

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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**THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM:
BUDGET, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES**

**HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION,
AND TRADE**

**June 10, 2014
Time 2:00 pm**

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Sherman, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before this Committee.

This hearing comes at a critical time in our counterterrorism efforts. The threat we face continues to evolve rapidly from one posed by a centralized, hierarchical command structure towards more diverse, dispersed terrorist networks. We recognize that to succeed against this more decentralized structure, we must adapt our approach as well, and we are making the changes we need to do this effectively.

I'd like to begin by providing a brief overview of the threat, and how it is changing.

The international community's successful efforts to degrade al-Qa'ida (AQ) senior leadership in Pakistan, coupled with weak governance and instability in the Middle East and northwest Africa, has accelerated the decentralization of what we refer to as the "AQ core." We remain committed to rooting out what remains of AQ's senior leadership from Pakistan, and we will continue our efforts to prevent the organization from reconstituting its safe haven and operational base in Afghanistan.

The increased isolation of AQ's senior leadership has led the group's affiliates in other countries to become more operationally autonomous from AQ core and increasingly focused on local and regional objectives. The past several years have seen the emergence of a more aggressive set of AQ affiliates and like-minded groups, most notably in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, northwest Africa, and Somalia.

In the last week of May alone, we saw terrorist attacks by AQ and others in Djibouti, Kenya, and Nigeria. This is in addition to the kidnapping of over 250 girls from the school in Chibok, Nigeria, which recently focused the world's attention on Boko Haram. Also in late May, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, one of the most active AQ affiliates, responded to an offensive by the Government of Yemen with a series of hit-and-run attacks across the country.

These incidents continue a trend we have seen during the last year of increasingly violent attacks by AQ affiliates against civilian targets ranging from religious pilgrims in Iraq to hospital staff and convalescing patients in Yemen, and families at a shopping mall in Kenya. Additionally, numerous violent extremist actors and organizations have been able to establish a presence across broad sections of Libya, with the threat that these areas could turn into established safe havens from which AQ and affiliated organizations can move weapons and personnel, and plan for and conduct attacks.

Another concerning trend that will affect the CT landscape for years to come is that of foreign fighters who are traveling to Syria. Syria continues to be a major battleground for terrorism and remains a key area of longer-term concern. The conflict is attracting thousands of fighters from around the world, particularly from North Africa, the Gulf, Central Asia, and Europe, who are traveling there to join the fight against the Asad regime, with some joining violent Islamist extremist groups. We and a number of our partners overseas are concerned that citizens who obtain battlefield experience in Syria will bring back violent extremist connections and battlefield experience when they return home.

Al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and other like-minded groups are not the only terrorist threats we face. Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism and Lebanese Hizballah's (LH) activities are also of significant concern. Interdictions in the past year have disrupted Iranian attempts to smuggle arms and explosives to Syria, Yemen, and Shia opposition groups in Bahrain. Most recently, in March of this year, Israel interdicted the Klos C, an Iranian cargo ship smuggling advanced rockets and other weapons to Sudan, likely destined for Palestinian militants in Gaza. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, LH, and Iraqi Shia militant and terrorist groups have

all provided a broad range of critical support to the Asad regime since the start of the conflict. Even as we continue efforts to resolve our concerns over Iran's nuclear program through diplomacy, we continue to counter Iranian support for terrorism – in coordination with our partners and allies – and make clear to Iran's leaders that its government's sponsorship of illicit and destabilizing actions are unacceptable to the international community. Further, we continue to work with our partners to expose and counter LH's activities around the world, including its terrorist activities and its intervention in Syria, which contravenes Lebanon's stated policy of disassociation.

To meet the challenges posed by these evolving threats, we must redouble our efforts where we have been successful and innovate in areas where we can do more. As President Obama articulated in his recent West Point speech on May 28, we are prioritizing the development of key counterterrorism partnerships across the globe, so that the counterterrorism burden does not fall on the United States alone.

Leveraging partnerships is absolutely vital to the success of our counterterrorism efforts. The response of the African Union Mission to Somalia to the instability in Somalia is an example of this approach – troops from Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Djibouti, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia have, working together and with our support, made a measurable difference in challenging AQ-affiliate al-Shabaab. Regional assistance from the Gulf Cooperation Council states, as well as strong bilateral assistance by the United States, has been essential in helping the Government of Yemen in its efforts to roll back al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, known as AQAP. In northwest Africa, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb and its offshoot al-Murabitun have been temporarily degraded following losses inflicted by France, Chad, and other African partners in northern Mali. However, small-scale attacks continue in northern Algeria and northern Mali, and the groups are leveraging the lack of governance and abundant terrorist networks in Libya to regroup. The groups also probably are positioning for a resurgence in Mali as the French drawdown troops from Operation Serval.

