

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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**THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM:
BUDGET, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES**

**HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION,
AND TRADE**

**June 2, 2015
2:00 p.m.**

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

This hearing comes at a critical time in our counterterrorism efforts. Despite the significant blows to al-Qa'ida's (AQ) leadership, terrorist threats are continuing to develop, enabled by weak or failed governance and sectarian conflicts around the world. We are deeply concerned about the continued evolution of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the emergence of self-proclaimed ISIL affiliates in Libya, Egypt, Nigeria and elsewhere, and tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters propelling conflict in the Middle East and posing a continued threat to their home countries. And as we remain focused on these and other transnational threats, we cannot lose sight of a range of other terrorist threats, including those such as Hizballah that are driven by State actors.

The Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT) is working to promote cooperation, strengthen partnerships, and build civilian capacity around the world to address the full spectrum of terrorist threats – both those threats that exist today and those that may emerge tomorrow. We are requesting additional resources in Fiscal Year 2016 to expand and broaden our partnership efforts. As the U.S. military expands its efforts with foreign militaries, it is equally critical that we strengthen the capacity of civilian security agencies to ensure effective, whole-of-government approaches to terrorism challenges. It is also critical that we expand our

partnerships with non-governmental actors who can help counter violent extremist recruitment and messaging in key regions around the world. Lastly, with governments and non-governmental actors alike, we must do more to address the drivers that fuel the spread of violent extremism.

Let me first provide a brief overview of the evolving terrorist threats we face, which help to shape the formulation of the CT Bureau's activities and budget request.

The ongoing civil war in Syria has been a significant factor in driving worldwide terrorism events. The rate of foreign terrorist fighter travel to Syria – totaling more than 20,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 countries as of March 2015 – exceeds the number of foreign terrorist fighters who traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, or Somalia at any point in the last 20 years. Many of the foreign terrorist fighters joined ISIL, which has seized contiguous territory in western Iraq and eastern Syria. Iraqi forces and the Counter-ISIL Coalition have dealt significant blows to ISIL, but it continues to control substantial territory.

ISIL has begun to foster relationships with potential affiliates beyond Iraq and Syria. Ansar al-Shari'a in Darnah pledged allegiance to ISIL in October 2014, and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, operating primarily out of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, officially declared allegiance to ISIL in November. In January, ISIL's branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan was announced. And in March, Nigeria's Boko Haram, in a video from the group, pledged allegiance to, and was promptly accepted by, ISIL. It still remains to be seen, however, the full scope of what these affiliations mean – whether they are representative of a command relationship, commonality of strategic goals, or merely opportunistic partnering.

As with many other terrorist groups worldwide, ISIL continues to brutally repress the communities under its control and use ruthless methods of violence such as beheadings and crucifixions. Uniquely, however, it demonstrates a particular skill in employing new media tools to display its brutality, both as a means to shock and terrorize, but equally to propagandize and attract new recruits. Boko Haram shares with ISIL a penchant for the use of brutal tactics, which include public beheadings, stonings, indiscriminate mass casualty attacks, and systematic oppression of women and girls, including enslavement, torture and rape.

Though AQ central leadership has been weakened, the organization continues to serve as a focal point of “inspiration” for a worldwide network of affiliated groups, including al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula – a long-standing threat to Yemen, the region, and the United States; al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb; al-Nusrah Front; and al-Shabaab.

In the last year, we have also seen a rise in "lone offender attacks" including attacks in Ottawa (October 22, 2014), Sydney (December 15-16, 2014), Paris (January 7, 2015), and Copenhagen (February 14-15, 2015). In some cases, such as the terrorist assassinations at the Paris publication Charlie Hebdo, it was difficult to assess whether attacks were directed by terrorist organizations or inspired by propaganda produced by ISIL or AQ. These attacks may presage a new era in which centralized leadership of a terrorist organization matters less; group identity is more fluid; and violent extremist narratives focus on a wider range of alleged grievances and enemies. Enhanced border security measures among Western states since 9/11 have increased the difficulty for known or suspected terrorists to travel internationally; therefore groups like AQ and ISIL encourage lone actors residing in the West to carry out attacks on their behalf.

