

MAXIMUM IMPACT: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVE-
NESS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S BUREAU
OF COUNTERTERRORISM AND CHARTING THE
PATH FORWARD

HEARING

OF THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH
AFRICA

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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MAXIMUM IMPACT: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM AND CHARTING THE PATH FORWARD

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:12 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Michael Lawler (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. LAWLER. The Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa will come to order.

The purpose of this hearing is to explore the Bureau of Counterterrorism's placement in the State Department, the role and responsibilities of the Bureau's leadership, and the execution of its programs.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member from Florida Representative Cherfilus-McCormick for any statement that she may have.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Thank you, Chairman Lawler, for convening this hearing on the State Department's Counterterrorism Bureau. I welcome this timely conversation with our two expert witnesses.

Thank you for coming in today. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

As we sit here, terrorism and violent extremism remain a growing threat that we must address with clear eyes and effective policy.

According to the 2025 Global Terrorism Index, the number of countries recording a terrorist attack increased from 55—58 to 66, reversing nearly a decade of improvement.

Today, 59 hostages remain captive in Gaza as a result of Hamas' brutal terror attacks on Israel on October 7th, including American Edan Alexander and the bodies of four other Americans.

While Iranian proxies have been weakening and have been weakened, and recent developments in Lebanon and Syria persist, an opportunity for cautious optimism.

ISIS, al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis remain an active threat in the Middle East, have attacked the U.S. ships and have even killed U.S. servicemen.

In Africa, the Sahel region including 10 countries—Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Guinea, Gambia, Senegal, Nigeria, Chad, and Mauritania—accounted for 19 of overall terror—of all terrorist attacks worldwide, becoming the epicenter of global terrorism.

These are just some of the threats that the CT Bureau has been and must continue to address. I must also note that while the CT Bureau is primarily focused on terrorism threats facing the U.S. from abroad, we must remain vigilant to the ways terrorism threatens us here at home.

In March, the Center of Strategic and International Studies published its annual global terrorism threat assessment, which Dr. Byman co-authored. I encourage my colleagues to read it carefully.

The author notes that in contrast to the years following 9/11, in 2025 the greatest terrorist threats facing the United States is not foreign terrorist organizations but, rather, domestic terrorism.

In 2025 the threat of terrorism is made worse—is made more complex by terrorist organizations and groups using digital assets, social media, and misinformation to strengthen their operations across borders.

We also know that the threat of terrorism is exacerbated by economic instability, political regression, famine, and climate change. The African countries I mentioned earlier—Syria, Yemen and potentially Haiti—have become ripe for recruitment if we are not careful and vigilant.

But at the very moment we need our counterterrorism toolbox full. This administration is hell bent on emptying it bit by bit.

The arbitrary cuts to the Foreign Assistance Program and the proposed 84 percent reduction in the State Department and international assistant budget will leave us less prepared to address the threats of this global terrorism.

I look forward to having a robust, expert-driven conversation about how we can support the CT Bureau in the important work.

I believe that if we ground our efforts in facts rather than fantasies we can ensure the U.S. is best positioned to address the multifaceted ways terrorism continues to threaten American citizens, our allies, and the global stability.

I yield back.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL LAWLER

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you to the ranking member. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Good afternoon, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

From the Houthis in Yemen to al-Shabaab in the Sahel to ISIS-K in Afghanistan, global terrorism remains a persistent and evolving threat to the safety and security of Americans both at home and abroad.

Terrorism not only endangers lives but also destabilizes regions, disrupts global commerce, and undermines U.S. interests around the world.

While countering violent extremism has long required a comprehensive whole of government approach, the threat landscape has evolved. Yet, our counterterrorism strategy has not kept pace.

Therefore, today we gather to examine the specific and critical role of the coordinator for counterterrorism and the Bureau of Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State in the modern threat landscape.

Established by Congress in 1998, the position of coordinator for counterterrorism was created to serve as a central note for U.S. diplomatic efforts to combat terrorism abroad.

Now housed within the Bureau of Counterterrorism the coordinator leads a team dedicated to advancing U.S. counterterrorism policy and coordinating with partner nations in the global fight against terrorism.

The Bureau's work is multifaceted and consequential, from engaging diplomatically with foreign partners to designating terrorist entities and implementing targeted assistance programs.

The Bureau plays a vital role in our National Security Strategy. The Bureau's mission also includes training foreign law enforcement, border control, and judicial officials to identify, disrupt, and prosecute terrorist actors and networks. These investments overseas deliver national security benefits here at home.

However, to succeed in today's evolving threat environment the Bureau must operate as an integrated and effective player within the broader interagency framework. This requires close coordination with key partners such as the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security, and a wide range of intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

A clearly defined mission and delineated authorities are essential to ensure the Bureau complements the work of its interagency counterparts rather than duplicating efforts or creating conflicts.

Effective coordination is especially vital when confronting State sponsors of terrorism, chief among them Iran. In 2024 alone Iran exported an estimated 587 million barrels of oil, marking a 10.75 percent increase from the previous year.

These revenues likely continue to bankroll terrorist proxies including Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis. I am particularly interested in how the Bureau engages diplomatically and works across agencies to disrupt the financial and trade networks that fuel Iran's global campaign of terror.

This includes ensuring that our security assistance aligns with counterterrorism priorities. The Bureau is uniquely positioned to assess where partner nations fall short in counterterrorism capabilities, but it is not always clear how those assessments influence funding decisions.

As we have seen with countries like Morocco and Lebanon, very different threat environments can result in nearly identical foreign military financing levels. We should consider whether the Bureau ought to have a more formalized role in prioritizing security assistance when counterterrorism is the primary objective.

At a time when adversaries like China and Russia are actively seeking to undermine U.S. leadership on counterterrorism it is more critical than ever for Congress to evaluate and strengthen the

authority, mission, and effectiveness of the coordinator of counterterrorism.

Through the reauthorization process we will ensure that every dollar spent and every diplomat deployed is singularly focused on the safety and security of the American people.

Under the leadership of the Trump administration we now have the opportunity to reevaluate and modernize our approach to counterterrorism and chart a stronger, more strategic path forward.

Our witnesses today bring a wealth of firsthand experience, both from leading the Bureau of Counterterrorism and from conducting extensive analysis of U.S. counterterrorism and security policy.

Their testimony will provide valuable insight into the structural and operational challenges facing the Bureau and will help identify the key reforms and authorities needed from Congress to strengthen its effectiveness—moving forward.

With that, I want to again thank both of our witnesses for their testimony.

Other members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

We are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this important topic, Hon. Nathan A. Sales, former coordinator for counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State, and Dr. Daniel L. Byman, director of the security studies program at Georgetown University.

The committee recognizes the importance of the issues before us and is grateful to have you both here to speak to us today.

Your full statements will be made part of the record and I will ask each of you to keep your spoken remarks to 5 minutes in order to allow time for member questions.

I now recognize Ambassador Sales for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF NATHAN A. SALES

Mr. SALES. Thank you very much.

Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Cherfilus-McCormick, and members of the subcommittee, it is a pleasure to be here with you today.

The gist of my testimony is fairly simple. Counterterrorism still matters. It still matters even at a time when Washington's primary focus is on adversary states like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

Today's threat landscape, as we have already heard, is as complex and unpredictable as ever. After our withdrawal from Afghanistan, al-Qaeda is regrouping under the protection of its long-standing Taliban patrons. It reportedly built nine new camps in 2024 alone.

ISIS' local affiliate ISIS-K has shown it can strike far beyond Afghanistan's borders.

Last March it killed more than 140 people in Moscow. Under the Taliban's misrule, Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven for terror. No fewer than 21 terrorist groups are active on its soil.

In Syria, we have seen a steady rise in attacks by ISIS remnants. Last year ISIS conducted about 700 attacks in the country.

That is an average of almost 60 per month, almost triple the numbers from 2023.

West Africa is becoming the epicenter of global terrorism. Last year the Sahel region accounted for 51 percent of global terrorism-related deaths. Five of the 10 countries in the world most affected by terrorism are in the Sahel.

The situation in Nigeria is particularly concerning with extremist violence killing some 52,000 Christians since 2009.

So why does all this matter to the United States?

Well, first, we have a vital interest in preventing attacks on Americans abroad and, ultimately, on our homeland. In addition, terrorism can spark open warfare between states with far reaching regional and even global consequences.

We saw this in the aftermath of the October 7th attack on Israel by the Iranian regime's terror proxy Hamas.

Terrorism can unleash waves of migration that import security risks and upend domestic politics as Europe has learned in recent years. Hostile states like Russia know this all too well and they weaponize migration to destabilize their neighbors.

Finally, keeping terrorist threats at bay gives leaders the space they need to address other geopolitical problems. A catastrophic attack would leave policymakers with little bandwidth for the urgent challenges posed by rival states, which brings me to a key point.

CT isn't some kind of distraction from higher priorities in an era of great power competition. It is a vital part of American grand strategy.

CT cooperation can cement partnerships, aligning key states with Washington, and detaching them from competitors. We are the security partner of choice and we can offer capabilities that our rivals can't match.

This is especially true in Africa where China and Russia are both active. America and our African partners have the same goal. We want front line states to be able to defend themselves on their own and not be perpetually dependent on Washington.

Not so Communist China, whose debt trap diplomacy creates vassals, and not so Russia, whose idea of security assistance is to send in Wagner mercenaries to brutalize innocent civilians.

Furthermore, counterterrorism tools can be used to respond to state-backed proxy groups. Countries like Iran, North Korea, and Russia are increasingly relying on such proxies to do their dirty work—assassinations, attacks on civilian infrastructure, even planting bombs on cargo planes.

Sanctions, prosecutions, and other CT tools can impose meaningful costs on those responsible. They also negate the plausible deniability that led hostile states to use proxies in the first place.

Let me close with a few suggestions to make the State Department's vital counterterrorism work more effective.

First, look at consolidating in the CT Bureau some of the counterterrorism responsibilities that are still spread across the State Department. There are some examples in my written statement.

Second, streamline the process for reviewing foreign terrorist organizations designations. Under current law CT Bureau has to con-

duct a review every 5 years to determine whether to keep a designated FTO on the list.

Those reviews are unnecessary as any group that renounces terrorism can file a petition for delisting. Worse, the reviews consume scarce resources that could be better spent imposing new sanctions on new groups.

Third, change the CT coordinator's official title to assistant secretary, the standard terminology used by most other State Department bureaus.

And fourth and finally, preserve State's traditional role as the central hub for the distribution of all foreign assistance.

As the Nation's preeminent foreign policy agency, State is normally in the best position to assess and ensure that resources are aligned with mission.

Mr. Chairman, Madam Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee, thank you again for your time and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sales follows:]

**Maximum Impact: Assessing the Effectiveness of the State Department's
CT Programs and Charting the Path Forward**

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa**

May 6, 2025

Testimony of Ambassador Nathan A. Sales

Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Cherfilus-McCormick, and Members of the Subcommittee, it is a pleasure to be here today.

My name is Nathan Sales. I am the founder and principal of Fillmore Global Strategies LLC, a consultancy that provides legal and strategic advice on matters at the intersection of law, policy, and diplomacy. I am also a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council.

From 2017 to 2021, I served at the U.S. Department of State as the Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism. Concurrently, I was the acting Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, as well as the Special Presidential Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. I previously served at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, and at the U.S. Department of Justice as Senior Counsel in the Office of Legal Policy, where I worked on counterterrorism policy. I am here as a private citizen, but my testimony is informed by my experiences working on national security and counterterrorism for the U.S. government over the course of two decades.

