

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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**U.S. Department of State Counterterrorism Bureau:
Ensuring Resources Match Objectives**

**HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade**

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Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for this opportunity to discuss the work of the State Department's Counterterrorism Bureau, the Administration's new National Strategy for Counterterrorism, and our ongoing efforts to protect America's security at home and abroad.

The CT Bureau continues to play a critical role in efforts to defeat transnational terrorist organizations. And our partners remain integral to our success. We will continue to leverage these partnerships to advance U.S. counterterrorism priorities and address the full spectrum of terrorism threats.

The Administration's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request for the CT Bureau includes more than \$237 million to implement the President's counterterrorism strategy. This request prioritizes funding for programs that advance our long-term capacity-building goals and directly support top counterterrorism priorities. The programs address critical areas, including crisis response; aviation and border security; counterterrorism legal frameworks (i.e., for investigations, prosecutions, and corrections); countering the financing of terrorism; and addressing terrorist radicalization, recruitment, and rehabilitation.

The FY 2019 request also reflects our commitment to balancing and 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.

I would like to also like to highlight the Administration's new National Strategy for Counterterrorism, which was released on October 4. This is the fourth strategy released since 9/11 and the first one since 2011. It reflects today's fluid, complex, and diverse terrorist landscape, and lays out the Administration's plan for defeating our terrorist adversaries.

The strategy sets forth a comprehensive whole-of-government approach that relies on both civilian and military tools. Unlike previous approaches, this strategy does not focus on one or two terrorist organizations or particular countries or geographic regions. Rather, it sets forth foundational principles and priorities to pursue globally, largely along thematic lines. It is comprehensive, emphasizing a wide range of tools that can counter a broad array of terrorist threats. The strategy also renews our commitment to defeating global terrorist organizations and networks, such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida. In addition to these groups, Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian regime and its terrorist proxies have a truly global reach and we must elevate our efforts to counter Iran's destructive activities around the world.

This is an "America First" strategy, but that does not mean "America alone." Terrorism is a global threat, and all nations have a role to play in countering it. The strategy specifically highlights the value of promoting existing counterterrorism partnerships and developing new ones, building our partners' capabilities, and addressing terrorist radicalization and recruitment.

In particular I'd like to run through the strategy's themes that are relevant to global partnerships and international capabilities. The strategy establishes six lines of effort to eliminate the terrorist threat to the United States:

1. Pursue terrorist threats to their source;
2. Isolate terrorists from financial, material, and logistical sources of support;
3. Modernize and integrate a broader set of United States tools and authorities to counter terrorism and protect the homeland;
4. Protect United States infrastructure and enhance preparedness;
5. Counter terrorist radicalization and recruitment; and
6. Strengthen the counterterrorism abilities of international partners.

The United States will remain a global counterterrorism leader and the State Department plays an important role in all six of these areas. We are at the forefront of the U.S. Government's efforts to establish stronger and more robust counterterrorism partnerships, to bolster the counterterrorism capabilities of key

foreign governments, to expand information sharing between and within partner nations, and to support locally-driven terrorism prevention.

We are prioritizing the allocation of U.S. resources and encouraging allies and partners to assume a greater share of the burden. As part of this strategy, we will be working closely with our partners to encourage them to use their unique resources, relationships, and reach when it comes to countering and defeating global terrorist organizations.

Terrorist Threats to the United States and our Interests

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, determined, and adaptable. They have adjusted to heightened counterterrorism pressure. Ninety-nine percent of the territory ISIS once held in Iraq and Syria is now liberated, and more than 7.7 million people have been freed from ISIS' brutal rule. Approximately 50 percent of all the territory liberated from ISIS in Iraq and Syria has been recovered since President Trump took office in January 2017. Yet despite these successes, this fight is not over – it is simply moving into a new phase.

While foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) are no longer traveling to the conflict zones, they are now leaving Iraq and Syria to head home or travel to third countries. Attacks by homegrown terrorists – those inspired or directed by ISIS or al-Qa'ida who have never stepped foot in a war zone – are also increasing. And as counterterrorism efforts shift from the battlefield, civilian tools will have to play a larger role against these evolved terrorist threats.

