



## Donald Trump wrongly blames Hillary Clinton for creation of ISIS

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Donald Trump and his vice presidential candidate Mike Pence gave their first joint interview to *60 Minutes* and used the show to point the finger at Hillary Clinton for ISIS.

Trump told CBS's Lesley Stahl that the United States will have to declare war against ISIS -- and he vowed to do it with very few troops on the ground to wipe out ISIS.

"Hillary Clinton invented ISIS with her stupid policies," Trump said in an interview that aired July 17. "She is responsible for ISIS."

Trump has made this claim repeatedly. It's wrong, and we'll explain why.

### The roots of ISIS

Trump was referring to Clinton's actions related to Iraq, Libya and Syria, said Trump spokesman Stephen Miller, who referred us to a previous Trump speech on the topic.

The sources of ISIS are complex and interconnected, said John Pike, an expert on defense and director of GlobalSecurity.org, a website that provides information on defense.

"She may 'share some of the blame' but there is more than enough share to go around. She was in no sense the singular author of the thing," Pike said.

For starters, the terrorist group's roots pre-date Obama's presidency and Clinton's role as secretary of state.

It has gone by several names since 2004, when long-time Sunni extremist Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi established al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and more recently the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), according to the National Counterterrorism Center.

After he was killed in a 2006 U.S. airstrike, the group became the Islamic State of Iraq. In 2013, the group was referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham and then just the Islamic State in 2014.

Given the timing, Democrats blame President George W. Bush for the creation of ISIS, because al-Qaida flourished after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Obama's decision to leave Iraq after 2011 contributed to the security vacuum that gave ISIS the chance to put down roots there, said Michael O'Hanlon, a security expert at the Brookings Institution, a centrist-to-liberal group. (O'Hanlon is one of hundreds of voluntary advisers to the Clinton campaign but has a minor role.)

You could say the blame touches both Bush, for creating a strong space for al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, and Obama, for giving the group a chance to regroup.

As for Clinton, Trump's campaign points to her vote as a senator to authorize force in Iraq in 2002. She later said she regretted that vote.

Republicans have blamed Obama for not keeping 10,000 troops in place in Iraq, which they say could have deterred the opening for ISIS. However, Obama inherited a timeline to exit Iraq from Bush, and there was no agreement to leave a large force behind.

Trump's campaign also points to Clinton's positions on Syria and Libya. In 2011, she echoed Obama's support for regime change in Syria in 2011.

"The transition to democracy in Syria has begun, and it's time for Assad to get out of the way," she said while secretary of state in August 2011.

Regime change in Libya also gave ISIS an opening, said Christopher Preble, a defense expert at the libertarian Cato Institute.

"Clinton's enthusiasm for regime change in Libya in 2011, which Obama endorsed, resulted in the collapse of order there, which ISIS and others have exploited," he said. "That is a fair criticism, in my opinion."

It's possible to argue that these factors -- withdrawing from Iraq, the administration's lack of support to anti-Assad rebels in Syria and the decision to intervene in Libya -- contributed to the power of ISIS, said Austin Long, a Columbia University international and public affairs professor.

"Then Sen. Clinton's vote for the Iraq war could also be seen as contributing the preconditions for the emergence of al-Qaida in Iraq," Long said. "So Trump's argument cannot simply be dismissed out of hand."

However, Clinton was in favor of supporting Syrian rebels and was overruled by Obama and advocated strongly for maintaining a moderate troop presence in Iraq after 2011.

"So on both of those points, I don't think it was Clinton leading Obama -- rather, it was the reverse," Long said. "The Libya intervention and the vote for the Iraq war are thus the only points in the argument that actually stand up to scrutiny."

On her vote related to the Iraq war, Clinton was many of many in both parties who supported the intervention advocated by Bush.

"On Libya while this clearly appears to have been a mistake in hindsight it was a fairly minor contribution to the emergence of ISIS, which grew out of the Iraq and Syrian conflict," Long said.

## **Our ruling**

Trump said "Hillary Clinton invented ISIS with her stupid policies. She is responsible for ISIS."

There were several factors that contributed to the growing power of ISIS, but it's misleading to pin the responsibility solely on Clinton. For starters, the roots of ISIS trace back to 2004, when Bush was president and before Clinton was Obama's secretary of state.

She did vote to authorize force in Iraq in 2002 while a senator, but that was advocated by the Bush administration and the vast majority of senators. The intervention in Libya, which she supported, did give ISIS an opening, but Trump is overstating her role by saying she is responsible for ISIS.

This claim is inaccurate. We rate it False.