Today, I will begin with a brief description of the global terrorist threat landscape; I will discuss how counterterrorism can promote American strategic objectives in an era of great power competition; and I will suggest some organizational and procedural reforms to make the State Department's vital counterterrorism work even more effective.

In short, counterterrorism still matters, even at a time when Washington's primary focus is on the challenges posed by adversary states such as China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. Counterterrorism is important because the United States and our allies continue to face a daunting array of terrorist threats, from Afghanistan to Syria and Iraq to Sub-Saharan Africa. And it is important because the counterterrorism toolkit can be used, not just to degrade and defeat terrorist groups that threaten us, but to solidify partnerships with key states and to impose costs on rivals that increasingly are turning to terror tactics to advance their malign objectives.

I.

Counterterrorism still matters for a simple reason: terrorism still matters. Indeed, today's global threat landscape is as complex and unpredictable as it has ever been. To cite just a few examples, the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan set the stage for core al Qaeda to regroup in the country under the protection of its longstanding Taliban patrons, while ISIS and

other groups plot attacks across the region and farther afield. In Syria, we have seen a steady rise in attacks by ISIS remnants after the so-called “caliphate” was dismantled during the first Trump administration. And West Africa has become perhaps the hottest of the globe’s terrorist hot spots, with dozens of groups attacking civilians with seeming impunity, destabilizing national governments, and reshaping the world’s geopolitical map in the process. It remains a strategic interest of the United States to counter these threats – not primarily through the use of military force, but through the judicious use of all instruments of national power.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. withdrawal in 2021 created a security vacuum that has enabled a wide variety of terrorist groups to take root and flourish. The local ISIS affiliate – ISIS Khorasan Province, or ISIS-K – is thought to have as many as 6,000 fighters¹ and has shown an alarming capability to conduct attacks far beyond Afghanistan’s borders, such as the March 2024 attack in Moscow that killed more than 140 people.² Meanwhile, al Qaeda has reasserted itself in Afghanistan under the Taliban’s protection; the group reportedly built nine new terrorist camps in the country in 2024 alone.³ Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, better known as the “Pakistani Taliban,” operates training camps alongside al Qaeda and uses Afghan territory to carry out attacks in Pakistan – a bitter irony given Islamabad’s longstanding support to the Afghan Taliban.⁴ Under the Taliban’s misrule, Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven for terror. No fewer than 21 terrorist groups are active on its territory.⁵

In Syria and Iraq, ISIS has steadily ramped up attacks following the loss of its physical “caliphate” in 2019.⁶ Last year, according to the Soufan Center, ISIS conducted about 700 attacks in Syria, an average of nearly 60 attacks per month, almost tripling its operational tempo over 2023.⁷ The situation has become more volatile since the fall of Bashar al-Assad in late 2024. After a drop in ISIS activity around the new year – due in part to a series of punishing airstrikes on ISIS training camps carried out by U.S. forces after the Assad regime’s collapse⁸ – the group launched

¹ United Nations, *Thirty-Fourth Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2734 (2024) Concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals and Entities*, July 22, 2024, at 16, <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/556>.

² Shane Harris, *U.S. Told Russia that Crocus City Hall Was Possible Target of Attack*, Wash. Post, Apr. 2, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/04/02/us-warning-russia-isis-crocus/>.

³ Jack Detsch, *Al Qaeda Expands Its Footprint in Afghanistan*, Foreign Policy, Aug. 30, 2024, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/08/30/al-qaeda-presence-afghanistan-taliban-resistance-panjshir-cia/>.

⁴ U.N., *supra* note 1, at 18.

⁵ Detsch, *supra* note 3.

⁶ Colin P. Clarke, *The Islamic State Is Making a Comeback*, Foreign Policy, Feb. 17, 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/02/17/islamic-state-syria-comeback-terrorism/>.

⁷ *The Islamic State Will Exploit the Current Situation in Syria to Its Advantage*, Soufan Center, Dec. 18, 2024, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-december-18/>.

⁸ *U.S. Airstrikes in Syria Meant to Prevent Islamic State from Taking Power in Leadership Void*, PBS, Dec. 10, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-airstrikes-in-syria-meant-to-prevent-islamic-state-from-taking-power-in-leadership-void>.

at least 14 attacks in the first two weeks of April 2025 alone, a fourth consecutive month of rising operations.⁹

West Africa continues to emerge as an epicenter of global terrorism.¹⁰ Last year, the Sahel region accounted for 51 percent of global terrorism-related deaths, with the number of such deaths rising by a factor of ten since 2019. Five of the ten countries in the world most affected by terrorism are in the Sahel.¹¹ Al Qaeda's affiliate JNIM is particularly capable, with approximately 5,000 to 6,000 fighters across several countries, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.¹² For its part, ISIS has five highly active provinces in Africa, including ISIS Mozambique and ISIS West Africa Province. The situation in Nigeria is particularly concerning. Extremist violence in the country has targeted Christian communities, with some 200 Christians massacred ahead of Holy Week in 2025,¹³ adding to the more than 52,000 Christians killed in the country since 2009 alongside 30,000 moderate, non-Fulani Muslims.¹⁴ For good reason, some observers are calling the attacks on Nigerian Christians a genocide.

It is a vital national security interest of the United States to degrade and defeat such terrorist threats, for a number of reasons. Most importantly, to prevent deadly attacks on Americans abroad, and ultimately on the American homeland. In addition, successful terrorist attacks can spur open warfare between states, with far-reaching regional and even global consequences. (We saw this after the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by the Iranian regime's terror proxy Hamas; today, India and Pakistan – two nuclear armed powers – are on the brink of war after an attack on Indian tourists in Kashmir.) Persistent terrorist violence can also unleash waves of migration that threaten to import security risks and upend domestic politics in destination countries, as Europe has learned in recent years (and as hostile states like Russia know all too well, as they weaponize migration to destabilize their neighbors). Finally, devoting sufficient resources to keep global terrorist threats at bay provides leaders the space they need to address other geopolitical problems. Another catastrophic, 9/11 level attack would leave policymakers with little bandwidth for the urgent challenges posed by rival states.

⁹ Charles Lister, *ISIS Is on the Ropes in Syria*, Middle East Inst., Apr. 14, 2025, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/isis-ropes-syria-successful-transition-damascus-could-deliver-knockout-blow>.

¹⁰ *Sub-Saharan Africa Remains an Epicenter of Violent Jihadist Terrorism*, Soufan Center, May 1, 2025, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2025-May-1/>.

¹¹ Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2025*, at 2, <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/global-terrorism-index/>.

¹² U.N., *supra* note 1, at 6.

¹³ *Nigeria Soaked in "Ocean of Blood", Says Bishop After Murders of 200 Christians in One Week*, Catholic Herald, Apr. 19, 2025, <https://thecatholicherald.com/nigeria-soaked-in-ocean-of-blood-says-bishop-after-murders-of-200-christians-in-one-week/>.

¹⁴ Lisa Zengarini, *Over 50,000 Christians Killed in Nigeria by Islamist Extremists*, Vatican News, Apr. 17, 2023, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2023-04/over-50000-christians-killed-in-nigeria-by-islamist-extremists.html>.

II.

Counterterrorism continues to be essential to American grand strategy, even in an era of great power competition.¹⁵ CT is a comparative advantage of the United States, and CT cooperation can cement partnerships with key states facing an array of terrorist threats, bringing them into closer alignment with Washington and detaching them from competitors such as China and Russia. Furthermore, America's rivals increasingly are using terror proxies to advance their own strategic objectives. The CT toolkit – law enforcement cooperation, intelligence sharing, aviation security, economic sanctions, and so on – is an important part of countering state-backed terror campaigns and imposing costs on our adversaries.

Consider partnerships. In the quarter century since the 9/11 terror attacks, the United States has developed, through trial and sometimes error, a suite of CT capabilities that our competitors cannot approach. Using a combination of civilian and military assistance, the United States is able to offer unparalleled CT tools to states on the front lines.

For example, the United States trains police officers, lawyers, and judges to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate terrorism related crimes, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive justice. We train and equip rapid response units to suppress terrorist attacks in real time, saving innocent lives. We boost partners' ability to sanction terrorist financiers, stanching the flow of money that is the lifeblood of international terrorism. We enhance border security, curtailing terrorist travel. And we strengthen aviation security, particularly at airports with direct flights to the U.S. This assistance is not charity. It is an investment in American security. If partner nations have the tools they need to cripple terrorist threats abroad, that adds to our security here at home. And if partner nations are more aligned with the United States, they will typically be less aligned with our competitors.

Africa is an especially important region for U.S. counterterrorism assistance, not just because Africa faces a staggering array of terrorist threats, but because China sees it as central to its Belt and Road Initiative and because Russia covets the continent's mineral wealth. It bears emphasis that the United States and our African partners share the same goal: We want frontline states to be able to defend themselves on their own and not be perpetually dependent on Washington. This stands in sharp contrast to the Chinese Communist Party, whose debt-trap diplomacy creates vassals, and whose approach to economic development enriches politically connected Chinese companies far more than local communities. The American approach also is a marked departure from that of Russia, whose idea of security assistance is to dispatch Wagner mercenaries with heavy handed tactics that seem likely to produce even more terrorist radicalization and recruitment. African countries are eager to cooperate on counterterrorism, and for many the United States remains their security partner of choice. If we don't help, they will turn to our competitors – even with all their manifest flaws. They may well conclude that a flawed partner is better than no partner at all.

¹⁵ See generally Nathan Sales, *Counterterrorism and Great-Power Competition*, Atlantic Council, Sept. 7, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/article/counterterrorism-and-great-power-competition/>.

Unfortunately, America's strategic position in West Africa has deteriorated significantly in recent years. During the previous administration, the government of Niger ended security cooperation with the United States – including forcing us to abandon our \$100 million drone base at Agadez, which we had used to collect intelligence about, and apply pressure to, a range of terrorist groups active in the region, including ISIS and al Qaeda affiliates.¹⁶ This highly regrettable development came on the heels of France being forced, beginning in 2022, to wind down its military presence in a number of West African countries where it had provided substantial counterterrorism assistance. The French presence, which had enabled American counterterrorism operations in the region, has been replaced by Russian forces arriving to fill the resulting security vacuum.¹⁷ Restoring security cooperation in the strategically vital region of West Africa must be an urgent priority for the new administration and our European partners.

Counterterrorism also remains relevant because adversary states increasingly are turning to proxy groups to do their dirty work, and CT tools can be used to counter such methods and to impose costs on rivals. The Islamic Republic of Iran, of course, pioneered the use of terror proxies almost five decades ago and to this day it remains the most enthusiastic practitioner of this bloody style of statecraft. North Korea has followed suit,¹⁸ and Russia likewise has ramped up its use of violent proxies – particularly after its 2022 invasion of Ukraine as the Kremlin looks to destabilize Kyiv's supporters in Europe.¹⁹

In particular, America's adversaries have directed organized crime syndicates, drug cartels, mercenaries, and their own intelligence services to carry out a wide variety of acts of what can only be described as terrorism. To take just a few notorious examples, they have planned and conducted assassinations of political figures, dissidents, corporate leaders, and other prominent targets, sometimes by using prohibited chemical weapons. They have attempted transnational kidnappings. They have carried out bombings and arson attacks against community centers, shopping centers, and other civilian infrastructure. They have planted explosives on cargo planes.