ISIS has adapted to its battlefield losses by plotting, directing, and inspiring attacks around the world, particularly on soft targets and in public spaces like hotels, tourist resorts, and cultural sites. We have seen this trend in Bamako, Barcelona, Istanbul, Jakarta, London, Marawi, Ouagadougou, and New York City, among others.

Despite core leadership losses over the years, al-Qa'ida's global network has quietly expanded its ranks and operations worldwide and its footprint now includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Mali, Yemen, Somalia, and other countries. Al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri continues to call for attacks on the United States and our citizens around the world.

Meanwhile, Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian regime is responsible for intensifying multiple conflicts and undermining U.S. interests in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Sometimes it acts directly through state organs such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Qods Force; sometimes it acts through terrorist partners, such as Hizballah or proxies such as Shia militia groups. Tehran supports Palestinian terrorists in Gaza and provides hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, equipment, and training to other terrorist groups. Iran also continues to perpetuate a civil war and humanitarian crisis in Yemen through its support of Houthi militants which threatens U.S. citizens living in Saudi Arabia. The threat posed by Iran's support for terrorism is not confined to the Middle East, however. It is truly global.

On June 30, German authorities arrested an Iranian official under diplomatic cover for his role in a terrorist plot to bomb a political rally near Paris, France. Authorities in Belgium and France also made arrests in connection with the plot. Other Iranian and Hizballah operatives have been arrested in the past several years in Europe, Africa, South America, Asia, and the United States – demonstrating the global reach of these networks.

Since 2012 alone, Hizballah has conducted a successful terrorist attack in Bulgaria that killed six, undertaken two separate plots in Cyprus, developed large caches of military equipment and explosives in Kuwait, Nigeria, and Bolivia, and sent terrorist operatives to Peru and Thailand.

Prioritizing Targeted Assistance

The United States needs knowledgeable and capable partners to address these evolving terrorist threats that endanger the United States and our interests around the world. These partners' border security officials, police, prosecutors, and other civilian officials play an important role in our efforts to prevent global terrorists from attacking the United States.

To this end, we are requesting Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, and Demining Related programs (NADR) and Economic Support Funds (ESF) in FY 2019 for targeted, high-impact assistance to enable governments to address the threats we care about most. These efforts include isolating and cutting off terrorist organizations from their means of support, countering the threat posed by returning FTFs and homegrown terrorists, and preventing and mitigating terrorist attacks. We see this as an investment not only in these countries' safety but also in our own security as

well. Our goal is for our partners to ultimately be able to address the terrorist threats they face independently, without turning to the United States for assistance.

Disrupting Terrorist Travel

To support the strategy's border security and terrorist travel objectives, the CT Bureau will support partners' efforts to detect terrorists well before they reach our own borders. The CT Bureau, in close coordination with interagency colleagues, works with our foreign partners to increase security at their borders to better identify, restrict, and report the travel of known and suspected terrorists. We are leading the charge on greater information sharing and promoting effective screening and watchlisting practices around the world.

These efforts received a powerful boost last December, when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2396. UNSCR 2396 includes a number of critical measures to combat terrorist travel and address homegrown terrorists inspired by ISIS, al-Qa'ida, and similar groups. It takes a number of counterterrorism tools the United States pioneered after 9/11 and calls on the rest of the world to live up to the same standards.

First, the resolution requires all UN members to collect and use Passenger Name Record (PNR) data to detect and stop terrorist travel. PNR is the information associated with an airline reservation. Border officials can use PNR data and other information to identify potentially risky travelers based on certain travel patterns, scenarios, or relationships. For example, authorities can use PNR to identify a passenger whose reservation included a telephone number associated with a known terrorist. That enables border officials to make risk-based operational decisions before a traveler boards an aircraft or enters our country.

