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**Written Testimony of
Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism Justin Siberell
U.S. Department of State**

**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee: Terrorism, Nonproliferation & Trade
Hearing: “Bureau of Counterterrorism’s FY 2017 Request”
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Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for this opportunity to address the Subcommittee on the work of the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, our ongoing diplomatic efforts to advance the United States’ foremost counterterrorism priorities, and the funding we believe is required to advance these goals and keep America safe in the years to come. The work that the Bureau is doing to build the capacity of civilian actors – governmental and non-governmental alike – is increasingly central to defeating the terrorist threats we face.

The United States confronts a fluid and fast-changing terrorist threat environment. The international community has made some progress in degrading terrorist safe havens. In particular, the US.-led coalition to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, or Da’esh) has made significant strides in reducing ISIL’s control of territory in Iraq and Syria, as well as the finances and foreign fighters available to it. At the same time, continued instability in key regions of the world, along with weak or non-existent governance, sectarian conflict and porous borders provide terrorist groups like ISIL the opportunity to extend their reach, terrorize innocent civilians, attract and mobilize new recruits, and threaten partner countries.

In the face of increased military pressure, ISIL, al-Qa’ida, and both groups’ branches and adherents have pursued mass-casualty attacks against symbolic targets and public spaces. Attacks in Bamako, Beirut, Brussels, Jakarta, Paris, and elsewhere have heightened political attention around the world and raised both the urgency and political will of our partners to act against the evolving threat posed by these groups. In the case of ISIL, these attacks may also have been staged in an effort to assert a narrative of victory in the face of steady losses of territory in Iraq and Syria.

The United States and our partners around the world face significant new challenges as we seek to contend with the return of foreign terrorist fighters from Iraq and Syria, the risk of terrorist groups exploiting migratory movements, and

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new evolutions in technology that enable terrorist groups to recruit adherents and inspire attacks using publicly-accessible platforms and applications. We will release the annual *Country Reports on Terrorism* later this month, which will describe these and other trends in greater detail.

President Obama has called for the United States to develop more effective partnerships around the world to confront, disrupt, and defeat the global threat from terrorism. As the Bureau charged with leading the Department of State's bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism diplomacy and capacity-building, the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism is playing a critical role in developing those partnerships. Through our diplomatic engagement, we are working to strengthen and expand counterterrorism cooperation and information-sharing with key countries around the world. We are engaging not just with national government officials, but also increasingly with sub-national government officials and civil society leaders.

The success of U.S. counterterrorism efforts increasingly depends upon capable civilian partners. Police, investigators, and prosecutors are on frontlines of preventing and responding to asymmetric attacks by terrorist groups, especially attacks on so-called soft targets. Border and aviation security officials are working to stop foreign terrorist travelers, transfer of materiel, and terrorist threats. Moreover, local law enforcement, prison officials, and community leaders are on the frontlines in preventing and countering radicalization and recruitment to violence in their communities. The Bureau is leading efforts in these areas to build capacity and cooperation among these civilian actors.

We appreciate Congress' appropriation of \$175 million for the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF) in Fiscal Year 2016. With these and other Bureau resources, we will strengthen the ability of key law enforcement and criminal justice sector actors from the Sahel to Southeast Asia to more effectively disrupt terrorist threats in their countries and address factors that make communities susceptible to violent extremism. Such efforts are critical in supporting existing whole-of-government approaches against ISIL, al-Qa'ida and other groups that threaten American lives and interests. We are also expanding our engagement with European partners to ensure they enhance capabilities to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, improve information sharing, and disrupt local terrorist recruitment networks. We look forward to briefing the Subcommittee regularly as we develop and implement the capacity building initiatives enabled by this increased CTPF funding, and hope for Congress' continued support for CTPF in Fiscal Year 2017, which will enable us to build on the efforts we are

undertaking this year. For FY 2017, we have also requested additional funding for our Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), which provides a highly valuable capability for countries to strengthen border controls, through enhanced technology and training. When terrorists attempt to cross an international border, they open themselves up to risk of apprehension. There is no excuse for governments not enforcing effective border controls – many of our partners are attuned to this challenge and are eager for U.S. advice and engagement to improve their own systems.

As part of our overall strategy, we also believe that we must increase our focus on preventing the spread of violent extremism in the first place – to stop the radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization of people, especially young people, to engage in terrorist activities. Secretary Kerry has directed the Bureau to play the lead role in enhancing and coordinating the Department’s work on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). The Department has renamed the Bureau and increased personnel resources to support this mission. We appreciate the support of Congress for this effort. In this role, we will be working very closely with USAID and the newly-established interagency Global Engagement Center (GEC) to promote a more strategic, integrated, and ultimately accountable approach to CVE. In collaboration with the GEC, the Department has requested additional resources for CVE programming in Fiscal Year 2017 – including as part of CTPF – to expand partnerships with government, non-governmental, local communities, and civil society actors who can help counter violent extremist messaging and narratives and the recruitment and mobilization that they drive.

