

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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Written Statement

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Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to talk about the State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism's (CT) priorities and discuss the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 resources we need to protect America's security at home and interests abroad from terrorist threats, and how they align with the Biden-Harris Administration's broader counterterrorism priorities.

CT plays a critical role in the U.S. government's efforts to promote counterterrorism cooperation, strengthen partnerships, and build civilian capacity to counter the full spectrum of terrorist threats confronting the United States and our allies, including ISIS, al-Qa'ida (AQ), Iran-backed groups, as well as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVE). CT is focused on strengthening our international partners' commitment to the counterterrorism fight. We help them develop and sustain the tools and capabilities they need to effectively counter our mutual terrorist enemies. CT remains at the forefront of international efforts to help partners fulfill their counterterrorism responsibilities to address top global terrorist threats.

The Administration's FY 2022 budget request for the CT Bureau includes \$326.75 million in Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, and Demining Related Programs (NADR) for the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF), the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), and \$15 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for countering violent extremism (CVE) programs. This request prioritizes funding to advance our long-term capacity-building goals and directly support top counterterrorism priorities. These programs address critical areas, including developing law enforcement capacity: to investigate and prosecute terrorists, to respond to terrorism-related crises in real time, to address aviation and border security, to counter the financing of terrorism; and preventing and countering violent extremism.

In addition, the request also includes \$30.17 million in the Diplomatic Programs account to strengthen the counterterrorism workforce at the State Department. This request includes funding for additional positions that will enable the Bureau to increase oversight and accountability of foreign assistance programs and for additional contractors to support our leadership of the

Coalition to Defeat ISIS. This figure also includes the requirements for the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs.

The FY 2022 budget comes at a time when the overall U.S. government approach to counterterrorism is shifting, as we move away from military-led approaches to ones more rooted in diplomacy, partnerships, and multilateral engagement. CT's budget request is important to the execution of this strategy shift, as the new approach will require considerable investments in our partners' civilian counterterrorism capabilities – exactly the work that CT is focused on.

CT's budget request is not just shaped by U.S. national security interests, but it is also driven by the terrorist landscape, which is more dynamic, complex, and fast-moving than ever before. In that vein, before providing additional detail on our budget request, I'd like to provide a brief overview of the threat.

Terrorist groups remain a persistent and pervasive threat to the United States, allies, and interests abroad. ISIS, AQ, and their affiliates have proven to be resilient and determined, despite the significant progress we have made in degrading their ability to directly threaten the US homeland. They have responded to increased counterterrorism pressure by adapting their tactics and techniques. ISIS's global presence continues to grow despite the complete liberation of territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria. Globally, ISIS continues to leverage branches and networks across the Middle East, Asia, and Africa to advance its agenda. Some ISIS branches and networks are increasing the volume and lethality of their attacks, particularly in West Africa, the Sahel, and Mozambique, causing more fatalities by ISIS affiliates in Africa in 2020 than in any previous year. We are also concerned about the threat of ISIS in Afghanistan and potential spillover to neighboring countries. AQ also continues to pose a serious threat and has branches – notably AQAP and al Shabaab – that are quite capable of inflicting damage on our allies and on our global interests. This remains the case despite the significant losses of leadership and degraded capacity to execute large scale attacks that AQ has suffered.

In parallel with all of this, Iran, and its proxies – including Hizballah in Lebanon and groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen – continue to engage in dangerous and destabilizing activity in the Middle East and beyond. Iran has been funding and arming its proxies – including with sophisticated technology – and enabling attacks across the region.

And finally, we are also facing a major threat from REMVE actors, including those who promote the superiority of the white race. The threat is real, and it is acute: FBI Director Wray elevated REMVE to a “national threat priority” in 2020, the same level as ISIS and AQ. And between 2015 and 2020, the UN Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee tracked a 320 percent increase in REMVE terrorism globally.

Now let me turn to what the State Department is doing to address these diverse threats. The CT Bureau is leading the international diplomatic campaign against ISIS. Structurally, the Office of the Special Envoy to Defeat ISIS was formally merged into CT earlier this year, and the CT Coordinator is now dual hatted as the U.S. Special Envoy to the D-ISIS Coalition. This step has brought additional synergy to the State Department's efforts to counter ISIS and has helped us better align our foreign assistance programs with our diplomatic engagement.

