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U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy Update

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Testimony Before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation

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Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Sherman, Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I will summarize my formal written statement and ask that you include my full testimony in the record.

Since 1776 the United States has often waged war against tyranny and terror. Sadly, throughout the last couple of centuries terror has been an enduring tactic employed by our enemies. In this modern era we face a rapidly evolving global battlefield and a transformative enemy that embraces terrorism in new ways, and thus poses unique challenges. Certainly, globalization, modernization, and the development of democracy and free markets afford us many wonderful opportunities for peace and prosperity. Yet, this globalization dynamic imposes political and cultural stress, and reactionary forces exploit this stress and employ terrorism as a means and, sometimes, as an end. For some, terrorism serves to define their political agenda and to provide them identity. al-Qaida, without terrorism, is nothing. Hizballah uses terrorism to achieve political goals, such as boosting their power and prestige to win seats in Lebanon's parliament. Iran and Syria export terrorism to serve their narrow, selfish national interests. The FARC in Colombia, in concert with narco-traffickers, terrorizes for political and economic gain. So, terrorism not only has various adherents and forms, it may serve various ends. We must understand these differences, to formulate and implement more effective and enduring strategies.

To further complicate this challenge, note the shifting terrain upon which this war is waged. Our foes exploit the explosive growth of media and the internet, as well as the ease of travel and communication around the world. These advancements have made possible the rapid movement of operatives, expertise, money, and explosives. Terrorists no longer depend on personal contact to plan, organize and conduct their attacks: they use the media and the internet to advance key messages, rally support, share experiences, recruit, train, and spread fear.

With the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge, terrorists acquire new tactics and new weapons, such as multiple shaped charges detonated along our convoy routes in Iraq. Suicide bombers trigger explosive-laden backpacks in soft

target sites, in London and Bali. Enemy operatives seek to develop expertise in biological and chemical weapons, as revealed in anthrax labs and training manuals seized in Afghanistan in 2001-2002.

The enemy is also learning to deploy in smaller numbers, in teams or individuals or even remotely -- with increased lethality. From an operational perspective, these enemy forces are developing into micro targets with macro impact. This trend is challenging our notion of warfare, operationally, legally, politically, and even philosophically.

The enemy learns and adapts, and takes advantage of our modern, progressive, and global society. We must learn and adapt, also.

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks 4 years ago, we and our allies have waged an unremitting war against al-Qaida, its associates and its supporters. We have been on the offensive, and taken the fight to the enemy in a campaign of direct and continuous action that has degraded the ranks of al-Qaida's leaders and operatives; constricted the space that terrorists operate in and transit through; and choked the enemy's lifeblood by cutting off key funding channels and sources. These offensive measures continue to bolster the security of the United States and its citizens and interests abroad. As the President noted in his 6 October speech, in the last four years, we have stopped 10 major al-Qaida attacks, three aimed at our homeland.

While we and our international partners have made great strides, we must do more.

In the case of al-Qaida and affiliates, we confront a loose confederation of extremist networks targeting the United States, its allies and interests, and the broader international system. According to Australian strategist David Kilcullen, this confederation has many of the characteristics of a globalized insurgency. Its aim is to overthrow the existing international system and replace it with a radical, totalitarian pan-Islamic "Caliphate." Its methods include intelligence collection, analysis, counterintelligence, deception, denial, propaganda, subversion, terrorism, insurgency and open warfare. So, while we speak of "terrorists" we must focus not only on "terrorism," but rather on all the methods they employ. We must also focus on their strategy, and attack that as well.

