

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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FY 2020 Budget: State Department Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Bureau

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2:00 p.m.**

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to talk about the Trump Administration's counterterrorism priorities and discuss the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 resources we need to protect America's security at home and interests abroad from terrorist threats.

The Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism focuses on combatting the wide range of terrorist threats confronting the United States and our allies, including ISIS, al-Qa'ida, Hizballah, and other terrorist groups and state sponsors of terrorism, such as Iran. At last year's hearing, I laid out the Administration's National Strategy for Counterterrorism and the important role for the State Department in leveraging diplomatic and foreign assistance tools. We are making progress implementing that strategy, and I am here today to explain how the resources we seek will build on our initial successes.

The Administration's FY 2020 budget request for the CT Bureau includes more than \$241 million to sustain the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF), the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), and programs on countering violent extremism (CVE). This request prioritizes funding to advance our long-term capacity-building goals and directly support top counterterrorism priorities laid out in the Administration's counterterrorism strategy. These programs address critical areas, including developing law enforcement capacity to investigate and prosecute terrorists; responding to crises in real time; enhancing aviation and border security; countering the financing of terrorism; and combatting terrorist radicalization and recruitment.

Our FY 2020 request represents an investment in the counterterrorism capacity of our partners. We want to boost their capabilities to the point they are able to address the terrorist threats they face on their own. The FY 2020 request also reflects our commitment to sharing more of the financial burden with our friends and allies. The United States continues to lead the world in global counterterrorism, but we cannot do this alone. We need our partners to increase their own commitment of resources to counterterrorism within and outside their own borders. Since the Trump Administration began to emphasize more equitable burden sharing two years ago, some of

our partners have stepped up in important ways. But there is still more that they can and should do.

Terrorist Threats to U.S. National Security

The CT Bureau's budget is shaped by U.S. national security interests and driven by the terrorist landscape, which has become even more complex over the past several years. ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and their affiliates have proven to be resilient and determined. They have responded to increased counterterrorism pressure by adapting their tactics and techniques.

On March 23, the President announced the liberation of the last territory held by ISIS in Syria and Iraq. This is an important milestone in our fight against global terrorism, and it was made possible by this Administration's decision over two years ago to take the gloves off and accelerate the campaign.

But this is not the end of the fight. ISIS remains a global threat capable of launching terrorist attacks against us and our allies. The group's leaders and followers see the loss of their false caliphate as a setback, not a defeat, and they are actively looking to continue the fight from ISIS branches and networks around the world. The ISIS-inspired attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, and the subsequent video statement by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, reinforced that ISIS seeks to maintain capability, influence, and relevance through groups and networks outside Iraq and Syria.

In Africa, ISIS-linked groups are on the rise across the continent – from Senegal to Egypt to Mozambique, and many places in between. They have increased the lethality of their attacks, expanded into new areas, and repeatedly targeted U.S. interests. In South and Southeast Asia, ISIS continues to carry out attacks and, through propaganda campaigns, inspire regional groups to commit acts of terror, as we saw in Sri Lanka.

The CT Bureau is leading to coordinate the fight against ISIS outside the Iraq/Syria core. The recent D-ISIS Coalition Political Directors' meeting in Paris included a plenary session on increasing threats in West Africa and the Sahel, and Coalition members agreed to meet in the early fall to focus on practical steps we can take together in West Africa and the Sahel. We will take stock of our efforts in the region and identify gaps which need more attention.

Let me also address the places where the CT Bureau is contributing to the Defeat-ISIS fight inside Iraq and Syria, working with partners throughout the Department and interagency. The Syrian Democratic Forces are currently holding more than 2,000 ISIS foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Many of these individuals remain a threat, particularly with their battlefield experience and skills honed in the conflict in Syria. The United States has repatriated and prosecuted a number of our own terrorist fighters. We applaud those countries that have also taken back their FTFs with the intention of prosecuting them, including North Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, and Italy. However, many more countries – including nearly all Western European allies – have yet to repatriate any of their citizens in SDF custody. On June 28, Italy set an important example by becoming the first Western European nation to repatriate a citizen who traveled to fight for ISIS. Refusing to take back citizens and instead leaving them in facilities abroad is an abdication of the duties of sovereign states. These fighters need to be brought home to face justice

now; the problem will only get harder to solve as time passes and circumstances on the ground change in unpredictable ways.

