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Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, distinguished committee members - thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the role of public diplomacy in countering violent extremism and provide an overview of how public diplomacy advances the strategic interests of the United States.

This hearing comes at a critical time in our fight against ISIL. In just the last few weeks, from Istanbul to Baghdad to Dhaka, we've seen again the terrorists' brutality and wanton disregard for the lives of innocent people. Yet, at the same time, there are many signs of progress in our efforts to counter ISIL's message. The amount of anti-ISIL content on social media platforms is increasing; ISIL's flow of content is diminishing and being interrupted. The revulsion to ISIL can be seen in the engagement of mainstream Muslims around the world who reject what the terrorists stand for. It can also be seen in the actions of the tech companies whose platforms are being used to disseminate much of this noxious content. They have ramped up their efforts to purge their platforms of this vile material and the content is often removed in minutes, not hours or days.

We must continue to focus on being more coordinated, more nimble, and more effective. My statement today will focus on messaging, but will also outline how we are harnessing the full range of public diplomacy tools to confront the challenge of violent extremism -- while recognizing the significant hurdles that remain.

This past fall, after an intensive review of our counter messaging strategy -- including consultation across the U.S. Government and with technology, marketing and communications experts from the private sector -- the White House and the Department of State announced that the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) would be replaced by the Global Engagement Center (GEC), an interagency body housed at the State Department, reporting to the Secretary of State through the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

The Global Engagement Center has a dual mission: to coordinate, integrate, and synchronize government-wide communications directed at foreign audiences aimed at countering the propaganda of ISIL and other violent extremists; and to build the capacity of partners to develop content, amplify credible local voices and disseminate positive alternative narratives. Through these two lines of effort, the GEC seeks to disrupt and drown out ISIL's perverse narrative.

Our strategy is informed by a core insight: we are not always the best messengers for the message we want to deliver. Public statements from U.S. Government officials condemning ISIL can easily be used by the enemy as a recruitment tool. Our efforts focus on amplifying credible voices and lifting up those voices in a coordinated way – while assessing and measuring the impact of these efforts. The new approach is centered on “partner-driven messaging.” Instead of direct messaging to potential ISIL sympathizers, much of our work focuses on supporting and empowering a global network of partners—from NGOs to foreign governments to religious leaders—who can act as more credible messengers to target audiences.

One example of our drive to build partnerships is the Sawab Center in Abu Dhabi, a joint messaging center where Emiratis work alongside Americans to counter ISIL online. Since July 2015, Sawab has launched nine original social-media campaigns, ranging from voices of victims and defectors, to affirming positive messages such as national pride. Each campaign has averaged over 125 million views on social media, and Sawab has consulted and shared its experience with 20 countries and international organizations interested in similar efforts to counter violent extremism online.

The establishment of Sawab has catalyzed U.S.-backed initiatives to support the creation of messaging centers in Jordan, Nigeria and Malaysia, where the Digital Strategic Communications Division is slated to open its new messaging center in Kuala Lumpur this summer -- a major step forward in US efforts to reach at-risk individuals in Southeast Asia.

To measure impact, the Global Engagement Center is using data analytics tools developed by Silicon Valley. These measurements allow the GEC to analyze foreign social media activity in near-real time and help our partners do the same.

There are signs of progress in the messaging space. According to recent RAND study, anti-ISIL content online outnumbers pro-ISIL content approximately 6:1. A GEC analysis has shown pro-ISIL messaging is down by 45% since June 2014.

We are pleased that many of the world's biggest social media companies, including Facebook and Twitter, have been proactively and voluntarily working to eliminate ISIL content from their systems based on their terms of service. In just the last year, we've seen marked improvement in these companies' reaction time and the volume of content that they are removing. We have established a regular and active dialogue with the technology companies to discuss our policy concerns.

What does success look like? The answer is something of a paradox. In the long-term we would like to see a media landscape that does not require U.S. government messaging at all, because NGOs, local governments, partners and credible voices are effectively drowning out ISIL's message of hate. Short term, we look for concrete signs of success - - which we are seeing - such as the reduction in the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and decreased media and social media activity.

Secretary Kerry has recently announced the expansion of the renamed Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism to coordinate the Department's CVE efforts and, along with USAID, introduced a new joint strategy to guide our collective CVE efforts. These changes reflect a larger reevaluation of how the State Department communicates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

People around the world today have more information at their fingertips every minute than their grandparents could discover in a lifetime. But the proliferation of information has created a dangerous by-product, the

viral spread of disinformation by state and non-state actors. Countries like Russia and China engage in sophisticated media campaigns to either discredit credible news sources or create their own versions of reality. As Pat Moynihan used to say, you're entitled to your own opinions, not your own facts. But more and more in this age of disinformation, people and governments feel entitled to their own "facts." Even though there is more information than at any time in history, people seem increasingly unable to distinguish between fact and fiction. And this is exactly what some countries want. As journalist Peter Pomerantsev has said, "It's not an information war, it's a war on information."