Mr. Chairman, we are seeking to leverage the Bureau’s tools and programs to advance the U.S. government’s foremost counterterrorism priorities and objectives: countering ISIL’s global expansion, maintaining pressure on al-Qa’ida and its affiliates, and constraining Iran’s terrorist networks, including Lebanese Hizballah. We are also focusing on building priority capabilities across key regions: countering radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism, reducing terrorist mobility and ease of travel, and preventing and mitigating terrorist attacks on soft targets.

Countering ISIL’s Global Expansion

The Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism has led U.S. efforts to address and mitigate the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Since 2012, FTFs from more than 120 countries have traveled to Iraq and Syria. While some have died on the battlefield, others have returned home. We

are now seeing a reduction in flows of foreign terrorist fighters to the conflict zone. Over the last year, we assess that we continue to make progress in addressing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

Led by our Senior Advisor on Foreign Terrorist Fighters, the Bureau has been actively engaged in promoting global cooperation and information sharing to address FTF threats. Senior Bureau officials engage regularly with foreign counterparts from the key FTF source and transit countries to increase coordination against the threat posed by FTFs. We are working with partners to put in place the fundamental reforms necessary to address this threat, including by increasing information sharing, strengthening border security and strengthening legal regimes. For example, we have led efforts to deploy interagency Foreign Fighter Surge Teams to several European countries, including Belgium and Greece, to strengthen information-sharing on known and suspected terrorists, and use of this information in traveler screening and financial investigations. In addition, we obligated more than \$20 million in Fiscal Year 2014 funding for programs to help partner nations address FTF threats.

These efforts have yielded results. Since the passage of landmark UN Security Council Resolution 2178 in 2014, approximately 45 partner countries passed new laws or updated existing laws to address FTFs. Through the Bureau's diplomatic efforts, we now have information-sharing arrangements with 55 international partners to assist efforts to identify, track, and deter the travel of suspected terrorists. We also supported INTERPOL to expand its Foreign Fighter Fusion Cell. 58 countries, plus the United Nations, now contribute foreign terrorist fighter profiles to INTERPOL. At least thirty-five countries have reported arresting FTFs, and 12 have successfully prosecuted at least one foreign terrorist fighter. During the past year, we also increased U.S. and UN terrorism designations of known FTF recruiters. Turkey – a critical geographic chokepoint in the flow of FTFs – has also increased detentions, arrests, and prosecution of suspected FTFs, and taken important steps to improve the security of its border. While criminal justice tools are a key component of the approach to FTFs, we are also helping train countries on how to rehabilitate and reintegrate returning FTFs where appropriate – a scenario that is playing out frequently in countries across the world.

Beyond FTFs, the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism is also actively engaged in supporting partner nations to counter the spread of ISIL's affiliates and networks. We have increased engagement with our North African partners to address the ISIL branch and other terrorist groups in

Libya. We plan to significantly expand support for Tunisia as it copes with threats emanating from Libya. We are also providing significant support to countries in the Lake Chad Basin region as they contend with the threat posed by Boko Haram, which has declared its allegiance to ISIL. For example, we are training law enforcement from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria on skills for conducting border security operations and preventing and responding to terrorist attacks, especially attacks involving improvised explosive devices. We are increasingly devoting resources to prevention-focused CVE initiatives in communities that are likely to be targeted for recruitment by ISIL, including in partnership with USAID. And, together with the Global Engagement Center, we are expanding programs to help countries to counter ISIL's messaging and narratives, which the group relies upon to recruit new fighters.

Maintaining Pressure on al-Qa'ida and its Affiliates

While al-Qa'ida's senior leadership has been significantly weakened, the organization and especially several of its affiliates continue to pose a threat to the United States and our allies. The Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism provides significant assistance to build law enforcement capacity in Afghanistan and Pakistan to effectively respond to, investigate, and prosecute acts of terrorism. This past year, we launched a new training and exercise program to promote cooperation between Afghan and Pakistan law enforcement forces in patrolling their shared border and disrupting terrorist transit. In both countries we are supporting programs to counter recruitment by terrorist groups in prisons – an issue of growing concern around the world.