The Coalition, which now includes 83 members, remains central to the international community's efforts against ISIS. One of our signature accomplishments has been to expand the Coalition's focus beyond Iraq and Syria, and to include ISIS threats further afield. Though the number one priority for the Coalition remains countering ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the Coalition is now actively engaged in addressing ISIS threats in Africa and South and Central Asia.

With the formal endorsement of the Coalition's foreign ministers in Rome in June, the U.S. and Italy are developing a stand-alone Africa platform that will work in parallel with the four existing working groups, which include Communications, FTF, Counter ISIS Finance, and Stabilization. We intend for African participation and leadership to be front and center with the Africa Platform and intend to request two African members serve as co-leads with the United States and Italy. We have also requested the co-leads of the previously mentioned working groups consider ways to expand their leadership to include African members as well. We expect the first meeting of the Africa Platform will be on the margins of the next Coalition Political Director-level meeting in Brussels in December.

In the wake of the terrible suicide bombing in Kabul on August 26, we quickly convened the D-ISIS Coalition leadership and asked it to consider how it might leverage its experience and expertise to counter ISIS-Khorasan as well. The working groups have already responded and identified potential efforts against the ISIS-K threat in the Communications Working Group meeting on September 28 and the Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF) Working Group on October 13.

With these expanded global efforts, we are most certainly not neglecting the persistent threat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, including the thousands of FTFs and family members who remain in custody or in displaced person camps. CT is leading the coordination of the diplomatic and logistical pieces of the effort to repatriate these FTFs, working closely with the U.S. interagency and our international partners to successfully repatriate hundreds of FTFs and associated family members to their countries of origin for rehabilitation, reintegration, and prosecution, as appropriate.

We applaud the efforts of our international partners who are also repatriating FTFs and their family members, and we urge other countries to take back their citizens. The situation at the prisons and at the camps is not sustainable and will only grow more challenging over time.

In Iraq, our Operation Inherent Resolve has transitioned firmly into an advisory/enabling role to the Iraqi Security Forces which carry out counter ISIS missions. CT will increase its engagement with civilian-led government ministries and agencies to enhance their counterterrorism capacity and the overall judicial sector to ensure long-term success against ISIS in Iraq.

Separately, we are deeply concerned about the reported drone attack targeting the residence of Iraqi Prime Minister Kadhimi. This apparent act of terrorism, which we strongly condemn, was directed at the heart of the Iraqi state. We are in close touch with the Iraqi Security Forces charged with upholding Iraq's sovereignty and independence, and have offered our assistance as they investigate this attack.

CT is also continuing to lead international efforts against AQ, and to remind our partners that the group remains capable and dangerous. Last year, we brought together 60 countries to discuss threats posed by AQ and endorse guiding principles to combat AQ and its affiliates.

CT has also spearheaded a diplomatic campaign against Hizballah, urging governments to take steps to recognize the group in its entirety as a terrorist organization and to restrict its activities in their countries. These efforts are yielding results – with 14 countries from Europe, South and Central America taking steps in the past several years to sanction, ban, or otherwise restrict Hizballah from operating in their territory.

CT has also taken on the duties of the Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure, implementing an important Administration priority to responsibly close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

And finally, CT is playing a key role in countering the transnational aspects of the REMVE threat. In response to the FY 2020 NDAA requirements, in February, the Secretary designated the CT Coordinator as the lead for the Department on REMVE-related issues. In this role, we have developed a new comprehensive Department strategy which we submitted to the Hill in June, which outlines our efforts to leverage all of our tools – from sanctions to watchlisting to diplomatic engagement – to counter this threat. CT also leads the Department’s efforts to implement the first ever National Strategy to Counter Domestic Terrorism.

And now I’d like to turn more specifically to our capacity building efforts, which are at the heart of our FY 2022 budget request. As the U.S. moves away from a U.S.- and military-led approach to one relying more heavily on partners and diplomacy, it will become even more critical to help our partners build their civilian counterterrorism expertise and capacity. We’ll need our partners to be able to secure their borders, investigate and disrupt terrorist plots, track terrorist financing, bring terrorists to justice, prevent and counter violent extremism, and rehabilitate and reintegrate former terrorists.

Let me flesh out some of our key initiatives. The President is requesting \$276.7 million for NADR-ATA in FY 2022. This request encompasses the ATA program primarily implemented by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the CTPF, counterterrorism finance programs, and our capacity building efforts through important multilateral partners such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the United Nations, among others. The ATA request encompasses the State Department’s largest programs to build the counterterrorism law enforcement capacity of our foreign partners.