Some have called for an international tribunal to address SDF detainees. However, international tribunals will not solve any of the challenges our European partners have cited for not repatriating their citizens. The tribunals will still struggle to find admissible evidence for cases; there will still be the need to securely detain the fighters; and governments will still have to deal with the FTFs after they have served their sentences and been released.

With the world's attention largely focused on ISIS during the past five years, al-Qa'ida has quietly strengthened its capabilities, positioning to reassert itself as the ideological and operational vanguard of the global jihadist movement. Today, al-Qa'ida's network has more members than it did before 9/11, and it continues to exploit under-governed spaces, conflict zones, and global security gaps to recruit, fundraise, and plot attacks. Two al-Qa'ida affiliates in Africa – al Shabaab in the Horn and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) in the Sahel – are among the world's most dangerous terrorist groups.

ISIS and al-Qa'ida also continue to inspire homegrown terrorists who have never set foot on a battlefield but have embraced their toxic ideology, and have planned and executed violent attacks against civilians. These attacks are not just happening in front line states grappling with instability and conflict. We are also seeing homegrown terrorists inspired by these groups strike into the heart of Western Europe, as in Paris, London, and Berlin.

Meanwhile, Iran remains the world's worst state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian regime is responsible for intensifying multiple conflicts and undermining U.S. interests in Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. We've seen Iran engage in terrorist activity directly through its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Qods Force, including in plots in the United States, Europe, and Africa. We have also seen Iran continue to extend its malign influence through terrorist partners, such as Hizballah, Hamas, and militia groups in Iraq and Syria.

The threat posed by Iran's support for terrorism is truly global, including here in the Western Hemisphere. For example, in 2017 two U.S.-based Hizballah operatives – Samir el Debek and Ali Kourani – were arrested by the FBI in Michigan and New York, respectively. Among other activities, El-Debek was surveilling potential targets at Hizballah's direction in Panama, including the Panama Canal. Kourani spent years surveilling U.S. military and law enforcement facilities on behalf of Hizballah. He was just convicted by a federal jury in New York for these crimes.

This is why we are prioritizing cooperation and looking across national borders for new ways to improve our collective security. Just last week, Secretary Pompeo joined his counterparts from around the hemisphere in Buenos Aires to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the deadly Hizballah attack on the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) Center in Buenos Aires, and to discuss our collective efforts to protect this hemisphere from terrorism.

Finally, we are increasingly concerned and focused on the threat posed by racially and ethnically motivated terrorists. We've seen the results of this type of hatred in New Zealand, Norway, and

here at home, and are working closely with the FBI, DHS, and our foreign partners to address this growing threat.

What We Are Doing About It

The United States continues to lead the globe on counterterrorism issues. As the threats we face evolve, the United States and our partners increasingly will need to rely on civilian-sector CT tools, as explained in the Administration's National Strategy for Counterterrorism. Those include information sharing; boosting law enforcement capabilities; border and aviation security; combatting terrorism finance; and countering radicalization and recruitment. These are the types of capabilities that the CT Bureau helps build around the world through its funding and programs. Over the past year, working with our interagency partners, we've launched several new initiatives, including on battlefield evidence, terrorist use of the internet, and countering unmanned aerial systems.

Enhancing Law Enforcement Capabilities to Investigate and Prosecute Terrorists

Law enforcement is a key counterterrorism tool. Moreover, as terrorist networks grow more diffuse, civilian criminal justice "finishes" – arresting, prosecuting, and incarcerating terrorists – will grow more important. We'll need our partners to successfully respond to terrorists and prosecute them for the crimes they've committed, no matter where they're located. Let me flesh out some of our key initiatives.

