

# The President's Conference and its message, "Think Again, Turn Away".



## Website of US State Department Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications

Today starts a three day conference in Foggy Bottom at which President Obama will appear before an audience of representatives from 60 countries dealing with the threat of "violent extremism". The White House and State Department have made it abundantly clear that they refuse to identify the perpetrators and the victims of the Paris Charlie Hebdo and Kosher Supermarket attacks, this weekend's attacks in Copenhagen, among them Jews, and the grisly beheading of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya by ISIS. The critics of this no name policy suggest that if you cannot define the threat of radical Islam and its basis, Qur'anic doctrine and Sharia Islamic law, that you can't develop a strategy for "degrading and" defeating" the Islamic State.

Given what happened in Egypt's Sinai and this past weekend in Libya, the area of conflict with IS might be expanded to include North Africa and, obviously, the West, given the attacks in France, Belgium and Denmark, as well as America and Canada. Thus the "violent extremism" conference will focus on warning potential IS recruits of foreign fighters from across the globe to "Think Again, Turn Away.". That message is being refined by the [State Department Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications](#) (SCCC) set up under an executive order issued by President Obama in 2011. Otherwise, the recruits might end up dead either as

suicide bombers or at the hands of IS masterminds. The CSCC has a daunting task. According to its [website](#):

CSCC is comprised of three interactive components. The integrated analysis component leverages the Intelligence Community and other substantive experts to ensure CSCC communicators benefit from the best information and analysis available. The plans and operations component draws on this input to devise effective ways to counter the terrorist narrative. The Digital Outreach Team actively and openly engages in Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, and Somali to counter terrorist propaganda and misinformation about the United States across a wide variety of interactive digital environments that had previously been ceded to extremists.

As a *New York Times* (NYT) [article](#) on the conference pointed out the State Department CSCC coordinator, [Ambassador Alberto Fernandez](#) is leaving shortly after trying to lead the messaging effort across a broad spectrum of competing internal State, Homeland Security and intelligence echelons. This comment by former State Department counterterrorism coordinator Daniel Benjamin sums up why Fernandez will retire in April, 2015. “After its first year or two, it was never taken seriously and got little support from higher-ups.”

The CSCC has endeavored to communicate that the IS Salafist jihadist slick presentations in videos, tweets and Face book pages corrupts the central message of Islam of “peace and justice” – that is only to adherents of the faith. In point of fact, the IS following in the way of Allah, Jihad.

How slick is the IS agit-propaganda spewed out on-line to the unwary recruit? One recent example is reflected in a new release [translated](#) by MEMRI, entreating recruits to come to Libya and join the gateway to the Conquest of Rome – a thought that should be unnerving to Pope Francis. The NYT CSCC article cited as examples of effective “messaging”:

One online image two years ago, for instance, showed photographs of three American men who traveled to Somalia and died there, including Omar Hammami, a young man from Alabama who became an infamous Islamist militant. The accompanying message reads, "They came for jihad but were murdered by Al Shabaab."

Another image showed a young man weeping over a coffin. The message read, "How can slaughtering the innocent be the right path?"

Each of the online posts carried a warning: "Think again. Turn away."

Last June, Islamic State supporters warned fighters to beware of [the center's Twitter account](#) and not to interact with it.

The reality of the CSCC mission, is that it has been corrupted- to [quote](#) Egyptian President Al-Sisi- by the origin of IS and Al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). As late as January 2015, the State Department was caught in a conference with alleged Egyptian MB leaders. There were graphic messages on twitter set against the backdrop of the Seal of the State Department by [one of the participants](#) flashing the 'rabbia' hand sign-a signal to support ousted President Morsi and hundreds of others currently being tried for sedition in Egypt. Last May, the State Department was [embarrassed](#) by a tweet it sent about the presence at a White House meeting on messaging with Sheik Bin Bayyah, a deputy to notorious MB preacher, Yusuf Al Qaradawi. Bin Bayyah had been there before along with another Egyptian legislator and member of a terrorist group in 2013.

The President's Conference on Violent Extremism is being stage managed by a skilled media expert, [Richard Stengel](#), former *Time Magazine* managing editor, who was appointed in 2013 as [Undersecretary Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and](#)

[Public Affairs](#). Stengel will be assisted at the Conference by Ambassador [Rashad Hussein](#), current Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and former Deputy White House Counsel with MB connections. Stengel admits that countering the ISIS supremacy in messaging its appeal to young impressionable Muslim recruits is daunting. He was cited by the *New York Times* [saying](#), “We’re getting beaten on volume, so the only way to compete is by aggregating, curating and amplifying existing content.... These guys [meaning IS] aren’t *BuzzFeed*”