

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
AND HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

INTELLIGENCE AND EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE

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AND

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Chairman Langevin, Chairman Bera, Ranking Member Stefanik, Ranking Member Yoho, and distinguished members of the Subcommittees, thank you for your continued support of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). I am proud to appear today alongside Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Dolliff, Acting Assistant Secretary of State Moore, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Lasseter, to update you on our collective efforts to protect U.S. national security interests in a rapidly evolving, globalized threat environment. It is an honor to represent the DTRA workforce which maintains a strong focus on strategic deterrence, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and improvised threats and their associated networks. Their commitment to our mission and strong relationships with our partners here today is what makes our organization so successful.

Today, I plan to focus on DTRA's cooperative efforts around the globe to reduce biological threats posed by Especially Dangerous Pathogens (EDPs) and the diseases they cause, whether man-made or naturally occurring. I will also touch on how these efforts have enabled our partners worldwide to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. I will speak less today about the threats and risks deriving from advancements in biotechnology, but would welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic during a closed session in the future.

Within the DoD Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (CTR), DTRA CTR serves as the implementer. The DoD CTR Program's Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) activity line reduces the proliferation of biological weapons (BW), BW components, and BW-related technologies and expertise. The program facilitates detection and reporting of diseases caused by EDPs – whether deliberately released or naturally occurring – including diseases such as COVID-19. BTRP currently works cooperatively with over 30 foreign partners to reduce biological threats by enhancing partner country and regional biosecurity, biosafety, and biosurveillance capabilities. These capabilities counter the threat of theft or diversion of dangerous materials, counter the threat of accidental and intentional pathogen release, and establish an early detection and reporting capability for biological threats to detect and contain outbreaks at their source before they can become destabilizing regional events or pose a threat to U.S. forces, the U.S. homeland, or U.S. interests, allies, and partners abroad.

Since its inception in addressing WMD threats in the Former Soviet Union, Congress and the Department have expanded the CTR program's activities to address emerging WMD threats in

additional countries or regions using the CTR “Determination” process, which requires Secretary of Defense approval and Secretary of State concurrence to authorize new partner engagements. Current Determination authorities enable BTRP to conduct activities in South and South East Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and most recently, the Balkans, Baltics, and Black Sea region, as well as with the countries of the Former Soviet Union. Chapter 48 of Title 50, United States Code, authorizes the Secretary of Defense to carry out the CTR Program, including “facilitate[ing] the detection and reporting of highly pathogenic diseases or other diseases which are associated with or that could be used as an early warning mechanism for disease outbreaks that could affect the Armed Forces of the United States or allies of the United States, regardless of whether such diseases are caused by biological weapons.”

BTRP has countered biological threats since 1997, including building holistic biosurveillance systems. Through activities including equipping, training, constructing or renovating laboratories, and facilitating cooperative biological research projects, BTRP strengthens partnership and regional biosurveillance networks and reduces biological threats. By working with partners to secure pathogen collections; enhancing biosafety and biosecurity at vulnerable sites; and strengthening the capacity for public health and veterinary health systems to rapidly and accurately detect, diagnose, and report infectious disease outbreaks, the DoD CTR Program has prepared cooperative partner countries in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia to identify and defeat biological threats. These capabilities helped bolster partner nations’ abilities to quickly detect and diagnose the current COVID-19 outbreak, and BTRP-engaged countries are currently using previously-provided CTR training and capabilities to successfully deal with COVID-19.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated to the global community that health security is a critical component of national security. Every country needs an effective biological surveillance system to detect, diagnose and report outbreaks of dangerous pathogens. Further, because outbreaks do not respect international borders, the United States relies on the biosurveillance systems of all other nations to provide early warning to mitigate an outbreak before it reaches the homeland.

As a result of the DoD CTR Program and the assistance of our U.S. Government partner the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), local officials in Thailand detected the first

case of a novel coronavirus outside of China on January 13, 2020, after its initial discovery in Wuhan, China. Thai officials announced that a Chinese patient had been positively identified as a carrier of the novel coronavirus thanks to the biosurveillance program at Chulalongkorn University. The advanced capabilities of Thailand's biosurveillance program are the direct result of support from BTRP, which enabled Thailand to detect COVID-19 on their own by equipping Chulalongkorn University for emerging infectious disease (EID) detection and surveillance. The current COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that BTRP's partnerships and associated capabilities have accelerated the ability to mitigate the threat and, in many cases, reduced its severity.