The broader counterterrorism approach articulated by the President includes training, building capacity, and facilitating partner countries on the front lines. The United States needs law enforcement partners around the world that have the capability to manage security challenges within their borders, defend against threats to national and regional stability, and deter terrorist operations across borders. Counterterrorism and rule of law goals are closely aligned and reinforce one another. Our goal is to increase the ability of partners to address threats to public security by improving security sector capabilities, reforming the justice

sector, strengthening regional linkages, facilitating compliance with international standards, and connecting these efforts to existing multilateral initiatives and forums. To meet this goal, we assist countries as they develop law enforcement and legal institutions capable of tracking, apprehending, prosecuting, and incarcerating terrorists, while at the same time respecting human rights and securing borders.

In his West Point speech, the President announced that he would seek Congressional support for a Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF) designed to provide the flexibility and resources required to respond to emerging needs as terrorist threats around the world continue to evolve. The aim is to pursue a more sustainable and effective approach to combating terrorism that focuses – as I have already elaborated – on empowering and enabling partners facing terrorist threats.

Before I outline our priorities for 2015 funding, I would like to note that we are strongly committed to improving the monitoring and evaluation of CT activities and have made important strides to manage for results as effectively as possible. In FY 2013, the Counterterrorism Bureau at the State Department established a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team to expand our Results-Based Management approach to CT programs.

Let me turn to priorities for 2015 funding.

Building Partner Capacity

Increasing the ability of our partners to address terrorist threats within their borders and regions is crucial. Building partner capacity in law enforcement, countering terrorism finance, and travel interdiction programs is at the heart of our civilian counterterrorism efforts.

Through our Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, implemented through the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, we help partner nations build capacity across a wide spectrum of counterterrorism law enforcement skills, offering courses, consultations, training, and equipment relevant to investigations, border security, protection of critical targets, leadership and management, regional coordination and cooperation, critical incident management, and cyber security. ATA is central to our capacity building effort, and it is by far the largest program CT manages as the U.S. government's primary tool for promoting effective counterterrorism partnerships in the law enforcement realm. As terrorist networks continue to adjust their tactics and strategies, ATA will continue to adapt and

refine its training initiatives to meet evolving threats. We have seen our investments pay off in places like Jordan, Nigeria, and Lebanon, among many others. In Lebanon, for example, an ATA-trained Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit worked quickly and effectively to gather evidence, sweep, sketch, and secure the crime scene following the 2012 car bombing that killed Brigadier General Wissam al-Hasan, the Commander of the Internal Security Forces (ISF). The unit's work has been hailed by both the FBI and Lebanese Attorney General as technically superior, and the evidence collected will be critical to prosecution efforts.

Denying terrorists access to money, resources, and support is also a vital component of our counterterrorism strategy. Through our efforts to counter the financing of terrorism, we assist our partners in disrupting financial flows as they build and strengthen effective legal frameworks and regulatory regimes; establish active and capable Financial Intelligence Units; strengthen the investigative skills of law enforcement entities; bolster prosecutorial and judicial development; and sustain designated training and technical assistance programs to build anti-money laundering and counterterrorist financing capacity. The Counterterrorist Finance program supports the placement of advisors such as Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisors (RLAs) and Department of Homeland Security mentors in key partner nations to advise host nation authorities and build the capacity of priority countries to detect, disrupt, and dismantle terrorist financing networks. Funds are targeted specifically at those countries whose financial systems are considered most vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups and their financiers.

We presently have RLAs in Algeria, Kenya, Malta, Mauritania, Niger, Bangladesh, Panama, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates; we also have plans to place RLAs in Iraq, Senegal, and Ethiopia later this year.

Enhancing border security through terrorist travel interdiction is another priority. The Terrorist Interdiction Program provides 22 partner countries with the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System known as PISCES to identify, disrupt, and deter terrorist travel. In FY 2013, approximately 300,000 passengers per day were processed through PISCES systems around the world (a record for the program). A majority of Ports of Entry are now using upgraded biometric PISCES systems to process travelers for the first time. The increased use of biometrics has enabled PISCES partner countries to improve exponentially their ability to detect terrorists traveling under assumed identities with sophisticated false documentation.