We are also actively supporting regional efforts to counter al-Qa'ida affiliates, especially al-Shabaab, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb, and al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). In Somalia, for example, we have helped to establish and train four Joint Investigative Teams to respond to terrorist incidents. These teams have been the first to respond to some of the recent attacks in Mogadishu, including the attempted bombing of an airliner in March 2016. In Somalia, we are also providing support for efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia and civil society partners to promote defections from al-Shabaab and to establish a process for registering, rehabilitating, and when appropriate, reintegrating disengaged fighters. Over the past year, hundreds of fighters have left al-Shabaab and gone through this program.

Constraining Iran's Terrorist Networks

As we work to implement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, the United States has also continued its work to stop Iran's sponsorship of terrorism. As will be described in the forthcoming *Country Reports on Terrorism*, Iran continues to support terrorism through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force and Lebanese Hizballah. Iran continues to be deeply involved in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, including through the support of terrorist groups.

The Bureau of Counterterrorism is leading efforts to mobilize international awareness and cooperation to counter illicit, destabilizing activities by Iranian-sponsored terrorist groups, including Hizballah. In close partnership with our colleagues at the Department of Justice, we have convened investigators, prosecutors, and sanctions experts across Eastern Europe, South America, West Africa, the Middle East, and soon Southeast Asia to identify strategies and to increase cooperation in countering Hizballah's illicit activities. With the European Police Service, we have established an International Law Enforcement Task Force focusing on Hizballah's terrorist and illicit activities. We have also been actively engaged with the Gulf Cooperation Council and increased our information-sharing on Iranian proxies.

Countering Radicalization and Recruitment to Violent Extremism

As we have learned over the past decade, it is not enough to just degrade and disrupt terrorist groups through security measures. To be effective over the long run, we must also address the ways in which these groups draw local support and attract new recruits, while intervening in the life cycle of violent extremism. While there will never be justification for acts of terrorism, we must seek to understand and address the factors that drive people to such evil. The nature and range of possible drivers can vary greatly – from individual psychological factors to community-based grievances, sectarian divisions, and religious intolerance. However, there are certain common factors that could potentially increase the levels of support for violent extremism in communities, including exposure to terrorist messaging and locally-influential recruiters, experiences with state-sanctioned violence and abuse, heavy-handed tactics by security services, the presence of inter-state or intra-state conflict, and the systematic denial of opportunity.

In February 2015, President Obama brought together over 60 countries, 12 multilateral bodies, and representatives from civil society, business, and the religious community to discuss this challenge. That Summit and the subsequent process have sparked a broad-based effort to better understand and address the factors that drive radicalization and recruitment to violence within specific communities. Earlier this year, the UN Secretary General released a Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism, which calls for the UN system to enhance its efforts to address violent extremism. It also outlines a range of recommendations for member states, including the development and implementation of national CVE action plans.

The Bureau of Counterterrorism is playing a leading role in carrying forth this work, in coordination with other Department and interagency partners. We have led the development of the first-ever State and USAID Joint CVE Strategy, which we will release later this month. Through the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), we are developing a toolkit for governments to effectively address the life cycle of radicalization to violence – outlining good practices for prevention to intervention to rehabilitation and reintegration. We are supporting the Strong Cities Network, an effort to connect mayors and municipal officials around the world to share their experiences and, importantly, their best practices. We are also developing new tools for governments to prevent radicalization to violence in prisons and help them ensure that former fighters are rehabilitated and reintegrated back into society whenever possible and appropriate. Further, the Department is working in conjunction and in coordination with the newly-formed domestic CVE Task Force, led by the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice. The CVE Task Force is coordinating the U.S. Government’s overall approach, strategy, and execution of the CVE mission in the United States. The Department of State is a member of the Task Force, and we are elevating our engagement with key international partners on CVE, including the European Union, the United Nations, and the World Bank.

With our assistance, several countries in the Western Balkans have developed and begun to implement new national CVE strategies targeting the radicalization and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters. In East Africa, the Department of State’s CVE programs have helped mobilize initiatives by civil society – especially women and youth – to push back against violent extremist messaging and recruitment. With our engagement, several countries in Southeast Asia have adopted and begun to implement new policies for handling terrorist inmates and countering prison radicalization. We believe we can have much greater impact with additional funding for CVE, and that is why we are asking for

an additional \$59 million in Economic Support Fund (ESF) resources as part of our FY 2017 CTPF request in support of our joint strategy with USAID. ESF funds are crucial to enable us to support programs involving civilian government, civil society, and community partners.

