



MEDIA CALL: EUROPE'S RESPONSE AFTER THE PARIS ATTACKS

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SPEAKERS:

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JUDY DEMPSEY: We have Jan Techau, director of Carnegie of Europe, and Marc Pierini scholar at Carnegie Europe and a refugee expert and former ambassador to the region including Turkey. And, we are very fortunate to have Yezid Sayigh from our Beirut office. Let's start the questions. We are not going to do any introductions there's so little time so here's your chance.

STEVEN ERLANGER: Hi Judy, it's Steve. I'm just curious to ask about new proposals to limit civil liberties in France and Brussels today and I wondered how your panel was reacting to that, whether they were overdone or is there going to be a big debate about it? And then perhaps we can get into Schengen and borders, that's up to you guys but that's my question.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Jan can you deal with this?

JAN TECHAU: I can say something but if Marc wants to come in as well. I think it's a natural reaction. The home front, the domestic front is very clearly the field of political activity that gets the most attention now and even though we have very strong words and announcements on foreign policy the main field of political activity will be domestic. And that will all be about homeland security which brings with it this debate on civil liberty.

In the Belgian press, it is very heavily debated, I checked it this morning, lots of comments on whether we're going too far in the heat of the moment; certainly the same thing happening in Germany. I'm not enough of a homeland security expert as to whether it's all justified or not. It's very clear that this is an attempt on behalf of the authorities to regain some trust because the biggest problem that people had was not so much the actual [inaudible] but they felt that the authorities were not in control any longer and now the attempt to regain some sort of trust is very much in the foreground here, at least for the time being.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Thanks Jan, Marc would you come in here, please?

MARC PIERINI: What's going on in France and the extension of the state of emergency which was voted for three months this morning in the Parliament is a compulsory move for the government because we're basically in front of a French 9/11 and nobody would understand that no measure is taken and officially because the methodology used by the Islamic State is very fast moving one, people taking advantage of freedom of expression, using international media, freedom of movement within the Schengen area.

So the key here will be the monitoring from a rule of law but in the immediate future that is going to get strong support from the public.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Interesting, Yezid do you want to come in here from a very different perspective?

YEZID SAYIGH: I was just going to observe that the new war on terror is probably going to have its greatest impacts inside France and some other parts of Europe than it will in the field in the Middle East, given the escalation of French military action there. But I think the deepest and most long-lasting impacts are going to be at home.

BERND RIEGERT: Hello this is Bernd Riegert may I go ahead?

JUDY DEMPSEY: Yes.

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BERND RIEGERT: Just one simple question I don't know who can answer that; what can Europe do to really defeat Islamic State now is there a recipe or some recommendations you have?

JUDY DEMPSEY: So that's a very easy question, Marc can you pick up here?

MARC PIERINI: As I said earlier we are in a situation similar to the morning after 9/11. The first reaction is more controls, more police, state of emergency plus military action outside. We've seen that on Afghanistan in September/October 2001. There is no recipe in the sense that we see a very fast moving change of policies and attitudes by not only France and the EU but Russia and Turkey as well.

If you look at the situation since the G20 this weekend in Antalya you've seen complete reversal of attitude by Russia on ISIL and now by Turkey on ISIL. It was an embarrassing moment during the G20 when Putin brandished satellite pictures, hundreds of oil tankers going to Turkey so that has triggered the change on his part and on the part of Turkey.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Jan do you want to come in here?

JAN TECHAU: Yes my response to this is that the Europeans can certainly help defeating the Islamic State but ultimately the Islamic State can only be defeated in the region itself. I think our ability to force outcomes in the region is very, very limited and we now see demonstrations of strength and increased military activities for what extent they're actually useful is a separate question.

But ultimately it's the region itself that needs to defeat that movement and this is why it's so important to get the Saudis and the Iranians and everybody else on board. If the Europeans try to actually, or the West as such including the Americans try to resolve the situation again the time of reigning power of the region that are Government-led, they're sheltering this that are enabling this that's a futile attempt and they will fail.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Thank you Jan that's a fine answer, Yezid can you come in, please? Can Europe do anything to defeat IS or do you want to pass on this?

YEZID SAYIGH: No I'll come in from a certain angle which is that unlike Al-Qaeda and the war that the US launched against it, 2001 onwards where it sought to focus on a specific territory and the phenomenon in the conventional way, ISIS is a very different type of organization which ironically actually could make it easier to defeat because in my view ISIS remains at core in the Iraqi phenomenon and Iraqi organization whose defeat can only come in its home territory in Iraq.