The counterterrorism toolkit can be an effective suite of responses to these sorts of hostile measures. Sanctions, prosecutions, and other highly visible measures can impose meaningful costs on those responsible while negating the plausible deniability that led adversary states to operate through proxies in the first place. And in the same way that adversary states will employ gray zone methods short of open armed conflict to manage escalation risk, so too the counterterrorism toolkit provides American and allied policymakers with a graduated and calibrated menu of responses that can be dialed up or down as circumstances warrant.

¹⁶ *U.S. Military Completes Withdrawal from Key Drone Base in Niger*, Reuters, Aug. 5, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-military-completes-withdrawal-key-drone-base-niger-2024-08-05/>.

¹⁷ *France Ends Military Presence in Sahel Region with Handover of Last Base in Chad*, France 24, Jan. 30, 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250130-france-hands-over-last-base-in-chad-amid-withdrawal>.

¹⁸ Robert Windrem et al., *North Korea Has a History of Assassination Attempts on Foreign Soil*, NBC News, Nov. 21, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korea-has-history-assassination-attempts-foreign-soil-n823016>.

¹⁹ Emma Burrows, *Western Officials Say Russia Is Behind a Campaign of Sabotage Across Europe*, AP, Mar. 21, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-europe-hybrid-campaign-d61887dd3ec6151adf354c5bd3e6273e>.

III.

Let me close with several organizational and procedural suggestions that Congress and the administration might consider to make the State Department's counterterrorism work even more effective.

First, it might be worthwhile to consolidate in the Counterterrorism Bureau some of the counterterrorism-related functions and responsibilities that today are housed elsewhere in the State Department. For example, during the first Trump administration, the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS was merged into CT Bureau, and further reorganization along these lines could be beneficial. Moving these elements to CT Bureau could result in better integration of the Department's counterterrorism efforts, create efficiencies by streamlining policymaking and operational processes, and establish a clearer chain of command – and thus accountability – on counterterrorism issues.

One example is the Rewards for Justice (RFJ) program, which offers monetary awards to tipsters who provide information leading to the arrest or conviction of certain specified terrorists.²⁰ The program is administered by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), but, in practice, RFJs typically piggyback on top of counterterrorism sanctions administered by CT Bureau: The evidentiary record that CT compiles and then uses to prepare a sanctions package will subsequently be used to justify an RFJ. Bringing the RFJ program into CT Bureau would ensure that awards are fully aligned with and integrated into the sanctions programs for which CT Bureau is responsible. It also would reduce wasteful duplication of effort across two separate bureaus.

A second, perhaps more complicated, example concerns the Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program, which aims to build counterterrorism capacity in key partner states. Responsibility for ATA programming is divided between CT and DS. CT is responsible for determining the program's overall strategic direction, providing the necessary funding, setting the requirements for specific capacity building programs, and monitoring and evaluating program effectiveness. For its part, DS handles the implementation of certain programs in certain countries. It might make sense to fold the DS elements into CT Bureau, to promote better coordination and feedback between program design and implementation. On the other hand, there may be some value in continuing to keep responsibility for program evaluation separate from program execution.

Next, Congress and the administration might relocate to CT Bureau elements of offices that are slated for closure, such as the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) and the Global Engagement Center (GEC). CT would be a natural fit for CSO personnel with counterterrorism expertise, as well as experts in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African affairs, given the prevalence of terrorism in those regions. As for the GEC, when it was originally established in 2016, its mission was to counter the online ISIS propaganda that inspired thousands of foreign terrorist fighters to stream into Iraq and Syria,²¹ before mission creep led the office into the broader and more controversial issues that contributed to its disbanding in April of this year. The GEC elements that remained narrowly focused on the original mission of countering terrorist

²⁰ 22 U.S.C. § 2708.

²¹ Exec. Order No. 13,721 (Mar. 17, 2016).

propaganda might be usefully incorporated into CT Bureau. Indeed, some consideration was given to doing so early in the first Trump administration.

Second, Congress might streamline the process of reevaluating designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). Under current law, CT Bureau is required to conduct a review every five years to determine whether a group that previously was designated as an FTO should remain on the list.²² Such periodic reviews are unnecessary, as any designated groups that have renounced terror have the ability under the law to file a delisting petition.²³ Worse, the five-year reviews have a substantial opportunity cost. They consume policymaker bandwidth and other resources that might be more profitably spent imposing new sanctions on the constantly evolving universe of terrorist groups worldwide. Congress could extend the review period (e.g., to ten years) or eliminate the requirement altogether.

Third, Congress and the administration should consider changing the CT Coordinator's official title to "Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism," adopting the standard nomenclature used by most other State Department bureaus. This would both reduce confusion and reflect changes over the years in how the U.S. government has organized to combat terrorist threats.

When the Coordinator position – now formally known as the "Coordinator for Counterterrorism [with] the Rank and Status of Ambassador at Large"²⁴ – was established in October 1972, the U.S. government's counterterrorism capabilities were in their infancy. The Coordinator was tasked not just with advising the Secretary of State and leading the State Department's counterterrorism efforts, but overseeing such efforts for the government as a whole; the "Coordinator" title reflects this interagency role. Today, of course, a robust counterterrorism architecture exists across the Executive Branch and the Coordinator's prior role as an interagency convener has been supplanted by others, including the NSC's Senior Director for Counterterrorism and the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center. The "Coordinator" title is a relic from another era.

In making any title changes, it strikes me as advisable to preserve the Coordinator's statutory rank and status as an Ambassador at Large, which, in my experience, has been invaluable in engaging top decisionmakers in foreign capitals. There is also the question of whether legislation is necessary to make the position an Assistant Secretary or whether this could be accomplished administratively. Congress by statute has capped the number of Assistant Secretaries of State at 24.²⁵ In the past, this cap has prevented the Coordinator position from being converted to an Assistant Secretary without further legislation. However, the administration's proposed reorganization of the State Department would merge or eliminate a number of bureaus, potentially freeing up authorized Assistant Secretary positions that could be allocated to CT.

²² 8 U.S.C. § 1189(a)(4)(C).

²³ *Id.* § 1189(a)(4)(B).

²⁴ 22 U.S.C. § 2651(e)(1), (3).

²⁵ *Id.* § 2651(c)(1).

A **fourth** and final suggestion – one that applies not just to CT Bureau but to the entire State Department. It is advisable to maintain State’s traditional role as the central hub for the distribution of all foreign assistance. Foreign assistance is an investment of taxpayer money. It is a way of translating America’s foreign policy objectives into concrete and practical outcomes. As the nation’s preeminent foreign policy agency, the State Department is normally in the best position to assess how a given program in a given country would (or would not) advance U.S. objectives. While other departments and agencies will and should continue to engage with their foreign counterparts and play an active role overseas, State should maintain its exclusive role in foreign assistance to ensure that resources are aligned with mission.

* * *

Mr. Chairman, Madame Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you again. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Ambassador Sales.
I now recognize Dr. Byman for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DANIEL L. BYMAN

Mr. BYMAN. Thank you.

Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Cherfilus-McCormick, members of this distinguished subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

I won't repeat what Ambassador Sales said about the evolving nature of the terrorism threat and especially his points on how it is incredibly consequential in Africa.

I would also add, however, that the white supremacist threat has globalized and we are seeing interaction among white supremacists around the world.

I would also note that China and particularly Russia are engaged in gray zone competition that also involves activities that we would consider support for terrorism such as assassination and sabotage against civilian targets.

To meet this evolving threat, the Bureau of Counterterrorism needs to remain an integral part of the overall U.S. effort.

Mr. Chairman, you mentioned whole of government effort and I believe the Bureau should be at or near the center of that effort.

It is an important coordinator in bilateral relations and multilateral forums, but it also helps integrate U.S. intelligence, the military, and other instruments of U.S. national power.

Although most public attention on counterterrorism focuses on military operations, the bulk of the effort on a day-to-day basis against groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda is done by the security services of U.S. allies and partners.

These must be constantly coordinated, directed, and incentivized, and this task is accomplished in part through the intelligence liaison but also in part through vigorous diplomacy that the CT Bureau helps coordinate.

Integrating counterterrorism into overall diplomacy is critical and it is especially important in regions like the Middle East where at different times the United States has had regional policies that have not integrated counterterrorism and counterterrorism policies that haven't integrated regional realities.

The State Department programs that support law enforcement, border security, and other vital tasks are cost effective and they improve the capabilities of U.S. allies and partners, and in so doing make the United States and the American people more secure.

They do so at a fraction of the cost of many—of military action and this can save many American lives. In addition, cutting these programs increases the terrorism risk to U.S. allies and it also sends the wrong signal to them at a time of competition, especially with China.

We need to ensure there remains a single, high-level entity at the State Department for coordinating counterterrorism.

We also need to make sure that the power to designate terrorist groups and State sponsors is used responsibly to ensure the credibility of U.S. designations.

I have the honor of sitting next to Ambassador Sales. I would like to commend him and the CT Bureau for the work they did in

the first Trump administration in designating the first global white supremacist terrorist groups.

That sort of action demonstrates that the United States is committed to fighting terrorism regardless of the political ideology behind it.

We do not want these lists to simply be an accounting of actors the United States does not like no matter how horrific they are. The United States should be opposed to drug cartels, to gangs, and other nefarious actors. It should take steps to counter them.

But the terrorism designation is not useful, given that doesn't fit what the terrorism designation was created for and creates complications for U.S. businesses and U.S. charities.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Byman follows:]



Statement before the

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

**“Maximum Impact: Assessing the Effectiveness
of the State Department’s Counterterrorism Programs and
Charting the Path Forward”**

A Testimony by:

Daniel Byman

Professor, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
Director, Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program, Center for
Strategic and International Studies

May 6, 2025

Chairman Lawler, Ranking Member Cherfilus-McCormick, members of this distinguished subcommittee, and subcommittee staff, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic. Neither Georgetown University nor the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) take policy positions, so the views represented in this testimony are my own and not those of my employers.

The terrorism threat has evolved, and the Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT Bureau) and any successor organizations must change with it. Salafi-jihadist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) are far weaker than they were over a decade ago, but they show signs of strength in different corners of the world, notably Somalia and parts of West Africa. Iranian-backed terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah have suffered grievous blows from their wars with Israel, but they are steadily rebuilding. The violent white supremacist movement is globalized, with their hateful ideas spreading from country to country. Perhaps most troubling, great power competitors like Russia and China are engaging in "gray zone" warfare, with support for terrorism being one of the tools they employ along with economic pressure, subversion, and selective uses of military force.¹

Fighting terrorism has been a priority of the United States for over twenty years, and the Bureau of Counterterrorism remains an integral part of the overall U.S. effort. The CT Bureau is an important coordinator for counterterrorism in bilateral relations and multilateral forums, helping integrate U.S. intelligence, the military services, and other instruments of national power and to strengthen counterterrorism ties to U.S. allies. In addition, the programs it runs are cost-effective ways to improve the capabilities of U.S. allies and partners and, in so doing, make the United States more secure. The CT Bureau's designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and state sponsors, despite many limits, remains a vital function as does the associated highlighting of terrorist and hostile state actions through its public listing of FTOs and state sponsors. Similarly, the CT Bureau plays an important role, along with the Department of Treasury, in designating individuals under Executive Order 13224. Although this is overshadowed by the FTO designations, the United States regularly uses this tool to shine a spotlight on individuals engaged in terrorist activity.