Through **CTPF** and the **ATA** programs, the CT Bureau is building comprehensive counterterrorism capabilities with some of our most vulnerable partner states on the front lines. We have seen CT-trained law enforcement units disrupt major terrorist incidents around the world, including in Afghanistan, Mali, Kenya, Tunisia, and Somalia. We are also seeing partners successfully prosecute cases and put terrorist criminals in prison in Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Balkan countries, among others.

- In **Somalia**, we continue to see strong results from our investments in developing and mentoring Joint Investigative Teams (JITs) in the Somali Police Force. In just over four years, with assistance made possible through CTPF, we've built up a significant capability: our Somali partners have actively disrupted several terrorist attacks, responded to and investigated more than 400 terrorist attacks, referred more than 50 cases for prosecution, and supported the evidence-based conviction of nearly 100 terrorists and facilitators. The JITs also actively use DHS's biometric program – BITMAP, also funded through CTPF – to enroll and screen terrorist suspects. To date, the JITs have enrolled more than 90 terrorist suspects whose identities were previously unknown to U.S. law enforcement. On a daily basis, the JITs are saving lives and demonstrating the value of effective security forces and the rule of law for the citizens of Somalia.
- In **Afghanistan**, we have been operating through the ATA program since 2002, and currently partner with elite law enforcement units to build their capacity to address terrorist groups targeting urban centers such as Kabul, Kandahar, and Logar. In May, the unit in Kabul responded to a Taliban suicide attack on Counterpart International – an international NGO supporting civil society organizations that encourages peace and opportunities for women.

Relying on training and skills provided by CT, the unit quickly neutralized the attackers and safely secured Counterpart's staff. We are seeing these types of tactical successes from our Afghan partners over and over.

- In **Mali**, CT is building crisis response teams (CRTs) for Mali's National Gendarmerie. The CRTs successfully responded to terrorist attacks at Hotel Kangaba in Bamako in June 2017, and are now deployed to the Segou region in central Mali where there are rising incidents of terrorism over the past year. The CRTs are having an immediate impact, supporting gendarme posts, intervening in an armed robbery, and arresting suspected terrorists.

To help enable prosecutions, the United States has launched an important new initiative on **battlefield evidence** aimed at how to use this type of information more effectively in civilian courts, especially those of partner nations. This is an issue of growing importance as it can enable origin countries to more effectively prosecute their FTFs. Through this initiative, the U.S. conducted a comprehensive internal review of our own efforts and systems, to assess where we were succeeding and where we were falling short. We've made some important changes enabling us to more easily share information with our foreign partners, and are working with these governments to enable them to more effectively use information shared with them. We are now working with the United Nations and NATO to promote the use of battlefield evidence in other countries, and urge our partners to join us in this effort.

Combatting Terrorist Travel

CT is leading the charge on greater information sharing and promoting effective screening and watchlisting around the world. Detecting terrorists transiting borders and airports enables border security officials to prevent entry and, where possible, to prosecute them for their crimes. We need this information pushed out to the front lines. Too often, access to databases is limited to offices in national capitals and does not extend to immigration officials at ports of entry or police officers walking a beat. We have several important initiatives underway to improve both the quality of the databases and connectivity to them.

In previous testimony, I updated you on efforts to improve international use of **Passenger Name Record (PNR)** data under UN Security Council Resolution 2396, which obligates member states to develop the capability to collect, process, analyze, share, and protect PNR data. In November, at ICAO's 2nd High-Level Conference on Aviation Security, I conveyed the United States' call for an ICAO standard for PNR by the end of 2019. My team is now part of an ICAO PNR Task Force that will propose a draft standard for adoption in the coming months.