Second, Resolution 2396 requires member states to maintain watchlists of known and suspected terrorists and to collect and use biometrics, such as fingerprints and photos. These tools help authorities spot terrorists if they attempt to board planes or cross borders. And because we all need to interdict threats before they reach our respective shores, the resolution calls for states to share this information internally and externally.

To help our partners meet these requirements, we are increasing our investments in border security capacity-building programs through the Administration's request for the Antiterrorism Assistance program, the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), and the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF). Working through the Global

Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the United States and Morocco launched the Terrorist Travel Initiative on the margins of the 2018 UN General Assembly. This initiative is bringing together national and local governments, law enforcement and border screening practitioners, and international organizations to share expertise on watchlisting and screening tools and to develop a set of international good practices.

Through the CTPF program, we are also working together with INTERPOL to extend connectivity of its I-24/7 secure global police communications system to more air, land, and sea ports of entry in priority countries. This will ensure that INTERPOL databases – such as notices on FTFs and stolen and lost travel documents – can be used for traveler screening. Since 2016, we have helped Indonesia and Malaysia bring more than 31 ports of entry into the system. The tangible impact of this program was on full display in April of this year, when Indonesian officials detained an individual wanted by the United States when he attempted to enter Indonesia at Bali International Airport.

We must be sure that our partners have the border security technologies to keep pace with evolving terrorist tradecraft. Through TIP, we are continuing to improve and expand the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) program. PISCES provides state-of-the-art border screening systems to 24 countries around the world. The increasing sophistication that terrorist groups use to create fraudulent travel documents, coupled with changes in terrorist travel patterns, prompted the CT Bureau to invest in advanced technologies such as facial recognition algorithms for PISCES.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism

We have made significant advances in counterterrorism finance, but more work remains. We must work with private and public sector partners to deny terrorist funding for their operations. As such, we need our partners to develop the necessary legal regimes to sanction terrorists and their financial and logistical enablers. We don't just want to stop the bomber, we want to stop the moneyman who pays for the bomb.

So far this year, the State Department has announced 50 terrorist designation actions against groups and individuals under our Foreign Terrorist Organization and Executive Order 13224 authorities. Where possible, we bring these designations to the United Nations for action, which can be a force multiplier for our domestic sanctions.

Through the Counterterrorism Finance program, the CT Bureau is also funding technical assistance programs that increase our partners' capacity to prevent terrorist financing and more effectively monitor and supervise their financial systems. When we improve their ability to identify and freeze terrorist assets, use financial intelligence, and investigate and prosecute suspects, we help shut down terrorists' access to the international financial system.

For example, in Iraq and Somalia, the CT Bureau is funding advisors who are providing training and on-site mentoring services for financial regulators to help prevent terrorists from being able to abuse the financial sector. In Qatar, the CT Bureau is partnering with the Departments of Justice and the Treasury to **strengthen** Qatar's ability to prosecute terrorism cases with a focus on terrorist financing.

Countering State Sponsors of Terrorism

Countering Iran and its terrorist proxies is a top priority for the Trump Administration. We will continue to use all tools at our disposal to counter these serious threats. Pressing for greater international action against Hizballah in particular is one of our top diplomatic priorities, and we are engaging our partners at high levels to deliver this message.

Along with the Department of Justice, the CT Bureau continues to lead the U.S.-Europol Law Enforcement Coordination Group (LECG). The LECG, which now includes more than 30 countries, provides a forum for law enforcement practitioners and counterterrorism experts to develop strategies on how to counter Hizballah using law enforcement and financial tools.

As part of the Administration's campaign to increase pressure against Tehran, just yesterday, we sanctioned a number of Iranian-linked entities and individuals using counterterrorism authorities. We sanctioned Jawad Nasrallah as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) under Executive Order 13224. Jawad Nasrallah is a rising Hizballah leader and the son of SDGT Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hizballah. Jawad has previously recruited individuals to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel in the West Bank. In January 2016, he tried to activate a suicide bombing and shooting cell in the West Bank, but the Israeli government arrested the five Palestinians recruited to the cell. We also designated the Al-Mujahidin Brigades (AMB) yesterday. The AMB is a military organization that has operated in the Palestinian Territories since 2005 and whose members have

plotted a number of attacks against Israeli targets. AMB has ties to Hizballah, and Hizballah has provided funding and military training to AMB members.

