

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE COUNTERTERRORISM
BUREAU: THE FY 2018 BUDGET**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————
SEPTEMBER 7, 2017
—————

Serial No. 115–87

—————

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/> or
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

—————
U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

26–759PDF

WASHINGTON : 2018

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EDWARD R. ROYCE, California, *Chairman*

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, Florida
DANA ROHRABACHER, California
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
JOE WILSON, South Carolina
MICHAEL T. McCAUL, Texas
TED POE, Texas
DARRELL E. ISSA, California
TOM MARINO, Pennsylvania
JEFF DUNCAN, South Carolina
MO BROOKS, Alabama
PAUL COOK, California
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania
RON DeSANTIS, Florida
MARK MEADOWS, North Carolina
TED S. YOHO, Florida
ADAM KINZINGER, Illinois
LEE M. ZELDIN, New York
DANIEL M. DONOVAN, Jr., New York
F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, Jr.,
Wisconsin
ANN WAGNER, Missouri
BRIAN J. MAST, Florida
FRANCIS ROONEY, Florida
BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK, Pennsylvania
THOMAS A. GARRETT, Jr., Virginia

ELIOT L. ENGEL, New York
BRAD SHERMAN, California
GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York
ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey
GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida
KAREN BASS, California
WILLIAM R. KEATING, Massachusetts
DAVID N. CICILLINE, Rhode Island
AMI BERA, California
LOIS FRANKEL, Florida
TULSI GABBARD, Hawaii
JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
ROBIN L. KELLY, Illinois
BRENDAN F. BOYLE, Pennsylvania
DINA TITUS, Nevada
NORMA J. TORRES, California
BRADLEY SCOTT SCHNEIDER, Illinois
THOMAS R. SUOZZI, New York
ADRIANO ESPAILLAT, New York
TED LIEU, California

AMY PORTER, *Chief of Staff* THOMAS SHEEHY, *Staff Director*
JASON STEINBAUM, *Democratic Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

TED POE, Texas, *Chairman*

JOE WILSON, South Carolina
DARRELL E. ISSA, California
PAUL COOK, California
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania
LEE M. ZELDIN, New York
BRIAN J. MAST, Florida
THOMAS A. GARRETT, Jr., Virginia

WILLIAM R. KEATING, Massachusetts
LOIS FRANKEL, Florida
BRENDAN F. BOYLE, Pennsylvania
DINA TITUS, Nevada
NORMA J. TORRES, California
BRADLEY SCOTT SCHNEIDER, Illinois

CONTENTS

	Page
WITNESS	
The Honorable Nathan Alexander Sales, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, U.S. De- partment of State	3
LETTERS, STATEMENTS, ETC., SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING	
The Honorable Nathan Alexander Sales: Prepared statement	5
APPENDIX	
Hearing notice	24
Hearing minutes	25
The Honorable Ted Poe, a Representative in Congress from the State of Texas, and chairman, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade: Prepared statement	26
The Honorable Dina Titus, a Representative in Congress from the State of Nevada: Questions submitted for the record	28

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
COUNTERTERRORISM BUREAU:
THE FY 2018 BUDGET**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:00 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Paul Cook presiding.

Mr. COOK [presiding]. The subcommittee will come to order. Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

This hearing right now—I had the pleasure of meeting with our guest and talking about some of the issues beforehand. This is an area that is extremely important in light of what is going on in the world. And counterterrorism is something that has a lot of different opinions, solutions, and what have you, but this is one which is not going to go away and I am delighted that we have our guest with us.

And right now I don't see anyone else, and I am not going to chastise the ranking member for taking his time getting down here, but I know here is my very, very good friend, Representative Keating, from the great state of Massachusetts. So I was just in your district where I spent some time with my family and it was absolutely great. So I am going to turn to the ranking member for 5 minutes for an opening comment.

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you Mr. Chairman and thanks for coming and spending money in my district, and it is always a pleasure to team up with you as we have on many issues and will continue to do in the future. And for Chairman Poe and yourself and myself, this is an important hearing on a very important subject; so I would like to thank you and I would like to thank the chairman for holding this hearing.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Sales for joining us today. And once again, I had the pleasure to do this the other day, extend my congratulations on your appointment to this position and I look forward to working with you on U.S. counterterrorism policy and how we can be more effective in addressing what is truly a global threat.

Terrorist attacks, we have witnessed, take innocent lives and wreak havoc in communities not just domestically but around the world. And they underscore how critical the issue is for promoting greater security for us here at home and for our families around the world because of these great and challenging threats.

It is widely understood that the fight against terrorism is not solely taking place on battlefields. Violent extremism incubates where individuals are denied access to justice and an opportunity to provide for their own families' basic needs. It spreads when we do not dismantle terrorist financing networks or when governments turn a blind eye to terrorism, even as it undermines their own legitimacy and ability to guarantee security for their own people.

It grows when conflicts emerge, humanitarian crises unfold, or new governments struggle to establish the institutions that are necessary to bring their countries through what are often turbulent transitions. This is why the State Department is so critical to our security and combating terrorism. Terrorism is a global threat and requires coordination with our allies and partners throughout the entire world.

We cannot shut down terrorist financing networks, support new democratic governments, stimulate investment and economic growth, track foreign fighters, and train law enforcement and counterterrorism units on securing our communities by ourselves. Yet these and so many other steps are necessary—and if we want to live in a world we do not have to wake up daily to new developments in the fight against terror, we will have to address these issues.

And our diplomats, Foreign Service officers, and countless individuals serving their country at the State Department make our partnerships and cooperation with other countries possible. State Department funding provides the relief, training, and investment that is critical for generating the stability and security needed for eradicating the threat of terrorism.

This funding comes with the expertise of the entire department of individuals who understand the local contexts and leaders and geopolitical issues to different conflicts and who are best positioned to make sure when the money is being spent to combat terrorism it is being spent in ways that further American security as well.

That is why I was joined by so many of my colleagues in our disappointment with the President's State Department budget, cutting nearly a third of the Department's budget at a time when we face numerous complex security challenges throughout what is an increasingly more dangerous world.