Which is precisely why doing something in Syria if, for instance, the Vienna statement were to be followed through and result in at least in a ceasefire and potentially the start of talks in Syria that would be a very helpful complementing element. But in all cases I think unlike Al-Qaeda which was not defeated by destroying its bases in Afghanistan, I think with ISIS ironically you can defeat the mother organization at least in one single place.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Next question, please. One question per person, identify yourself; here we go.

CAROL MATLACK: This is Carol Matlack with Bloomberg News in Paris I have a question about the implications of this for intelligence. Is what's happened in Paris in the last few days, is it indicative of a serious intelligence failure and what going forward do you think are the key changes or things that need to be done in terms of intelligence?

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JUDY DEMPSEY: Who would like to take this first; intelligence failure, intelligence issues?

MARC PIERINI: There will always be somebody claiming that it was an intelligence failure, lack of intelligence sharing certainly, also loopholes in legislation, for example, it's much easier to procure weapons in Belgium than it is in France. At the same time we have realized that we're not under the hypothesis of a few lone wolves like we said in January in Paris but a very structured organization taking advantage of Schengen, taking advantage of legislation and moving very fast between Brussels and Paris during the past few weeks.

So it's more than intelligence sharing I think we're now down to joint operations and making these operations possible at any point in time, 24/7.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Jan do you want to come in here on this issue of intelligence sharing or lack of or mistakes made? There are reports now that the French didn't pick up the Turkish element of passing on intelligence. This is only what I've read I don't know if it's true or not.

YEZID SAYIGH: I don't have any real insight on this but I just wanted to observe that I think there's a significant difference between, and something that needs to be worked out through intelligence work whether what's happened in Paris or, for instance, for that matter before whether these were in effect lone wolf attacks in the sense that local groups such as already established themselves, the planning and the logistics and so on. Or whether ISIS, the core ISIS central command, whatever we want to think of it as, whether this has undertaken a strategic shift and has decided to invest significant resources of its own in terms of key intelligence officers it has designating them to start planning this kind of operation as a strategy.

That I think is a very different kind of thing because if there's going to be sustained terrorist attacks outside, beyond Iraq and Syria that requires a significant intelligence effort in terms of networks, cells, logistics and so on. That's quite a burden. So far ISIS could just delegate and allow other people to do this rather than doing it itself and I think that's something intelligence, intelligence agencies, Turkish and others have to work out and identify.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Is there any substantial intelligence sharing inside the region, between each other and within and among the Middle Eastern countries and the EU countries and America?

YEZID SAYIGH: I honestly can't answer that on a general level. I can say that in a place like Lebanon, for instance, there tends to be a lot of rivalry between the key security agencies that are the most effective in dealing with this kind of threat, military intelligence, the general security apparatus and the information bureau. However, they have, in the past, coordinated quite effectively and shared information when faced with a specific need, so I would...my sense is, my hunch is that there's probably pretty much the same dynamic across the region. Most agencies don't operate... Arab to Arab, for instance, or Arab to Turkish agencies, I suspect have very poor levels of day-to-day coordination but that's just my hunch and I'm sure others could say more of that.

MARC PIERINI: Judy, can I add something here on the question raised by Yezid? I think if we look at the 34 days between the Ankara bombing October 10 and the Paris bombing November 13, and in-between, the Beirut bombing and the Soviet, the Russian liner, that is 500 deaths so it's hard not to look at it as the result of a new strategy.

JAN TECHAU: I would like to add something on the intelligence questions because we're now focusing on intelligence services a lot. It seems to me that when it comes to the inner European

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context, it's for the most part also a failure of police cooperation actually and will probably run lower on the ladder and say that there has been a failure of communications between the Belgian and the French authorities, between the German authorities and the French counterpart.

This is just as an home affairs; it's not even intelligence or high politics, if you will. It's very butter and bread police work which doesn't seem to work flawlessly, let's put it this way. I'm not a justice and home affairs guy to really assess this but it seems to be that the main focus should be first on this before we even start to talk about intelligence which is also important, but for the actual, when you actually look at the mistakes that were made at the basic police communications level, that is what enabled these attacks more than anything else.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Thanks, Jan.

