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| 1. Mark your confusion by highlighting or underlining anything you don’t understand. 2. Show evidence of a close reading (questions, connections, predictions, reactions, summarizing, clarifying, challenging, etc.). 3. Write a 1-page response. Possible Writer’s Notebook questions:  * Should the U.S. go after ISIS in the Middle East? Explain. * Select any passage and respond to it. |

**Obama to ISIS: “If You Threaten America, you will find no safe haven”**

Source: *New York Post,* Sept. 12, 2014

President Obama announced an escalation of the war against Islamic State terrorists Wednesday night with plans to intensify airstrikes in Iraq, send more U.S. military advisers to Baghdad, provide arms to Syrian rebels and likely begin airstrikes in Syria, where U.S. reconnaissance missions identify more targets of the terrorist organization the Islamic State in Iraq (also known by the acronyms ISIL and ISIS).

“If left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region – including to the United States,” Mr. Obama said in a prime-time address from the White House. “We will conduct a systematic campaign of airstrikes against these terrorists.” In an echo of President George W. Bush’s anti-terror doctrine, the President specified that terrorists will not be safe in any country. “I have made it clear that we will hunt down terrorists who threaten our country, wherever they are,” Mr. Obama said. “That means I will not hesitate to take action against ISIL in Syria, as well as Iraq. This is a core principle of my presidency: If you threaten America, you will find no safe haven.”

The president took pains to contrast the expanded campaign with Mr. Bush’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. For example, he referred to this campaign, which has surpassed more than 150 airstrikes in Iraq, as a counterterrorism operation instead of a war — a word he used in only two references to what his plan is not. “I want the American people to understand how this effort will be different from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Mr. Obama said. “It will not involve American combat troops fighting on foreign soil. This counterterrorism campaign will be waged through a steady, relentless effort to take out ISIL wherever they exist using our air power and our support for partner forces on the ground.”

The strategy will rely on the U.S. and its allies arming moderate Syrian rebels who are battling both the Islamic State [ISIS] and the regime of President Bashar Assad in a 3-year-old civil war. While some in Congress have been urging Mr. Obama for years to arm the Syrian rebels, other lawmakers reacted warily to the plan. “We have to make sure that we’re not putting weapons into the hands of al Qaeda or other jihadis,” Rep. Peter T. King, New York Republican, said on CNN.

Mr. Obama has said he has the authority to proceed with much of his plan without formal approval from Congress. But he is seeking lawmakers’ authorization for $500 million to train and equip Syrian rebels.

**What is ISIS?**

Source: Gil Kaufman, *MTV News,* Aug. 21, 2014

**Who Is ISIS?**

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS or ISIL) used to be known as Al Qaeda in Iraq.

**Are They Still Part Of Al Qaeda?**

Al Qaeda broke ties with ISIS in February after Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri became frustrated with ISIS’s refusal to heed his orders to kill fewer Syrian civilians. The group is expanding its reach on the long border between Iraq and Syria.

**How Many ISIS Soldiers Are There?**

No one knows how many fighters ISIS has, but some estimates have put their numbers at 15,000 or more, with up to three times that number available to fight if necessary.

**Could They Attack America?**

Former CIA deputy director Mike Morell told CBS News that the [recent] beheading video is an attempt to intimidate the U.S. “The definition of terrorism is violence for political effect,” Morell said. “We should mark this date down because this is ISIS’ first terrorist attack against the United States.” On August 9, someone posted a picture of the ISIS flag unfurled outside of the White House. ‘[W]e are here #America near our #target :) sooooooooooooon,’ read the accompanying message; the Secret Service is investigating the incident.

**Could They Really Set Up Their Own State?**

They kind of already have. In addition to having their own flag, ISIS has claimed a large swatch of land around the Syria/Iraq border and has continued to advance into other adjacent areas, forcing more than one million Iraqis from their homes in the process. Their total land holdings are now larger than the neighboring state of Jordan.

**Who Is Their Leader?**

Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi believes that all of the world’s Muslims should live under one Islamic state ruled by sharia law. The mysterious al-Baghdadi walked out of the largest U.S. detention camp in Iraq in 2009, allegedly telling some U.S. reservists from Long Island, “I’ll see you guys in New York.” He is now considered to be the world’s most dangerous jihadi, or, as some have called him, “The New Osama Bin Laden.”

**What Do They Want?**

The insurgent militia is bent on creating a Sunni Islamic state — or caliphate — in the region through the use of extreme violence against its perceived enemies. They have targeted the Iraqi government and American forces in Iraq, as well as Shia Muslims and Christians and, increasingly, civilians of all faiths in unpredictable, violent attacks that include beheadings and suicide bombings.

**Who Is Funding Them?**

ISIS doesn’t depend on foreign funds to survive, but instead they’ve hoarded millions thanks to theft and the sale of oil from areas they’ve overrun. In July, the group is reported to have pulled off the biggest bank heist in history, allegedly lifting more than $430 million from a Mosul bank after overrunning that Iraqi city. They’ve also reportedly extorted money from humanitarian workers and have been selling electricity back to the Syrian government they’re fighting against. The group has also bragged of stealing millions of dollars in U.S. military equipment, making it one of the world’s most well-funded terrorist groups.