Today we are here to address the counterterrorism aspects of the budget request and I look forward to hearing from you on your priorities and plans for using critical human and funding resources available through the State Department and partner agencies across the U.S. Government. If we fail to really use diplomacy and strategic investments in promoting stability we will be mired in conflict and the threat of terrorism for decades to come.

Thank you again, Ambassador Sales. I look forward to hearing your testimony and thank you for being here and taking the time to meet this week. I yield back.

Mr. COOK. Thank you, Congressman Keating.

Before I introduce our witness I just want to explain what is going on here. Right now we have got multiple hearings and there is one over at the House Committee and there is one in Judiciary which have a lot of attention going on, besides that votes and everything like that; so I want to apologize for the three-ring circus that you are part of. And sometimes you come in here it is very, very busy, sometimes you feel like the Lone Ranger—no pun intended. But I am personally delighted to have you here particularly after our conversation, and I am rest assured you are going to do a great job.

So without objection, the witness' prepared statement will be made part of the record. I ask that the witness keep your presentation to no more than 5 minutes. Hopefully we are going to have other members that will join us here because this subject is so important.

So right now I want to introduce the Ambassador, Ambassador Sales. He is the Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the State Department. Ambassador Sales was previously a law professor at Syracuse University of Law, and before that Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Department of Homeland Security. And he is from, as I said, Syracuse in the Northeast, where I had occasion to spend some time and I hope he has thawed out since those experience after leaving California.

So, Ambassador Sales, once again, it is our honor to have you here, and please give your presentation. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE NATHAN ALEXANDER SALES, COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador SALES. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chairman Cook and Ranking Member Keating and members of the subcommittee. It is a wonderful opportunity to discuss—

Mr. COOK. Excuse me. Do you have your microphone on or—
Ambassador SALES. Yes, I do. Closer, point. Right.

Chairman Cook, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Counterterrorism Bureau's work and our efforts to keep America safe. I have been on the job about 3 weeks now, and I am grateful for the chance to speak with you so early in my tenure at the State Department.

Since 9/11, the United States has been the world's counterterrorism leader. We have invested a great deal of blood and treasure in taking the fight to our enemies. CT will always remain a top American priority, and we emphatically state that we will not retreat from our global leadership role, but it is time for the rest of the world to step up too.

Our friends and allies must share more of the burdens, financial and otherwise. We need them to make the same commitments that we have made to fight terrorism around the globe. Now sometimes that means military action, but it is just as important to confront terrorism with civilian tools.

The administration's goal is to degrade the terrorism threat to a level where it can be addressed with civilian mechanisms like law

enforcement, diplomatic engagement, and capacity building—measures where the CT Bureau has long played a central role. In our fiscal year 2018 request we have prioritized three programs: The Counterterrorism Partnership Fund, the Antiterrorism Assistance program, and the Terrorist Interdiction Program.

Let me quickly run through a few of our most important diplomatic efforts and programmatic efforts. First, the protection of soft targets: Terrorists increasingly are attacking soft targets like hotels, resorts, and cultural sites. We have seen the trend in Barcelona, Berlin, London, Manchester, and Nice, and here at home as well in places like Orlando and San Bernardino.

To counter this growing threat, CT has spent the past year working with our international partners through the Global Counterterrorism Forum to develop a set of international good practices on the protection of soft targets. We hope to finalize these recommendations and announce them publicly in the very near future.

Second, information sharing: It is essential that we share counterterrorism information especially at international borders. Working with our international partners here at home, the State Department has concluded bilateral agreements under HSPD-6 for sharing information about known and suspected terrorists.

Since 2007, 65 countries around the world representing all corners of the earth have signed HSPD-6 agreements. That includes all 38 members of the Visa Waiver Program. When fully implemented, these agreements will help us identify, track, and prevent the travel of those who would do us harm.

Third, aviation security: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups continue to prioritize attacks on commercial aviation. Look no further than last year's attack on Daallo Airlines or the recently thwarted plot in Australia. Along with DHS, the CT Bureau is working to elevate the baseline of global aviation security and ensure that our foreign partners can respond to these deadly threats.

Fourth and finally, capacity building: The CT Bureau uses the foreign assistance funds that Congress appropriates to improve our partners' counterterrorism capabilities. We are helping them help themselves. In particular, we assist in building their ability to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate terrorism-related cases. To investigate we provide training, equipment, and mentoring to law enforcement; to prosecute we teach lawyers how to prepare persuasive, well-developed cases that will lead to convictions; and to adjudicate, we work with judges so they have a better understanding of the complexities and challenges of deciding terrorism cases. In my written testimony you will see examples where these efforts are yielding concrete and tangible results.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, the terrorist threat is constantly evolving and along with our friends and partners around the world, we too must evolve to meet that threat. We greatly appreciate Congress' support in this shared endeavor. I look forward to your questions and to our discussion. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Sales follows:]

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

NATHAN A. SALES

Coordinator for Counterterrorism

U.S. Department of State Counterterrorism Bureau: The FY 2018 Budget

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

September 7, 2017

2:00 p.m.

Chairman Poe, Ranking Member Keating, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for this opportunity to speak about the work of the Counterterrorism Bureau, our ongoing diplomatic and programmatic efforts to advance U.S. counterterrorism priorities, and the funding we believe is required to advance these goals and keep America safe in the years to come. Simply put, terrorism is a global threat, and the United States cannot fight it alone. More than ever, we need willing and able partners.

The CT Bureau is playing a leading role in the U.S. government's international efforts to promote counterterrorism cooperation, strengthen partnerships, and build civilian capacity to address the full spectrum of terrorist threats – both today's threats and the ones that may emerge tomorrow. Building on the increased funding that was made available to the CT Bureau for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017, the Department's Fiscal Year 2018 request for CT includes more than \$228 million to continue and sustain our civilian counterterrorism partnership efforts and strengthen partner capabilities.

The Administration's fundamental counterterrorism objective is to degrade terrorist threats to a level that they are capable of being addressed by civilian authorities. That is why we are strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies and other civilian partners – from Justice and Interior Ministries to border and aviation security officers to police departments. Our goal is to ensure effective, whole-of-government approaches to terrorism. These will become even more important as our successes in Iraq and Syria against ISIS's false caliphate will be followed by efforts against the remnants of its global network. We also must do more to prevent and counter recruitment and "inspiration" of a new

generation of terrorists, and we are expanding our partnerships with private actors who can help counter terrorist recruitment and messaging.

