

Because we must finish what we started, Matthew and I affirm; resolved: Committing United States ground combat troops to fight ISIL is in the best interest of the United States.

### **Contention One:** Sounding the Alarm

#### **Sub-point A:** The Anbar Awakening

In 2006 and 2007, the United States faced an uphill battle in the Anbar province until American troops cooperated with Sunni tribal leaders to beat back the influence of Al Qaeda, called the Anbar Awakening.

Today, the climate calls for another Anbar Awakening.

**Derek Harvey from the University of Southern Florida explains** that potential differences are becoming apparent between Sunni tribes and ISIL because of ISIL's maximalist political ambitions.

**John McCary from the Center for Strategic and International Studies emphasizes** that the tribes are critical to counterinsurgency because they are able to identify the insurgents. Without local intelligence, the United States cannot distinguish locals from militants, making it impossible to combat extremists without significant collateral damage.

Ultimately, **Ben Hubbard with the New York Times stresses** that the resources and battleground presence that existed in 2007 is just not there today. Thus, a renewed troop commitment is the tinder that can finally ignite another Anbar Awakening.

#### **Sub-point B:** The Kurdish Way

**Denise Natali from the Institute for National Strategic Studies outlines** that the current coalition relies heavily on Kurdish boots on the ground.

In doing so, **Dexter Filkins from The New Yorker writes** that ISIL presents an opportunity for the Kurds because they can claim previously-disputed land, thereby fueling their independence aspirations.

This is problematic for two reasons.

First, **Natali continues** that the empowered Kurds have been able discriminate against Sunnis in Iraq, preventing them from returning home when land is reacquired.

Second, **Mohsen Milani from the University of Southern Florida explains** that Iran, already apprehensive with Kurdish strength, has a red line regarding independence. Allowing the Kurds to cross that line would implicate the United States, who arms the Kurds because they are the ground force of choice.

### **Contention Two:** Urban Warfare

A significant difference between ISIL and terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda is that ISIL holds large swaths of territory. Problematically, this includes densely populated cities. American ground troops hold two advantages over local forces: experience and objectivity.

**Missy Ryan writes for the Washington Post** that Iraqi forces have significantly less experience in urban warfare because they relied heavily on US troops to engage in urban settings from 2004 to 2008.

Moreover, **Ryan continues** that Kurdish peshmerga and Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias risk jeopardizing local support in Sunni-dominated urban environments.

Because of the inherent advantages of an American urban campaign, there are two impacts.

First, airstrikes can be more effective.

**As Michael O’Hanlon of the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Security explains**, airstrikes require intelligence gained largely on the ground in order to avoid collateral damage.

Second, ISIL’s base of support will be eroded.

**Michael Soussan, former UN program coordinator for Iraq, explicates** that the less training a force has, the more civilian casualties it inflicts.

In and of itself, **Soussan argues** that Arab civilian casualties could cause the Arab coalition to hesitate, as the deaths would be prominent in the news.

More importantly, **Daniel Byman of Georgetown University corroborates** that refugee, or displaced, populations are ideal recruitment pools because of the offer for vengeance or power.

### **Contention Three: Iranian Aggression**

Increasingly, Iran is establishing itself as a bona fide Middle East hegemon.

**Hillary Leverett of the Jackson Institute notes** that in light of the Arab Spring, there has been a shift in power away from the United States and toward Iran and its allies.

Reinforcing this trend, **Helene Cooper of the New York Times corroborates** that President Obama is becoming increasingly reliant on Iranian fighters in order to avoid American ground troop commitments.

Iran’s growing role is problematic for four reasons.

First, Iran’s army is ill-equipped.

**Eric Schmitt of the New York Times explains** that Iranian missiles and rockets could conflagrate sectarian tensions and cause unnecessary civilian casualties because they aren’t precision-guided.

Second, Iran’s presence invites regional retaliation.

**Paul Shinkman of US News reports** that Saudi Arabia and its Sunni Arab allies have, instead of waiting for American assistance, taken up the prerogative to combat growing Iranian influence themselves, which threatens to inflate civil wars into all-out regional wars.

Third, Iranian participation could alienate local populations.

**Michael Maloof, former security policy analyst, underscores** that Shi’ite Iranian participation in efforts to combat ISIL could cause Sunni tribes to back out of supporting the Iraqi government, instead opting to side with ISIL.

Fourth, America loses out on its global credibility.

**Bret Stephens in his book *America in Retreat* argues** that a lack of commitment can embolden enemies who see our red lines as bluffs and our threats as empty. Meanwhile, our allies will pursue their own interests regardless of Washington’s desires.