



August 23, 2016, 12:16 pm

# We can't afford to give terrorists a one-way ticket back to the battlefield

By House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)



Getty

Last week the Obama Administration approved its largest-ever release of detainees from Guantanamo Bay, sending 15 extremists back into the world.

By now, the pattern has become familiar: the President lets hardened terrorists go free, Congress and the American people express outrage, and the White House ignores the uproar.

But the grave risks of this policy *cannot* be ignored. The President is giving terrorists a one-way ticket back to the battlefield.

In fact, officials have confirmed to Congress that some former detainees are responsible for attacking or killing Americans since being freed. Yet, incredibly, the releases persist.

Not only does the President's rush to open Gitmo's jail cells allow fighters to keep waging war against us, it also gives the jihadist A-team a chance to mentor a new generation of radicals.

"Outrageous" hardly describes the non-logic of this policy. What Commander-in-Chief lets the enemy return to the fight in the middle of a war?

But that's just the problem—the President doesn't believe we're fighting one.

He declared an end to the global war on terror in 2013, and he downplayed the danger from ISIS as "killers with good social media" who are "on the back of pickup trucks" and plotting "in apartments or garages."

In reality, though, we've entered uncharted territory. Those killers have now been tied to more than 100 terrorist plots or attacks against Western countries, an unprecedented wave of terror. And former Gitmo detainees are eagerly joining ISIS's ranks, in addition to re-enlisting with al Qaeda.

Still the White House sees Gitmo detainees as victims of a war on terror that went too far—relics of Bush Administration heavy-handedness—who should be reintegrated into society.

But I have been to the detention facility, and I can promise you these inmates are not gentle souls who have seen the light.

They are the worst of the worst, and they are dead set on killing more Americans.

Nearly 700 inmates have been released from Gitmo, and more than 200 have returned to the fight or are suspected of doing so, according to the Director of National Intelligence. And that's just who we know about.

Sadly, the President is more focused on letting these terrorists loose than on rounding up more of them.

His Administration tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade Americans that we should bring the detainees to U.S. soil, where their presence would have undoubtedly turned our communities into terror targets.

Now the Administration is bending over backwards to convince our international partners to accept them before the President leaves office, wasting our diplomatic leverage on a reckless cause.

Indeed, it begs the question: what is the White House promising these foreign governments in exchange for accepting dangerous terrorists? Is this how we should be wielding our influence?

Making matters worse, the President has failed to develop a coherent detention policy for capturing, interrogating, and prosecuting *new* suspects.

Our policy cannot simply be to kill every terrorist.

Don't get me wrong—we should use every means possible to bring them to justice, but we should also bring extremists into custody when feasible. That's how you get the crucial intelligence needed to stop attacks and dismantle jihadist networks.

Unfortunately, the White House has been too paralyzed by political correctness to figure out a system for doing that.

Instead it is frantically getting rid of those we've already got in custody in order to fulfill a misguided campaign promise.

The result is that we have telegraphed weakness to our enemies and put America and our allies in greater danger.

If we want to prevail over the evil of Islamist terror, we need to keep Guantanamo Bay open, its jail cells closed, and the landing strip ready to welcome new inmates.

So for the sake of our national security, let's hope the next president is more focused on winning this war than trying to find new homes for jihadists.

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*The views expressed by authors are their own and not the views of The Hill.*