In the CT portion of the FY 2018 budget request, we have prioritized sustaining three key programs: the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF), the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, and the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP). These programs are critical to advancing our long-term capacity-building goals. The focus areas for these programs include crisis response, aviation and border security, counterterrorism legal frameworks (i.e., prosecutions and investigations), counterterrorism financing, and addressing terrorist radicalization, recruitment, and rehabilitation.

Funding requested under ATA will also allow us to continue to support innovative multilateral efforts by U.S.-created institutions such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Institute for International Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ), where we have advanced our counterterrorism agenda and priorities by developing shared best practices and advancing the rule of law.

Overview of Terrorist Threat Landscape

ISIS, and its murderous ideology, currently represents the top terrorist threat to the United States and our interests abroad. With Coalition support, local forces have reclaimed more than three-quarters of the territory ISIS once held in Iraq and approximately two-thirds of the territory it previously held in Syria. The so-called caliphate is crumbling. Yet despite this progress, ISIS remains capable of carrying out and inspiring terrorist attacks in Syria, Iraq, and abroad. In fact, largely as a result of its loss of territory and a precipitous decline in the number of foreign terrorist fighters that were once available to the group, we have seen ISIS-directed or “inspired” small-scale decentralized attacks on soft targets outside of the Syria/Iraq conflict zone. These have included assaults on hotels, tourist resorts, and cultural sites in Bamako, Barcelona, Berlin, Jakarta, London, Marawi, and Ouagadougou, among other places.

Al-Qa’ida and its affiliates remain a substantial threat to the United States and our interests. These groups include the remnants of the AQ core in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Shabaab, al-Qa’ida in the Indian Subcontinent, and al-Nusrah Front, which is AQ’s affiliate in Syria and its largest affiliate. Al-Nusrah is committed to ousting the Assad regime. It also seeks to expand its reach regionally and globally, consistent with core AQ’s longstanding ideology. In January 2017, al-Nusrah merged with

other hardline opposition groups to form Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, which after fighting with other Syrian opposition in July, now dominates northwest Syria. We also know that AQ is trying to strengthen its global networks by relocating some of its remaining leadership cadre from South Asia to Syria.

Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, carrying out attacks and other destabilizing activities through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, as well as through the Lebanese terrorist group Hizballah. Iran is responsible for intensifying multiple conflicts and undermining U.S. interests in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, and continues to support attacks against Israel. Iran and its terrorist affiliates and proxies pose a significant threat and demonstrate a near-global terrorist reach.

Homegrown Terrorists: During the last few years, we have witnessed a shift from the centralized command and control of terrorist attacks by foreign organizations to a new framework in which individual terrorists use whatever weapons are at hand on their home turf against soft targets. Increasingly, the responsibility for deciding where, when, and how to attack has been devolved to these self-directed terrorists – and this trend is only becoming more widespread. We saw devastating examples of this in the Nice and Manchester attacks. We have also seen it here at home – in San Bernardino in 2015 and in Orlando in 2016.

What Are We Doing About These Threats?

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has served as the global counterterrorism leader, investing our blood and treasure to take the fight straight to the terrorist groups. The State Department has focused its diplomacy on building the political will and counterterrorism capacity of partner governments and non-state actors, including international organizations. We have strengthened old relationships and built new ones with foreign militaries, intelligence services, law enforcement authorities, foreign ministries, financial officials, civil society organizations, and private industry to advance our common counterterrorism goals.

The CT Bureau has been responsible for much of the development, funding, and coordination of programs to build partner counterterrorism capacity in law enforcement, border security, information sharing, counterterrorism finance, and more recently, programs to counter radicalization to violence and terrorist recruitment. We work closely with the full array of U.S. government agencies – including the intelligence community, the NSC, DOD, DOJ, DHS, and Treasury, to determine the nature of the threat, prioritize the allocation of resources, and

ultimately devise a strategic response. The CT Bureau's FY 2018 request is critical to ensure we are resourced to build effective counterterrorism partnerships and capabilities across the globe.

While counterterrorism remains a top U.S. priority, and we will not retreat from our leadership role, it is also time for the rest of the world to step up its efforts. Our friends and allies must share more of the financial burden to counter global terrorist threats; we need our partners to increase their own commitment of resources to counter terrorism within and outside their own borders. This includes funding for domestic counterterrorism functions such as law enforcement, intelligence, and border security; support for key multilateral institutions, such as INTERPOL, the IJ, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF); and capacity-building assistance for frontline states.

The CT Bureau has adopted a results-focused approach to program design, management, and evaluation to improve performance, outcomes, and accountability and ensure the sustainability of our collective efforts. We have developed tools and best practices to determine progress and results and to facilitate performance-informed decision making. We 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.

Protecting Soft Targets

We have experienced over the last few years an increased challenge of protecting locations that are designed to be open and inviting for everyday activities, such as dining, shopping, and lodging. Together, governments and businesses share the responsibility to strike a balance of security and accessibility at these locations.

Preventing and preparing for soft target attacks depends on multilateral collaboration as well as national-level communication and coordination across multiple departments, disciplines, and functions, including intelligence, information sharing and risk analysis, law enforcement, emergency management, and critical infrastructure security and resilience. Preparedness also requires communication and cooperation with private industry and civil society.

The CT Bureau is therefore working with international partners under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum to draft a set of international good practices

focused on the protection of soft targets from terrorist attacks. We plan to finalize and announce these recommendations in the near future.

Border Security and Information Sharing

We place a high value on information sharing, especially at international borders, where there is a critical need to detect and prevent terrorist travel. With the FBI-administered Terrorist Screening Center (TSC), and in coordination with U.S. interagency partners, the State Department has engaged foreign partners to conclude bilateral arrangements for the exchange of identity information on known and suspected terrorists pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6). Since 2007, the Department and the TSC have signed over 60 HSPD-6 arrangements with foreign partners, which when fully implemented will help identify, track, and deter the travel of known and suspected terrorists; this includes all 38 Visa Waiver Program countries.