One of the best tools to prevent terrorist travel is CT's **Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES)** program. Over the past year we have expanded PISCES to several key countries including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Every day, more than 300,000 travelers worldwide are processed through PISCES-equipped border control sites in 23 priority countries, where they are screened against terrorist databases. In February, one of our partners, the Afghanistan Border Police, arrested a senior Taliban member, Abdul Jalil Haqqani, when he triggered a match in the PISCES system as he attempted to depart

for Pakistan at the Spin Boldak border crossing. Your support for **TIP** is critical to sustaining this program.

The CT Bureau is leading the drive to implement a G-7 effort to extend access to and use of **INTERPOL** databases at air, land, and sea ports of entry in 60 key countries by 2021. The INTERPOL system is an information-sharing platform that enables officials on the front lines to access INTERPOL's criminal databases and allows member states to communicate with each other. CT has dedicated assistance funds to expand connectivity in Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Tajikistan, and Thailand. In addition, other G-7 partners are funding the expansion in additional countries. In just one example, Indonesia has expanded I-24/7 connectivity at its 14 busiest international airports and five busiest seaports, screening all passengers coming through those ports against INTERPOL's databases.

Together with Morocco, CT launched the GCTF **Terrorist Travel Initiative** in September 2018. The initiative is bringing together national and local governments, law enforcement and border screening practitioners, and international organizations to share expertise on how to develop and implement effective counterterrorism watchlisting and screening tools and better use traveler data. This initiative is helping our partners strengthen their use of biometrics, PNR data, watchlists, and other screening tools to limit the flow of terrorist travelers in their regions, and share information on this travel among themselves and with international partners, all within a rule of law framework. These efforts are aimed at helping countries help themselves – enhancing nations' abilities to detect and stop terrorist travel worldwide.

While not related to terrorist travel, we have launched another new GCTF initiative to **Counter Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Threats**, which we announced in December 2018 with our co-chair, Germany. The initiative is helping raise awareness of this new and increasingly exigent threat to civilian targets. We will collectively develop a set of non-binding good practices to assist countries in developing or expanding national action plans to identify, prioritize, and implement policies and measures to counter terrorist use of UAS. We plan to release these new good practices at the GCTF Ministerial on the margins of the UN General Assembly this fall.

Countering Terrorist Financing

One of our most effective financial weapons is **terrorist designations**. Designations isolate and expose our adversaries, making it harder for them to raise money and move it through the international financial system. Responsible financial institutions ensure that terrorists do not taint their networks. We have made significant advances in counterterrorism finance, but more work remains. We need our partners to develop the necessary legal regimes to sanction terrorists and their financial and logistical enablers, and we are working with them to help develop this capability.

Since January 2017, the Secretary of State has completed more than 100 designation actions against terrorist groups and individuals. That number includes 43 actions against ISIS-related individuals and entities, 30 actions related al-Qa'ida, 12 related to Hizballah, and 13 related to other Iran-backed terrorists.

This year, the Secretary has focused our designations tools to target some of our greatest national security threats, including ISIS, Hizballah, and Iran. In April, Secretary Pompeo designated the IRGC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), an unprecedented step in our broader effort to counter Iran's deadly campaign of terrorism around the world by starving the regime of the resources it uses for its terrorist pursuits. It is the first time that the United States has designated part of another government as an FTO. The designation underscores that the Iranian regime's use of terrorism makes it fundamentally different from any other government.

This year we worked closely with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security to integrate the **Rewards for Justice (RFJ)** program with terrorist designations. The RFJ Program recently announced a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the disruption of the financial mechanisms of Hizballah. This was the first time we've issued an RFJ reward offer focused solely on Hizballah financing. It was an important step in our maximum pressure campaign against Tehran and its terrorist proxies.

In addition to these important tools, we use the **Counterterrorism Finance Program** to provide technical assistance programs that increase our partners' capacity to prevent, detect, and prosecute terrorist financing. When we improve our partners' ability to identify and freeze assets, use financial intelligence, and investigate and prosecute suspects, we help shut down terrorists' access to the international financial system.