Al-Qaida gains strategic strength from making local conflicts their own, from aggregating these conflicts, from deploying operatives on a global scale. We must, therefore, cut the links, material and ideological, from al-Qaida and its affiliates and prevent al-Qaida from recruiting more allies. We must cut these links and isolate the enemy. These links include ideology, finances, intelligence, communication, cultural affiliation, training, and other support infrastructure. Toward that end, we must cut these ties while we simultaneously attack three strategic objectives:

- . Enemy leadership;
- . Enemy safe havens, which include
 - o **geographic space**, such as state sponsors of terrorism, failing states, ungoverned areas where terrorists can train and organize;
 - o **cyberspace**, which provides internet-based means for communication, planning, resource transfer and intelligence collection; and
 - o **ideological space**, which includes belief systems and cultural norms that enhance the enemy's freedom of action;
- . The conditions the enemy exploits to advance their cause -- local groups, grievances, communal conflicts and societal structures that may provide fertile soil in which extremism flourishes.

As the President stressed in the 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, we must engage these strategic targets with all instruments of statecraft, to include diplomacy, military power, the rule of law, economic power, and intelligence/covert action. We must orchestrate these instruments, in harmony for each particular environment, for each specific target. This requires intensive intelligence collection and analysis, followed by sharp and quick action. More than ever, the intelligence sensor must be linked to policy conductor, at all levels.

This is yet another challenge in this global war, the challenge of multiple level operations. We must simultaneously work at four levels: global, regional, national, and local. This is where we can break the links that al-Qaida seeks to forge. Breaking these links helps eradicate or diminish enemy safe haven, usually in border areas which confounds operations based exclusively on national level operations. This is also how to attend to the local conditions that the terrorist seek to exploit; deny them disenfranchised and angry young men as recruits, and deny them the operatives for terrorist attacks.

This is not just an academic outline, but a viable operational method that has worked. In Afghanistan in 2001-2002, the United States placed an emphasis on local, national, regional, and global conditions, on fracturing enemy forces, on employing all instruments of statecraft, and on providing hope and opportunity for the dispossessed. In Southeast Asia, from where I have just returned, the rapid U.S. response to the tsunami in Sumatra helped accelerate a peace accord in Aceh. The strong regional leadership of the Malaysian government may forge a peace accord between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, perhaps helping to deny safe haven in Mindanao for JI operatives that threaten Indonesia and the region. And, in southern Thailand, a local conflict must be addressed, before al-Qaida and affiliates can exploit to their own ends.

There is another example where al-Qaida seeks to claim a local conflict as their own: Iraq. Al-Qaida and its allied foreign fighters seek to hijack, transform, and direct local, Sunni, Baathist insurgents in Iraq. They view Iraq as a training ground and indoctrination center for Islamic extremists from around the world. They not only want to defeat the US and our Iraqi allies, but also the notion of democracy in the Middle East. The enemy is recruiting, especially from countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Networks endeavoring to funnel would-be combatants to Iraq have been disrupted in several European countries. In the near future, some of these battle-hardened fighters from Iraq could return to their home countries or our own, exacerbating domestic conflicts or providing new skills and experience to existing extremist networks in the communities to which they return. Iraq, therefore, presents local, national, regional, and global consequences and opportunities, for the enemy and for us.

How we define the various enemy forces, cut their links, and isolate them, in partnership with our local allied forces, will be the key to breaking the insurgency. In addition, as Secretary Rice said when she testified before your counterparts in the Senate (October 19), we and the Iraqi Government will succeed when we:

- Keep Iraq from becoming a safe haven from which Islamic extremists can terrorize the region or the world.
- Demonstrate positive potential for democratic change and free expression in the Arab and Muslim world, even under the most difficult conditions.
- Turn the corner financially and economically, so there is a sense of hope and a visible path toward self-reliance.

Success in Iraq and all counterterrorism conflicts depends upon the success of our partnerships. The State Department, with the cooperation and support of other Federal agencies, works to build the political will and practical capacity of other governments and non-state actors, such as international organizations, to combat terrorism. We have intensified

old relationships and built new ones with foreign militaries, intelligence services, law enforcement authorities, foreign ministries, and banking officials to advance our common counterterrorism goals. We are working with foreign civic groups, provincial officials, tribal authorities, business leaders, educators, and a growing array of private sector partners who have vested interests in political stability, liberal institutions such as free markets, and democracy.