We have encouraged our partners to further increase security at their borders to better identify, restrict, and report the travel of suspected foreign terrorist fighters. This means getting countries to make greater use of INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Document and other databases and resources related to foreign terrorist fighters – resources that allow countries to screen travelers and to assist their law enforcement agencies in identifying and investigating terrorist travelers. We also continue to expand the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) program, which provides state-of-the-art border screening systems to 24 countries.

As a result of all of these initiatives, we've seen a significant increase in coordination among partners to add suspects to terrorist watchlists and to share that information more broadly. Over the next year, we will aim to sign new arrangements with a number of priority countries and will focus on achieving the full implementation of existing arrangements.

Aviation Security

ISIS and other terrorist groups continue to target commercial aviation. We saw this most recently with the thwarted aviation plot in Australia. We are working with our DHS colleagues to elevate the baseline of global aviation security and make sure our foreign partners are poised to respond to threats. Sometimes this requires enhanced measures, as in the case of the March 2017 ban on personal electronic devices and the heightened security requirements that replaced it on June

28, 2017. Other times, it means increasing awareness of the threats so countries adopt a security approach that meets the threat environment.

Through diplomatic engagement and targeted foreign assistance, we are working with our partners overseas to improve passenger and cargo screening, upgrade technology, and employ mitigation measures such as canine detection teams to address more complex threats. The CT Bureau is in the process of launching aviation security assistance programs in Ethiopia, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, and a regional project focused on Southeast Asia.

Building Partner Capacity

The CT Bureau uses foreign assistance resources to build the ability of partner nations to identify, deter, disrupt, apprehend, prosecute, and convict terrorists and their supporters. Our goal is for these partners to be able to confront the terrorist threats they face themselves without turning to the United States for assistance. The CT Bureau's capacity-building efforts include ensuring there are appropriate legal frameworks in place to bring criminal cases against offenders. In particular, we assist partner countries in building the ability to **investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate** terrorism-related cases.

To **investigate**, we provide training, equipment, and mentoring to law enforcement bodies so they have the appropriate knowledge, skills, and tools to detect, thwart, and respond to terrorism. This includes training and equipping crisis response, K9, bomb, and cyber investigation teams. To **prosecute**, we work with prosecutors to increase their skills to prepare persuasive, well-developed cases that will lead to convictions. Examples include case-based mentoring designed to secure prosecutions or working with countries to develop CT prosecution cells that are versed in terrorism case law. To **adjudicate**, we work with judges on procedural and substantive issues so they have a better understanding of the complexity of terrorism cases. To round out our efforts within the criminal justice system, we work with prison officials to provide training and technical assistance so they can effectively punish terrorism offenders and identify those who may be receptive to rehabilitation.

What we've been doing in this area is already working. In Somalia, on March 24, 2017, CT-funded Somali Joint Investigation Teams responded to a suspicious vehicle, uncovering three charges. Investigators neutralized the meticulously prepared – and fully intact – vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and sent it to the FBI for further forensic analysis. The Somali Police Commissioner also

disseminated information to international partners (such as the UN and embassies) and Somali interagency partners.

In the past few years, 131 people have been convicted under newly-passed foreign terrorist fighter laws in the Balkans. Resident Legal Advisors from DOJ, and funded by the CT Bureau, assisted local prosecutors in evidence organization, analysis, prosecution strategies, and case-specific challenges through a case-based mentoring program. There are now approximately 33 more FTF defendants indicted or on trial, all in Kosovo.

In 2016 CT-funded ATA-trained response forces launched a raid against suspected terrorists at an apartment building in Dhaka, Bangladesh. During the seven-hour operation, law enforcement officers kept the terrorists under surveillance, evacuated nearby residents, and exchanged gunfire with the suspects, who also threw explosive devices at police from inside the five-story residential building. Nine suspects were killed and one was taken into police custody. After police secured the site, ATA-trained bomb disposal technicians successfully recovered and rendered safe 13 hand grenades, five kilograms of homemade gel explosives, more than 20 detonators, and additional bomb-making equipment.

In the Philippines, a CT-funded ATA-trained explosive ordnance disposal team has responded to several crises, including a bomb attempt near the U.S. Embassy in Manila and the ongoing violence in Marawi City. In 2016, the team participated in an early-morning raid on a suspected terrorist safe house in Mindanao and discovered a cache of weapons and explosive devices, resulting in four arrests. By using an ATA-provided x-ray machine, bomb technicians from the Philippines National Police evaluated and rendered safe an anti-personnel mine, a commercial electric blasting cap, an improvised electric blasting cap, and two fragmentation hand grenades. ATA-trained members of the PNP Special Action Force and Anti-Cybercrime Group are also contributing to ongoing operations and investigations in Marawi and around Mindanao.

While the Philippines has a specific terrorism law, the Human Security Act, this law has been used a limited number of times and resulted in only one conviction in 2015. To remedy some of the law's shortcomings in terrorism cases, the State Department is funding a DOJ Resident Legal Advisor to provide guidance and support to the government's working group charged with updating the law, and working with prosecutors to better prepare terrorism cases. We are also partnering with DOJ to help the Philippines address the challenges it faces in its prison system.

Countering Radicalization

Countering radicalization is a critical component of a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism. We must do more than simply identify and stop foreign terrorist fighters from traveling or removing them from the battlefield. We need to delegitimize the violent ideology that attracts them and also prevent them from getting into terrorist pipelines in the first place. To do so, we must work with partners inside and outside of government to increase outreach efforts to youth, women, and victims of terrorism. We have increased our engagement with governments with vulnerable populations to take ownership of the issue and develop comprehensive, rights-respecting national strategies and action plans to counter violent extremism.

As part of this effort, we have expanded our engagement with a range of municipal, civil society, and private sector partners. One example is GCERF, which was established as the first global effort to support private, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against terrorist ideology. Operating at the nexus of security and development, GCERF has raised more than \$37 million from 14 other countries to support national strategies and address the local drivers of radicalism. It is active in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mali, and will soon expand to Kenya and Kosovo.

