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MailOnline

'The US can't play whack-a-mole with extremists': Obama says Sunni militants threaten America but warns against sending troops 'wherever militant organizations pop up'

- Barack Obama says extreme ideology of Sunni militants pose a 'medium- and long-term threat' to the US
- He believes Iraqis in towns seized by militants will reject ISIS
- Says countering extremism is a 'global challenge' that needs a targeted strategic response
- US Secretary of State John Kerry has urged Arab nations not to fund groups behind ISIS militants
- He's already met with Egyptian President Abdel-Fatteh el-Sissi on Middle East tour
- ISIS militants have captured Qaim, Rawah and Anah in Iraq's Sunni west
- Civilians in Rutba negotiating surrender after soldiers threatened shelling
- Capture of Rawah and Anah may mean ISIS is marching to Haditha dam
- If dam were destroyed it would cripple power grid and cause flooding

By [Associated Press](#) and [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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US President Barack Obama said the growing crisis in Iraq threatens America but rejects the idea of sending troops to fight militant organizations 'wherever they pop up'.

Obama said his administration would not fall into the trap of 'whack-a-mole' foreign policy when a global, targeted response was needed to counter extremists.

I think it's important for us to recognize that ISIS is just one of a number of organizations that we have to stay focused on,' Obama told [CBS News' Norah O'Donnell](#).

'This is going to be a global challenge and one that the United States is going to have to address but we're not going to be able to address it alone.'

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Concerned: US President Barack Obama told 'CBS This Morning' journalist Norah O'Donnell (right) that Sunni militants which have taken over parts of northern Iraq pose a 'medium- and long-term threat' to America because of their extreme ideology

He added: 'And as I said yesterday, what we can't do is think that we're just going to play whack-a-mole and send US troops occupying various countries wherever these organizations pop up.

'We're going to have to have a more focused, more targeted strategy and we're going to have to partner and train local law enforcement and military to do their jobs as well.'

He said Sunni militants that have seized Iraqi towns pose a 'medium- and long-term threat' to the US because of their extreme ideology, but expects that the local populations would reject ISIS because of their violence.

Meanwhile U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is discouraging Arab nations from sending financial support to even moderate opposition Sunni groups in Syria, fearing the aid could be used to help the growing insurgency in Iraq.

Kerry says he delivered that message to Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi during their meeting Sunday in Cairo.

He says he plans to make the same case to other leaders in Sunni-dominated Arab states over the next several days, as the region's security is facing a critical moment as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant gains ground in Iraq.

The group has taken over parts of Syria in what is rapidly deteriorating into a cross-border war. He'll urge Arab states to work together to defeat the group.



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Diplomacy: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (left) met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Hassan Shoukry in Cairo, Egypt on June 22

The news comes as rebel fighters from Islamic militant group ISIS have captured four more towns in Iraq including a crossing on the border with Syria.

Qaim, Rawah and Anah all fell to rebels fighters yesterday, while civilians in the town of Rutba are negotiating a surrender after units stationed on the outskirts threatened to start shelling.

The towns, the first to fall in the mainly Sunni province of Anbar, were captured as Shiite volunteer soldiers marched through Baghdad as the country heads towards sectarian war.

The capture of Rawah, situated on the Euphrates River, and the nearby settlement of Anah, also raises the prospect that ISIS militants are marching towards a dam at Haditha.



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Unrest: Mehdi Army fighters loyal to Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr joined in the marches which also took place in the southern cities of Basra and Amarah on June 21



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Defense: Kurdish Peshmerga troops secure an area in the town of Sulaiman Pek in Salahuddin province on June 21, as Sunni fighters seize a border post on the Iraq-Syria frontier

If the dam and adjoining power station were destroyed, it would cripple the country's power grid and cause widespread flooding.

Iraqi military officials said more than 2,000 troops were quickly dispatched to the site of the dam to protect it against a possible attack by the Sunni militants.

Rawah's mayor, Hussein Ali al-Aujail, said the militants ransacked the town's government offices and forced local army and police forces to pull out.

Rawah and Anah had remained under government control since nearby Fallujah fell to the Sunni militants in January.

The capture of a border crossing at Qaim has allowed ISIS to move heavy artillery and vehicles from Syria with ease for use on Iraqi battlefields. Troops have long been able to cross unimpeded.



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Protest: Volunteers of the newly formed 'Peace Brigades' raise their weapons and chant slogans against the al-Qaeda inspired Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant during a parade in Baghdad on June 21



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Patriotic: A group of farmers form a brigade to defend Iraq after top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani called for volunteers to fight against ISIS militants

Syrian rebels have already seized the facilities on the Syrian side of the border and several other posts in areas under their control.

Police and the army said the Sunni insurgents seized Qaim and its crossing, about 200 miles west of Baghdad, after killing about 30 Iraqi troops in day-long clashes on Friday.

The officials said people were now crossing back and forth freely.

Chief military spokesman Lt Gen Qassim al-Moussawi acknowledged Qaim's fall, saying troops aided by local tribesmen sought to clear the city of 'terrorists'.

[Members of the Shiite Mahdi Army vow to protect Baghdad](#)



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[mindthegap](#), land of milk and honey, United States, 6 hours ago

Post a hashtag sign and go play golf Barry. It won't cost us taxpayers as much and the outcome will be the same since you and your VP have a pretty solid track record of continued failures both home and abroad

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[Steve in Texas](#), Roscoe, United States, 6 hours ago

Incompetence personified

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[John23](#), Norwich, 6 hours ago

"He said Sunni militants that have seized Iraqi towns pose a 'medium- and long-term threat' to the US because of their extreme ideology, but expects that the local populations would reject ISIS because of their violence." - And how does Mr Obama suggest people go about "rejecting" a marauding army of mutilators and murderers?

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[F.N. Feddupp](#), Cincinnati, 6 hours ago

He can whack four guys sitting around having tea in a remote farmhouse in Afghanistan, but can't attack large columns of terrorists with heavy equipment on open roads in a barren desert? As usual, his decision will be to defer a decision until it's too late to do any good. Obama's lack of any meaningful real-world executive experience becomes more obvious every day.

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[recently lobotomized](#), sf bay area, United States, 6 hours ago

President Obama, if you don't deal with them now, you WILL have to play "whack a mole" later. You have to treat this like cancer which if not treated early will spread to the other organs and ultimately there will be no turning back.

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[blueskybigstar](#), Los Angeles, 6 hours ago

Why is he pretending to defend against terrorists when the drone attacks that are killing so many innocents are creating them and his arming of fighters in Syria has now created these ISIS fighters? So wrong, not right at all!

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[Mikki](#), Manchester, 6 hours ago

Kerry why the long face!!

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[me](#), home, 6 hours ago

Foreign policy, diplomacy, (or even general competence, as a matter of fact) are things about which the US' current administration knows absolutely nothing.

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[Mikki](#), Manchester, 6 hours ago

I wouldn't believe a word that comes out of Obamas controlled mouth.....

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[The Voice Of Reason](#), Manchester, United Kingdom, 6 hours ago

This President needs to grow some. He;s just a puppet

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