

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
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Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for this opportunity to speak about the work of the Counterterrorism Bureau, our ongoing diplomatic and programmatic efforts to advance U.S. counterterrorism priorities, and the funding we believe is required to advance these goals and keep America safe in the years to come. Simply put, terrorism is a global threat, and the United States cannot fight it alone. More than ever, we need willing and able partners.

The CT Bureau is playing a leading role in the U.S. government's international efforts to promote counterterrorism cooperation, strengthen partnerships, and build civilian capacity to address the full spectrum of terrorist threats – both today's threats and the ones that may emerge tomorrow. Building on the increased funding that was made available to the CT Bureau for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017, the Department's Fiscal Year 2018 request for CT includes more than \$228 million to continue and sustain our civilian counterterrorism partnership efforts and strengthen partner capabilities.

The Administration's fundamental counterterrorism objective is to degrade terrorist threats to a level that they are capable of being addressed by civilian authorities. That is why we are strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies and other civilian partners – from Justice and Interior Ministries to border and aviation security officers to police departments. Our goal is to ensure effective, whole-of-government approaches to terrorism. These will become even more important as our successes in Iraq and Syria against ISIS's false caliphate will be followed by efforts against the remnants of its global network. We also must do more to prevent and counter recruitment and "inspiration" of a new

generation of terrorists, and we are expanding our partnerships with private actors who can help counter terrorist recruitment and messaging.

In the CT portion of the FY 2018 budget request, we have prioritized sustaining three key programs: the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF), the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, and the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP). These programs are critical to advancing our long-term capacity-building goals. The focus areas for these programs include crisis response, aviation and border security, counterterrorism legal frameworks (i.e., prosecutions and investigations), counterterrorism financing, and addressing terrorist radicalization, recruitment, and rehabilitation.

Funding requested under ATA will also allow us to continue to support innovative multilateral efforts by U.S.-created institutions such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Institute for International Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ), where we have advanced our counterterrorism agenda and priorities by developing shared best practices and advancing the rule of law.

Overview of Terrorist Threat Landscape

ISIS, and its murderous ideology, currently represents the top terrorist threat to the United States and our interests abroad. With Coalition support, local forces have reclaimed more than three-quarters of the territory ISIS once held in Iraq and approximately two-thirds of the territory it previously held in Syria. The so-called caliphate is crumbling. Yet despite this progress, ISIS remains capable of carrying out and inspiring terrorist attacks in Syria, Iraq, and abroad. In fact, largely as a result of its loss of territory and a precipitous decline in the number of foreign terrorist fighters that were once available to the group, we have seen ISIS-directed or “inspired” small-scale decentralized attacks on soft targets outside of the Syria/Iraq conflict zone. These have included assaults on hotels, tourist resorts, and cultural sites in Bamako, Barcelona, Berlin, Jakarta, London, Marawi, and Ouagadougou, among other places.

Al-Qa’ida and its affiliates remain a substantial threat to the United States and our interests. These groups include the remnants of the AQ core in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Shabaab, al-Qa’ida in the Indian Subcontinent, and al-Nusrah Front, which is AQ’s affiliate in Syria and its largest affiliate. Al-Nusrah is committed to ousting the Assad regime. It also seeks to expand its reach regionally and globally, consistent with core AQ’s longstanding ideology. In January 2017, al-Nusrah merged with

other hardline opposition groups to form Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, which after fighting with other Syrian opposition in July, now dominates northwest Syria. We also know that AQ is trying to strengthen its global networks by relocating some of its remaining leadership cadre from South Asia to Syria.

Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, carrying out attacks and other destabilizing activities through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, as well as through the Lebanese terrorist group Hizballah. Iran is responsible for intensifying multiple conflicts and undermining U.S. interests in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, and continues to support attacks against Israel. Iran and its terrorist affiliates and proxies pose a significant threat and demonstrate a near-global terrorist reach.

Homegrown Terrorists: During the last few years, we have witnessed a shift from the centralized command and control of terrorist attacks by foreign organizations to a new framework in which individual terrorists use whatever weapons are at hand on their home turf against soft targets. Increasingly, the responsibility for deciding where, when, and how to attack has been devolved to these self-directed terrorists – and this trend is only becoming more widespread. We saw devastating examples of this in the Nice and Manchester attacks. We have also seen it here at home – in San Bernardino in 2015 and in Orlando in 2016.

What Are We Doing About These Threats?

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has served as the global counterterrorism leader, investing our blood and treasure to take the fight straight to the terrorist groups. The State Department has focused its diplomacy on building the political will and counterterrorism capacity of partner governments and non-state actors, including international organizations. We have strengthened old relationships and built new ones with foreign militaries, intelligence services, law enforcement authorities, foreign ministries, financial officials, civil society organizations, and private industry to advance our common counterterrorism goals.