In an effort to reach local actors, the CT Bureau partners with the Strong Cities Network (SCN), which was launched at the UN in September 2015. The SCN is the first global network of mayors, municipal-level policy makers and practitioners united to build community resilience to counter violent extremism in all its forms. The network has more than 100 city members from Los Angeles, New York, and Chattanooga, to Peshawar, Nairobi, and Vilvoorde.

Additionally, the CT Bureau works closely with the Department's Global Engagement Center, which is charged with coordinating the U.S. government's counterterrorism messaging to foreign audiences.

The CT Bureau uses a range of tools and resources to counter terrorist threats around the world. Protecting the homeland is our top priority as we enlist the cooperation and build the capacity of partners to take on these challenges. We are encouraged by reporting from our diplomatic posts about how our training and

resources are directly assisting partners to disrupt terrorist operations, prosecute terrorist suspects, and protect borders.

Mr. Chairman, the terrorist threat is constantly adapting and we must adapt along with it. We can best protect our people and interests over the long run by being nimble and able to recognize the potential need to retool programs as the threat evolves. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with domestic agencies to expand international cooperation, strengthen partnerships, build bilateral and regional capabilities, and promote rule of law-based approaches to counterterrorism. We will work to dismantle terrorist safe havens and disrupt the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and their resources, and address the conditions that terrorists exploit for recruitment.

We greatly appreciate Congress's support in this shared endeavor. I look forward to your questions and our discussion.

Mr. COOK. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. You are going to have quite a job on your hands, and this is one—I don't envy your situation. And I support the ranking member's concern about funding. I think this is something that we cannot ignore. If we don't fund some of your activities or what have you, all we are going to be doing is funding more as Secretary Mattis talked about, more guns, more money, you know—that is going to be the end result.

So some of the programs that you are involved with, my question basically is how are you going to constantly reprioritize? And you know, this is like what day of the week is it, what has happened recently, and of course we are approaching the anniversary of 9/11 and it is like okay, what is the biggest terrorist threat that we are facing? And by the way as an aside, your comments about working with our allies and everybody on the same sheet of music in a common goal I think is laudatory—and very, very happy that you are saying it.

So in regards to all the threats and I won't even list them, you know them better than I do, how are you constantly going to re-evaluate on an almost daily, weekly basis? What is the greatest threat facing the United States and Americans?

Ambassador SALES. It is an important question, Congressman, and an important challenge that we have to meet. The terrorist threat is, as you say, constantly changing, constantly evolving, constantly adapting. Our enemies are capable of learning from their mistakes. They are capable of learning from our successes. And a good example of this is the rise of what you might call self-directed terrorism.

The al-Qaeda model of carrying out terrorist attacks is one where you have a centralized, hierarchical, command-and-control structure that issues orders to operatives to go out and carry out attacks. It provides them with training. It provides them with resources. It provides them with marching orders. What we have seen in recent years is, coexisting with that earlier model of terrorism, a model of terrorism in which individual terrorists are responsible for selecting targets on their own. They don't necessarily require detailed instructions or even any instructions from a centralized command structure. They are self-directed and capable of striking independently.

And that rise of that model of terrorism is one that we have seen here in the United States, in San Bernardino and Orlando. We have seen it increasingly in Europe as well. And so the challenge is to adapt our capabilities to meet that threat. That has to be based on an analysis of the problem. It has to be informed by intelligence reporting about what our adversaries are doing and what their plans are and how they are adapting, and it has to inform as well by our diplomatic engagement with allies around the world to understand the problems that they are experiencing in their countries.

Mr. COOK. Thank you for your answer. Before I turn it over to my colleague here, I just want to—I know you have been on the job 3 weeks, but I think the people on this committee are very, very interested in your activities. Don't be afraid to keep us in the loop. We have got a lot of things going on, but everything is so important

and I think your efforts and your education can go a long way to produce allies in this battle that you have.

So at this time I am going to turn it over to the ranking member, Congressman Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And not only as ranking member of this committee, I am also on the subcommittee on Homeland Security on counterterrorism as well as aviation safety; so the issues you spoke to are longstanding concerns of mine.

One of the things as we traveled around looking at different airports through Europe and even in Africa, we were looking at resources that our country was offering to certain countries and we found in that trip that people, other countries were reluctant to even take advantage of our resources. But I think, given the string of terrorist attacks in Europe in particular, we have seen a change of mind. Are you seeing that change and receptiveness to our resources and our help?

Ambassador SALES. I certainly am, Congressman. I think—you mentioned Europe in particular. I think Europe, leaders in Europe, are very well aware of the severity of the threat that they face. And I think atrocities like we have seen in Barcelona and London and Manchester, and the list goes on, have really galvanized leaders at the national level and at the EU level as well to work internally together within Europe and to work as part of our Transatlantic Alliance with the United States to counter this threat together.

Mr. KEATING. You know, one of the areas of concern was the—it was in Istanbul and the airport there. There is such a huge, you know, mecca of travel, and I think that you know there was a reluctance there, but there have been a lot of discussion about improvements in that regard. What have you seen in that area?

Ambassador SALES. Turkey has made a number of important strides. As you know and as you just said that the Istanbul Airport has been an important transit point not just for tourists and business people, but also for foreign terrorist fighters who are seeking to enter the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq.

I think when the ISIS scourge started sweeping across the Middle East for the first time in 2014, we saw 20,000-30,000 foreign fighters traveling into the war zone through a number of routes, but including through our NATO ally Turkey. Since then, Turkey has begun to take a number of strong steps to gain better control of its border with Syria to stanch the flow of foreign fighters in. Turkey has also stepped up the sharing of information with other NATO allies to give a heads up about the possible movements of foreign terrorist fighters. We have still got some work to do, but I am encouraged by the direction things are heading.

Mr. KEATING. You know, we have had success with our coalition, military success on the ground with ISIS. However, ISIS is different. It is sort of like a franchise—it has been described before as opposed to an entity, because they deal in ideology and they will go anywhere and they will be receptive to activities throughout the whole world. And, you know, that is including not just the Middle East but areas, you know, Southeast Asia, Central Asia—you see it in the Philippines. We have even had discussions just recently about concerns with countries like Bangladesh where there is, you know, the incubation I talked about, all those characteristics are

there—and how people that are firsthand in terms of their information have described changes that have occurred.