The Trump administration, with support from Congress, should explore several additional changes to the Bureau as it considers any reorganization of the State Department. These include: preserving vital programs that strengthen partner capabilities; strengthening efforts against great powers like China and Russia that engage in "gray zone" warfare that includes aspects of terrorism; ensuring there remains a single, high-level entity at the State Department for coordinating counterterrorism; and using the FTO designation properly to retain its power and credibility.

¹Alexander Palmer et al., "Global Terrorism Threat Assessment 2025," Center for Strategic & International Studies, March 28, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/global-terrorism-threat-assessment-2025>; Daniel Byman, *Spreading Hate: The Global Rise of White Supremacist Terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Julian E. Barnes, "Russia Escalated Sabotage to Pressure U.S. and Allies on Ukraine, Study Says," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/18/us/politics/russia-sabotage-attacks-europe-ukraine.html>; Seth G. Jones et al., "China's Strategy of Political Warfare," Center for Strategic & International Studies, August 2, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-strategy-political-warfare>

My statement first details the value of the Counterterrorism Bureau in managing today's terrorism threats. It then discusses several particular programs the CT Bureau manages and their importance for fighting terrorism. The third section of my statement details the designation power of the Bureau and the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach. I conclude my testimony by offering policy recommendations for the Trump administration and for the U.S. Congress.

Value of the Counterterrorism Bureau

The Counterterrorism Bureau plays numerous roles in helping the United States fight terrorism. The first is to serve as a bureaucratic center in the Department of State. In this capacity, the CT Bureau encourages the regional and functional bureaus to prioritize counterterrorism and engages other parts of the U.S. government, such as the intelligence community and the Department of Defense. When the system works well, intelligence and defense concerns are better integrated into U.S. diplomacy and diplomatic realities are better incorporated into intelligence collection and cooperation and military operations and planning.

Although most of the public attention on counterterrorism focuses on U.S. military operations or controversial issues such as surveillance and detention, the bulk of the effort against groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda is done by the security services of allies and partners.² These, however, must be constantly coordinated, directed, and incentivized – a task accomplished via intelligence liaison and vigorous diplomatic action, which the CT Bureau helps coordinate.

Integrating counterterrorism into overall diplomacy is especially vital in critical, but unstable, regions like the Middle East. The ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, the aftermath of the Israel-Hezbollah clash, the repeated attacks Iran conducted on Israel and the Israeli response, Houthi attacks on international shipping and U.S. forces, and the overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria are only a few of the many regional crises that involve terrorist groups, their sponsors, or both. An effective Middle East policy requires an effective counterterrorism policy.

Many terrorist groups are global, and housing the responsibility for counterterrorism under a regional bureau, such as the State Department's Bureau of Near East Affairs, would be ineffective. Hezbollah, for example, is based in the Middle East but is active in South America, Europe, and other parts of the world. ISIS has powerful branches in South Asia and Africa, and it seeks to target the United States and Europe as well. A coordinator with global responsibilities is vital to devise an overall strategy and ensure that different regional bureaus are working together to defeat these enemies.

Retaining a high-level office with a global focus is also necessary for coordination outside the State Department. Indeed, other national security agencies have robust counterterrorism programs that act across the world. Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict and the Joint Special Operations Command in the defense and military communities, the Central Intelligence Agency's Counterterrorism Mission Center, and the National Counterterrorism Center are important examples of well-resourced entities that have global responsibilities and coordinate

² Daniel Byman, "The Intelligence War on Terrorism" *Intelligence and National Security* 29, no. 6 (2013): 837-863, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2013.851876>

and direct different regional efforts. The State Department must retain a similar capacity for global action on counterterrorism.

The State Department also plays an important role in repatriation of ISIS-linked individuals. Camps for refugees and the displaced in Syria such as Al Hol house tens of thousands of people, many of them non-Syrians. One U.S. official called these camps a “ticking time bomb.”³ The Trump administration has wisely encouraged countries to bring their nationals home to face justice, and this should be continued. This issue is especially pressing given the instability in Syria today and the uncertainty of U.S. policy in the area, which – through aid cuts and plans to reduce the U.S. military presence – has decreased the already-limited U.S. influence in the region.⁴

Counterterrorism Programming

An important part of the Counterterrorism Bureau’s value and influence is its control over various counterterrorism programs, such as the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund, the Terrorist Interdiction Program, and the Antiterrorism Assistance Program, among others. Although the amount of money (usually a little more than \$300 million annually) is small compared to counterterrorism spending in the defense world, the programs offer considerable value. These programs allow the United States to train and equip law enforcement partners around the world and strengthen partner judicial systems to better combat terrorism. Other programs attempt to counter violent extremism and help states counter terrorist financing and otherwise build their capacity.⁵

These programs are important for strengthening allies and partners in key areas. This includes supporting border security and law enforcement, two critical counterterrorism functions, as well as combating the financing of terrorism. When operating on their own territory, allies and partners can do the job more effectively, and more cheaply, than could the United States because they have advantages in manpower, legal authority, and legitimacy.

These programs can and should be improved. It is already a constant struggle to ensure they are integrated as part of whole-of-government, or even whole-of-State Department, counterterrorism efforts. In addition, the CT Bureau is short on personnel and overly reliant on contractors.⁶

³ Gordon Lubold and Michael R. Gordon, “‘A Ticking Time Bomb’: In Syrian Camps, Fears of an Islamic State Revival,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/a-ticking-time-bomb-in-syrian-camps-fears-of-an-islamic-state-revival-a89f2ac3>; Seth J. Frantzman, “US Pushes Countries to Repatriate Nationals in Syria’s Displaced-persons Camps,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, February 13, 2025, https://www.fdd.org/analysis/op_ed/2025/02/13/us-pushes-countries-to-repatriate-nationals-in-syrias-displaced-persons-camps/

⁴ Bassem Mroue, “Trump’s Aid Freeze Leads to Uncertainty in Syrian Detention Camp Holding Families Linked to Islamic State,” *PBS*, February 3, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/trumps-aid-freeze-leads-to-uncertainty-in-syrian-detention-camp-holding-families-linked-to-islamic-state>

⁵ Bureau of Counterterrorism, “Programs and Initiatives,” U.S. Department of State, accessed April 29, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-counterterrorism-programs-and-initiatives/>

⁶ Joseph Macmanus et al., “Inspection of the Bureau of June 2020 Counterterrorism’s Foreign Assistance Program Management,” *Office of Inspector General United States Department of State*, June 2020, https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/isp-i-20-14_7.pdf

Unfortunately, recent State Department aid freezes threaten to reduce partner capacity. The United States froze U.S. funding for medical care and maintaining bases of Somali counterterrorism forces and forensic labs for Somali law enforcement, blunting the tip of the spear in the effort to fight Al Qaeda's most capable affiliate.⁷ In addition to the disruption to valuable programs, the freezes and suspensions send a message to partner nations that the United States does not value their concerns and will not make good on U.S. security promises. Some may look to China or other countries to ensure their security.

Preserving CT Bureau program funding to address these issues helps partner states fight terrorism within their own borders, arresting and prosecuting would-be terrorists before they can attack at home or strike against the United States. Ending these programs would increase the terrorist threat to the United States, making it more likely that foreign terrorists could slip through nets in allied and partner countries, not face counterterrorism pressure there, or use these countries as bases from which to attack the United States or U.S. interests.

Designating Foreign Terrorist Organizations

An important function of the Counterterrorism Bureau is designating Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).⁸ The FTO designation not only leads to the implementation of various penalties under U.S. law, but it also influences how U.S. and international financial institutions, technology companies, and other important private entities engage with these actors and their customers in general. Similarly, the Counterterrorism Bureau lists state sponsors of terrorism, another important official determination that has criminal and financial consequences under U.S. law as well as profound implications for private companies, which often limit business and investment if there is even a small risk of association with terrorism.⁹

These lists were always political, but they have become even more so. The uneven listings of global white supremacist and anti-government terrorists, and the on-and-off state sponsor listings of countries like Cuba and North Korea without significant changes in their support for terrorism, reduces the credibility of these lists.¹⁰ So too does the limited attention the CT Bureau

⁷ Katherine Houreld, Rachel Chason, Susannah George, and Mustafa Salim, *Washington Post*, February 16, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/02/16/trump-funding-freeze-terrorism-africa/>

⁸ Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, accessed April 29, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/#~:text=The%20Bureau%20of%20Counterterrorism%20in,identify%20potential%20targets%20for%20designation>.

⁹ See Bureau of Counterterrorism, "State Sponsors of Terrorism," U.S. Department of State, accessed April 29, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/#~:text=Countries%20determined%20by%20the%20Secretary,section%20620A%20of%20the%20Foreign>

¹⁰ Jason M. Blazakis, "Understanding the State Department's Latest Far-Right Terrorist Designation," *The Lawfare Institute*, June 30, 2024, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/understanding-the-state-department-s-latest-far-right-terrorist-designation>; Colin P. Clarke, Camden Carmichael, and Seamus Hughes, "Why the Terrorgram Collective Designation Matters," *The Lawfare Institute*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/why-the-terrorgram-collective-designation-matters>; Chris Meserole and Daniel Byman, "Terrorist Definitions and Designations Lists What Technology Companies Need to Know," *Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies and The Brookings Institution*, July 19, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GRNTT-Paper-No.-7.pdf>

gives to publicizing and fighting the support for extremism and terrorism of countries like Pakistan and Russia.¹¹

The effort to expand the FTO list to new categories, such as drug cartels and violent gangs, will lead to further inconsistencies. These groups kill thousands of people, traffic drugs, and spread violence in their own countries and at times abroad – all of which the United States should oppose. However, many are (and others can be) designated as transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) through the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act and otherwise punished under existing U.S. laws. By design, the TCO and FTO lists were meant to be separate, and declaring a TCO to also be a terrorist group does not add significant policy leverage or new tools to counter these groups.¹²

Cartels, of course, seek to make money as their primary objective, while terrorists seek political change. One risk in conflating the two is that U.S. payment processors, banks, and businesses with links to Mexico and other countries where these groups are active must worry that they are vulnerable to prosecution if they do basic functions such as helping transfer remittances or other noncriminal payments. A zealous prosecutor might use the material support power to aggressively prosecute U.S. businesses as has been done with ISIS. This could harm legitimate businesses seeking to operate in these countries.

A second risk is that the terrorism label further becomes shorthand for behavior the United States does not like, as opposed to the actual use of terrorism. Already, gaps and inconsistencies in the U.S. list create this perception, and the more divorced group activity gets from traditional definitions of terrorism, the more likely other countries are to regard the designations with cynicism or indifference. In some cases this may not matter, but it is important for the moral opprobrium associated with terrorism to remain strong.

The United States should also be wary of the risks of using these designations when it complicates other U.S. policies. The Houthis in Yemen, for example, are a repressive, pro-Iran, and anti-U.S. group. U.S. attacks on Houthi leadership and infrastructure and support for allies and partners against the Houthis are a legitimate response to Houthi attacks.

