

Top Pentagon official: ISIS-K could attack US in '6 or 12 months'

By

[Samuel Chamberlain](#)

October 26, 2021

The ISIS terror group's affiliate in Afghanistan, [known as ISIS-K](#), could develop the ability to carry out attacks against America within a year, a top Defense Department official told lawmakers Tuesday.

Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Jack Reed (D-RI), had asked Pentagon undersecretary for policy Colin Kahl if he agreed with a recent assessment by Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that "there may be a resurgence of international terrorism emanating from the region within 12 to 36 months."

Kahl responded: "I think the assessment depends on which group we're talking about."

"I think the intelligence community currently assesses that both ISIS-K and Al Qaeda have the intent to conduct external operations, including against the United States, but neither currently has the capability to do so," Kahl explained.

"We could see ISIS-K generate that capability in somewhere between 6 or 12 months," he went on. "I think the current assessments by the intelligence community is that Al Qaeda would take a year or two to reconstitute that capability, and ... we have to remain vigilant against that possibility."

Kahl's fellow witness, Joint Staff Director of Operations Lt. Gen. James Mingus, told Reed he concurred with Milley's assessment of the terror threat, but made no mention of Kahl's statement.



[What is ISIS-K? What to know about the terrorist group in Afghanistan](#)

ISIS-K was behind the Aug. 26 suicide bombing outside Kabul's international airport, which killed 13 US service members and 169 Afghans during the botched American military evacuation of that war-torn country.

[Earlier this month, officials revealed](#) that the suicide bomber who carried out the airport attack had been released from an Afghan prison by the Taliban during their August offensive that toppled the Western-backed Kabul government.

A [June report](#) by the United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team suggests that ISIS-K has a hardened core of about 1,500 to 2,200 fighters based in small areas of Afghanistan's Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, east of Kabul.

In recent weeks, ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for a [series](#) of [deadly mosque bombings](#) targeting Afghanistan's minority Shiite Muslims.