So with that as a given it brings us back to the importance of USAID and other initiatives that we have, because if indeed they are this franchise that local people on the ground given fertile territory to exist and grow will take advantage of, if we are not countering that we are not going to be successful in stemming this because it is a moving target.

And all those moving targets are over the world, but they could be a threat back here in the United States for all the reasons that you described in terms of air traffic and in terms of people using the social media to become inspired and they don't even have to be directed to act.

So I will get back to the cuts that were there. I honestly feel although your reference to other partners stepping up to the plate, I think they are understanding the need of that more than they did even a few years ago. But for the taxpayer, the best bang for the dollar in dealing with terrorism is to deal with these issues because it is spread throughout the world. It has metastasized.

So how do you get around that honestly? I know that we are talking about this in our committee. I don't think there has been a full committee hearing where we haven't right across the aisle spoke to this need as well as understand that even the filling of State Department positions are so critical in that regard.

I think I am speaking for the vast majority of the full committee both sides of the aisle. This is something we see as a major need and just want to get your reaction to this. I know that you are constrained with budgets, but this is about your budget in a rare instance that Congress offered more money and it is not getting used for some of these things, so if you could just address that. I know you are brand new.

Ambassador SALES. Certainly. Well, thank you for the question, Congressman. It is a very important question. You are right. ISIS is a franchise. They are branching out all over the world, not just in their core heartland of Syria and Iraq. We see affiliates in Afghanistan. We see them in the Philippines. We see them all across the globe; in every place that ISIS is we need to be as well. We need to have a presence to counter their false narrative. We need to have a presence to build up the capabilities of the countries that are now finding themselves with us in the front lines of the fight against ISIS, and we are doing that at the CT Bureau. Where ISIS is active we are committed to expending the resources that the American taxpayers have entrusted us with to counter this threat.

You mentioned Bangladesh in your question and so let me just address that country in particular. Just last year in 2016, we funded crisis response forces in Bangladesh and last year they were very successful in carrying out a raid against suspected terrorists at a safe house in an apartment building. The CT Bureau-funded officials managed to arrest one of the terrorists. Several others were killed in a gun battle. The CT-funded officials found 13 hand grenades, five kilograms of explosives, 20 detonators, and additional bomb making equipment.

So the Bangladeshis are safer because of the work that our Bureau did, and ultimately, the American people are safer because of

the work that this Bureau did in helping take down that terrorist cell.

Mr. KEATING. All right. I think, Mr. Chairman, we might have time given the conflicts that people had today to have a second round of questions. So I will yield back and maybe we will entertain a second round. Thank you.

Mr. COOK. Thank you. We are joined by Congresswoman Torres and I hope she has some questions for us, and turn it over to you.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

And good afternoon, I think it is afternoon, Ambassador Sales. I would really like to bring it back to our communities—this conversation. I represent San Bernardino County. I have lost constituents in that attack that took place 2 years ago. It will be 2 years in December. As a former 911 dispatcher, I understand very well how key it is for our first responders, our police departments, to have a very close working relationship with our communities.

What is the role of community policing in the Bureau, in the Bureau's law enforcement assistant program?

Ambassador SALES. Well, I couldn't agree more with the premise of your question, Congresswoman. We need at that Counterterrorism Bureau and at the State Department generally to engage all levels of government—not just foreign ministers and other cabinet secretaries, but also law enforcement officials, community activists, civil society organizations, municipal authorities, the sort of people who are on the front lines of the struggle against ISIS and al-Qaeda, and I think we have been successful at doing that.

Recently, we launched an initiative known as the Strong Cities Network which is designed to accomplish exactly this vision that we are talking about where we partner with local governments, municipal governments, including law enforcement authorities, to better protect their communities and the nation as a whole.

Mrs. TORRES. Right. A concern that I have is that I don't think that our cops in the street are getting a lot of information or proper training on how to identify and how to deal. There are some grants that are unattainable for small municipalities and I think that we need to focus more in the homeland in ensuring that our first responders have that information and have data and are able to work together, you know, with our alphabet soup at the Federal level.

One thing that I am very proud of is that prior to—6 months before that incident happened—I was able to actually bring together Homeland Security, the FBI, ATF at a gathering with our local police departments and sheriffs. So the first time that they met was not when this incident happened. They had previously met, they had exchanged business cards, phone numbers, and therefore I think that that call when that incident happened to the FBI office, it wasn't a cold call. You know, they had a contact there.

And my concern is, I just don't think that we are doing enough to share information and to properly train our cops in the street on how to deal with counterterrorism issues.

Ambassador SALES. Well, thank you for that concern, Congresswoman. I can tell you that I am encouraged to hear about the institution-building that you helped facilitate in your district. That is the very sort of thing that we at the CT Bureau are trying to do on the international stage. You know, here at home we take a

backseat to domestic entities like DHS and FBI who have the lead in building those relationships among domestic law enforcement players and municipal authorities, but we have the exact same vision when it comes to community engagement on the international stage working with exactly the same sorts of entities.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you so much. I yield back.

Mr. COOK. Congressman Keating, you had another question?

Mr. KEATING. Well, another region—and it is really hard because it is becoming so widespread to pick out entities. But another area of concern I have had too in terms of foreign fighter travel and radicalization is in the Balkans too, and it is becoming an increasing concern there. Could you just share, you know, your views on how things are going, what we could do to improve that specific area? And it is one of those areas I think where there is a difference on how the U.S. is perceived.

And I guess as a secondary question, it is really important if we want cooperation as to how our country is viewed by the people, not just their leaders, themselves. So what is being done on that secondary level, and more specifically what is your view on what is going on with the Balkans?

Ambassador SALES. So Congressman, the Balkans are a very important focus and priority area for the CT Bureau. The Balkans have the geographic fortuity of sort of lying right in the pathway of some of the migration routes into Iraq and Syria. And just as troublingly, they are right in the migration routes for people who having gained battlefield experience, are returning home to Europe perhaps to carry out more attacks like we saw in the Paris attacks, in the Brussels attacks.

