to this kind of violence and suppression of, of the freedoms, of the rights of others emanates from the 1979 Iranian Revolution or whether it emanates for what many call the counter reaction to it, after '79, in among Sunni or Wahhabi societies, in terms of those organizations that seized an opportunity like the Muslim Brotherhood to drive this message of hate and to compete against it across North Africa and Central Asia and West Africa.

But what we see is an ever greater expansion of those who are advocating terror and violence and the absolute destruction of any apostates who disagree with their extremist view. And so I think that we get back to the basic teachings, what is being advocated by clerics and in this al-Sisi is absolutely right to try in Egypt, to reorganize and rededicate and focus the universities and those involved in clerical teachings on political pluralism and non-violence on these values. And that's going to be part of it, and then the second part is identifying those states who are supporting terror, directly or indirectly supporting terror. And that's what we're trying to do.

DUBOWITZ: I'm glad you mentioned Iran because for the first time in my professional career, I didn't.

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

ROYCE: It's true.

DUBOWITZ: Iran is a – clearly a state sponsor of terrorism and it's been designated such by the U.S. government, by every administration. And there are certain

indices; there are certain criteria that we use in designating these states. And there are only a few states that have been designated as state sponsors of terrorism.

But when we look at a country, for example, like Qatar. Qatar is obviously involved in terror financing. They're involved in supporting many of these terrorist organizations that you laid out. There are, you know, radical clerics who are inciting at Qatari state-sponsored events. Qatar is clearly providing material support for terrorism.

I guess the question for you is if they don't get the message, if the conveyor belt is not moving in the right direction, at some point should we consider designating Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism?

ROYCE: Well, if you think about it, if we're talking about moving legislation this week, authored by Congressman Brian Mast and myself that focuses on sanctioning those who support Hamas. And if Qatar is supporting Hamas, then we're talking about sanctions against Qatar.

So, I think we're moving on legislation that addresses those states which despite their commitments don't keep the commitment, with respect to changing behavior in supporting organizations that are sowing terror. And I think this becomes the acid test.

DUBOWITZ: Because they have made commitments in the past, Chairman Royce, as you're aware. I mean, the Jeddah Communique, I'll read this, it says, Qatar has agreed to quote, "countering financing of ISIL and other violent extremists, repudiating their hateful ideology, ending impunity and bringing perpetrators to justice," among other points.

And my colleague, David Weinberg, has issued two reports on Qatar and their terror financing, their unwillingness to bring perpetrators to justice and their support for violent extremism. Is – again, that's a commitment. I know there have been, I think seven Congressional letters that have raised concerns about Qatar's record on terror financing from 2013 to 2016. I understand that Qatar has again promised in Riyadh and joining other GCC countries in redoubling these efforts.

So, there's an explicit promise that's been made by Qatar. With this new legislation, I guess you'll be holding up that explicit promise against what's actually happening on the ground in considering sanctions against Qatar.

ROYCE: Right. Rather than send the marches, rather than send protests over, I think the most direct way to approach it is legislatively with sanctions legislation.

And one of the things – let me go off topic for a minute to just to express my appreciation to you on a subject. My feeling was the same way about Iran. And when Eliot Engel and I sat down after I became Chairman of the Committee and discussed what we could actually do the change Iran's behavior, our collective judgment – and we

had some 30 hearings on this – was that we should give the Ayatollah a choice between economic collapse or real compromise on this nuclear program.

And I guess the surprise for me, when we wrote the legislation and we had a lot of – we used the conceptual support – conceptual underpinning of this from Treasury – work over at Treasury – but frankly, your organization was very helpful, as well, as we tightened the bill up.

The administration opposed it, we did not know at the time that they were doing their own backdoor negotiations with the Ayatollah. The argument I made was that the negotiations should be on behalf of the people of Iran, not with the Ayatollah. The focus should be on the Iranian people who had had an election stolen from them. But we had a conflict of vision.

So, we bring the bill up in committee and despite the administration's opposition, after making our case, and with the help from you, we passed that unanimously. We took it to the floor and the administration redoubled their effort. We passed it off the floor of the House with a vote of 400-20. That was the collective judgment of this institution when they heard the arguments and came to the conclusion, give the Ayatollah that choice – economic collapse or real compromise on this nuclear program.

Took it to the Senate, we had 60 supporters in the Senate, we could not get to two-thirds. But, that's the kind of approach and leverage that we need. I never understood the inability of the former administration to understand that even if they wanted to do a deal, we needed to have some backstop that would be effective. But I do know what was effective in prior situations – I won't get into North Korea – but only once in 2006 did we let Stuart Levey, Undersecretary of the Treasury, temporarily move against them when they were counterfeiting \$100 U.S. bills.

And the results of that was to shut down the hard currency for their missile program. It shut down the missile program. They didn't have the hard currency for the nuclear program. The dictator did not have the money to pay his generals as one of the high-ranking North Korean defectors told us. That's not a good position for a dictator to be in. But the Department of State put so much pressure on Treasury, they convinced -- they forced Treasury's hand to lift those sanctions.

Just once, I'd like to make the point that yes, sanctions can work. And I'd talked to a former member of the government in South Africa who told me, we would have lasted about 10 days after the United States put economic sanctions against us. And at the end, we turned over the nuclear weapon that we had created to the international community. You know, we let Mandela out of jail and we agreed to end apartheid.

Yes, when we're united, sanctions can work. And so, you know, we will try doing treaties, we will try the letters and you know, try to hold people to their commitments. But at the end of the day, to really hold people to account, they need to feel the

consequences. And when human lives are at stake, and not just our national security but you know, the safety of our allies, their security is at stake.

There comes a time when you have to move forward decisively, and that's why I'll be proud to move Brian Mast and my legislation later this week.

(APPLAUSE)

DUBOWITZ: Well, great.

(APPLAUSE)

DUBOWITZ: Well, Chairman Royce, this has been incredibly helpful. I mean, I think the takeaway for me is the United States needs leverage, whether we're dealing with allies, with enemies, or with frenemies.

And you know, the mistake maybe that's been made in the past with Qatar is not having sufficient leverage. It sounds like this legislation is an important step along the way, to giving the United States and U.S. administration new leverage over the Qatar is -- well, I guess anytime you understand that as Secretary Gates said, "No facility is irreplaceable."

And that when you look at real estate versus the ideological and material support for terrorism, there are other real estate alternatives. I understand the Saudis and the Emiratis have actually talked about potential basing alternatives and they seem to be very committed based on statements in Riyadh to the war against -- against terrorism.

So, thank you very much for your leadership --

ROYCE: Thank you, Mark.

DUBOWITZ: -- and your friendship.

ROYCE: Thank you for yours.

(APPLAUSE)

ROYCE: I appreciate it.

(APPLAUSE)

END