The CT Bureau has been responsible for much of the development, funding, and coordination of programs to build partner counterterrorism capacity in law enforcement, border security, information sharing, counterterrorism finance, and more recently, programs to counter radicalization to violence and terrorist recruitment. We work closely with the full array of U.S. government agencies – including the intelligence community, the NSC, DOD, DOJ, DHS, and Treasury, to determine the nature of the threat, prioritize the allocation of resources, and

ultimately devise a strategic response. The CT Bureau's FY 2018 request is critical to ensure we are resourced to build effective counterterrorism partnerships and capabilities across the globe.

While counterterrorism remains a top U.S. priority, and we will not retreat from our leadership role, it is also time for the rest of the world to step up its efforts. Our friends and allies must share more of the financial burden to counter global terrorist threats; we need our partners to increase their own commitment of resources to counter terrorism within and outside their own borders. This includes funding for domestic counterterrorism functions such as law enforcement, intelligence, and border security; support for key multilateral institutions, such as INTERPOL, the IJ, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF); and capacity-building assistance for frontline states.

The CT Bureau has adopted a results-focused approach to program design, management, and evaluation to improve performance, outcomes, and accountability and ensure the sustainability of our collective efforts. We have developed tools and best practices to determine progress and results and to facilitate performance-informed decision making. We create monitoring plans for all of our activities and involve third party contractors for targeted evaluations to inform future programming. Evaluation recommendations have allowed us to refine and focus the programs as well as identify areas for improvement.

Protecting Soft Targets

We have experienced over the last few years an increased challenge of protecting locations that are designed to be open and inviting for everyday activities, such as dining, shopping, and lodging. Together, governments and businesses share the responsibility to strike a balance of security and accessibility at these locations.

Preventing and preparing for soft target attacks depends on multilateral collaboration as well as national-level communication and coordination across multiple departments, disciplines, and functions, including intelligence, information sharing and risk analysis, law enforcement, emergency management, and critical infrastructure security and resilience. Preparedness also requires communication and cooperation with private industry and civil society.

The CT Bureau is therefore working with international partners under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum to draft a set of international good practices

focused on the protection of soft targets from terrorist attacks. We plan to finalize and announce these recommendations in the near future.

Border Security and Information Sharing

We place a high value on information sharing, especially at international borders, where there is a critical need to detect and prevent terrorist travel. With the FBI-administered Terrorist Screening Center (TSC), and in coordination with U.S. interagency partners, the State Department has engaged foreign partners to conclude bilateral arrangements for the exchange of identity information on known and suspected terrorists pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6). Since 2007, the Department and the TSC have signed over 60 HSPD-6 arrangements with foreign partners, which when fully implemented will help identify, track, and deter the travel of known and suspected terrorists; this includes all 38 Visa Waiver Program countries.

We have encouraged our partners to further increase security at their borders to better identify, restrict, and report the travel of suspected foreign terrorist fighters. This means getting countries to make greater use of INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Document and other databases and resources related to foreign terrorist fighters – resources that allow countries to screen travelers and to assist their law enforcement agencies in identifying and investigating terrorist travelers. We also continue to expand the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) program, which provides state-of-the-art border screening systems to 24 countries.

As a result of all of these initiatives, we've seen a significant increase in coordination among partners to add suspects to terrorist watchlists and to share that information more broadly. Over the next year, we will aim to sign new arrangements with a number of priority countries and will focus on achieving the full implementation of existing arrangements.

Aviation Security

ISIS and other terrorist groups continue to target commercial aviation. We saw this most recently with the thwarted aviation plot in Australia. We are working with our DHS colleagues to elevate the baseline of global aviation security and make sure our foreign partners are poised to respond to threats. Sometimes this requires enhanced measures, as in the case of the March 2017 ban on personal electronic devices and the heightened security requirements that replaced it on June

28, 2017. Other times, it means increasing awareness of the threats so countries adopt a security approach that meets the threat environment.

Through diplomatic engagement and targeted foreign assistance, we are working with our partners overseas to improve passenger and cargo screening, upgrade technology, and employ mitigation measures such as canine detection teams to address more complex threats. The CT Bureau is in the process of launching aviation security assistance programs in Ethiopia, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, and a regional project focused on Southeast Asia.

Building Partner Capacity

The CT Bureau uses foreign assistance resources to build the ability of partner nations to identify, deter, disrupt, apprehend, prosecute, and convict terrorists and their supporters. Our goal is for these partners to be able to confront the terrorist threats they face themselves without turning to the United States for assistance. The CT Bureau's capacity-building efforts include ensuring there are appropriate legal frameworks in place to bring criminal cases against offenders. In particular, we assist partner countries in building the ability to **investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate** terrorism-related cases.

To **investigate**, we provide training, equipment, and mentoring to law enforcement bodies so they have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and tools to detect, thwart, and respond to terrorism. This includes training and equipping crisis response, K9, bomb, and cyber investigation teams. To **prosecute**, we work with prosecutors to increase their skills to prepare persuasive, well-developed cases that will lead to convictions. Examples include case-based mentoring designed to secure prosecutions or working with countries to develop CT prosecution cells that are versed in terrorism case law. To **adjudicate**, we work with judges on procedural and substantive issues so they have a better understanding of the complexity of terrorism cases. To round out our efforts within the criminal justice system, we work with prison officials to provide training and technical assistance so they can effectively punish terrorism offenders and identify those who may be receptive to rehabilitation.

