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Obama: Terrorism doesn't 'pose an existential threat to our nation'

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[President Obama \(/section/barack-obama\)](/section/barack-obama) argued Tuesday that terrorism, while troubling, does not threaten the survival of the United States and shouldn't be treated as though it does.

"Rather than offer false promises that we can eliminate terrorism by dropping more bombs...we have to take a long view of the terrorist threat and we have to pursue a smart strategy that can be sustained," Obama said during a speech at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa in which he reflected on his administration's fight against terrorists.

"They don't pose an existential threat to our nation, and we must not make the mistake of elevating them as if they do," Obama said of the so-called "lone wolf" attackers that have proliferated in the final few years of his presidency. "That does their job for them."

Obama touted the decimation of Islamic State-held territory in the Middle East, crediting a combat strategy that prioritized the "rule of law" with beating back organized terrorism groups.

"No foreign terrorist organization has successfully planned and executed an attack on our homeland," he noted. "It's not because they didn't try. Plots have been disrupted, terrorists have been taken off the battlefield, and we've

done this even as we drew down nearly 180,000 troops in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Obama admitted the struggle continues to defeat the radical Islamism that has spurred several lone wolf attacks this year.

"To say that we've made progress is not to say that the job is done," he said.

Indeed, one week prior to Obama's address, a radical Muslim student at Ohio State University drove his car into a group of his peers and subsequently attacked them with a butcher's knife. In June, a gunman pledged allegiance to the Islamic State as he carried out the deadliest attack on U.S. soil since 9/11 when he gunned down dozens of victims at an Orlando nightclub.

The Obama administration has weathered criticism of what some have perceived as a lackluster response to the Islamic State's rise in influence.

Obama and his allies have frequently countered by noting the Islamic State's ability to use anti-Muslim sentiment as a recruiting tool in Syria and Iraq.