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Strategic Asia and the War on Terrorism

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Thank you Dr. Ellings for that kind introduction.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to be here to speak with you today, and I would like to thank the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, its Board and benefactors, and the excellent staff of the National Bureau of Asian Research for organizing the Strategic Asia Program and this symposium.

Critical thinking and public discussion about the war on terrorism are crucial to our success, and I appreciate the work of Dr. Tellis and the distinguished research team who are your panelists today. As I look at list of contributors to "Strategic Asia 2004-5", I see that you have truly assembled a group of America's leading specialists. The volume they have produced is impressive for its authoritative assessment of the shifting strategic landscape in Asia-Pacific region. Their efforts are very important to promoting transparency--the open and free exchange of information and ideas--which is critical to getting a handle on the challenges we face.

As we have seen all too recently and tragically in Russia and Indonesia, the threat from terrorism persists despite our best efforts and the progress we have made. I'd like to begin today with a brief overview of U.S. counterterrorism strategy and efforts, and then I'd like to follow with some thoughts on the war on terrorism in Asia.

U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy

Following the September 11 attacks, the United States has been clear: any person or government that supports, protects, or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent, and will be held to account. We have done so through our National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, which creates the policy framework for coordinated actions to prevent

terrorist attacks against the United States, its citizens, its interests, and its friends around the world and, ultimately, to create an international environment inhospitable to terrorists and all those who support them.

As Dr. Tellis notes, we have implemented this strategy to act simultaneously on four fronts:

- **Defeat** terrorist organizations of global reach by attacking their sanctuaries, leadership, finances, and command, control and communications;
- **Deny** further sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists by cooperating with other states to take action against these international threats;
- **Diminish** the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit by enlisting the international community to focus its efforts and resources on the areas most at risk; and
- **Defend** the United States, its citizens, and interests at home and abroad.

The National Strategy highlights that success will come only through the sustained, steadfast, and systematic application of all elements of national power--diplomatic, financial, law enforcement, intelligence, and military.

The United States is committed to combating terrorism the world over, in whatever form it takes to threaten the American people and interests and others. The main focus of our efforts since September 2001 has been on the al-Qaida organization.

Let me briefly tell you about the progress we have made, and how the al-Qaida organization looks far different than it did in September 2001.

Successes Against al-Qaida

Since September 11, 2001, more than three-quarters of al-Qaida's senior leadership and more than 3,400 lower-level al-Qaida operatives or associates have been detained or killed in over 100 countries, including Bali bombing mastermind Hambali, largely as a result of cooperation among law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Terrorist cells have been wrapped up around the globe, from Singapore to Italy and Saudi Arabia, as well as here at home (Buffalo, Portland, and North Carolina).

A global dragnet has tightened around al-Qaida, made possible by a broad coalition of 84 nations, all focused on the common goal of eradicating the terrorist threat that endangers all civilized nations.

We have made extensive efforts to attack al-Qaida's finances, which are the lifeblood of its murderous activities, including the movement of operatives, the corruption of officials and local populations, and the acquisition of arms and explosives. Since 9/11, more than 170 countries have issued orders freezing or seizing approximately \$72 million in terrorist-related financial assets. The U.S. has designated 387 entities as terrorists or supporters of designated terrorists, and frozen nearly \$142 million in terrorist-related assets. Almost 1,500 terrorist-related accounts and transactions have been blocked around the world, including 151 in the United States. Over 80 countries have introduced new terrorist-related legislation, and 94 have established Financial Intelligence Units to block money laundering and the misuse of charities in the support of terrorists.

Meanwhile, we have strengthened our defenses in the United States, including a comprehensive reorganization of our government to more effectively protect our homeland. We have implemented more stringent screening procedures, and worked with the international community to raise global law enforcement and security standards. We have also been engaged to provide many countries with the training and assistance needed to support and expand their own counterterrorism efforts.

Evolving Threat

I would now like to take a few minutes to describe how the al-Qaida threat has evolved over the past 3 years. Our ongoing operations against al-Qaida have served to isolate its leadership, and sever or complicate communications links with its operatives scattered around the globe. Unable to find easy sanctuary in Afghanistan and elsewhere, the al-Qaida leadership must now devote much more time to evading capture or worse. This has complicated al-Qaida's communication and coordination efforts, which are more difficult and more time-consuming in the current operating environment. We have also seen examples of terrorist activities delayed for extended periods as al-Qaida affiliates await instructions from an increasingly isolated central leadership.

Also, as al-Qaida's known senior leadership, planners, facilitators, and operators are brought to justice, a new cadre of leaders is being forced to step up. These individuals are increasingly no longer drawn from the old guard, no longer the seasoned veteran al-Qaida trainers from Afghanistan's camps or close associates of al-Qaida's founding members. Critical gaps have been cut out of the al-Qaida leadership structure, and these relatively untested terrorists are assuming greater responsibilities. We are relentlessly going after these new leaders as they are identified.