The Houthis' terrorism designation, however, complicates both diplomatic and humanitarian efforts in Yemen but does not add significant pressure on the Houthis themselves. In theory the designation further restricts the Houthis' financing and provides additional tools for prosecuting individuals who provide material support to the Houthis. The designation also signals to other

¹¹ Zia ur-Rehman, "India Accuses Pakistan of Supporting Terrorism. Here's What We Know," *The New York Times*, April 29, 2025,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/29/world/asia/india-pakistan-kashmir-terrorism.html>; Shelby Butt and Daniel Byman, "Right-wing Extremism: The Russian Connection," *Survival* 62, no. 2 (2020): 137-151,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2020.1739960>

¹² Brian Michael Jenkins, "Should Mexico's Drug Cartels Be Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations?" RAND, March 22, 2023,

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/03/should-mexicos-drug-cartels-be-designated-foreign-terrorist.html>;

Tricia Bacon and Daniel Byman, "The Problem With Designating Cartels as Terrorist Groups," *Foreign Policy*, February 18, 2025,

https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/02/18/problem-cartels-terrorist-groups/?preview_id=1186631

states that the United States prioritizes opposition to the Houthis, which could motivate partner cooperation. At the same time, however, the Houthis themselves are not a significant player in international terrorism according to traditional U.S. definitions: their attacks on shipping and on Israel are more akin to acts of war than terrorism.

In addition, Houthi leaders do not travel outside of Yemen or own foreign assets, reducing the impact of designations' restrictions on international financial activities. As former NSC official Allison Minor noted, "the Houthis have shown they are more interested in disrupting the global financial system than participating in it."¹³ The designation also risks restricting the flow of humanitarian aid and vital remittances from the diaspora to Yemen, where starvation, disease, and poverty pose a deadly threat. As Yemen expert Gregory Johnsen noted, "The Houthi leadership is largely insulated from shortages in food and medicine. Yemeni civilians are not."¹⁴ Lastly, the designation also hinders U.S. and international negotiations with the Houthis to end their attacks on shipping and to accept a ceasefire in the civil war by making them less likely to believe in U.S. and international good faith because the listing decreases the economic and diplomatic benefits of any peace.

Implications and Recommendations

It is important to strengthen the Counterterrorism Bureau and for it to improve its efforts to combat terrorism. Sustaining, and ideally increasing, funding is a necessary step to preserve vital programs that strengthen partner capabilities. If the CT Bureau has fewer personnel and diminished programs, it exerts less influence and would be less able to ensure that counterterrorism remains a diplomatic priority. It would also make it more likely that the Department of Defense and intelligence community do not integrate the president's foreign policy objectives and instead operate according to their institutional preferences only.

The CT Bureau should be encouraged to provide additional designations and more real-time updating of terrorism-related information. Tracking Russian backing of extremists and Chinese gray-zone warfare activities are two important functions in the era of great power competition, and the CT Bureau can be part of this broader effort. The CT Bureau should also continue the effort begun under the first Trump administration to designate global white supremacist terrorist groups, demonstrating that the United States is committed to fighting terrorism regardless of the political ideology behind it.

If the State Department is fundamentally reorganized, there must be a high-level office and leader responsible for counterterrorism that reports to the Secretary of State. Without such an office and leader, counterterrorism will get lost in the day-to-day of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. This entity must have global responsibilities and be able to coordinate actions among the regional bureaus and outside the Department of State.

¹³ Allison Minor, "A Better Way to Counter the Houthis," *Foreign Affairs*, October 18, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/yemen/better-way-counter-houthis>.

¹⁴ Gregory D. Johnsen, "The Mistake of Designating the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization," The Brookings Institution, November 25, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-mistake-of-designating-the-houthis-as-a-foreign-terrorist-organization/>.

Finally, the State Department should be leery of calls to apply the FTO or state sponsor designations to other dangers that are not directly related to terrorism. Although cartels and similar organizations are heinous, conflating their activities with terrorism risks weakening the moral and public impact of a terrorist designation and poses unnecessary complications for U.S. companies.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Dr. Byman.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

Ambassador Sales, in your experience does the current placement of the Bureau of Counterterrorism within the State Department allow it to fully leverage its authorities in leading interagency CT strategy?

Mr. SALES. Thanks for the question, Mr. Chairman.

As you will recall, during the Biden administration CT Bureau was moved from J, the civil rights and human rights family of bureaus, to P, political affairs, which is where the regional bureaus are housed.

I think Secretary Rubio's proposal to shift CT Bureau to the T family—that is to say, the security oriented bureaus—makes a lot of sense.

CT has natural synergies with arms control, preventing proliferation of weapons to terrorists in particular, preventing the use of chemical weapons by terrorists in particular.

So I think housing it in the T family would make a lot of sense.

Mr. LAWLER. So to that end, if you can elaborate more, obviously, Secretary Rubio, as you point out, released this new organizational chart, moving it from P branch to T. What is—what do you really believe the benefits of that are in more detail?

Mr. SALES. Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, there is a couple of benefits. One is it will enable better coordination across the various State Department bureaus that are collectively responsible for security.

The arms control team, the law enforcement team—that is to say, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, and the CT team all work on the same set of issues, try to solve the same sorts of problems. Having them housed under the same umbrella I think makes it easier for them to coordinate with each other.

Mr. LAWLER. How do you believe that the Counterterrorism Bureau helps facilitate coordination between the Bureau of African Affairs, for instance, or the Bureau of Near East Affairs?

Obviously, this committee being Middle East and North Africa those two are relevant to the counterterrorism issues that span both of those regions.

Mr. SALES. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the CT Bureau has a really vital role to play there because it is laser focused on the challenge posed by terrorist groups.

Regional bureaus—and this is the standard push and pull dynamic no matter what the issue is in the State Department—they tend to have a broader aperture for looking at problems in a region, and no one problem is always going to command the attention of the assistant secretary and the workforce in a regional bureau.

So the interplay between a regional bureau like NEA, which sees the big picture of what is American grand strategy in the Middle East, and the CT Bureau, which can address specifically the problems posed by ISIS or al-Qaeda or other threats is a very important dynamic.

Mr. LAWLER. Ambassador Sales, what role does the Counterterrorism Bureau play in the policy development, implementation, and

coordination of sanctions targeting terrorist organizations and their support networks?

Mr. SALES. I think it is one of the two most important bodies in the Federal Government dealing with sanctions policy and sanctions execution.

So the division of labor between the CT Bureau and the Treasury Department, the other key player when it comes to terrorism sanctions, is as follows.

CT Bureau has the authority to impose sanctions on those who engage in terrorism—actual terrorist operatives, actual terrorist organizations—whereas the Treasury Department has the authority to impose sanctions on those that enable or facilitate or raise money for terrorist organizations.

And so sometimes the line between those different categories of behavior can be a bit blurry and that is why I think it is very important for the CT Bureau to have a good relationship with counterparts over at Treasury.

Mr. LAWLER. The recent back and forth on the Houthi designation as a terrorist group raises questions about how consistent and effective our FTO designation process actually is.

How does the Bureau evaluate the long term value of these designations, especially when they get reversed from one administration to the next?

Mr. SALES. Well, Mr. Chairman, during my time at State we were responsible for putting the Houthis on the list and we did it because that is what the evidence dictated.

This was an organization that was committing terrorist attacks against energy infrastructure across the Middle East, that had attacked, actually, the Aden Airport while the government in exile of Yemen was arriving and managed to kill, I believe, a number of U.N. humanitarian workers.

So we simply looked at the facts, and that is the way the CT Bureau typically approaches FTO designations, in my experience.

We have a legal standard, engage in terrorist activity. We look at the evidentiary record that is compiled by open source information as well as more exquisite forms of information, and then it is ultimately up to the Secretary to make a call as to whether the evidence meets the legal standard.

Mr. LAWLER. So you support the redesignation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization?

Mr. SALES. Absolutely. If they haven't earned it I am not sure who has.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

I now recognize the gentleman from California Mr. Sherman for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Yesterday was a big day at the State Department. It was fork in the road day. I don't know how many State Department people have taken the check and are leaving. We will find that out soon.

Mr. Byman, we are here focused on the Bureau of Counterterrorism. How much—if that Bureau is cut by 15 percent does that endanger Americans?

Mr. BYMAN. The Bureau of Counterterrorism their work is critical. It is truly life or death, and it keeps me safe. It keeps my family safe. It keeps everyone here safe.

So I think the Bureau is already underfunded, is already overstretched, and to cut it further means the programs will be less effective. It means there will be less coordination and, to me, that is very dangerous.

Mr. SHERMAN. And we will be more vulnerable to terrorism?

Mr. BYMAN. Yes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Got you.

The Popular Resistance Committees are the third largest terrorist group based in Gaza. They have killed Americans. They have engaged in a whole host of terrorism before October 7th and were full participants on October 7th.

Mr. Sales, any reason we wouldn't designate the Popular—well, my bill to designate them we shouldn't be doing this here. The State Department should be doing it.

My bill to designate them passed this committee unanimously but is there a reason why we haven't designated them? I realize they are not as big as the other two but they are third on the list.

Mr. SALES. Yes. Bronze medal is still on the trophy stand so I think any group that is targeting people—targeting innocent civilians, targeting Israeli soldiers—for deadly violence that meets the standards should certainly be on the State Department's radar screen.

Mr. SHERMAN. And I realize they were once affiliated with Fatah and that is a less terrorist organization than other Palestinian organizations, but they did kill three American service guards back in 2003.

I want to focus a bit on crypto. There was a huge division in this body many years ago about—some argued that our economic—that our use of the dollar, our banking sanctions on Iran, were so effective that we could have gotten a better nuclear deal, and some thought that the sanctions using the banking system were so effective that we did get a good deal.

But both sides who agreed—were violently opposed to each other on the—whether the deal was good agreed why we were able to get a deal.

Right now we have maybe 10,000 transactions a day in crypto. We have got billions of dollars a day—transactions a day—I am saying transactions, not dollars—in dollars.

So it is a lot easier to keep track of crypto unless it becomes a currency and becomes something that—tens of millions of transactions occur every day.

Crypto aspires to be a major currency. If oil transactions could take place in crypto would that undermine our ability to bring Iran to the table?

Mr. SALES. Congressman, if that is for me, I think the concern you raised is something that policymakers should worry about very much.

That said, I think there are still pressure points that can be used to apply pressure to the Iranian regime to force them to the table.

Insurance companies, for instance, are potential pressure points. Shipping companies are potential pressure points and various other

economic players that are enablers of illicit Iranian energy shipments.

Mr. SHERMAN. But other countries have insurance companies. Other countries have fleets of ships—in fact, far more than we do.

Only one country controls the currency that is accepted for international petroleum transactions. I would ask to put in the record this article “FBI busts \$1.5 million Hamas crypto currency ring” into the record.

Mr. LAWLER. Without objection.

[The information referred to was not provided]

Mr. SHERMAN. And I will ask our other witness whether if crypto became a true rival to the dollar, millions of transactions a day, accepted for international petroleum transactions would that undermine our sanctions.

Mr. BYMAN. Crypto right now encompasses a large number of very legitimate business entities and a wild range of alternatives, and to the extent that different crypto currencies want to become legitimate and want to enjoy the rights and benefits and transactions they need to also accept the rules and that includes preventing their use by terrorist entities.

And whether that is Iran, whether that is different terrorist groups they need to be cooperating with Treasury. They need to be cooperating with investigators, and if that is not done then—

Mr. SHERMAN. If you spend any time listening to the advocates of crypto you know that is exactly what they are not going to do. And I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. The gentleman’s time has expired.

