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[H.R. 3654, Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act of 2015, as amended](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, December 15, 2015, the House will consider [H.R. 3654](#), *the Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act of 2015, as amended*, under suspension of the rules. H.R. 3654 was introduced on September 30, 2015 by Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX) and was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition, to the Committee on the Judiciary and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. The Foreign Affairs Committee ordered the bill reported, as amended, by unanimous consent, on December 9, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 3654 requires the President, within 90 days of enactment, to report to Congress on the U.S. strategy to combat the use of social media by terrorists and terrorist organizations. The report must include:

- An evaluation of what role social media plays in radicalization in the United States and elsewhere;
- An analysis of how terrorists and terrorist organizations are using social media, including trends;
- A summary of the Federal Government's efforts to disrupt and counter the use of social media by terrorists and terrorist organizations, an evaluation of the success of such efforts, and recommendations for improvement;
- An analysis of how social media is being used for counter-radicalization and counter-propaganda purposes, irrespective of whether or not such efforts are made by the Federal Government;
- An assessment of the value of social media posts by terrorists and terrorist organizations to law enforcement; and,
- An overview of social media training available to law enforcement and intelligence personnel that enables such personnel to understand and combat the use of social media by terrorists and terrorist organizations, as well as recommendations for improving or expanding existing training opportunities.

The bill also requires the President, within 180 days of enactment, to submit to Congress a report that contains a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorist use of social media, as committed to in the President's 2011 "[Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States](#)."

BACKGROUND

The use of social media by terrorists and terrorist organizations to encourage and inspire individuals to commit acts of terrorism has proliferated in recent years. For example, a 2015 Brookings report found that at least 46,000 Twitter accounts were used by ISIS supporters between October and November of last year, and that nearly 20 percent of those accounts designated English as their primary language.¹ The Administration has acknowledged that "the Internet has become an increasingly potent element in radicalization to violence, enabling violent extremists abroad to directly communicate to target audiences in the United States."²

In August 2011, the President signed the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States, which outlined a community-based approach and the Federal Government's role in empowering local stakeholders to build resilience against violent extremism. The strategic implementation plan (SIP), released in December of that year, noted that "the Internet has facilitated violent extremist recruitment and radicalization and, in some instances, attack planning, requiring that we consider programs and initiatives that are mindful of the online nature of the threat. At the same time, the Federal Government can leverage and support the use of new technologies to engage communities, build and mobilize networks against violent extremism, and undercut terrorist narratives."³

The SIP committed that the Administration would develop a "comprehensive strategy for countering and preventing violent extremist online radicalization and leveraging technology to empower community resilience that considers: (1) the latest assessment of the role of the Internet; (2) the absence of clear national boundaries in online space and the relationship between international and domestic radicalization to violence; (3) relevant legal issues; and (4) the differing authorities and capabilities of departments and agencies."⁴ The promised comprehensive strategy has yet to be produced.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Royce recently stated that "the Obama administration needs to get serious about targeting terrorists' use of social media. Extremist groups are using Twitter, Facebook and YouTube across borders to recruit, radicalize and encourage attacks on our free society."⁵ According to the bill sponsor, "In the 21st century we have to recognize the importance of all the battlefields against terrorists. It is ironic that terrorists, who are barbaric and antiquated, are dominating us when it comes to a technology that didn't even exist a little more than 10 years ago. It is time for that to change."⁶

¹ See Brookings Report—"The ISIS Twitter census: Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter," March 2015.

² See Strategic Implementation Plan—"Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," December 2011 at 20.

³ Id. at 5.

⁴ Id. at 20.

⁵ See Press Release—"Foreign Affairs Committee Passes Bills to Combat ISIS," December 9, 2015.

⁶ See Press Release—"Poe Statement at markup of the Combat Terrorist Use of Social Media Act (H.R. 3654)," December 9, 2015.

COST

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate is currently unavailable.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jerry White](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 5-0190.