The removal of the Taliban regime from Afghanistan by Coalition forces stripped al-Qaida of its primary sanctuary and support, and shut down long-standing terrorist training camps. Although our work continues in Afghanistan to root-out the remnants of al-Qaida's former strength, al-Qaida has lost a crucial safe haven. In short, al-Qaida has been deeply wounded and has been forced to evolve in ways not entirely of its own choosing in order to remain a viable threat.

Al-Qaida has proven to be resilient, despite its loss of leadership and safe havens. We have seen al-Qaida and other terrorist groups forming a global jihadist network, which seeks to exploit weak counterterrorism regimes and to establish links with other like-minded terrorist groups to raise funds, recruit, spread propaganda, plan, and conduct terrorist attacks. Al-Qaida, while still dangerous, is less capable as an organization than it was in 2001.

Al-Qaida as a Movement

There are growing indications that a number of largely Sunni Islamic extremist groups are moving to pick up al-Qaida's standard and attempting to pursue global jihad against the United States and its allies.

In particular, groups like Ansar al-Islam and the Zarqawi network pose a real threat to U.S. interests, as has been shown very clearly by their deadly activities in Iraq. In Asia, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are also working to further murderous designs of which al-Qaida certainly approves.

While it would be a mistake to believe that we are confronted by a monolithic threat composed of legions of like-minded terrorist groups working in concert against our interests, it would be fair to say that we are seeing

cooperation between al-Qaida and smaller Islamic extremist groups, as well as even more localized organizations.

Identifying and acting against the leadership, capabilities, and operational plans of these groups poses a serious challenge now and for years to come.

South Asia

The South Asia region is another front line of the Global War on Terror and we have seen significant advances here over the last 2 years. Across the region we are involved in training military and police to better combat terrorists, along with helping to provide the necessary resources to do the job.

In Afghanistan, we are helping to transform a principal source of regional instability into a secure and prosperous country. There is still a long way to go, but the Afghans have had success in building a framework for a democratic system that will be fleshed out by upcoming elections.

This transformation cannot succeed, however, without security, and elements of the Taliban, along with other terrorists, are making efforts to reconstitute their forces. We and our allies are building a network of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) throughout the country to help provide local security and to coordinate development and reconstruction while easing the transition to civilian rule. We are cooperating with Japan and the UN to disarm and demobilize militias.

In Pakistan, we are working closely with the Government to capture or destroy elements of al-Qaida and the Taliban that remain within Pakistani borders. Pakistan ranks fourth in the world in the amount of terrorist assets frozen, and the latest efforts to round up al-Qaida operatives has brought the number of suspected terrorists arrested to over 550. We also continue to look to Pakistan to do everything in its power to end militant infiltration into Kashmir and dismantle any remaining training camps. The Government has taken steps to curb this infiltration, but we are asking it to redouble its efforts.

In October 2003, the Pakistani army began operating against al-Qaida and other terrorist groups in the historically off-limits Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The operations have been increasingly effective and we believe that these efforts, along with coalition operations on the other side of the border in Afghanistan, have made it extremely difficult for the al-Qaida leadership to direct terrorist operations.

Since December 2001, the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE have observed a cease-fire and conducted several rounds of negotiations. The talks are currently stalled. The LTTE claims to have renounced violence, but is widely believed to be responsible for a recent suicide bombing and several assassinations of rivals within the Tamil community. The LTTE will remain on the list of designated Foreign Terrorists organizations until it truly renounces terrorism in both word and deed.

Despite these frustrating developments, we recognize that during the previous rounds of talks both the LTTE and the GoSL have made concessions, and we remain hopeful that further negotiations will result in an end to the violence there.

In August 2003, the Maoists in Nepal abrogated their cease-fire with the government and began a renewed campaign of assassination bombings and attacks on security forces. In October, the U.S. designated the Maoists as terrorists under

E.O. 13324, subjecting them to financial sanctions. The Nepalese have inflicted heavy casualties on the Maoists, but the conflict cannot be decided by military force. We urge the Maoists to agree to a new cease-fire and renewed negotiations as soon as possible.

Southeast Asia

Let me turn now to a region that concerns us greatly: Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is a major front in the global war on terrorism, and continues to be an attractive theater of operations for regional terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). What worries us is the disparity between the level of threat--and reality of future attacks is a certainty--and the capacity of host governments to respond. There is much at stake in Southeast Asia.

The primary terrorist threat in Southeast Asia remains JI attacks against soft targets, the September 9 bombing outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta notwithstanding. As "official" targets have hardened, we can expect murderers like JI to shift to soft targets, including commercial shipping in vulnerable waterways.

The governments in Southeast Asia have been reliable partners in the war on terrorism, but they face tremendous challenges to dealing with the terrorist threat. Indonesia, for example, has arrested over 110 suspected terrorists and convicted some 30 terrorists since the October 2002 Bali bombings. Yet as Indonesia is a vast archipelago, effective border control is extremely difficult. They are also paying a price in blood shed and lives lost. One need only consider that all those killed in the attack on the Australian Embassy were Indonesian nationals. We are also concerned that government officials, such as the recently assassinated Indonesian prosecutor, will become targets.