We have sought to focus the resources and abilities of a wide variety of multilateral organizations to build a seamless global counterterrorism web. Immediately after 9/11 we pressed the UN to set new, higher international standards for combating terrorism. We have worked to encourage all countries to ratify and implement the existing international conventions and protocols on counterterrorism. President Bush signed the UN Nuclear Terrorism Convention on September 14, the first day it was open for signature. We are working closely with our allies to secure final agreement on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism which will close additional gaps in international law. We are coordinating with allies who have the ability to provide assistance -- such as the EU and the G-8 -- to build will and capacity to combat terrorism around the globe.

We ask, encourage, and when necessary pressure other governments to counter existing threats within their borders or to prevent a terrorist problem from taking hold. If these foreign governments do not have the means, we coordinate the resources of the State Department, the Intelligence Community, DOD, the Justice Department, the FBI, Treasury, Homeland Security, and other agencies to provide the tools and training required. Because of the U. S. Government's collective efforts, our foreign partners have successfully identified and interdicted terrorist groups, passed legislation to criminalize terrorism and terrorist finance that meets international standards, and improved their ability to enforce those laws and prosecute those who violate them. And, our partners are teaching us about the nature of the enemy, about the conditions they exploit, and about the benefits of such partnerships.

As we seek to defend our homeland and to attack the terrorist enemy, we must also find a way to counter the appeal of violent ideologies. Similar to the Cold War, we must understand the social and political conditions that terrorists exploit, and address these conditions while we simultaneously engage the enemy directly. We and our allies must convince these exploited populations that alternatives of prosperity, freedom, and hope are possible. Ultimately, we will beat al-Qaida's hateful intentions and twisted ideology by deploying our most powerful weapon: the ideals and values upon which this great country was founded. These ideals and values, however, should not be imposed, but rather we must create the political space for others to establish their own brand of liberal institutions and democracies, to suit their needs.

We are working to develop a comprehensive strategy to de-legitimize terrorism and to encourage efforts by the majority of Muslims who reject violent extremism. As the President noted in his 6 October speech, "the most vital work will be done within the Islamic world, itself." In his excellent book "No god but God," Reza Aslan notes that it will take many years to defeat those "who have replaced Muhammad's original version of tolerance and unity with their own ideals of hatred and discord." But, he adds, that "the cleansing is inevitable, and the tide of reform cannot be stopped. The Islamic Reformation is already here." So we must listen to Muslim reformers and support their efforts to bring forth Islamic democracy, as in Iraq.

We are not only broadening our partnerships in the Islamic world, but refining our public diplomacy, becoming more effective in countering extremist propaganda, and advancing our broader strategy in concrete ways. Specifically,

- . The President has launched a new effort to promote freedom and democracy. In a September 19 address to the

United States Institute of Peace, the President's Advisor for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Frances Townsend underscored the President's freedom agenda and its importance in our counterterrorism strategy.

- The U.S. will further encourage economic prosperity based on free market and free trade principles.
- The U.S. will support international educational reform that demands intellectual integrity and tolerance, and prepares young people to compete in an international economy, as an alternative to systems that promote ignorance, fear, and paranoia.
- The U.S. will advocate women's rights. One half of the world's population needs not only a voice, but a leadership role in all countries.
- The U.S. will work bilaterally and multilaterally to address local and regional conflicts that global terrorists seek to exploit.

So, we must provide a more effective policy context, at all levels, to enable those operators and implementers to orchestrate the instruments of statecraft. We must engage the enemy, especially its leadership, with unrelenting vigor. We must deny the enemy safe haven. We must address the broader conditions that terrorists exploit, providing viable, attractive alternatives to the disaffected. Toward that end, we must continue to build international partnerships. All of this will take time; all of this will require the kind of sustained, determined, focused effort that will last as long as required. We must steel ourselves for a long, hard, and complex war. But we've done this before, and we have won. We will do so again. The American people expect no less. Thank you. I welcome your questions or comments.

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