We are very active with government authorities in the Balkans. The CT Bureau has funded a number of law enforcement training initiatives and we have worked with the Justice Department funding resident legal advisors. Those efforts are paying, I think, very real dividends. Since we made the Balkans a priority, I believe 131 people have been convicted of crimes related to the movement of foreign terrorist fighters and my understanding is there is about 33 more who are currently under indictment and going through the criminal process right now—all of them in Kosovo.

So the criminal law is a very powerful tool for deterring terrorist activity including terrorist travel and we are doing our utmost to use that tool in the Balkans.

Mr. KEATING. Just on the secondary part of that, the way the U.S. is perceived in some of these areas is a concern—areas where I think we were much more—viewed much more in a supportive way that is not quite the case now for a number of reasons.

And I guess if you could comment too, one of Russia's objectives, have you seen any of their efforts, part of their engagement in elections there as they did in France as they are trying to do in Germany and as they are doing throughout the area as well as the propaganda that they have so successfully engineered to try and split our coalition apart; is that creating a problem too?

Ambassador SALES. Well, Congressman, I think our Transatlantic Alliance is strong and durable and it is built on shared history and even more importantly, shared values. NATO of course is the bedrock of our security regime, security posture, and it is the

bedrock of the post-war international system. I think it is unshakeable and I think you are seeing not just the United States, but our European allies redouble their commitments to NATO. Not just to deal with traditional adversaries, but also to focus on new threats that we face like counterterrorism.

And as you know, NATO has recently announced the appointment of a counterterrorism coordinator and the development of new counterterrorism capabilities. I find that very encouraging that NATO is adapting in the same way that the global threat environment is adapting.

Mr. KEATING. They were quite anxious to, you know, to get involved in that area.

Just a quick question, finally is—the committee has had hearings before on the role of women engaging in counter terrorist activities for a number of reasons, number one they are the center point of the families that are involved and they can spot radicalization perhaps sooner than other members. And when we put resources in the hands of many of the women they go more directly to the hands of helping children and helping education and things that really buffer us from radicalization—is that going to be a priority with you?

Ambassador SALES. Yes, it will, Congressman. I say that, I answer that question as the father of two young girls so I have some skin in this game, as it were, absolutely. Women are often front-line targets of terrorists. You think of the atrocities committed against girls by Boko Haram and countless other examples that readily come to mind. So women and girls are important assets, important assets in the struggle against terrorism. Not just potential targets for terrorism, not just potential victims of terrorist depredations. So I think it is important to engage all levels of society, all members of society in this mutual fight.

Mr. KEATING. Great. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. COOK. Thank you. Congresswoman Torres, do you have anymore? You do?

First of all, I want to thank you very, very much. But to the committee, I know we had—oh, excuse me. I noticed we have one more member that snuck in here very quietly and I want to give the opportunity for Congressman Zeldin to ask him some questions.

Mr. ZELDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for hosting this hearing. And to the Ambassador, good luck—I look forward to working with you. I think it is great that you are starting to reach out individually to different members to build relationships and I think that is great to hear all of our different concerns. You have an important job ahead of you and I wish you the best for all my constituents' safety and security for this country's safety and security.

I have had something interesting happen to me a couple of times over the course of the last month and a half, right before the August recess. I was at a dinner off-site with some members of a foreign affairs committee of a Parliament in the Middle East and we asked them about battling this radicalization that exists in their countries. And one person at the table said something that would be very politically incorrect to say here in the United States, and when that person said it everyone at the table agreed. And the per-

son said we need to, in their country, they said we need to take them out of the mosques. It gave me a lot to think about.

Coming back from August recess, I just had an ambassador in my office from another country from the Middle East and I shared that reflection and that moment that happened and I asked him and his staff what he thought about it and he said it was true. I would be really interested to hear what your perspective is. I know this is a tough question. It is a really important issue and it is one that we have in many respects struggled with here because we want to protect America's national security and I think we in many respects we are always trying to say and do the right thing.

Fascinating perspective that I got from two different countries in the Middle East, both Muslims who were sharing this perspective, both saying that we should take them out of the mosques. What is your thought of that?

Ambassador SALES. Well, I think, Congressman, you have raised a very important issue which is how do we address the threat not just of violence, but of the radicalism that ultimately culminates in violence? And at the CT Bureau we have partnered with a number of important partners and allies around the world to address this very issue and to engage in a systematic counter radicalization campaign that can offer opportunities to young people to divert them away from a path toward radicalization, to offer off-ramps such that people who might have been inclined to embrace violence see alternatives to that course, to more fully integrate all members of society into the economic opportunities that can help dissuade them from pursuing violence.

But it is not just enough for us to address the risk of violence. That is merely the tip of the iceberg. What we are engaged in is a fundamental contest of ideas and there is an ideological component to this struggle as well in much the same way that there was an ideological component to the Cold War. We have to engage our adversaries at the level of ideas and demonstrate why their false claims are indeed false. And in so doing, it is important for us to partner with authentic voices of Islam around the world who likewise reject the siren song of radicalism and violence.

Mr. ZELDIN. Here in the United States and the international community, we view places of worship and schools and hospitals as protected sites that are respected, that are off limits—that are sacred. And it seems like it is pretty obvious, I guess, at this point that some of what we hold dear and sacred institutions to us in the United States might not be getting used in the same way that we aspire to for our own children and others here in the United States.

So with Israel, when they face issues with Hezbollah storing missiles inside of protected religious sites or I hear this story about taking kids out of mosques, or kids learning with textbooks that are teaching them a version of history that grooms them to be adversarial to good people, these are all challenges that you face. I wish you the best.

I thank again the chairman for hosting this hearing, and please continue to work on building that relationship with each and every one of us.

Ambassador SALES. I certainly will, thank you.

Mr. COOK. Mr. Ambassador, I want to thank you very much and I appreciate the members showing up here and asking their questions. You have been on the job 3 weeks. Speaking on behalf of the committee, I think we have got to have you back again. Obviously today was somewhat of an anomaly, but it is a crazy place.