Reducing Terrorist Mobility and Ease of Travel

Another critical ongoing focus for our work is addressing the ability of terrorists and their facilitators to move easily across borders – especially airports and land borders. We are providing significant assistance to help partner countries enhance their capacity to patrol these borders and conduct effective screening of travelers. We are working closely with the Department of Homeland Security to implement reforms to the Visa Waiver Program and strengthen compliance among European countries. We have funded advisors from the Transportation Security Administration to assist airport officials with implementing effective passenger and cargo screening procedures. We are also training law enforcement across East Africa, the Sahel-Maghreb, and South Asia on effective land border patrol operations.

The Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP) provides critical funding and technical expertise to help countries to screen passengers at airports, seaports, and major land border ports of entry. Through this program, we provide and train countries with Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation Systems (PISCES), a proven technology. As we seek to address the transit of foreign terrorist fighters, it is critical that countries have the capacity to collect travelers' data and check it against terrorist databases. We have implemented PISCES in more than 20 countries around the world, and hope to grow that number over the coming year. That is why we have asked Congress for increased funding – \$30 million – to support this critical program.

Through the GCTF, we are also working to develop new globally-focused good practices for governments on effective border security and management. We have teamed up with the Kingdom of Morocco and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) in this Border Security Initiative. The Initiative has convened a series of workshops among border practitioners and experts in key regions such as the Sahel and Horn of Africa to define actionable, practical and replicable good practices that partners and nations can undertake. In the Sahel, we are also piloting a new program to strengthen partnerships between border law enforcement units and border communities.

Preventing and Mitigating Terrorist Attacks on Soft Targets

The Bureau of Counterterrorism is also focusing on building law enforcement capacity across countries to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks, especially against soft targets and critical infrastructure. Through the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, we are training and equipping dedicated crisis response teams throughout Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia to respond to attacks. Where appropriate, this is done in coordination with efforts by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Special Program for Embassy Augmentation and Response (SPEAR) program to enhance U.S. embassy security. In East Africa, we have established a new annual exercise that brings together law enforcement from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda to respond to real-life terrorism scenarios, especially drawing lessons learned from the Westgate Mall attack in 2014. We hope to replicate such exercises in other regions over the coming years.

These efforts have delivered results. In Jakarta, U.S.-trained Indonesian law enforcement units were the first to respond to and disrupt the attack on a shopping mall in January 2016. In Kenya, U.S.-trained law enforcement and border security units have been successful in disrupting and mitigating attacks by al-Shabaab, including in northeastern Kenya. In Nigeria, U.S.-trained bomb disposal units have detected and detonated improvised explosive devices, saving lives. With our engagement, countries are developing policies and plans for increasing the security and resilience of critical infrastructure, including through increased partnerships with the private sector. Through advisors and legal support, we are also helping countries to conduct investigations and prosecute those responsible for attacks.

Fostering a Culture of Collaboration, Planning, Learning, and Innovation

Mr. Chairman, we have made a number of changes within the Bureau of Counterterrorism over the past year to foster a culture of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, learning, innovation, and collaboration. We have established an Office of Strategy, Plans, and Initiatives charged with articulating clearly defined goals for the bureau's work across priority areas and then reviewing, on an ongoing basis, how the Bureau's various programs and activities are advancing those goals. This involves close coordination with the Intelligence Community, the Department's regional and functional bureaus, and interagency partners. We have also expanded collaboration with these actors to enhance our analysis and planning for the CTPF. In addition, the Bureau has established a Strategic Monitoring Team to develop and implement a framework for tracking progress against the Bureau's policy priorities and identifying strategic,

organizational, and resource changes to better advance these policy priorities. These efforts have enabled us to move toward a more analytical and evidence-based decision-making process.

We have also retooled our Office of Programs to strengthen the design, management, oversight, and monitoring and evaluation of our increased foreign assistance resources. Our Programs officers work closely with other State Department program and desk officers and embassy staff and conduct regular field visits to monitor ongoing programmatic efforts. We have launched a comprehensive, third-party evaluation of our ATA program, which is set to be completed later this month. This is in addition to the regular assessments that are conducted every two to three years in ATA partner countries. In addition, we have just awarded a new contract for a third-party evaluation of our CVE program. While many of our past CVE programmatic efforts have been experimental and smaller-scale to date, we believe this evaluation will provide us with important insights for future program design and targeting. We are also partnering with the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations to develop a guide for monitoring and evaluation of CVE programs. We are committed to undertaking additional evaluations of our larger-scale programs.

Mr. Chairman, surely there is more work to do. We know there are areas where we can and must improve, especially as the terrorism landscape evolves. Nevertheless, I am proud of what we are accomplishing in the Bureau of Counterterrorism. We have a talented team of people who are committed to the work of countering terrorism and keeping their country safe. We greatly appreciate Congress' interest and support for our efforts. I look forward to your questions and our discussion.