The DoD CTR Program has leveraged BTRP partnerships to address partner nations' critical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) shortages and deliver necessary training and expertise as part of the global effort against COVID-19. Within two weeks of request, BTRP transferred a supply of PPE to the National Institute of Health and Hygiene in Rabat, Morocco. The equipment went directly to safeguarding Morocco's frontline healthcare workers in the fight against COVID-19. U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, David Fischer, said of BTRP's efforts "This equipment transfer is part of over seven years of close cooperation between DTRA and the Government of Morocco. This partnership's focus is on saving lives and mitigating threats to ensure the National Security for both of our countries." BTRP's partnership with Morocco is a prime example of how the program enables a partner nation to react to and combat a biological threat like COVID-19, core aspects of the DoD CTR Program. And in the case of Morocco, it bolstered national pride.

DTRA's broader efforts in the Philippines provide an example of DTRA CWMD partner building programs (beyond the DoD CTR Program) working in harmony to develop a high level of CWMD expertise with one of the United States' most significant regional partners. In FY19 we implemented a multi-year plan of engagement to develop host-nation capability to establish and operate an Emergency Operation Center during a CBRN incident and sustain a WMD response. These efforts contributed to this partner nation becoming a CWMD regional leader in an area of great geopolitical importance, and helped reinforce the United States as the partner of choice for engagements in other domains, including maritime proliferation prevention.

The DoD CTR Program's capacity building with partners in Europe is another example of making key, enduring contributions that have saved lives during the global pandemic in an area

of great geopolitical importance. In Georgia, BTRP-trained scientists in the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health at the BTRP-constructed Richard Lugar Center developed a diagnostic testing capability for COVID-19. This diagnostic testing capability enabled Georgia to implement extensive diagnostic testing to inform outbreak control. The Richard Lugar Center was lauded by the Georgian government as being integral in controlling the COVID-19 outbreak, being able to efficiently run tests and trace the origin of the virus in country. In Ukraine, BTRP-supported subject matter experts and trained members of the Public Health Center on the best use of the BTRP-provided Electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance System during the pandemic. An official Ministry of Health mandate to subordinate organizations to utilize the disease surveillance system validates BTRP's cooperative biosurveillance efforts to improve Ukraine's ability to monitor, track, and report emerging biological threats.

While the full impact of COVID-19 on the world won't be known for years, we are already addressing emerging threats within BTRP's mission space by helping prevent the spread of pathogens like anthrax, Ebola, brucellosis, and others. For example, BTRP is investing in countries to build their capacity to address critical biological threats such as the family of Henipaviruses, which have the potential to be equally – if not more devastating – than COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates to adversaries how disruptive disease outbreaks can be. Countries are scaling up crisis-response capabilities without having the time to properly address vulnerabilities and exploitable security gaps. Furthermore, COVID-19 impacts are driving major disruptions in countries with fragile biosurveillance systems and weak support networks. The consequences from COVID-19 will significantly influence global health security requirements, planning, funding, resourcing, and partnerships for the foreseeable future.

While COVID-19 needs are pressing right now, we also must not lose sight of the fact that the DoD CTR Program continues to accomplish a broader mission—to enable detection of emerging threats and to prevent outbreaks where possible. Today's threat environment includes state actors, such as China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran, as well as violent extremist organizations who are interested in acquiring, developing, enhancing, proliferating, and using WMD. These efforts are facilitated through readily-available knowledge, technologies, materials, and global trafficking networks. The acquisition and use of WMD capabilities by state and non-state actors

around the world increases the threats to U.S. forces, the homeland, and our allies – and these threat actors are watching and learning the impact of a disease outbreak.