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

CVE funding focuses on denying terrorist groups their most precious resource – new recruits – by reducing sympathy and support for violent extremism. Such efforts are a vital complement to our other CT work. They seek to build resilience against violent extremist narratives and support targeted counter-recruitment interventions for at-risk communities in priority countries. Our budget request will be used for purposes such as developing the connection between CVE and community-oriented policing; it will also support the rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated violent extremist offenders and broader prison counter-radicalization efforts. Other community-based interventions to reduce support violent extremist may be supported to amplify the impact of these efforts.

CVE programming requires knowledge of where at-risk populations are most susceptible to radicalization to violence. We ensure that our areas of focus overseas align with the areas of greatest risk by working with foreign partners and other U.S. government agencies, such as USAID, the intelligence community, and DoD, to identify hotspots of radicalization and to design relevant programming that counters drivers of extremism in those locales.

To counter terrorist propaganda, the CT Bureau helped establish the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) in 2011, an interagency operation housed under the State Department's Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. CSCC counters terrorist propaganda in the social media environment on a daily basis, contesting space where AQ and its supporters formerly had free rein. In 2013, CSCC produced over 10,000 postings and 138 videos. CSCC also engages in a variety of projects directly supporting U.S. government communicators working with overseas audiences, as well as amplifying credible CVE voices and supporting local initiatives in critical parts of the Middle East and Africa, such as Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Mali, and Nigeria.

In addition to our own programming, we must also build the capacity of our partners to counter radicalization to violence on their own. In this vein, the CT Bureau is sponsoring an initiative that will help combat prison radicalization via the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists, an effort led by the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the International Center on Counterterrorism - The Hague (ICCT). This initiative provides a forum where policymakers, practitioners, independent experts, and multilateral organizations can share best practices. Through this initiative, countries can also request technical assistance from UNICRI in addressing issues of violent extremism within their prisons.

Counterterrorism Engagement funding

Counterterrorism Engagement (CTE) funding helps the United States strengthen political will for common counterterrorism objectives with our partners. It promotes U.S. engagement through the UN and other multilateral and regional organizations and encourages other donor nations to increase their engagement. CTE-funded activities have included such diverse projects as a partnership with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum on a program focused on countering attacks against mass transportation systems; the drafting of an OSCE-developed guide on protecting non-nuclear energy infrastructure from terrorist cyber-attacks; and development of an OAS-developed mobile cyber laboratory that is being used throughout the Western Hemisphere.

CT Engagement funding also supports activities of the multilateral Global Counterterrorism Forum, including for example the establishment of an International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta, with its core mission of building the capacity of police, prosecutors, parliamentarians, judges, and prison officials to prevent and respond to terrorist activity. Another recently launched GCTF initiative is a Foreign Terrorist Fighters project led by the Netherlands and Morocco. Practitioners are meeting this spring and summer to develop good practices for addressing the entire spectrum of the foreign terrorist fighters problem, including law enforcement, countering violent extremism, and reintegration. Overall, working through the GCTF, we have mobilized over \$230 million from partners to support capacity-building efforts in priority regions.

Countering terrorist safe havens via the Regional Strategic Initiative

Denying terrorists safe havens – shrinking the space in which they operate – is a key element of our counterterrorism effort. The Regional Strategic Initiative was developed for this purpose. It fosters regional cooperation, deepens U.S. relationships with allies and partners, and helps them build regional capacity to stop terrorists who recognize no borders. To this end, the CT Bureau recently hosted a series of events on strengthening border security capabilities and cooperation in the Maghreb and the Sahel, where CT-related border security issues are pervasive. The events helped partner nations develop comprehensive approaches to border security in the region, specifically in the realm of cross-border hot pursuit of suspected terrorists and other criminals.

Conclusion

Evolving terrorist threats require innovative strategies, creative diplomacy, and even stronger partnerships. The threat is formidable, but we are taking our efforts forward to meet these challenges. I firmly believe that countering violent extremism, multilateral engagement, and building local capacity and political will – through our various programs and with our Department and interagency partners – will provide us the tools to make lasting progress in our fight against terrorism. We are requesting your support to make sure that these tools are fully funded at the level requested. Our terrorist adversaries are nimble, and given the vitally important imperative to protect the United States and to stay “one step ahead,” we should ensure that the tools of civilian power continue to adapt to serve national security. As I hope you will agree, we have focused and sharpened our efforts, but there remains much to do.

I look forward to answering your questions and working closely with you in making the United States safer, in conjunction with our friends and allies across the globe.