Written by **Warren Mass** on June 20, 2016

South Korean Intelligence Warns of ISIS Threat to U.S. Bases

South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS) said in a statement release on June 19 that ISIS, through its hacking network called United Cyber Caliphate, has collected its own intelligence information on U.S. bases in South Korea — as well as dozens of other U.S. and NATO air force facilities around the world.

A June 20 report from CNN stated that in addition to potential threat against the bases posed by its intelligence gathering, ISIS has also released information on individuals in 21 countries, including the personal details of an employee of a South Korean welfare organization who has been placed under the government's protection.

South Korea's Yonhap News Agency reported a statement released by NIS:

> While disseminating the location data of the installations and information on the individuals, [ISIS] incited [its sympathizers around the world] to retaliate for the benefit of Muslims.

South Korea's NIS said that ISIS has disseminated its intelligence data, including Google satellite maps, through the Telegram messaging service. Through the messaging program, ISIS unveiled the locations of U.S. Air Force units in Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi Province, and Gunsan, North Jeolla Province, both in South Korea. An article posted on the Security Affairs website last November said that, following the Paris terrorist attacks, the nonprofit organization running the Telegram messaging service had identified several channels used by the ISIS and blocked them. However, Telegram said that terrorists could still establish private connections, and that it is not able to block communications that happen in private groups, which can include up to 200 users. This effectively means that the messaging service could not cut off ISIS's means of communications.

In response to the NIS announcement, U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) issued a statement on June 20 indicating that it took the threat seriously and will remain vigilant:

> Through constant vigilance and regular exercises with our South Korean counterparts, we remain prepared to respond at any time to any emerging threats.

> USFK remains committed to ensuring the highest degree of security on the Korean Peninsula.

ISIS has gone from relative obscurity to becoming the world's best-known terrorist organization in just two years. It first gained prominence in early 2014 when it drove Iraqi government forces out of Western Iraq, an offensive in which it captured the important city of Mosul.

Previously ISIS fought in Syria, under a different name, and made rapid military gains in Northern Syria starting in April 2013, gaining control of large parts of that region by mid-2014. American jets began

bombing ISIS in Syria in September 2014, despite the fact that much U.S. aid to the anti-Assad rebels had found its way to ISIS, which had become allied with them in their battle against Assad.

The supreme irony, however, is that ISIS owes its existence to U.S. activity, despite our nation's current preoccupation with defeating ISIS (and, from the latest reports from the South Koreans, the apparent preoccupation of ISIS with attacking U.S. military targets).

The first action taken by the United States that led to the rise of what would eventually be called ISIS (or the Islamic State) was to invade Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power in 2003. This created a power vacuum as the authoritarian but stable government headed by Saddam was filled by an assortment of radicalized factions and an ineffective, weak central government in Baghdad unable to maintain order. With the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011 things only worsened, and ISIS began its quest to capture much of Iraq and begin its reign of terror. George W. Bush, who authorized the invasion as president, all but admitted this during an interview with CBS Television's *Face the Nation* in November 2014 — though he still would not admit that the invasion, itself, had been a mistake.

"I think it was the right decision [to go into Iraq]," Bush told CBS News' Bob Schieffer. "My regret is that … a violent group of people have risen up again…. This is 'Al Qaeda plus' … they need to be defeated. And I hope we do…. I hope the strategy works."

That "violent group of people," of course, is ISIS. Bush did not explain why he thought that, given the rise of ISIS in the vacuum created by the ouster of Saddam Hussein, he still thought it "was the right decision" to invade Iraq.

If Bush's action created fertile ground for ISIS in Iraq, his successor, Barack Obama did the same in Syria.

The New American has published multiple articles providing details of how the foreign policy of the Obama administration has contributed to the growth of ISIS and its success in gaining control over much of Syria. One of the most revealing is "Anti-ISIS Coalition Built ISIS," published on August 10, 2015.

The article cites the words of Vice President Joe Biden, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Martin Dempsey, and the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, demonstrating that the U.S.-supported "anti-ISIS coalition" armed, trained, and funded ISIS with the goal of establishing an Islamic State in Eastern Syria to destabilize the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

The article quoted from Biden's 2014 speech at Harvard:

> The idea of identifying a "moderate middle" has been a chase America's been engaged in for a long time…. The fact remains that the ability to identify a "moderate middle" in Syria was — there was no "moderate middle" because the "moderate middle" are made up of shopkeepers, not soldiers…. What my constant cry was was that our biggest problem was our allies…. What were they doing? They were so determined to take down Assad and have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands, of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight. Except that the people who were being supplied were al-Nusra and al-Qaeda and extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.

While being questioned by Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), General Dempsey also reinforced the fact that ISIS was supported by members of the "anti-ISIS" coalition:

> Dempsey: It really comes down to building a coalition so that what the Arab Muslim world sees is

"them" rejecting ISIS, not...

Graham: They already reject ISIL. Do you know any major Arab [U.S.] allies who embrace ISIL?

Dempsey: I know major Arab allies who fund them.

Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) speaking on CBS's *This Morning* back in 2014, spoke out against the measure proposed in Congress to aid the Syrian rebels:

It's a mistake to arm them. Most of the arms we've given to the so-called moderate rebels have wound up in the hands of ISIS, because ISIS simply takes it from them, or it's given to them, or we mistakenly actually give it to some of the radicals.

A report in *The Hill* on September 15, 2014 cited Paul's assertion that rebel fighters in Syria are focused on overthrowing Syrian President Assad, rather than fighting ISIS and noted that some rebels units had recently agreed to a truce with ISIS.

"I would say one insightful piece of news from the last week is, some of the moderate rebels, so-called moderate rebels have now signed a cease-fire with ISIS," Paul said. "So, really their enemy is really Assad. They don't really care what ISIS does."

The recent news from South Korea illustrates more than one very negative result of our nation's continued interventionist foreign policy. We are engaged in what is rapidly becoming a worldwide war on ISIS terrorists, when it has been our own policies in Iraq and Syria that have enabled ISIS and turned it from a ragtag assortment of jihadists into a highly efficient terrorism machine.

A second lesson to be learned from the South Korean intelligence report is that our widespread military presence around the world only provides a larger number of vulnerable targets for ISIS and any other anti-American forces that seek to wage war against us. While a strong military is essential to our national defense, our military would better defend us at bases right here in the United States and on the oceans of the world.

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