The DoD CTR Program is uniquely able to leverage its standing as a consistent annual U.S. contributor to global health security, including implementing the goals of the U.S. Global Health Security Strategy (GHSS), and working closely with our interagency colleagues to demonstrate a whole of government commitment to the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), and more. BTRP establishes trusted partnerships with key nations and organizations that span the military-civilian health security workforce, and has experience building sustainable biosurveillance capabilities at national, regional, and global levels. The DoD CTR Program's dedicated 3-year appropriation focuses on preventing and containing high consequence biological events by ensuring that U.S. taxpayer investment is not wasted due to an inadequate planning and engagement horizon, and its robust acquisition and program management workforce quickly issues and administers international contracts and grants to address those events.

As the DoD CTR Program implementer, DTRA continues to seek creative and innovative ways to carry out its mission within the strategic priorities and budget established by the Department of Defense and remains poised to address any urgent threats that emerge. As the world works through COVID-19 impacts, the DoD CTR Program will continue to address gaps in early warning systems for biological threats, ensure partner countries can use the capabilities BTRP has provided, and coordinate with others in the U.S. interagency and international community. Through the DoD CTR Program, the Department will continue to address WMD proliferation threats and contain outbreaks of dangerous pathogens before they threaten the U.S. or its interests, allies, and partners abroad.

On a daily basis, BTRP continues to receive foreign partner requests for preparedness and detection support related to the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes providing biosafety, biosecurity and biosurveillance support to aid in the detection, diagnosis and reporting of COVID-19 in 30 countries. As of September 18, 2020, BTRP has fulfilled 40 requests from 18 countries, plus the African Union Center for Disease Control. Support provided includes diagnostic testing reagents and supplies, decontamination devices, virtual trainings, and disinfectant solutions totaling over of \$6M in support to partner nations.

An added benefit of the DoD CTR Program is how it bolsters U.S. partnerships in parts of the world where revisionist powers are eager to exert malign influence at the expense of U.S. objectives. As the Morocco, Georgia, and Ukraine success stories show, the DoD CTR Program activities build strong relationships in addition to achieving threat reduction outcomes. The DoD CTR Program is one of many tools the Department has to advance strategic political-military objectives and contribute to establishing the U.S. as the partner of choice, rather than our strategic competitors.

In addition to the DoD CTR work we are primarily here to talk about today, I want to emphasize that my BTRP team's threat reduction activities complement DTRA's CWMD Building Partnership Capacity (BPC) programs, which, in FY19, completed 274 engagements in 24 countries across six Combatant Command regions, providing enhanced CWMD understanding and capabilities to approximately 4,100 participants. For FY20, those same programs anticipate completing 290 events in 27 countries with more than 4,300 participants. While there have been challenges during the global pandemic, the programs have been largely successful in carrying out planned events. We have worked to ensure our BPC activities align to the National Defense Strategy, enabling DTRA to work with partners to build CWMD capacity. By building a partner nation's capabilities and capacities, it builds their sense of national pride, which increases their willingness to partner with the U.S. in other ways. By providing partners with better, self-sustaining solutions, the U.S. demonstrates that we are the "partner of choice" rather than strategic competitors. These strategic partnerships can act as force multipliers in the competition for influence and reinforce the strategic messaging that the U.S. has these nation's best interests in mind. This support plays a fundamental role in bolstering U.S. partnerships in parts of the world where revisionist powers are eager to exert malign influence through regional partnerships at the expense of the U.S.

Conclusion

Building out our friendly networks and increasing U.S. influence in partner nations strategically degrades the networks and influence of our competitors. One of the most effective ways to increase the depth and breadth of our friendly networks is by increasing our partners' abilities and strengthening the bonds with our partners through the nation's suite of BPC, security cooperation, and threat reduction programs. DTRA remains an agile and responsive Defense

Agency and Combat Support Agency that has evolved as the threats our nation faces have evolved. DTRA continues to prioritize support to Combatant Commanders, expanded relationships with interagency and international partners, innovative capabilities to drive warfighting effects, and an empowered Agency leadership and staff to achieve these outcomes. Our successes reduce threats against our nation and the Joint Force and reduce risk to the warfighter. From threat reduction biosurveillance activities that detect deadly outbreaks such as Ebola during the crisis in West Africa and the early detection of the coronavirus in Thailand, to BPC activities that enable Combatant Commanders to compete with near-peer adversaries, DTRA stands alongside our partners here today safeguarding our national security.