MICHAEL PETROU: It's Michael Petrou from Maclean's. I'm wondering if anyone can speak to any potential emerging differences regarding the military campaign against the Islamic State between France and United States, if there are any, what they would be.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Thanks, Michael. Any differences in military campaign: who wants to take up this issue?

MARC PIERINI: I will say a couple of things. Basically, until mid-September basically you had US and a few others joining in but concerning Syria, in particular, and Raqqa, it was the US the US alone so we couldn't speak of any difference. The novelty in September was the Russian intervention but as everybody knows, initially it targeted those militias closer to the Assad regime and not ISIL. Only very recently they have made a massive effort towards ISIL, Raqqa, [unclear] and the oil tankers in-between. Now, what you have with the increased French involvement and the continued US involvement is a de facto coalition emerging which has no particular structure to coordinate its action.

We've seen a couple of days ago Russian cruise missiles launched without any warning to the US or to the French. Their own aircraft were in the air. Of course, normally cruise missiles never fly that high to counter [unclear] but there is a simultaneous, at the very least, increase in these three various forces and that will necessitate some sort of coordination.

JAN TECHAU: It seems to me that the US administration is actually welcoming the fact that there's now additional fire power coming in from the French and that is coordinated with the Russians. There has not really been any kind of criticism so if your question, Michael, was meant to point at a possible wedge that has been driven between the French and the Americans by the Russians; I don't think that that's happening. We have a pretty tacit agreement here, silent agreement that we're not going to play ourselves against each other. How long that can last? I don't know. Ultimately at some point the political goals that are quite different between Russians and the West will come more visible again but for the moment that compromise that tacit agreement can still hold I believe.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Interesting answer, Jan, and we will just see if Russia continues. It does strike the IS targets instead of all this striking the opposition. Next question, please. First of all, identify yourself and one question. We really have to press on now.

STEPHEN FIDDLER: Hi, it's Stephen Fiddler from the Wall Street Journal. I just want to bring it a little closer to Europe. I wondered how you see the Paris attacks reflecting on the internal EU debate following on the refugee crisis relating to frontiers, relating to that kind of thing, so how does that...? I'm sorry if I missed the first ten minutes.

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MARC PIERINI: I would say that everybody knows that the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers that are going into the EU this year probably a million by the end of December for the calendar year, nothing to do with terrorism but the fear is there, and therefore, governments have to be careful. The first result of this will be a renewed call on Turkey to check people at the border with ISIS, which is a remaining 90-95km stretch and to cooperate even more than recently on expulsion, return of jihadists and so on. That will be the first effect.

Then, of course, the secondary effect which is unpleasant and probably very unfair, is that some political parties in the EU, some countries in the EU will take the pretext of one passport from here or there to take a much restrictive attitude which will be a pity. But that negative trend exists.

YEZID SAYIGH: I just wanted to draw attention to the longer term trends broadly on the issue of migrants and refugees and so on. One is that the refugee crisis already, even before the latest flow to Europe, was massive in places like Lebanon and Jordan and of course, Turkey, not to mention Yemen and other places, and what I think European and other government, international donor agencies have to be planning for is the long term because the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, for instance, is not going to reduce, even if a political solution is reached to end the conflict tomorrow.

Every experience we've had, from Afghan refugees in Iran or wherever else in the world, shows that refugees do not immediately go back home for all sorts of different reasons and so the burden of providing both humanitarian assistance and also directing assistance to those host governments in order to enable them to reduce social strains that arise in their own populations that are poor or marginalised or illiterate, etc., that is something that has to be provided for the long term and new ways thought about how absorption should operate in the meantime, so that already was a problem facing us given that international assistance has declined to less than half today than it was, say, two years ago.

The other thing is that the migration flow, refugee flow into Europe was driven not just by the latest conflicts but is a long-term trend and therefore we should anticipate that the drivers of these flows, since they emanate from various types of conditions in the "sending" countries will continue to build up the pressure so we have to think over a long term strategy and medium term, not just the most immediate responses.

STEVEN ERLANGER: Can I just ask about the Schengen question?