I now recognize the gentleman from South Carolina, the chairman emeritus of the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee Joe Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Chairman. I am very happy to be emeriti. This is good, as we speak Latin here.

But aside from that, I want to thank both of you for being here today and thank you for your service to the American people and, indeed, Dr. Byman, I appreciate you were talking about the enemies of freedom are working together, and somehow there just needs to be an understanding that we are in a conflict we didn’t choose.

And these are dictators who rule by gun invading democracies who rule by law, and it really started February 24, 2023, when war criminal Putin invaded Ukraine.

Then on October 7, 2024, you had Iran, through its puppets, invade Israel. The aggression has continued and that—and you have the aggression of war criminal Putin. You have the regime in Tehran and then you have the Chinese Communist Party.

And so thank you for referencing that indeed, we have got enemies that are working together, and people of good faith and persons who truly want to promote freedom and democracy need to be working together in every way.

And for both of you, in recent years we have seen disturbing levels of a subversion of the government of Iraq by Iran-backed terrorists, organizations, and militias. They wield substantial influence over all branches of government and overtly support Iran-friendly policy.

Additionally, I am particularly concerned because two of my sons have served in Iraq with the intent of promoting freedom for the people of Iraq, and so to see the Iranian influence, to me, is just inconceivable of what is going on.

And with that, for each of you what is the level of the Iranian strategy of taking over Iraq through its military puppets and how is the Bureau adjusting its counterterrorism approach to deal with the growing activity of Iranian puppets as Iran continues to develop a nuclear capability?

Mr. SALES. Well, thank you, Congressman, for that question.

I think you are exactly right. Iraq really is at a crossroads. It has to choose whether it wants to be a vassal State to its neighbor or whether it wants to be a free and prosperous democracy engaged in trade and commerce with the United States and our allies.

I think Iran has tools that the United States doesn't have for influence in Iran. It can threaten—in Iraq, I should say.—It can threaten to kill Iraqi parliamentarians. It can threaten to kill their families. It can offer bribes.

The United States doesn't play that game. We are not going to stop playing the game the way we play it so what we need to do is make sure that we are applying pressure to Iran's tools of influence in Iraq.

That includes sanctioning the terrorist groups, the militias that use force domestically against protesters, that use force against American soldiers and diplomats.

It means limiting—using the power of the dollar to limit Iran's influence over the Iraqi economy, in particular the continued need for Iraq to purchase energy from its neighbor, giving waivers to Iraq, which has been done for many years.

To allow those transactions to continue is a gift to the mullahs. It gives them more leverage over a very fragile Iraqi government and economy. It needs to stop.

Mr. BYMAN. Thank you, sir, for that question.

There is a decline in U.S. influence in Iraq that has been steady now in multiple administrations for some time, and despite the sacrifices of American soldiers, despite the service of your sons, the United States has, largely, walked away from Iraq and this has occurred even as Iran's position there has been weakened by Israeli military action.

And we have seen emboldened Iraqi civil society actors more willing to push back against Iran even though they face, as the Ambassador pointed out, a true threat to their very lives.

Part of the role of the State Department should be encouraging greater U.S. effort in Iraq, should be increasing the number of people we have on the ground there, should be ensuring that the United States has a robust military presence in the region, and also playing a critical role in coordinating U.S. allies—Saudi Arabia, Israel, others—with a strong interest there.

Unfortunately, I think we are going in the wrong direction on Iraq, and I hope that this committee can push it in the proper direction.

Mr. WILSON. Well, your influence will be very helpful and, indeed, we know that oil has been transferred from Iran to Iraq under the understanding it is from Iraq.

No, it is not. It is from Iran. And then incredibly tragic is with the dictatorship in Damascus, Assad fleeing to Moscow, appropriately, in fact, in Iraq today the Iranian training of forces to try to overthrow the new government that we have such high hopes will be successful for the people of Syria.

I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

I now recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts Mr. Keating for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Byman, in particular, you know, if we are looking at the important issues of reorganization, to try and be more efficient and more effective, certainly that is the course we should all embark on here.

But, you know, without dealing with the root causes and having a policy that focuses on the root causes without dealing with partnerships, because this is a global threat, it won't mean anything.

It would be reorganization. It would be akin to moving around the deck chairs on the Titanic. It won't accomplish anything. So getting into the root causes there is real problems that I see now in partnerships.

Dr. Byman, can you briefly talk about the value and the necessity of global partners?

Mr. BYMAN. Thank you for the question, Mr. Keating.

The day to day of counterterrorism is, largely, done through U.S. allies and partners. They have the forces on the ground, whether that is law enforcement or intelligence or military.

They also often have capabilities because they are dealing with domestic problems that have ramifications for the United States.

At the same time, there are zones of chaos. There are angry populations, and U.S. programs to counter extremism are designed to help manage or at least reduce some of the problems.

Mr. KEATING. So you are concerned, sir, about some of the cuts that have occurred to our allied nations and the cuts that are there through USAID and other sources that really are necessary to help buildup our effectiveness in counterterrorism?

Mr. BYMAN. These programs are necessary for our allies to be strong including on counterterrorism and cutting them is a setback for the United States.

Mr. KEATING. Those partnership capabilities do they include intelligence sharing?

Mr. BYMAN. They do.

Mr. KEATING. Isn't it concerning—it is to me—that with Signalgate and everything you see going on with the scandal there that the U.S. has really called into question its ability to manage its own intelligence and to keep these kind of discussions private?

I look at the—thwarted, caught in Vienna. If it wasn't for global partners here and information that could be shared and trusted it wouldn't have been thwarted.

So isn't that—isn't it integral to our ability to deal with partners that they trust that the intel they share stays there and is not something that can be so easily breached as was with the Signal messaging that occurred with Secretary Hegseth?

Mr. BYMAN. Admiral McRaven, the former head of Special Operations Command, used to talk about you can't surge trust and that trust is something that you could spend years working on and then it could break in a day.

And it is vital that we preserve that, especially for intelligence sharing.

Mr. KEATING. And the other, getting to the root abilities we have together, it is so important that the U.S. show that they have the strongest adherence to rule of law. Isn't that the case?

Mr. BYMAN. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. Wouldn't you think that having the President of the United States, who was just asked in the last week whether or not he would, you know, defend our Constitution here in our own country and his reply saying, "Well, I don't know," isn't that something that generally would be unnerving to allies and partners at that level, to say we wouldn't adhere to our own rule of law?

Mr. BYMAN. One thing we see throughout the world is that successful counterterrorism depends on a fundamental commitment to the rule of law, that when we move away from it we may have momentary successes but over time it corrupts the governments and corrupts our partnerships.

So it is—rule of law is vital, sir.

Mr. KEATING. Yes. In your opening remarks and statements you were dealing with issues and the concerns with white supremacist groups, and I also have that concern.

I was dealing with making sure with appropriations that we fully fund the racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism causes we have.

Can you really deal—if you are really putting a hierarchy on the threats we have how high is that threat?

Mr. BYMAN. It is an extremely highest threat, sir. If you look back at violence in the United States just in terms of death toll in recent years white supremacists have been at the very top of that list and I think everyone agrees that is a threat that needs to be covered.

Mr. KEATING. Great. Well, thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Keating.

I now recognize the gentleman from California Mr. Issa for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you.

Ambassador, you know, we have an expression that we use so often here, that partisanship ends at the water's edge. Unfortunately, we are nowhere close to the water's edge, I guess, in today's hearings to a certain extent.

Back to the question of the moving of the counterterrorism, you, obviously, have an expertise about the ability to keep secrets, the working with partners, all of that, correct?

Mr. SALES. I would like to think so, Congressman.

Mr. ISSA. Well, you had the job and you did a good job. So given that and given the broad historic area that the under secretary for political affairs has versus the new position, in a sense, aren't we moving it to the—the Secretary is moving it to a more secure use to working with things that you keep close to the vest you nego-

tiate in order to get the end results you want, usually without disclosure?

Mr. SALES. I think that is right, Congressman. I think moving the CT Bureau into the T family where all of the other security-related bureaus are located makes a lot of sense, including for the reason you have just identified.

Mr. ISSA. Okay. So we will just leave it as moving it to the right place for the right reason could, in fact, be a good decision from a U.S. senator, now Secretary, who has looked at this on a national security basis for his decade of service here.

But one other question that this begs, too, isn't this one of the most important positions, going forward, as we look at global issues, trade issues, cybersecurity, all kinds? We have got all kinds of issues that are global.

But this issue to a great extent is the issue that bit us in the back end on 9/11. This is the issue that, for example, has led to attacks around the world to our allies.

So isn't this one of those issues where you have to give it to somebody who isn't looking at the broad policy of the day and all the things that are in vogue but in fact diligently working on something that could happen anywhere at any time, if you take your view away from that specific issue?

Mr. SALES. I think absolutely.

Counterterrorism is a no-fail mission. If a diplomat offends an assistant minister someplace then you have to send a note of apology. If counterterrorism safeguards fail Americans die.

So it is absolutely critical that this issue remain a priority across the government, and as I said in my opening statement, that doesn't mean that this is a distraction from America's broader strategic objectives.

Counterterrorism tools and counterterrorism partnerships are precisely one way that we can advance our strategic objectives against our rival states that are increasingly acting together and with terrorist organizations.

Look no further than the Iranian regime sending drones to Putin to be used in strikes against Ukrainian civilians in Kyiv. I mean, that is up—that is what we are up against here and CT can be part of solving that problem.

Mr. ISSA. Well, and continuing along that theme, the gentleman from Massachusetts Mr. Keating seemed to imply in his questions that if we just did more to end poverty and misunderstandings and, you know, I don't know, the myriad of issues—the do-good issues, if you will—not saying they are not important but that somehow that would be as effective as actually fighting counterterrorism.

Would you agree with that?

Mr. SALES. Congressman, in my experience the most effective counterterrorism programs are the nuts and bolts—training prosecutors, training judges—to handle terrorism cases, assisting foreign ministries of finance to help track the money and impose sanctions on terrorist groups.

Things that matter on the front lines of terrorism, in my experience, have been the most effective way to keep Americans safe.

Mr. ISSA. And, perhaps, just to put a bow on this, was Osama bin Laden somehow poor, disadvantaged, or in some other way

brought to terrorism because of things that foreign aid would help with?

Mr. SALES. I think his family's extreme wealth would have made him ineligible for a USAID grant.

Mr. ISSA. Okay. So, again, I will put a second bow on this just to be sure, and, Doctor, I will give you the last of—the last answer for a moment.

Aren't there distinct differences between how we fight terrorism where we see it and how we fight poverty and other things, which may allow people to be induced to join terrorists but per se doesn't create the terrorist regimes?

Mr. BYMAN. I think there is a definite distinction, sir, between the programs. My caveat is in some places, though, there is overlap and especially some of the places that the Ambassador mentioned in Africa where government is weak.

Building government, making it stronger, helps us fight terrorism and some of the AID programs play that role.

Mr. ISSA. I certainly agree. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Representative Issa.

I now recognize the gentleman from Illinois Mr. Schneider for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for joining us.

The State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism plays a critical role in safeguarding our national security. I think we all agree how important it is to make sure we keep Americans and American interests safe around the world and here at home.

