

NEWS

European generals: Military alone won't defeat Islamic State



Credit: Greg Stanley/Staff

Brigadier General Frank Lissner of the Royal Danish Army spoke Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016 in North Naples about combating the Islamic State and the evolving nature of terrorism. (Greg Stanley/Staff)

By [Greg Stanley](#) of the [Naples Daily News](#)

Jan. 19, 2016



Credit: Greg Stanley/Staff

Brigadier General Giovanni Magazzoni of the Italian Air Force spoke Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016 in North Naples about combating the Islamic State and the evolving nature of terrorism. (Greg Stanley/Staff)

Scoffing at calls made last month by Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz to carpet-bomb the terrorist group ISIS into oblivion, four European generals told a North Naples audience Tuesday that more bombs won't defeat the Islamic State.

"It would be very hard to do more bombing than we are doing right now," said Brigadier General Frank Lissner of the Royal Danish Army. "We cannot do more because the problem is we have to identify the target before we hit it. We have these rules of engagement that we should be certain that it is a military target and that there are no civilians in the collateral damage."

Other GOP candidates also have called for tough military action against ISIS, including Donald Trump who said, "I would just bomb those suckers." And retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who argues the military,



Credit: Greg Stanley/Staff

Brigadier General Mikael Christofferson of the Swedish Royal Air Force spoke Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016 in North Naples about combating the Islamic State and the evolving nature of terrorism. (Greg Stanley/Staff)



Credit: Greg Stanley/Staff

Brigadier General Gerd Bischof of the German Air Force spoke Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2016 in North Naples about combating the Islamic State and the evolving nature of terrorism. (Greg Stanley/Staff)

including ground troops, should "destroy them."

Lissner and the other generals, who represent their countries to U.S. Central Command in Tampa, said the military alone won't topple the Islamic State.

Western armies can try to assist, equip and train moderate groups to fight the Islamic State. But as was proved in repeated failed attempts to do just that in Syria, vetting the groups can be too precarious and the training can come too late or even too early to be effective, said Gerd Bischof, Brigadier General of the German Air Force.

Weapons given to a friend one day could be shooting at you the next, he said.

"The military is the first responder," Bischof said. "It's always the first responder, but there must be other answers, too."

Bischof and Lissner, along with brigadier generals Giovanni Magazzino of the Italian Air Force and Mikael Christofferson of the Swedish Royal Air Force, spoke at the invitation of the European American Network, a local group that helps people with mostly European ties make connections in the area.

The group has hosted panels with a number of European generals and military leaders from Central Command over the last five years to speak on Iraq, Afghanistan and, more recently, on the rise of the Islamic State and the record-setting influx of migrants and refugees in Europe.

The Islamic State is showing how terrorism is evolving, Bischof said.

It's becoming more social media savvy and more obviously cruel. It's shown, too, that terrorist cells are born or flock to ungoverned and unstable areas, which handcuffs almost anything a military force can do to stamp it out, he said.

"If you get them out of Iraq and Syria they will go to Libya and Yemen," Bischof said. "They will continue to evade and we will continue to fight and that is the future of the future."

Looking at a map of the Middle East, Bischof said he is most concerned the next crisis will come in Libya, where the country has become more and more unstable since the fall of Moammar Gaddafi in the Arab Spring.

"We thought that if Gaddafi fell it would become a better country," he said. "But it's so complicated. Libya is so unstable that I expect it will be the next choke point for terrorism."

To fight, western countries need to continually push for stability, Bischof said.

"There's no quick fix," he said. "You need to address humanitarian and educational aspects. Basically, the aim must be to support governments to produce good governance, otherwise we'll just see the next nest or focus of terrorism."

"We need to defend our values, too, and to have appropriate self-esteem or you become a victim of the terrorism," Bischof said. "Make sure your country or your nation is doing the right thing, and then do it."