We are making progress. We have a robust Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program throughout the region, and we are seeing results. In 2003, Thai authorities captured Hambali, JI's operation chief and the al-Qaida point man in Southeast Asia. Several ATA alumni were among the security forces. In the Philippines, we have seen success as the Philippine National Police have thwarted plots in Manila and arrested suspected members of JI and the Abu Sayyaf Group, using skills and techniques acquired through ATA. In Indonesia, my office implemented an eight million dollar program to train and equip a specialized counterterrorism unit within the Indonesian National Police, called Special Division 88. This unit has significantly contributed to the arrests and prosecution of members of JI, the group responsible for the bombings at Bali, the Marriott, and most likely the Australian Embassy. In Thailand and the Philippines, we are also working to stop terrorists at border entry points by providing training and computer equipment to establish a name-check database called the Terrorist Interdiction Program.

Because terrorism in Southeast Asia is a regional problem, we also work in a regional context to provide CT assistance. Through centers like the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) in Malaysia and the U.S.-Thailand International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, we are providing counterterrorism training to law enforcement officers throughout the region. We are also working with other capacity-building providers to leverage our efforts and resources. In Jakarta and Manila, for example, our embassies coordinate CT assistance programs with other embassies to avoid duplication of effort and to maximize the amount of training we can provide.

By working with the governments in Southeast Asia and other regional partners, we are making consistent progress towards increasing Asian governments' capabilities to fight terrorism and prevent the region from becoming a sanctuary for terrorists.

Tailored Strategies

While the military aspect of the struggle against terrorism is vital, it is not and has not been the sole component of our effort. Looking forward, intelligence and law enforcement will be areas of special importance. By intelligence, I don't mean espionage, the gathering of information, but information-sharing. By law enforcement, I mean working to prevent an attack, not only working for a conviction after an attack has occurred. These will be of critical importance.

We continue to advance USG counterterrorism efforts by working closely with our international partners on a bilateral basis and in various multilateral fora, including the United Nations Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee (UNCTC), G-8's Roma-Lyon and Counterterrorism Action Groups, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

We continue to diminish underlying conditions that terrorists exploit to operate and recruit. Poverty, corruption, religious conflict, ethnic strife, and suppressing democratic expression "breeds frustration, hopelessness and resentment--and ideological entrepreneurs know how to turn those emotions into either support for terrorism or acquiescence to it" (Secretary Powell). The President's *Millennium Challenge Account* will be an increasingly important way to improve the economies and standards of living where help is most needed and where governments have taken the first steps toward ruling justly, investing in people and promoting economic freedom.

We continue to develop public diplomacy approaches to de-legitimize terrorism, to encourage moderate Islamic leaders to speak out against extremism, and to explain USG counterterrorism policy.

Take Away Message: U.S. Cannot do it Alone

I hope you have noted my many references to partners and other governments. Our efforts to counter the threat recognize the fact that the United States cannot do it alone.

Partners such as Australia, Japan, the U.K., and others are assisting the U.S. in providing training and assistance. We continue to look for ways to develop cooperative counterterrorism assistance programs for less-capable countries. Many countries need assistance in developing their capabilities to counter terrorism and strengthen their legal framework. There is more than enough work for all of us, and we look forward to cooperating even more closely with our allies like Australia and Japan in providing capacity building assistance in the region.

Good news is that most Southeast Asian governments have taken steps to develop effective counterterrorism regimes, but these are works in progress. Addressing the factors that inhibit our ability to cooperate even more effectively will be a long-term process. Differing legal, cultural, and historical traditions and practices will complicate and slow progress. However, there is no doubt that all of us are increasingly aware of both the threat and the deficiencies that limit our abilities to address the challenge of terrorism.

The scope of the terrorist threat makes clear that no one country can hope to succeed in fighting the war against it alone: as President Bush has stressed on numerous occasions, the global threat we face requires a global strategy and a global response--and this is exactly what we are seeking to do, both bilaterally with our partners, and by coordinating with the United Nations and other international organizations to fight terrorism in every corner of the globe. In that effort, we

have many close and reliable partners in Asia: Cooperation has been forthcoming, and rapid response to immediate threats the norm.

Conclusion

Terrorists in Asia have proven their resilience, but our successes every day mean that they are spending more and more time looking over their shoulders. To win the global war against this threat, we must and will continue to work closely together to address the challenges before us and to build on our many successes.

Of one thing I am certain: the coalition of civilized nations will stand together to fight terrorism. Terrorists and those who support them will be given no respite, no refuge from the justice they deserve. They will be brought to justice, or justice will be brought to them. We are in this fight together, and for the long haul; there can be no accommodation with this evil. Thank you.



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