What we've been doing in this area is already working. In Somalia, on March 24, 2017, CT-funded Somali Joint Investigation Teams responded to a suspicious vehicle, uncovering three charges. Investigators neutralized the meticulously prepared – and fully intact – vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and sent it to the FBI for further forensic analysis. The Somali Police Commissioner also

disseminated information to international partners (such as the UN and embassies) and Somali interagency partners.

In the past few years, 131 people have been convicted under newly-passed foreign terrorist fighter laws in the Balkans. Resident Legal Advisors from DOJ, and funded by the CT Bureau, assisted local prosecutors in evidence organization, analysis, prosecution strategies, and case-specific challenges through a case-based mentoring program. There are now approximately 33 more FTF defendants indicted or on trial, all in Kosovo.

In 2016 CT-funded ATA-trained response forces launched a raid against suspected terrorists at an apartment building in Dhaka, Bangladesh. During the seven-hour operation, law enforcement officers kept the terrorists under surveillance, evacuated nearby residents, and exchanged gunfire with the suspects, who also threw explosive devices at police from inside the five-story residential building. Nine suspects were killed and one was taken into police custody. After police secured the site, ATA-trained bomb disposal technicians successfully recovered and rendered safe 13 hand grenades, five kilograms of homemade gel explosives, more than 20 detonators, and additional bomb-making equipment.

In the Philippines, a CT-funded ATA-trained explosive ordnance disposal team has responded to several crises, including a bomb attempt near the U.S. Embassy in Manila and the ongoing violence in Marawi City. In 2016, the team participated in an early-morning raid on a suspected terrorist safe house in Mindanao and discovered a cache of weapons and explosive devices, resulting in four arrests. By using an ATA-provided x-ray machine, bomb technicians from the Philippines National Police evaluated and rendered safe an anti-personnel mine, a commercial electric blasting cap, an improvised electric blasting cap, and two fragmentation hand grenades. ATA-trained members of the PNP Special Action Force and Anti-Cybercrime Group are also contributing to ongoing operations and investigations in Marawi and around Mindanao.

While the Philippines has a specific terrorism law, the Human Security Act, this law has been used a limited number of times and resulted in only one conviction in 2015. To remedy some of the law's shortcomings in terrorism cases, the State Department is funding a DOJ Resident Legal Advisor to provide guidance and support to the government's working group charged with updating the law, and working with prosecutors to better prepare terrorism cases. We are also partnering with DOJ to help the Philippines address the challenges it faces in its prison system.

Countering Radicalization

Countering radicalization is a critical component of a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism. We must do more than simply identify and stop foreign terrorist fighters from traveling or removing them from the battlefield. We need to delegitimize the violent ideology that attracts them and also prevent them from getting into terrorist pipelines in the first place. To do so, we must work with partners inside and outside of government to increase outreach efforts to youth, women, and victims of terrorism. We have increased our engagement with governments with vulnerable populations to take ownership of the issue and develop comprehensive, rights-respecting national strategies and action plans to counter violent extremism.

As part of this effort, we have expanded our engagement with a range of municipal, civil society, and private sector partners. One example is GCERF, which was established as the first global effort to support private, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against terrorist ideology. Operating at the nexus of security and development, GCERF has raised more than \$37 million from 14 other countries to support national strategies and address the local drivers of radicalism. It is active in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mali, and will soon expand to Kenya and Kosovo.

In an effort to reach local actors, the CT Bureau partners with the Strong Cities Network (SCN), which was launched at the UN in September 2015. The SCN is the first global network of mayors, municipal-level policy makers and practitioners united to build community resilience to counter violent extremism in all its forms. The network has more than 100 city members from Los Angeles, New York, and Chattanooga, to Peshawar, Nairobi, and Vilvoorde.

Additionally, the CT Bureau works closely with the Department's Global Engagement Center, which is charged with coordinating the U.S. government's counterterrorism messaging to foreign audiences.

The CT Bureau uses a range of tools and resources to counter terrorist threats around the world. Protecting the homeland is our top priority as we enlist the cooperation and build the capacity of partners to take on these challenges. We are encouraged by reporting from our diplomatic posts about how our training and

resources are directly assisting partners to disrupt terrorist operations, prosecute terrorist suspects, and protect borders.

Mr. Chairman, the terrorist threat is constantly adapting and we must adapt along with it. We can best protect our people and interests over the long run by being nimble and able to recognize the potential need to retool programs as the threat evolves. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with domestic agencies to expand international cooperation, strengthen partnerships, build bilateral and regional capabilities, and promote rule of law-based approaches to counterterrorism. We will work to dismantle terrorist safe havens and disrupt the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and their resources, and address the conditions that terrorists exploit for recruitment.

We greatly appreciate Congress's support in this shared endeavor. I look forward to your questions and our discussion.