For example, we are working with Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru to increase their capabilities to detect and disrupt terrorism finance. Our nascent efforts are already yielding concrete results. At a CT Bureau-funded workshop in September 2018, Brazilian and Paraguayan authorities shared information about Hizballah financier and U.S.-designated terrorist Assad Barakat. The next day, Brazilian police arrested Barakat. He remains in Brazilian custody and is pending extradition to Paraguay to face charges.

In Iraq, CT deployed Treasury technical assistance advisors to continue to train and advise Iraqi financial institutions, including the Financial Intelligence Unit and Central Bank of Iraq on anti-money laundering, counterterrorism finance, and other best practices. Due to this and other assistance, Iraq achieved real progress and was removed from the Financial Action Task Force grey list in June 2018.

Countering Terrorist Recruitment & Radicalization

In addition to countering the violence perpetrated by terrorists, we also need to counter the underlying ideology that breeds terrorism. ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and other terrorist organizations continue to radicalize and recruit. Their messages transcend borders. Their call to violence continues to resonate in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe, and here in the United States. Despite our military success, young men and women across the world are still being convinced to join ISIS and al-Qa'ida or carry out attacks in their name. The United States and our partners must persuade them otherwise.

We are partnering with government officials, community leaders, religious figures, and others who have the standing to counter terrorist radicalization and recruitment. Working together we are able

to counter their violent messages and engage in communities most affected by terrorism. Here are a few good examples.

Counter messaging with credible partners is one of our key lines of efforts. In Southeast Asia, we trained university and high school students to create and share videos on peace, tolerance, and alternatives to terrorism and the ideology behind it. In another initiative, we supported a documentary by mothers whose children went to Syria to fight with ISIS. This widely viewed film showed the devastation families experience when their sons and daughters abandon them for a life of violence. It forced would-be recruits to think twice about their support for terrorism, and to confront the false ideas that encouraged them in the first place.

CT continued efforts to counter **terrorist use of the internet (TUI)**. With our interagency partners, we have continued to promote, with foreign partners, U.S. policy for countering TUI. We also provide training to foreign partners to counter terrorist activities online.

CT has increased its engagement with technology companies, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google, to improve information sharing, including on designated terrorists and terrorist trends and tactics. The companies have since expanded and more proactively enforced their terms of service to substantially increase their voluntary removal of terrorist content online. CT has worked closely with the industry-led Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), since its establishment in 2017, to share information and technology to counter terrorism online, in particular with smaller companies, which are at risk from terrorists exploiting their platforms sometimes without the companies' knowledge. The strengthened partnership between CT and the technology industry, as well as CT's and the U.S. government's encouragement of increased voluntary action by technology companies, is yielding results. In addition to continuing to increase removals of content clearly linked to ISIS, al-Qa'ida, or their affiliates, technology companies have expanded their review and removal policies regarding racially motivated terrorist groups.

CT is working with our global partners to share the burden on countering terrorist radicalization and recruitment. For example, the **Global Community Engagement & Resilience Fund (GCERF)** has raised more than \$60 million from 12 countries and the European Union, in addition to \$11 million in contributions from the United States. GCERF is a global fund that works with local partners to prevent and counter terrorism in Bangladesh, Mali, Nigeria, Kosovo, and Kenya. **Hedayah**, the international CVE Center based in Abu Dhabi, has raised more than \$28 million from multiple global partners, including the UK, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, and the Netherlands, in addition to \$4.8 million from the United States. The CT Bureau is a major donor to the **Strong Cities Network (SCN)**, a global network of city leaders developing resilience to terrorism radicalization and recruitment. To date, the SCN has raised over \$6 million and includes 125 cities from across the globe.

Conclusion

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, protecting the United States and our interests against terrorist threats is the CT Bureau's top priority. We greatly appreciate the resources Congress has appropriated to us over the past several fiscal years for this important mission. We have made good, effective use of those resources. They are vital to ensuring that our partners remain

committed to the fight and have the tools they need to ensure the lasting defeat of ISIS, al-Qa'ida, Iran-backed terrorists, and other terrorist organizations.

I look forward to your questions.