In addition, the State Department issued multimillion dollar Rewards for Justice against two Hizballah terrorist leaders – this is the first time this authority was used to target Hizballah in more than a decade.

The CT Bureau is increasing its efforts to give law enforcement and justice sector partners the capabilities they need to uncover and dismantle Iran’s terrorist logistical and fundraising networks. Countering Iran and its terrorist proxies will remain one of the primary areas of focus for our capacity building efforts under CTPF.

Strengthening Law Enforcement Capacity and Multilateral Cooperation

The CT Bureau’s efforts to increase the ability of partner nations to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate terrorism-related cases is integral to the enduring defeat of ISIS, al-Qa’ida, and other terrorist networks. We are working with partners to provide key law enforcement tools and legal frameworks focused on the latest terrorist threats.

In Somalia, CT-funded Joint Investigative Teams have investigated more than 300 attacks, successfully referring 18 complex cases for prosecution in court. Investigations by these CT-funded teams have led to multiple convictions in high-profile terrorism cases, including the bombing in Mogadishu in October 2017 – Somalia’s deadliest attack ever. Nearly 600 people were killed, including several American citizens, and more than 300 were injured.

In the Balkans, recently enacted FTF laws have led to guilty dispositions for 192 people over the last few years. Local prosecutors built these cases using skills and training provided by two CT-funded Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisors working in the region.

In Afghanistan, at the beginning of Eid celebrations in August, ISIS-Khorasan fired about 30 mortar rounds at Kabul’s diplomatic quarter and the Presidential Palace. Response teams, funded by the CT Bureau, arrived at the scene within minutes, led the counter assault, neutralized five ISIS attackers, and destroyed the terrorists’ firing positions.

In Tunisia earlier this year, the Tunisian National Guard unit stationed in Kasserine carried out simultaneous raids on six homes associated with terrorism suspects. The

unit detained seven suspects, conducted sensitive site exploitation, and seized a cache of weapons and ammunition. The Tunisians credit CT-funded training with giving them the skills and confidence to execute this type of raid on their own.

Countering the Threat of Returning FTFs and Homegrown Terrorists

Countering the threat posed by FTFs and their support networks remains at the top of our priority list. We are now focusing on FTFs leaving the war zone in Syria and Iraq. The travel-related efforts I mentioned above – such as UNSCR 2396 and the GCTF Terrorist Travel Initiative – will be key elements of this enterprise.

We are also addressing the repatriation and prosecution of FTFs detained by our partners on the battlefield. We are encouraging foreign partners to take responsibility for their own citizens and ensure they have the laws, systems, and capabilities to prosecute them for any crimes they have committed. Some of our partners have the resources and capabilities to tackle these problems on their own, but others do not. In these cases, our assistance can be critical in enabling them to repatriate and prosecute their citizens. We are requesting ATA and CTPF funding to continue these efforts.

Handling returning FTFs is only one part of this equation. Countries also need to prevent the next generation of terrorists from emerging in the first place. This line of effort is essential to reducing recruitment and radicalization. These efforts are of critical importance and the Administration devotes an entire chapter to it in the new strategy.

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, protecting the United States against terrorist threats is the CT Bureau's top priority and the Administration's FY 2019 budget request supports these efforts. We are robustly implementing the Administration's National Strategy for Counterterrorism. We appreciate the increased resources Congress has appropriated to us over the past several fiscal years for this important mission. We are encouraged by the successes from these investments and the partnerships we are building, only a few of which I highlighted today.

The terrorist threat is constantly evolving and we must adapt along with it. As the new strategy highlights, we must continue to prioritize efforts to dismantle terrorist safe havens and disrupt the movement of terrorist fighters and their resources. We

will continue to work hand-in-hand with domestic agencies and international partners to expand cooperation and promote civilian approaches to counterterrorism.

We greatly appreciate your support in this shared endeavor. I look forward to your questions.