The best defense in this information battle is the free flow of information. We don't defeat Russian propaganda by shouting louder than they do, or by trying to battle propaganda with propaganda. This is about the fundamentals of democratic society -- free speech and an independent press. We have increased our support to the journalists and civil society activists, empowering them to refute corrosive lies, highlight corruption, and support democratic institutions. This strategy to combat disinformation is part of our larger public diplomacy vision.

My two-and-a-half-year tenure as Under Secretary has convinced me that public diplomacy is a growth industry. Across the State Department, public diplomacy programs are now viewed as an indispensable part of our crisis-response toolkit. Our programming supports our strategic goals on issues ranging from countering ISIL to preserving peace, stability and respect for international law in the South China Sea to containing the spread of the Zika virus.

My team has expanded analytics, evaluation and research units that will bring new data to inform our strategies on every public diplomacy initiative. Our evaluation experts are focusing on the tools and programs that are most suited to achieving those goals, drawing on research on audiences, communication campaigns, behavioral science, and more. We are using data and research from both USG and private sector sources to

help us enhance connections between foreign publics and the United States.

One of the U.S. government's greatest assets remains our power to convene. Last month, the President hosted the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Stanford University, one of the best US government events I've participated in. Over three days 700 delegates from every region in the world pitched their ideas to the best business minds in America. Entrepreneurship, especially for women and youth, offers options to combat violent extremism, improves education, builds economies and gives hope to communities where it was previously lacking.

That power to convene is not limited by geography. Virtual town halls on Facebook and Google hangouts can be the modern day equivalent of the New England town hall. People around the world who want to engage with us may not always like our policies, but they have already shown a willingness to begin a dialogue with the United States.

A centerpiece of our public diplomacy strategy has been to cultivate and invest in the next generation of global young leaders. Our Educational and Cultural Affairs bureau has designed many critical exchange programs over the years to do this. In this Administration we launched the Young African Leaders Initiative and similar young-leader programs in Asia, Latin America, and Europe, to ensure we are providing a deeper understanding of the United States and our values. Our regional young leader initiatives convene extraordinary talent from across the globe; build powerful networks of thousands of youth influencers; scale businesses; expand skill sets; and create partnerships to tackle shared challenges. These initiatives also serve our strategic interests: the Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative, for instance, has bolstered the Department's push to strengthen an ASEAN identity and foster regional cooperation.

We also continue to expand opportunities within our flagship Fulbright Program, which is celebrating its 70th anniversary. Fulbright scholars, who are more diverse than ever before, are some of the best public diplomats

our country has. Hundreds of Americans participating in Fulbright are helping to support English instruction around the world, and in doing so, are improving access to information and economic opportunity for hundreds of thousands of students in key partner countries and communities. Teaching English is a strategic investment that can pay huge dividends, which is why we are working with the Peace Corps and other partners to ensure our combined U.S. Government efforts in this space are attracting the best candidates and are coordinated to have maximum impact.

The lesson from these exchange programs is clear – we are long past the point where government communication can rely solely on reciting talking points from a podium. The world has moved into two-way conversations. Public diplomacy *is* a conversation. Our best partners in this endeavor are the American people: students, faculty and professionals welcoming visitors from abroad to study or do research – or conversely – Americans going abroad to study or engage foreign audiences. Citizen diplomats are more important than ever as we try to tell the story of who we are and what we stand for as a people and a nation.

I'm pleased to say that the Broadcasting Board of Governors, BBG, is adapting as well. In my role as the Secretary's delegated representative to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, I can attest to the impact a news organization can have when the right leadership is put in place and the old way of delivering information is reimaged. CEO John Lansing has done an incredible job in his short time. He is focused on building a modern media company that can use digital tools to deliver news across the BBG networks. Chairman Royce, thank you for your continued work and collaboration on improving the BBG.

With Congress and, specifically, this committee's support, public diplomacy benefits from distinct funding and authorities. It has always been my position that public diplomacy funding is linked to a comprehensive and unified strategy. This means that my responsibility is to work closely with Congress and this committee and staff to present unified budget requests and closely link spending plans and program reports.

Let me close by coming back to the issue of violent extremism. While the messaging battle against ISIL is showing signs of progress, we remain cognizant of the spread of ISIL ideology to other parts of the world. The work of public diplomacy is to build relationships in communities in every corner of the world so that people know they have a partner and ally in the United States. By being on the ground, by having our officers use their skills and talents to bring together seemingly disparate groups, we can begin to sow seeds of opportunity and resilience in places that would otherwise be susceptible to terrorist recruiting. This is long-term work and it will remain difficult. We know we will face setbacks, especially given the media space in which we operate. But after nearly two and a half years in this office, I am confident that we have the right strategy to accomplish our mission. Thank you again for inviting me today and thank you for your partnership in advancing the foreign policy goals of the United States. I look forward to answering your questions.