But I think about funding, about supplemental requests for funding. This is a very bipartisan committee, and I think a lot of people, both Democrats and Republicans, realize how important your job is. So I would ask the staff's indulgence in the future to let's do this again, I think, in a number of months where we are not jammed with oh, votes, hearings—on some very important issues and this and that, because what you have to say, I think, is extremely important and we can perhaps help you in lending support for a cry for more money for the important work you do. So I want to thank you very, very much and, at this time, this meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:49 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
Ted Poe (R-TX), Chairman

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

DATE: Thursday, September 7, 2017
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
SUBJECT: U.S. Department of State Counterterrorism Bureau: The FY 2018 Budget
WITNESS: The Honorable Nathan Alexander Sales
Coordinator for Counterterrorism
Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism
U.S. Department of State

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.



COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade HEARING

Day Thursday Date 09/07/2017 Room 2172

Starting Time 3:08pm Ending Time 3:49pm

Recesses (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Representative Paul Cook

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Executive (closed) Session

Televised

Electronically Recorded (taped)

Stenographic Record

TITLE OF HEARING:

"U.S. Department of State Counterterrorism Bureau: FY2018 Budget"

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Cook, Keating, Zeldin, Torres

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes No
(if "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

QFR submitted by Rep. Titus

IFR submitted by Rep. Poe

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 3:49pm

Sarah Wallace
Subcommittee Staff Associate

Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ted Poe (R-TX), Chairman**
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade Hearing:
“U.S. Department of State Counterterrorism Bureau: FY 2018 Budget”
September 7, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

The threat of terrorism remains a deadly challenge for us and our allies around the globe. So far in 2017 there have been over 900 terrorist attacks causing nearly 5,500 fatalities globally. Just last month, Europe was struck again as terrorists drove a vehicle into a crowd in Barcelona, Spain, killing 16 people. 60 percent of countries today see higher levels of terrorism than a decade ago. This surge in violence has been led by the rise of ISIS and fostered by weak states and toxic ideologies. Although we are making steady progress against ISIS on the battlefields of Iraq, Syria, and Libya, the recent spike in attacks in Europe as well as persistent violence throughout the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia remind us that we still have much to do to counter this menace.

The State Department’s Counterterrorism Bureau is a crucial instrument for completing this mission. Created in 1972 in response to the Munich Olympics attack, the Bureau forges partnerships with foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and NGOs to coordinate and advance counterterrorism objectives that enhance global security as well as our own. Under that broad mission it has several core responsibilities, including coordinating strategy across the State Department and other agencies, conducting bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism diplomacy, building capacity of partner nations to effectively combat terrorism and extremism within their own borders, counter violent extremism, and strengthen homeland security.

CT Bureau pursues these responsibilities through a number of programs. Its largest being the Antiterrorism Assistance program that provides training courses, mentorships, and equipment to law enforcement agencies of our allies. This assistance enhances their ability to conduct investigations, secure their borders, protect critical targets, respond to crises, and enhance cyber security. Since 1983, the Bureau has trained more than 90,000 law enforcement personnel from 154 countries.

Given the heightened threat from terrorism that we and our allies face it is crucial that CT Bureau does its job effectively and efficiently. It is our job in Congress to ensure that the American taxpayers are getting their money’s worth. We are talking about millions of dollars going towards programs abroad: the people of Houston need to know that these millions they are sending abroad are vital to their safety and security. This is all the more important given the Bureau faces a 45% cut to its assistance programs. With limited resources every penny must be spent wisely.

It has proven difficult to determine if the Bureau is spending its funding wisely since only five evaluations have been conducted in the last 6 years. With the large cuts the State Department is trying to implement, we should only be investing in initiatives that have a positive impact. We cannot afford to throw good money after bad. But how can anyone know this without evaluating the programs that are currently in place? For example, since 2012 the Bureau has promised to evaluate its CVE efforts, yet it still has not completed this evaluation. Since then, the Bureau has made CVE a cornerstone of its efforts. CT Bureau opened up a brand new CVE office last year and planned to hire new employees to staff it. To put it bluntly, it makes absolutely no sense to invest more and more money into a field that has not been proven to yield results.

Not only does CVE not have a tangible and proven track record of success, but since the Bureau has launched its CVE focus, ISIS has managed to attract tens of thousands of fighters towards its murderous cause. So obviously something is not working. If that were not enough, last year the State Department announced the establishment of yet another CVE-related office, the Global Engagement Center or GEC. The GEC is outside of CT Bureau and till this day we have not received a clear idea as to how the Bureau will engage and coordinate with the GEC and how duplication of efforts will be avoided.

Knowing that the dangerous cancer of Islamic terrorism is not going away any time soon, it is crucial that the CT Bureau expends its efforts and money wisely in ways proven to yield results. We simply cannot afford to lose this ideological battle. We must ensure that CT Bureau has the resources needed to carry out its mission and at the same time that the Bureau acts responsibly with the resources provided by the American people. Our security and those of our allies depends on it.

And that's just the way it is.



Questions for the Record
Submitted by the Honorable Dina Titus
To Ambassador Sales

Question 1:

Mr. Sales, thank you for joining us today. It is a welcomed change to have an appointed administration witness come before our subcommittee.

I want to ask you about the tone and priorities of the Administration, and if they are helpful to your efforts to combat terrorism and counter extremism.

The USA Today published an alarming article recently: "International tourism to U.S. dips by 700,000." I represent Las Vegas, where international visitors represent our largest growth market and are vital to keeping so many employed in our state.

There was another article earlier this week highlighting that Mexican tourists who normally visit the U.S. are bypassing us for Canada, hurting many tourism communities throughout Southwest.

At the same time, the President promotes his "America First" policies, cutting the State Department Budget by 31%, while simultaneously becoming an erratic, but shrinking violet on the world's stage.

I am an active Member on the House Democracy Partnership where we work with our colleagues in developing democracies to strengthen their democratic institutions and civil society. Some of our partner countries, such as Afghanistan, continue to face the dangers of terrorism and radical extremism. Yet, the budget looks to cut these types of programs around the world. What message does this send to our partners, and our enemies?

Do you believe your job is made more challenging by some of the statements from the White House and the cuts to programs designed to bring stability to governments in need?

[NOTE: Responses to these questions were not received prior to printing.]