ISIL and other terrorist groups, including al-Nusrah Front, continued to use kidnapping for ransom operations and other criminal activities to raise funds. Much of ISIL’s funding, unlike that of AQ core and similar organizations, does not come from external donations but is generated internally in the areas it controls. We must remain vigilant, however, as ISIL solidifies and expands its sources of revenue. ISIL is estimated to have earned up to several million dollars per month through various extortion and criminal schemes, including through oil smuggling.

ISIL and AQ core are not the only serious threats that confront the United States and its allies. Iran continues to sponsor terrorist groups around the world, principally through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF). These groups include Lebanese Hizballah, several Iraqi militant groups, Hamas, and Palestine Islamic Jihad.

We are concerned about a growth of violent extremists who continue to successfully spread their corrupt ideology, recruiting, radicalizing, and mobilizing people, especially young people, to engage in terrorism.

Over recent years, the CT Bureau has played a lead role in the U.S. government’s efforts to address the evolving threats and securing the counterterrorism

cooperation of international partners. The Bureau has led on a number of initiatives, including the following examples:

- **Addressing Foreign Terrorist Fighters:** The Bureau has coordinated efforts across the Department and interagency to curb the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria, and mitigate threats as some foreign terrorist fighters eventually return home. CT was engaged in the development of UN Security Council Resolution 2178, which drew unprecedented attention to the foreign fighter threat and actions that states can take to address that threat. CT was also instrumental in the development of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) good practices on foreign fighters, which formed the basis for the resolution. Over the past year, the Bureau has led interagency delegations across Europe, North Africa, the Gulf, and Southeast Asia to raise awareness of the foreign fighter threat and press for more effective information-sharing, law enforcement, and border security measures.
- **Building Multilateral CT Coalitions:** The Bureau has played a central role in the development of the GCTF and related institutions, including the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ), the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), and *Hedayah*, the international countering violent extremism center of excellence based in Abu Dhabi. Over the past year, the Bureau has also helped to stand up an international law enforcement task force against Hizballah.
- **Promoting Regional CT Law Enforcement Cooperation:** Through our Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, CT and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security helped to launch a new joint regional exercise for East African law enforcement officials on responding to real-life terrorism scenarios. CT also signed a Trilateral ATA Agreement with the Government of Morocco, which will build the capacity of Moroccan trainers to promote good practices and cooperation with third countries in the Sahel region.
- **Pressuring Terrorist Support Networks:** Since 2013, CT has prepared and processed over 95 new Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designations and Executive Order 13224 listings to pressure and prosecute those who provide support to terrorist organizations. CT has also expanded the use of the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) at ports of entry around the world to identify and deter terrorist travel.

As we look to the future and seek to address the rapidly changing threat environment, we must broaden our tools and expand our partners. President Obama has emphasized that we need to foster strong, capable, and diverse partners who can help to disrupt and degrade terrorist threats where they emerge.

The vital role that our partners play has become even clearer in the last year as we have worked to counter ISIL. The United States has worked to build a strong coalition of 62 countries to counter ISIL. This coalition is reflective of the global commitment to degrade and defeat ISIL, and is not only working to assist the Iraqi government halt ISIL's advances on the ground, but also to combat the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, disrupt ISIL's financial resources, and counteract ISIL's messaging and undermine its appeal.

The United States needs partners who can not only contribute to military operations, but also conduct arrests, prosecutions, and incarceration of terrorists and their facilitation networks. Addressing terrorism in a rule of law framework, with respect for human rights, is critical both for ensuring the sustainability of our efforts and for preventing the rise of new forms of violent extremism. Multilateral organizations and others such as the GCTF play a critical role in promoting good practices and mobilizing technical assistance in this regard.

Similarly, just as we develop partnerships to disrupt terrorist plots and degrade terrorist capabilities, we also need partners – governmental and non-governmental – who can help counter the spread of violent extremist recruitment and address the conditions that make communities susceptible to violent extremism. We must do more to address the cycle of violent extremism and transform the very environment from which these terrorist movements emerge. And that's why we are committed to enlarging our strategy in ways that respond effectively to the underlying conditions conducive to the spread, as well as the visible symptoms of, violent extremism. This was a major theme of the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), which brought together 300 participants from national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, and multilateral organizations, including leaders from more than 65 countries in February 2015. The Summit highlighted the important role that partnering with civil society plays in our counterterrorism efforts. Summit participants committed to advance a comprehensive CVE action agenda, which outlines several cross-cutting workstreams.