MARC PIERINI: Yes, we forgot that part of the question earlier. Schengen is obviously under dire pressure right now. So far not much of an exception to Schengen because we should not forget that there are immense economic benefits into Schengen. If you were to re-establish border controls on the highway between Paris and Brussels tomorrow, you'll have hundreds or thousands of trucks every day to stop and control so that is not the case at the moment. France has reintroduced spot checks on the highway, so does Belgium, but so far it's more police operation than the Schengen operation. We may come to that if the situation is still very bad from the public perception point of view and if you followed the debate in the French parliament, the *Congrès*, that is the assembly and the senate together on Monday in Versailles, many parties, certainly the right and the extreme left called for a suspension of Schengen.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Next question, please.

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HEIDI PLOUGSGAARD JENSEN: Hi, this is Heidi Plougsgaard Jensen. This is also a question of Schengen because obviously France has now suggested systematic control at the external Schengen borders. I wanted to ask is that going to make a difference in terms of trying to catch Syrian...?

JUDY DEMPSEY: Not just Syrian, frankly, home-grown... Is it enough –the external border controls? Who wants to take this one up?

JAN TECHAU: I have to say I'm not quite sure whether I can make a proper judgement on this. This is very much again like a homeland security type question. The dilemma in Schengen is that if you want to keep Schengen alive, you have to be very dramatic on your external borders, and those external borders seem to be very porous so the pressure on Schengen is great. What the right mix is between the one and the other is something that is very, very hard to state and Marc just basically pointed at the impossibilities of abandoning Schengen wholesale. I think something else is very important and that is that the Euroskeptics, those that are trying to benefit from the situation, are trying to redefine or reframe the entire Schengen debate in a way that makes Schengen look like the culprit here. Schengen is part of the problem and Schengen needs to be abandoned. And that's a direct attack on the integration factors. And I think that's what's happening here in the Schengen context.

And I wanted to say one short thing on the previous question on the connection between the refugee issue and the Paris attacks. It's not only that this connection has being made in the domestic debate or countries. That connection [inaudible] by the attackers. The attackers have of course used a very vulnerable time for their attacks, knowing full well that the refugee crisis is like a force multiplier of their attacks. It's like a real amplifier of the message. And regardless of whether we like that connection or not, it is made everywhere; not just by populist parties but in mainstream papers, the connection is there. We have to get used to the fact that the two will be mingled. It's a very ugly situation but the two will be discussed together and it's very hard to separate them now.

JUDY DEMPSEY: It is true. But we should just realize and just spell out that the attacks in London and Madrid and Indonesia and Brussels and everywhere else had nothing at all to do with refugees. Good point, Jan. Okay, but we have to disentangle these two. Next question, please. Identify yourselves, and one question per person, please.

BARBARA PLETT USHER: Hello. This is Barbara Plett Usher from the BBC. Just questions about the coalition actually. How significant do the panellists feel that coalition achievements recently have been? The operation in Sinjar, the beginning to move slowly on Ramadi and the steps too on the border with Syria. And then, off the back of that, the way that the state department of the administration describes its plan is that this is going to be a methodical, systematic squeezing of ISIS whereas the Paris attacks seem to have injected an urgency into it that the strategy doesn't address, that this is destabilizing Europe and needs to be addressed much more aggressively.

JUDY DEMPSEY: That's very interesting. You actually snuck in two questions but the second question is particularly interesting. How effective is the coalition? But the second question, which actually is quite interesting, this potential destabilization of Europe. Let's deal with both issues. Who wants to deal with the potential destabilization, the methodical aspect? The second question first. It's very difficult. Yezid, could you come in here?

YEZID SAYIGH: Yes. I'm not quite clear if I'm dealing with which question.

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JUDY DEMPSEY: The second one. With these attacks in Europe, is there a potential destabilization effect on Europe? Do you see this effect?

YEZID SAYIGH: No, no, I was going to look more at the impact of the coalition.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Oh, fine. Look at whichever you like. Really.

YEZID SAYIGH: Well, in terms of setback for ISIS like Sinjar and the general trend and implications for what the coalition is doing, I think that the increase of air action by France may be also a return to increasing the pace by the US which had dropped its air activity a great deal, combined with Russia. Certainly if that can be sustained—and I think frankly that has to be still a big if—then that, of course, will continue to degrade ISIS' capabilities.

However, we're not that much further forward in terms of developing ground pressure. Sinjar – let's be clear about a couple of things. First of all, this was Kurdish forces mainly and they've always been in a better shape than the Iraqi Baghdad government forces, who are going to be critical to actually defeating ISIS in the remaining parts of Iraq where the Kurdish forces cannot be the lead. And here we still have generally more bad news than good news coming from the rehabilitation of the Iraqi army. And that, I think, is going to take a while.

