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**NOTE FOR THE SECRETARY**

FROM: R – Richard Stengel

SUBJECT: (SBU) Paris Visit

(SBU) You have undoubtedly heard about Paris from a military and ministerial perspective. Let me tell you about it from the messaging angle: The coalition does not communicate well internally or externally.

(SBU) The two are related, but I will begin with the internal. There is still no mechanism for the small group to communicate internally. Yes, there is a messaging working group – the United States, the UAE, and the UK – but this has not really come together. The UAE is reticent, the Brits are over-eager, and the working group structure is confusing. When we convened meetings with our counterparts, I am certain we all heard about various initiatives for the first time.

(SBU) When it comes to the external message, our narrative is being trumped by ISIL's. We are reactive – we think about “counter-narratives,” not “our narrative.” The external message of Paris, which was summarized in the press as “stay the course” and “the strategy is working,” was not well received, at least by the media. We prepared a playbook going into the meeting for inter-agency use and use by the partners, which said the meeting was not going to be “business as usual.” This was not reflected in the meeting itself or its outward messaging. From the outside, it mostly seemed exactly like business as usual. To address this situation, I have a big proposal and an immediate improvement.

(SBU) The big proposal to fix the internal/external coalition messaging problem is to create a full-time coalition communications hub. This unit of about 20 people (one each from 20 countries, or two each from 10, etc.) would live in the region and do daily and weekly messaging around coalition activities and counter-ISIL. It would produce a daily thematic guidance, similar to the work of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications/Information Coordination Cell (CSCC/ICC); it would communicate internally to all the partners and liaise with the coalition spokesperson that we hope to put in Baghdad. (The

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latter is something we are working on with the NSC.) This seems like an obvious and simple solution – but I am sure it is not as easy as it sounds for a hundred different reasons. But it would be a real fix.

(SBU) In terms of an immediate improvement, I have asked the CSCC/ICC to dedicate two people full-time to coalition messaging. (Right now, their messaging is more U.S. and inter-agency focused.) We can also double down on a Weekly Coalition Playbook that would include all the LOEs and the weekly spokesperson calls; both of which we created as part of our messaging LOE, and both of which can be more robust and proactive.

(SBU) You probably heard as well that many of our allies see Daesh expanding like Starbucks franchises. And not just in Libya and Nigeria, but parts of South Asia. We need to think more globally about our counter-ISIL messaging, and we are. This also seems like a place where the CSCC/ICC can help, and we are adding a Hausa speaker, for example. I am working on a globalization of Daesh memo for you as far as messaging is concerned. But CSCC/ICC remains deeply under-resourced, and we will need to address this if we are to be effective.

(SBU) Finally, the event we did at the Louvre around destruction of antiquities by ISIL was a success. One possible due out: host a larger conference/summit on antiquities in Washington, New York, or London with dealers, auction houses, collectors, scholars and coalition members around the idea that trafficking in antiquities is a war crime, a tool of terrorism, and is financing Daesh's dark game.

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