I’d like to focus for a minute on CTPF. Since 2016, CTPF has allowed us to surge assistance and make gains with some of our most important partners. Reflecting on the past five years, these funds were instrumental in the progress we’ve made against ISIS, as well as to combat AQ and counter Iran’s terrorist activity. To continue to solidify these gains and expand efforts to select countries with emerging terrorism challenges, the Administration is requesting \$105.5 million for in NADR/ATA for CTPF. This request will allow us to maintain our successful programs. For example, CTPF investments led to the establishment of dedicated crisis response

capabilities for Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mali, and Tunisia. These units are successfully translating the skills learned from CTPF-funded training and mentoring to disrupt attacks and arrest terrorist criminals, which ultimately saves lives. Since the beginning, CTPF has also been a key tool in addressing the FTF challenges from Iraq and Syria. In the Western Balkans, CTPF training and assistance helped countries investigate and successfully prosecute 246 FTF cases. And on Iran, our programs are enabling partners in South America to effectively investigate and prosecute Hizballah facilitation cases. In addition to sustaining some of these very successful programs, the FY 2022 CTPF request includes funding that will allow us to respond to areas of growing concern, where we are seeing ISIS and AQ networks expand, such as West Africa and Mozambique. We are also planning to work with countries in Central Asia to strengthen border security efforts as we seek to constrain terrorist movement.

The President's request also includes \$50 million for NADR/TIP. This program funds the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), which deploys cutting edge technology that allows border control officials to screen travelers against terrorism databases in 23 countries. This funding will allow us to enhance efforts of partner countries' law enforcement to detect terrorist use of increasingly sophisticated fraudulent travel documentation, to foster collaboration with INTERPOL, and to provide the PISCES program to new priority partners, especially those where we see significant terrorist transit flows.

As we look to expand and improve PISCES, we are continuing to integrate it with DHS and international organization watchlisting and biometrics technology and programs, and to incorporate emerging technologies designed to defeat increasingly sophisticated efforts by terrorist networks to travel. For example, PISCES has integrated with IOM's MIDAS border management system in Somalia and Guinea and with a private commercial firm in Zambia. We expect to continue this kind of integration work in several other countries in Africa, in the Balkans, and in the Western Hemisphere in the coming years. In Panama, we have integrated with DHS-provided ATS-G and BITMAP programs as well as with INTERPOL's I/24-7 portal to provide host nation immigration officers with near real-time access to critical international databases and analytical tools to scrutinize advance passenger information contained in incoming flight manifests. Integration means better, more effective border security capabilities for our foreign partners and reduced global mobility for terrorists.

In addition to strengthening the capacity of partner government to counter the plotting, violence, and criminal activity perpetrated by terrorists, we also need to assist them to prevent terrorist groups from recruiting new members and pull away those who are headed down the path of radicalization. The President's request includes \$15 million in ESF for CVE programs that build the capacity of government officials, community leaders, including religious figures, and others who have the standing to counter terrorist radicalization and recruitment in their communities. These funds are also integral to our efforts to help our partners rehabilitate and reintegrate former FTFs and their family members, a critical piece of our strategy to address this growing and ongoing threat.

A key component of our ESF investments is supporting international CVE institutions such as Hedayah, Strong Cities Network, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). These institutions are an important part of our approach, they allow us to rally the international community around shared counterterrorism and CVE priorities. As a result of this

approach, we also have seen international donors increase their contributions to these organizations, so the United States' relatively small investments are being matched and exceeded by other key donors such as the European Union, Japan, the Netherlands, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and Switzerland, among others.

Finally, I'd like to highlight that we recognize that it is critical that our partners adopt a counterterrorism strategy and approach based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. Effective counterterrorism efforts and respect for human rights and the rule of law are inseparable. Research has shown that human rights violations can fuel terrorism, conflict, and instability. CT's law enforcement and justice sector programs seek to advance democratic values and respect for human rights to ensure that counterterrorism efforts don't become counterproductive to achieving national security goals. Our programs also greatly rely on progress that USAID and other international donors make on democracy and governance to address the underlying conditions that are conducive to the spread of terrorism in the first place.

Chairman Deutch, Ranking Member Wilson, protecting the United States and our interests against terrorist threats is our top priority. We greatly appreciate the resources Congress has appropriated to us over the past several fiscal years for this important mission, especially your strong support for CTPF. 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 sustain the fight against ISIS, AQ, and other terrorist organizations.