The other aspect really is that it's not entirely clear to me how much exactly the coalition—i.e. US and countries like France now that are committing more resources but also Russia in parallel—are really going to be able to do so long as they're limiting their involvement to air power. So I think definitely all this is going to increase the pressure, but the critical changes that need to happen on the ground are not yet happening.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Yes, Marc. It would be good if you pick up, yes, on the critical changes on the ground. What would need to happen, unless you have a different...?

MARC PIERINI: Well, we're seeing three different things here. Number one, you see that the French and US, Russians and now Turkey, as announced two days ago by the Foreign Minister, are acting more directly on ISIS and that includes Raqqa and that includes repelling ISIS from the Turkish border on what they Jarabulus-Marea line. Second, they are going after oil tanker convoys, which is a huge proportion of the income of ISIS. And finally, if there is a ground offensive, this will be on Raqqa by the Syrian Kurdish forces supported by the US and the French. And that is difficult enough but that's the only option for ground troops, from the Syria side.

JULIAN BARNES: Julian Barnes, here, from the Wall Street Journal as well. Is there any prospect of Arab nations—Jordan, Egypt, the GCC countries—putting troops on the ground or stepping up their advisory effort? And what would it take to make that in the realm of the possible?

YEZID SAYIGH: Against ISIS, I think the simple, short answer is, if the Iraqi army isn't going to do it, it's not going to happen. And that therefore answers whether any other Arab forces can... Well, they can't stand in. And if they do, send any type of supporting force, then that would only be in support of something that the central government does. The Saudis, I doubt very much, are going to send troops anywhere at all. The Egyptians might possibly send troops to Syria as part of an agreed peacekeeping or monitoring mission, if that is agreed by the government and everyone else. But again, to Iraq, I don't see them showing up.

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Now intelligence. Arab interior ministers and police chiefs and so on have regular council meetings. They have some of the formal structures and protocols that are supposed to increase their ability to coordinate, cooperate in fighting terrorism. How much any of this is really effective, I'm dubious. I think that bilateral relations between, let's say, the Jordanians or Saudis or Egyptians and the US are more effective.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Thanks for that, Yezid. Anybody want to come in here? And we probably have time for one more question. Okay, next question. But just identify yourself and the question you want to pose to our panel.

CAROLINE HAYEK: It's Caroline Hayek from Beirut. I have a question. I was wondering if there are any possible measures to dry up the terrorists' financial resources. I'm thinking about oil or the archaeological market and so on.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Oh. I see. So you're talking about sanctions or being able to monitor them or seize them or whatever. Is that the gist of your question? Yes? You're essentially asking, can we seize the assets of IS, right?

CAROLINE HAYEK: Yes.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Okay, thank you. That's an important question. Can somebody deal with this question?

YEZID SAYIGH: If you want, I can just comment that I think the US strike on the oil tankers, the trucks carrying oil, was significant because it's the first time that's happened. And this reveals that there's been a dilemma all along which is that things like oil, ISIS doesn't produce itself. It allows local clans and groups to produce and takes a cut.

And the point is that a lot of this fuel ends up going to places like the opposition areas where it's desperately needed for bakeries and hospitals and so on, just as also Bagdad used to pay salaries to civil servants in areas under ISIS control in Iraq. And the problem is, if you cut those things off entirely, you may be causing greater harm to the civilian population, not only under ISIS control but even in liberated areas of Syria, for example, too. There are these dilemmas.

I think one thing that can be done for sure is for Turkey to really make sure that nothing comes across the border that is being exported, such as archaeological antiquities or other oil that ISIS exports and derives income from, because that definitely is not going to the local population's benefit.

JUDY DEMPSEY: Thanks, Yezid. I think we're going to close it now, unless there's any other last question out there? No, I don't think so. So I want to thank our great panelists: Jan Techau, director of Carnegie Europe in Brussels; Yezid Sayigh, who is based in Beirut, one of our great Middle Eastern experts; and Marc Pierini, our wonderful scholar on refugee issues, migration and Europe's policy towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Thank you very, very much for participating. There'll be a podcast later and, all going well, a transcript. But thank you very, very much. It was a great pleasure hosting you. Bye-bye.

JAN TECHAU: Thank you, Judy.

YEZID SAYIGH: Bye.

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MARC PIERINI: Thank you. Bye-bye.