

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY

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Good Morning Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished Committee members. Thank you for your invitation to appear here today to discuss the Department of State's implementation of the recommendations made by the independent Benghazi Accountability Review Board (ARB), as well as those made by the panels of experts convened by the Department at the recommendation of the ARB. I, along with my colleagues at the State Department, look forward to working with you and your fellow members as you examine the issues relating to the 2012 terrorist attacks in Benghazi.

I have been a security professional for over 30 years. I returned to the State Department in February 2013 after serving nearly 4 years at the United Nations as the Under Secretary General for Safety and Security. My experience within the State Department, as a Regional Security Officer to most recently as the Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, has ranged from responsibility for day-to-day security on the ground at a single post, to running global programs for State and the United Nations at hundreds of locations. These global, wide-ranging responsibilities have provided me with extensive experience and perhaps unique perspective to evaluate, manage, and mitigate the wide range of security threats we face overseas.

The Department is committed to applying the valuable lessons learned from the tragic attacks in Benghazi in today's overseas operating environment. Over the past 2 years, with the Secretary's leadership and support, that commitment has been honored. I am pleased to report that we have made tremendous progress on the 29 independent Benghazi Accountability Review Board recommendations. To date, we have closed 22 recommendations, and 7 are in progress or nearing completion. We appreciate the opportunity today to describe the ways in which we have refined and improved our risk assessment and management. Today, we are better prepared, protected, and informed to manage risk.

The attacks on our facilities in September 2012 and subsequent attacks, like the 2013 attack in Herat, Afghanistan, remind us that the world remains a dangerous place. However, in order to advance U.S. national interests, it is sometimes necessary for the Department to operate in dangerous places. The decision to do so requires that we carefully balance the risk of operating at over 275 unique locations against our national interest in doing so. Once the decision is made to operate in a particular location, we in Diplomatic Security, together with colleagues throughout the Federal government, must actively monitor and manage the risks inherent in such operation. An enhanced risk management process is one of the important legacies of the Accountability Review Board.

The tempo of threats and attacks against us has not diminished. Every day, the Department assesses threats and our security posture to protect our people and our missions. We strive to deter and mitigate the effectiveness of any attack. It is critical to acknowledge, however, that risks can be mitigated but cannot be eliminated. Even with willing and capable governments as our partners, it is impossible to stop all terrorists or extremists from mounting attacks against us in all cases. In order to counter terrorist threats that affect our country and our allies, to fight pandemic disease, to promote American values such as promoting universal human rights and the rule of law, our diplomats and development experts must deploy around the globe. Often the locations where the threats are highest are those where U.S. presence and influence is needed most.

Given the nature of the threats we face, our work to secure our missions will never be finished. It is an ongoing, evolving process defined by proactive planning and responsive improvements. The Accountability Review Board made an important and valuable contribution in this regard, and I would also like to provide you an overview of the Department's risk management plan for high risk posts, which has been improved and developed in response to the recommendations.

One of the core components of the Department's risk management plan for high risk posts is the High Threat Post Review Board, which I chair. Other members include senior State Department officials representing both regional and functional bureaus. The Board quantitatively and rigorously assesses the threat environment to identify posts around the world that are high-threat, high-risk. This is not a static process and as emergent conditions change, for better or worse, at any post worldwide, designations will shift and posts may be added or deleted from the high-threat, high-risk designation.

Posts that are assessed to be high risk receive specialized risk-management attention. Using the Department's Vital Presence Validation Process, also known as VP2, instituted this year, we ensure that our most dangerous posts have a defined, attainable, and prioritized mission balanced against the resources and risks. Where the process determines that U.S. national interests require us to operate in these locations, the Department undertakes measures to mitigate identified risks and prioritizes resources to do so. Going forward, the Department will continue to use and refine this regularized and repeatable process.

As another aspect of the Department's broad and improved risk management plan, Chief of Mission personnel, including both security professionals and all

foreign service personnel, are now better prepared for operating in high-threat environments. We have increased the training time for our agents in the high-threat training course and expanded our Foreign Affairs Counter Threat (FACT) course for foreign service colleagues to all high-threat posts. And because we recognize that the value of these skills extends beyond high threat locations, we are working towards universal FACT training for all Foreign Service personnel and other employees at our posts overseas. We know that these skills can help safeguard U.S. government personnel whether they serve in Sana'a or Santo Domingo.

We have also responded to the Accountability Review Board's recommendations by strengthening our relationship with the Department of Defense. Over the last 18 months, we have established 17 new Marine Security Guard Detachments as well as a new Marine unit that can augment security in changing threat environments. These resources contribute to day-to-day security and can be called upon to address emergent circumstances, such as during our recent temporary relocation from Tripoli.

Consistent with the Accountability Review Board's recommendations, we have deepened our commitment to the principle that security is the responsibility of everyone within the State Department and the whole U.S. Government. We have implemented this approach in the Department's Framework for Security Accountability. This shared responsibility enables us to take advantage of the broad variety of information available. For example, every morning, I lead a daily threat briefing with security professionals and policy experts to assess information obtained from our intelligence community partners.

In closing, the Department appreciates the insights and contributions of the Accountability Review Board, as well as the complementary recommendations of the panels of experts convened at the recommendation of the Board. The Department shares the Board's goal to improve our security and risk management while advancing U.S. national interests. We are grateful for the additional resources that Congress provided over the past 2 years to improve and sustain this diplomatic platform. We are proud of our progress towards implementing the recommendations.

There is more to the implementation process than I can address in my remarks today. I will be glad to answer any questions you have at this time. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress on ensuring that the foreign affairs community has a safe platform for carrying out our national interests.