

ORAL TESTIMONY

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HFAC Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats Subcommittee

(Chair Dana Rohrabacher; Ranking William Keating)

and

HFAC Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Trade Subcommittee

(Chair Ted Poe; Ranking Brad Sherman)

“Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia”

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

1:00 pm

Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2172

Chairmen Poe and Rohrabacher, Ranking Members Keating and Sherman,
Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As you have heard from Assistant Secretary Blake, we are in a critical and dynamic phase in our relations with Central Asia. Though the five Central Asian states have been spared large-scale terrorist attacks, the governments in these states are concerned about how the region’s security will fare after the drawdown of ISAF troops in 2014.

The most capable terrorist groups with links to Central Asia, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union, remain focused on operations in western Pakistan and Afghanistan, where they fight U.S., coalition, and local security forces. They fight in alliance with the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, and the Haqqani Network. Neither the IMU nor IJU are considered exceedingly powerful individually, and will likely remain focused on operations in this same region, even after 2014. However, as Assistant Secretary Blake noted, while these groups do not pose an immediate threat to Central Asia, we are well aware of their ambition to destabilize their home countries.

To address this threat and as part of our broader relationship with Central Asia, the United States carries out a number of counterterrorism-focused capacity building programs that seek to develop law enforcement capabilities within a rule of law

framework. Ultimately, counterterrorism and rule of law goals are closely aligned and mutually reinforcing. The better our partners become at using law enforcement tools to identify, disrupt, and then prosecute, adjudicate, and incarcerate suspected terrorists, the less they may feel – or claim – the need to resort to extra-legal methods to crack down on a domestic threat.

Naturally we work with our interagency partners to ensure that State Department funding for counterterrorism capacity building in Central Asia aligns with and complements programs administered by other U.S. government agencies, such as Department of Defense programs that focus on counter-narcotics, nonproliferation, and border security.

Through the Central Asia Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), our assistance focuses on regional counterterrorism cooperation. RSI support allows the FBI to provide its Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS) to the Government of Uzbekistan. AFIS will make it possible for authorities to identify fugitives while still in custody and complements the FBI's international Exchange and Mutual Search of Fingerprint Records agreements with Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

RSI funding also supports a community policing project in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to encourage counterterrorism cooperation in their border areas. By building trust between law enforcement and key figures in local communities, this project aims to encourage law enforcement authorities to work more closely together.

The State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance program (ATA) is being implemented in three of five Central Asian countries, with an emphasis on border controls and increasing counterterrorism investigation capabilities.

ATA programming in the Kyrgyz Republic endeavors to assist local authorities to detect and deter terrorist threats against both the Transit Center at Manas International Airport and the Northern Distribution Network. In Tajikistan, ATA focuses on strengthening border controls, particularly along the Afghan border. We are engaged in talks to resume ATA programming with Uzbekistan, which was suspended in 2005 as a result of human rights concerns.

State Department counterterrorism assistance also focuses on disrupting terrorist finance flows. Under this program, we are providing cross-border financial investigation techniques training for Kazakhstani officials, designed to improve

their capabilities to detect, interdict, analyze, investigate, and seize illicit cross border cash used to finance terrorism.

Finally, and also as noted by Assistant Secretary Blake, the State Department works through multilateral bodies to advance counterterrorism objectives, including the OSCE and UN-specialized agencies. U.S. funding is supporting the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's program to assist the Central Asian countries' efforts to develop legislation to implement UN conventions related to terrorism. These efforts aim to establish a foundation of strong counterterrorism laws across the region with fundamental human rights safeguards.

Through the OSCE, we have funded the NGO, Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), to host workshops and build community-based support networks for vulnerable youth and families at risk of radicalization in Tajikistan.

U.S. funds have also been provided to support implementation of the Global Shield program by UNODC, INTERPOL, and the World Customs Organization. Global Shield aims to increase the capacity of law enforcement officials in the five Central Asian states as well as Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to detect and seize precursor materials in the manufacture of IEDs and to improve the prosecution of IED-related interdiction cases.

Through these and other multilateral initiatives, we seek to expand cooperation between and among the five states of this important region so that responses match the transnational nature of the terrorism threat.

That concludes my introductory remarks. Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss these issues with you.