With our FY 2016 request, the CT Bureau seeks to expand and broaden all of these partnerships and to bolster the rule of law capabilities of our partners to respond to terrorism in an effective and sustainable fashion. Specifically, CT has requested additional foreign assistance resources to advance the U.S. government's top policy and diplomatic imperatives, such as addressing the threat of foreign fighters and countering and preventing terrorist safe havens and recruitment.

CT has implemented a number of organizational changes over the past year to enable better integration of our policy planning, diplomacy, and program development. The Office of Strategy, Plans, and Initiative enhances CT's strategic planning capacity, and we have reorganized our Office of Programs to align with our regional priorities. We have established working groups for each of the Bureau's focus regions to set clear strategic objectives and maximize our resources. We have also sought to elevate the Bureau's policy efforts on countering terrorist financing and countering violent extremism. We believe these changes will enable us to be more strategic and effective.

In our FY 2016 request, CT has requested funding to sustain our enduring programs: ATA, CT Engagement with Allies (CTE), Counterterrorism Financing (CTF), CVE, and Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP). This funding is critical to advance our multi-year capacity-building goals with specific countries and regions. Focus areas for these programs include crisis response, aviation and border security, counterterrorism legal frameworks and prosecutions/investigations, and countering violent extremist messaging and recruitment. This funding will also enable us to continue to support innovative multilateral efforts by GCTF, GCERF, *Hedayah*, and the IIJ to promote good practices in civilian counterterrorism.

At the same time, the Department has requested an additional \$390 million in the Non-proliferation Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs – Overseas Contingency Operations (NADR-OCO) account for the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF). This would provide the Department of State with additional, flexible resources to broaden our counterterrorism partnership activities in an integrated fashion. The additional resources provided by CTPF would also enable us to expand and pursue new types of programming, such as building vetted law enforcement units, promoting fusion centers, researching local drivers of violent extremist threats, and empowering civil society and religious leaders to counter violent extremism. This funding would also enable us to develop coordinated capacity building efforts with the Department of Defense, which

received \$1.3 billion in CTPF funding in FY 2015, and ensure a balanced approach with our CT partners.

The additional resources provided by CTPF would enable us to increase our law enforcement and other civilian efforts to address foreign terrorist fighters, counter and prevent terrorist safe havens, and counter Hizballah's worldwide activities. Additionally resources will enable us to deepen partnerships with governmental and non-governmental actors to counter the spread of violent extremism such as strengthening partnerships between communities and local security services, building community resilience, and providing positive alternatives to violent extremism. In particular, we see significant opportunities to ramp up our efforts in North Africa, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia to strengthen partnerships and get ahead of evolving threats. We believe there are also significant opportunities to counter Hizballah, building on the work of the new international law enforcement task force.

CT takes very seriously the importance of managing U.S. taxpayer funding and ensuring maximal impact. Over the past year, CT has adopted a results-focused approach to program design and management aimed at improving performance, outcomes, and accountability with an overarching goal of ensuring the sustainability of our collective efforts. We have developed a set of tools and best practices to determine progress and results, and to facilitate performance-informed decision making. We continue to create monitoring plans for all of our activities and involve third party contractors for targeted evaluations to inform future programming. Evaluation recommendations have allowed us to refine and focus the programs as well as identify areas for improvement in programming. We have also developed an internal tracking Project Activity Management System that allows program managers to track detailed reports on activities, enabling constant monitoring.

The terrorism challenges that we face continue to evolve at a rapid pace, and we cannot predict what the landscape will look like one decade or even one year from now. However, we believe we can best protect America's interests and people over the long run by engaging in robust diplomacy, expanding our partnerships, building bilateral and regional capabilities, and promoting holistic and rule of law-based approaches to counter terrorism and violent extremism. The CT Bureau has a critical, central role to play in these efforts. With the support of Congress, we will continue to take steps to be more strategic, effective, and sustainable. We

appreciate Congress' support in this regard and look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

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