We have to promote global stability and protect the lives of American citizens or else we aren't doing our job. For decades the Bureau of Counterterrorism, commonly known as CT, has served as the strategic hub for international efforts to combat terrorism.

The CT Bureau cultivates partnerships with foreign governments, coordinates with multilateral organizations focused on peace building, and bolsters the capacity of nations to detect, disrupt, and defeat terrorist threats before they reach our shores.

We all agree we must continue to invest in this critical body and the counterterrorism workforce. The CT Bureau's efforts are not abstract diplomacy.

The eight programs and forums within the Bureau save lives each and every day through initiatives like the Anti-Terrorism Assistance—ATA—program.

CT Bureau has helped train more than 150,000 law enforcement security officials in more than 100 countries. These partnerships have directly prevented violent attacks, disrupted terrorist networks, and captured dangerous extremists intent on inciting civil unrest.

Ambassador Sales, in your opening remarks you said CT still matters, and you went on to list in countries around the globe where those threats are not just still existent but, indeed, growing.

I want to be clear. Diminishing the Bureau of Counterterrorism I believe would be a profound mistake. Terrorism is evolving.

Today's terrorist organizations are more diffuse, more digitally connected, more skilled in exploiting fragile regimes, as you talked about in Africa.

And so in your testimony, Ambassador, you had a couple of recommendations. The first is to consolidate programs not currently in the CT Bureau but within Department of State under the CT Bureau, making it more powerful, more influential—more effective, not less.

Your second recommendation, I believe, is to elevate the director—the head of the CT Bureau—to an assistant secretary status. Is that correct?

Mr. SALES. Yes. Yes, Congressman.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But in the new State Department org chart it shows it being moved from the P family to the T family. This committee has yet to be briefed on the reasoning for that decision.

You note CT work is essential and I would argue, as you said, I agree it should be elevated, not diminished.

With the proposed cuts to funding this administration's attack on our allies through tariffs, et cetera, I worry the Bureau's importance will be diminished and its coordination work and effectiveness also diminish.

What is the consequence of transferring it to the T family, of lowering its priority or its profile, whether it is in Africa or the Middle East? Is this the right approach, do you think, dealing with the Bureau?

Mr. SALES. Well, Congressman, I share very much your concern that CT as an issue and CT Bureau as an organization not be diminished in any way. I don't think, with respect, that moving it from one silo in the State Department to another silo in the State Department would have that effect.

When CT was originally created back in 1972 it was part of the office of the Secretary, then it moved to the so-called J family.

When I was acting under secretary CT was part of my portfolio. In the Biden administration it moved to the P family. So it has had a number of organizational homes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I understand that. But do you believe that the way the administration, the way the Secretary of State, is talking about the CT Bureau, the moves they are making, is that elevating the profile or diminishing the profile of the Bureau?

Mr. SALES. Well, I think moving it to the T family makes a lot of sense and I think it elevates it in so far as it creates synergies between CT Bureau, the arms control people, the law enforcement people, other bureaucrats, other units that are responsible for the security issues. I think that elevates the importance of—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. But you are saying it should be elevated, not diminished?

Mr. SALES. I agree with that, Congressman.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Dr. Byman, do you view the reorganization plan as a shift in priorities or do you see it the way the Ambassador does?

Mr. BYMAN. So my honest answer, sir, is I don't know. We haven't received clear reasoning on the logic of the move and I am a little disappointed to learn that the subcommittee has not received that either.

In general, the regional bureaus have been bureaucratically stronger than the functional bureaus and so moving it out of P does have potential consequences.

But as the Ambassador knows so well, much depends on the head of the CT Bureau's relationship with the Secretary and that is going to vary by how much attention Secretary Rubio gives CT. But the discussion of significant budget cuts doesn't bode well for the elevation of CT concerns.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. I am out of time. But I do appreciate the comments and I hope we do maintain the high profile of counterterrorism. It keeps our Nation secure and our people safe.

I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

I would just note for the record the Secretary's staff and the State Department staff have come and met with the staff of the full committee, both the majority and the minority.

The ranking member's staff was part of the briefing with respect to the reorganization of the chart so they do have information and I would certainly encourage my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to reach out to the ranking member's office for more information.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. In fairness, they did not talk about the CT Bureau.

Mr. LAWLER. They talked about the reorganization chart.

I now recognize for 5 minutes the gentleman from Texas Mr. Jackson.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this important hearing today. Thank you to our witnesses for your testimony today.

The world has increasingly become a more dangerous place due to the Biden administration's failed leadership, leaving our enemies more empowered and America and our allies more vulnerable than ever.

While the previous administration was hyper focused on advancing radical DEI initiatives, we must re-prioritize the safety and security of the American people above all else and that begins with reexamining the structure of the Department of State.

This committee is holding hearings that will optimize the agency to better serve and protect our national security while efficiently using taxpayer dollars.

Historically, our national defense and security has spanned multiple agencies with different specialties and different approaches.

However, inefficient intelligence sharing and coordination has plagued federal government, leading to duplicative entities and significant intelligence gaps, not to mention wasted dollars.

Ambassador Sales, from your experience what were the biggest barriers to coordination between the Counterterrorism Bureau and other key interagency actors such as the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the CIA, and others in the intelligence community?

What authorities or reporting lines could be reformed to reduce duplication and improve outcomes?

Mr. SALES. It is a great question, Congressman, and we could probably have an entire hearing just on that.

In my experience the challenges of coordination derive from different mission sets. The State Department mission is different from the intelligence community's mission is different from the Defense Department's mission, and when you sit around the table at a policy coordinating committee or at a principals committee you are going to see differences of opinion stemming from those sort of bureaucratic and turf priorities.

But also I think the way to solve those is clear lines of communication between the CT coordinator and the Secretary of State.

If the Secretary cares about your issue, if the Secretary is prepared to expend capital to move the ball forward on your issue, you can sort of steamroll a lot of that opposition that might come up during the interagency process.

Mr. JACKSON. Thank you, and I agree. You know, we want to decrease wasted time, money, and duplicate efforts. We want to get rid of all of that stuff.

But are there actually times where these different authorities actually work to our benefit in countering violent extremist organizations and other types of terrorism?

Mr. SALES. I think so, and I don't mean to shortchange the good that can come from robust interagency conversation. If one agency wants to impose sanctions on a group that would complicate, for example, the ability of the Defense Department to maintain force protection.

That is something that needs to come out, right? That is something that the interagency needs to take very seriously.

If, on the other hand, the imposition of sanctions on a politician is going to cause problems for diplomats who want to engage with that politician, that is also something that needs to come out in the interagency discussion.

Now, that is not to say that you should or shouldn't do something, only that these sorts of issues need to be aired in a transparent way among cabinet principals who trust each other.

Mr. JACKSON. Yes, that is—the deconflicting is absolutely, you know, key and I think that is kind of what you are describing here—deconflicting, some of that stuff.

It has been my experience also being on the Intelligence Committee that not only the deconfliction but sometimes there are actual authorities that one entity will have that the other entity doesn't and they can work with each other to accomplish more, in the end.

So I just wanted to point that out as well. I thank you both for your time today, and with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

I now recognize the gentleman from Tennessee Mr. Burchett for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity.

I am going to change courses here with you all. Are any of you all aware that the Biden State Department sent billions of taxpayer dollars to the Taliban and did the CT Bureau oppose this decision?

Mr. SALES. Well, Congressman, I can't speak to the CT Bureau's reaction. I was a private citizen at the time watching from the sidelines.

It is my understanding that the CT Bureau—sorry, that the Defense Department, unfortunately, during the botched withdrawal did leave behind a substantial amount of military hardware in the hands of our enemies.

Mr. BURCHETT. Right. It was currently money that is being sent in the form of aid we found that \$40 million a week is going to the Taliban and I have been trying for about a year to stop that, and it seems now this the State Department is looking into it.

Does the CT Bureau believe there is any ideological differences between the Taliban, ISIS, and al-Qaeda and, if so, what are those differences?

Mr. SALES. Well, Congressman, just speaking for myself, these terrorist groups that you mentioned have certain things in common and certain things that differ from each other.

One thing that they all share is the desire to kill as many Americans as possible, ideally here in the homeland, but if that isn't possible then to do it abroad, and meanwhile to do the same thing to Jews and to citizens of other allied states.

There are theological and ideological differences between them. Al-Qaeda is patient in trying to establish a caliphate. ISIS wants it now.

But in terms of tactics and in terms of objectives with respect to the United States, they are unrelentingly hostile and that is something they share in common.

Mr. BURCHETT. I guess you all view the Taliban as a terrorist organization, though, correct?

Mr. SALES. Well, they certainly walk like it and talk like it.

Mr. BURCHETT. I know that some people consider them a counterterrorism ally against ISIS, kind of enemy of my enemy is my friend kind of situation. I wonder what you all think.

Mr. SALES. I think some people do share that view. I am not one of them. It is the case that the Taliban and ISIS are enemies. They see each other as adversaries. They both seek control of Afghanistan.

But just because ISIS is a designated terrorist group doesn't mean that we should blind ourselves to the very real reality of atrocities committed by the Taliban.

The Taliban works hand in glove with the Haqqani Network which is an al-Qaeda affiliate, which is a U.S. designated terrorist organization. Haqqani figures are senior members of the Taliban government, using that term advisedly. Taliban regime is probably a better term.

So nobody should expect that the Taliban's interest in degrading ISIS are similar in any way to the interests of the United States in eliminating terrorist threats in Afghanistan as such.

Mr. BURCHETT. How does the State Department coordinate counterterror financing actions with the government as a whole?

Mr. SALES. Well, State works very closely with policymakers at Treasury and also OFAC, which is part of Treasury and which has—I would characterize it as more of a ministerial type role, administrative type role in administering sanctions.

The State Department sanctions related to terrorism typically get imposed on individuals and organizations that are actively engaged in terrorism such as al-Qaeda. Whereas Treasury, which has its own sanctions authorities for terrorism, will typically focus on financiers or enablers, money launderers, and those who are otherwise providing support to terrorism.

Mr. BURCHETT. I am always aware of and cautious of folks that are our friends until they are not our friends, and it generally turns out bad. If you want to jump in on any of this or you jump in as well.

Are there efforts by the State Department—any efforts they can make to streamline counter terror efforts within the Federal Government?

Mr. BYMAN. Sir, there is a lot that can be done to streamline different aspects of the Federal Government. It is always difficult with huge organizations to have that coordination, and sometimes you have the military going in one direction and the White House going in another and that has been common in multiple organizations.

So you need a strong coordinator, sir. You need someone who is empowered who is close to a secretary and thus people will listen to you and that enables more streamlining.

Mr. BURCHETT. It always bothers me as well, it seems when history plays out that we are on both sides of a lot of these conflicts and it—again, the only people that it pays out for is Wall Street.

What international partners can we rely on to assist with some of these counterterror financing efforts? And I am out of time, so give me a name.

Mr. SALES. The U.K. has been an enormously powerful force enabler. When you lock a terrorist group out of the U.S. financial system and the British financial system you put some real hurt on their ability to raise and move money.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired.

I now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Kean, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

As we evaluate the State Department's counterterrorism programs we must ensure that tools such as sanctions, diplomacy, and foreign assistance are being used strategically and effectively.

Terrorist groups have adapted and authoritarian adversaries like Iran, Russia, and China are using influence and instability to undermine U.S. efforts abroad.

