

Decision Brief | 2018.008 | November 26, 2018

President Trump Must Declassify Obama's Secret PSD-11 Strategy to Support the Muslim Brotherhood

Decision: President Trump should immediately declassify former President Obama's [2010 strategy for secret US support for the Muslim Brotherhood](#). That strategy is outlined in the still-classified Presidential Study Directive 11 (PSD-11).

Reason: No coherent US national security strategy can be implemented without full understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Obama administration's support for it as outlined in PSD-11. The previous administration secretly supported the Muslim Brotherhood as a "moderate" Islamist alternative to al Qaeda and ISIS. Many believe that US intelligence collection against the Brotherhood all but stopped. At the same time, critics of the Muslim Brotherhood have been vilified as haters and conspiracy theorists. The controversy over the murder of Saudi Muslim Brotherhood member and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi provides the proper pretext to declassify PSD-11 entirely.

Background: As we reported in our [June, 2018, Decision Brief](#), "The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is an international Islamist organization and network founded in 1928 in Egypt, and an ideological precursor of modern jihadist terrorist groups. The MB's strategic goal of creating a global Caliphate, which requires the overthrow of the US Constitution, is identical to that of ISIS and al Qaeda. The MB tactically shifts between approving and not approving violent extremism, depending on place and circumstance."

What we know of PSD-11. This Presidential Study Directive became the basis of the Obama administration's policy to help destabilize the Arab Middle East in 2011, overthrow the pro-US governments of Egypt and Tunisia, and topple the Libyan regime of Muammar Qaddafi, who had long supported terrorism, but by that point was fighting jihadist movements.

Obama directed his NSC staff to prepare PSD-11 in August, 2010, which reportedly was completed as an 18-page classified document.

"PSD-11 directly led to US engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood" and helped destabilize much of the Arab Middle East in 2011, [former House Intelligence Committee Chairman Pete Hoekstra testified](#) in 2016. Among Hoekstra's other points:

- **Reckless policy without regard to outcome.** "US officials did not concern themselves with questions over whether the new power structures [in pro-US Arab countries] would become allies or foes, or with intelligence agency warnings about the jihadist chaos such regime change might unleash."
- **"Roll of the dice."** "An official in the Obama White House indicated at the time, 'It's a roll of the dice....'"

- **Helped the Muslim Brotherhood take control of Egypt.** “The US undermined long-time ally President Hosni Mubarak and embraced the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after adopting PSD-11. Eventually Mubarak fell, and Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi won the presidency.”
- **Sided with the Muslim Brotherhood and al Qaeda in Libya.** “Under the guidance of PSD-11, the administration turned on Gaddafi and sided with the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda elements to dispose of him. Libya now exports weapons, training and jihadist ideology throughout the greater region.”
- **Allowed jihadists into the United States.** “Following the issuance of PSD-11 and the start of the Arab Spring, the Obama administration granted entry visas to individuals belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups who made statements of Islamic terror activities. Many of them should not have received visas under federal law. The US previously denied visas to some of the individuals. Again, it was a major shift in US policy.”
- **Fundamentally reshaped US policy & created conditions for ISIS/Daesh.** “UN Resolution 16/18, PSD-11 and the decisions based upon them fundamentally reshaped American foreign policy. The flawed and naïve analyses and the policies that sprang from them created conditions that forced the rapid expansion of Islamist terror – specifically ISIS – and sent the Middle East and North Africa into barbaric turmoil.”
- **Uprooted bipartisan consensus toward Middle East.** “The reported enshrinement of PSD-11 as a new national security strategy initiated dramatic reversals of longstanding bipartisan agreement among lawmakers.”
- **Created opportunities for radical Islamists to take advantage of turmoil.** “With PSD-11 the administration engaged with radical Islamists who predictably took advantage of the opportunity to fundamentally transform the region and its threat environment rather than pursuing democratic reforms.”

The Bottom Line: Execution of the president’s National Security Strategy to defeat radical Islamic terrorism must include defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood subverts and threatens US allies, friends, and vital interests in the Middle East and around the world. It subverts the United States here at home. [The Center has called for the United States to designate the Muslim Brotherhood and its fronts as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists.](#) Declassification of Obama’s PSD-11 strategy to support the Muslim Brotherhood is vital to continuing to undo the damage that PSD-11 has caused.