Ambassador Sales, as Congress considers its authorization of the State Department and Counterterrorism Bureau how can we ensure that its mandate and resources are better aligned with the threats facing Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East, from Iranian-backed terrorist groups like Hamas or Hezbollah?

Mr. SALES. Well, I think that is a really important question. It is always an important question. It has become an even more important question in the aftermath of the October 7 atrocities perpetrated by Hamas which, of course, is a key terror proxy of the Iranian regime.

I think you have to address the head of the octopus, not just the tentacles. Iran has built—or had built before Israel successfully degraded it—a network of terrorist organizations that encircle the Jewish State, from Hezbollah in the north to Hamas in the south to Palestinian Islamic Jihad to others, the Houthis getting involved in the game as well.

All of—that entire network runs through Tehran. That entire network runs through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In order to degrade it—there is kinetic ways to do that but there are financial ways to do it as well.

You have to cutoff the flow of money to that far flung network of terrorist organizations. That includes restoring maximum pressure on Iranian energy exports.

It means sanctioning the groups themselves, going after their own finances. I think the President was very clear just yesterday talking about the Iranian nuclear program—no program at all.

In order to get there—and I think he is 100 percent right—we should not settle for a JCPOA 2.0. In order to get the Iranians to budge we are going to have to reimpose maximum pressure and squeeze their economy. That is going to result in a better nuclear deal.

But to your question, Congressman, that is also going to result in a defanged terrorist network that could hurt Israel and that could hurt us.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you. Dr. Byman, how can the reauthorization process be used to reinforce the Bureau's use of sanctions, designations, and foreign assistance tools, deny space, funding, and legitimacy to Iran's terror proxy network operating near or against Israeli territory?

Mr. BYMAN. So, sir, I think part of it is hearings like this that call attention to Iran's support for terrorism around the world.

I think much of it, though, is making sure that programs that are designed to counter Iranian influence are well-funded and well-staffed, and that includes programs in different parts of the Middle East.

It includes programs around the world that are going after the financing of terrorism and having a very robust counterterrorism program is vital, and one of the members before mentioned how in 9/11 we were caught by surprise.

And looking back, one of the problems was so many U.S. bureaucracies were not focused on terrorism, and making sure that all the different parts of the U.S. Government maintain this focus is vital.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you.

Ambassador Sales, what specific tools has the Counterterrorism Bureau deployed or could be using more effectively to disrupt the Iranian proxy networks threatening Israel specifically against designated terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas?

Mr. SALES. Well, I think one of the most important steps that the CT Bureau took was to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization.

That was done in 2019 and it was groundbreaking in the sense that it was the first time the U.S. Government had ever imposed terrorism sanctions of this sort on a State entity.

So I think pressing other countries to follow America's lead and impose similar sanctions under their authorities on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a key piece.

Another key thing, I think, is internationalizing the American approach to sanctions on Hezbollah. A lot of countries like to say, well, there is the military wing and we will sanction them but there is the humanitarian wing of Hezbollah and we don't want to interfere with that.

They are a political party in Lebanon with important constituencies so we will artificially cordon off this other element and leave it untouched.

That approach doesn't work. Hezbollah does not see itself as split into a civilian side and a military side. It is one organization. It is a terrorist organization.

I would like to see the State Department continue to press partner governments—allied governments around the world follow our lead in sanctioning Hezbollah in its entirety.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you both for your testimony. I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Kean.

I now recognize myself for a second round of questions for 5 minutes.

Ambassador Sales, both China and Russia are now vying with the U.S. for influence abroad, especially in regions like Africa and South and Central Asia.

How does CT Bureau navigate the waters of ensuring the U.S. maintains its key partners in the fight against terrorism when resources are finite and increasingly being directed toward great power competition?

Mr. SALES. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a great question, and I think one of the ways I would answer it is to say that providing counterterrorism assistance in Africa in particular and in South Asia in particular is a way of advancing our grand strategy.

It is a way of advancing our interests with respect to nation State rivals like China and Russia. Africa is on the front lines of the fight against terrorism. They face a dizzying array of terrorist groups, from al-Qaeda affiliates to ISIS affiliates to Boko Haram to others.

We can help them in ways that no other country can. China is not in a position to provide counterterrorism assistance. Russia will make a big show of it by sending Wagner mercenaries in.

But as more than one head of State said to me while in government, we tried it the Russian way. It didn't work. We want to work with America.

So I think maintaining America's engagement, providing nuts and bolts counterterrorism assistance, rapid response teams that can put down assaults in real time, training police, training prosecutors, training judges—that kind of assistance helps defeat terrorist threats that threaten us but also helps lay down a marker that America is here to help you and brings those front line states into our camp and detaches them from our enemies.

Mr. LAWLER. So continuing down that path, can you use an example from the current threat landscape to illustrate the role of the CT Bureau and U.S. counterterrorism efforts contrasted with Russian and Chinese influence?

Mr. SALES. Absolutely. Unfortunately, the example I am about to share is one in the opposite direction.

The United States until fairly recently had a robust counterterrorism partnership with Niger. In recent years, recent months, we have seen Niger pivot away from the United States toward Russia.

And so where the United States previously was able to operate a significant drone base in Agadez from which we collected intelligence information about local terrorist threats and applied pressure to those local terrorist threats, we have now seen that base close down, the American presence diminish to nothing, and Wagner mercenaries come in.

That is bad for us from a global power competition standpoint. Russia's rise is our decline in that country. But it also means that that country is not going to be in a position to seriously degrade the terrorist threats that it faces because the Wagner approach—steal natural resources, inflict harm on civilian populations—is not a sustainable way. It is not an effective way to fight terrorism.

So if I may offer a word of advice to my friends in the new administration and friends in Congress, getting back into West Africa has to be an urgent priority for the new administration.

Mr. LAWLER. I appreciate that. On a separate note, how can the Bureau further utilize its convening power and platforms like the counter transnational terrorism forum established to increase awareness and understanding of Iranian-sponsored and directed terrorist activity to continue to allow the United States to play a lead role in international coordination on CT?

Mr. SALES. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think other countries will participate in these fora to the extent they think it matters to the United States and when I was the CT coordinator I could tell my counterparts, I could tell assistant secretaries from foreign governments, we need you to be there to talk about the Iranian threat.

And as a courtesy they would come. But if you really want to move foreign governments it needs to be a priority at the level of the secretary.

It needs to be a priority at the level of the President, and it was during the first Trump administration. I have every reason to believe that it will be during this administration as well.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you.

I now recognize the gentleman from Illinois Mr. Schneider for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the chance for a second question.

Dr. Byman, I will start with you, and specifically as it relates to dealing with the Houthis or any other group, does the President require a FTO—a foreign terrorist organization—or a SDGT designation to take additional diplomatic or kinetic action against a terrorist group or individuals suspected of terrorism?

Or does—and does that FTO designation permit the United States to engage in military operations, say, against cartels in Mexico that otherwise could not without an FTO designation?

Mr. BYMAN. The designations are not tied to authorizations for the use of military force, and that is a different set of authorities. The designations involve a set of legal penalties, financial penalties, and other restrictions but not linked to the U.S. military.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Let me expand on that, and this is specific to the CT Bureau.

Can you elaborate a little more on the role the bureau plays in countering illicit finance? My colleague Mr. Sherman talked about Hamas using crypto currency to finance some of its operations. Similar groups, Hezbollah, I know did the same.

And how can Congress work to strengthen our efforts to basically interdict the efforts of these groups to finance their operations?

Mr. BYMAN. So a lot of the lead is done by the Department of Treasury and also at different times the Department of Justice, especially through the FBI.

Much of the Department of State's role is a coordination role and especially dealing with American allies and partners around the world, and one problem the United States is having is it is simply outnumbered on the ground around the world.

We have seen a diminishment of the U.S. presence and the ability to coordinate, not just in national capitals but at a more local level, has been greatly diminished.

And so ensuring that there is robust funding, that the programs are broad and have authority to reach around different key countries, is going to be vital and I urge the subcommittee to focus on that.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you.

Let me expand on that a little bit because—and, Ambassador, you talked about this as well—one of our greatest strengths in the United States, greatest strengths in leading on a global stage, has been the ability to convene, to pull people together, whether it is at the secretary level or even in lower ranks to be having those conversations.

As this administration is beating up on allies, on threatening with tariffs, taking actions that zig one way today and zag another way tomorrow or even the same afternoon, is that affecting our ability to convene, to have credibility with our allies?

Because, as you said, Dr. Byman, we aren't in every place. We can't do it alone. We need the help of our allies.

Mr. BYMAN. What has been frustrating for me is that our criticism has at times involved very close allies and partners that have been with us in every war, for example, such as Australia, and there are many countries we rely on heavily for counterterrorism and for other foreign policy needs.

And to me, undercutting them, criticizing them about their domestic politics, makes them more hostile to the United States, less willing to work with us and more likely to look for alternatives.

So I worry that our rhetoric and, at times, our foreign policy actions are driving key allies and partners away.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Ambassador Sales, how important is it for us to have that credibility for you and the work you were doing in the Bureau to be able to speak one to one with your counterparts in other countries and our allies, and have them know that, A, you have the authority to speak, that you have credibility when you speak, and that the priorities that we focus on today are going to be consistent across time?

Mr. SALES. I think it is very important and, you know, Congressman, the premise of your question is exactly right. Allies matter.

We need allies as force multipliers, whether we are fighting terrorists or whether we are trying to prevent a Russian invasion of NATO territory in Europe.

Alliances matter, and America builds alliances in ways that our rivals can't. Nobody wants to be China's ally. China doesn't want peers. It wants vassals. It wants satrapies.

So the American approach is very different and it is very effective. But for alliances to be effective we need our allies to carry their share of the burden.

And so I think when you hear NATO Secretaries General thanking President Trump for encouraging—encouraging is a diplomatic word—encouraging their NATO allies to do more to meet our collective self-defense obligations and suggesting that wouldn't have happened had it not been for a sometimes sharp-elbowed diplomatic approach, I think that also enters into the analysis, too.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I think, certainly, friends can be firm. We need to be with our allies shoulder to shoulder. It is not one in front, one in back, but that shoulder to shoulder relationship requires, I believe, a mutual respect and a vision of a common interest in the world.

I yield back.

Mr. LAWLER. The gentleman's time has expired.

I thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony and the members for their questions. The members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for the witnesses and we will ask you to respond to these in writing.

Pursuant to committee rules, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitations.

Without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:29 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Chairman Brian Mast

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

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Michael Lawler (R-NY), Chairman

April 29, 2025

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 the Middle East and North Africa at 2:00 p.m. in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Tuesday, May 6, 2025

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: 2172 RHOB

SUBJECT: Maximum Impact: Assessing the Effectiveness of
the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism
and Charting the Path Forward

WITNESSES: The Honorable Nathan A. Sales
Former Coordinator for Counterterrorism
U.S. Department of State

Dr. Daniel L. Byman
Director, Security Studies Program
Georgetown University

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

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 202-226-8467 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 MENA SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

Day Tuesday Date May 6, 2025 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 14:12 Ending Time 15:29

Recesses ☐ (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___) (___ to ___)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Lawler

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Maximum Impact: Assessing the Effectiveness of the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism and Charting the Path Forward

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

None

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.)*

None

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 15:29

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

ATTENDANCE

Date: May 6, 2025

[illegible]