BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM: BUDGET, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM: BUDGET, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2012

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

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 o'clock p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Edward R. Royce (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ROYCE. This hearing will come to order.

Today we welcome Ambassador Benjamin back to the subcommittee for our yearly look at the State Department's handling of counterterrorism issues. And while al-Qaeda has taken major blows in the past year, the terrorism threat itself remains very real.

Late last year the committee was notified that the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, which has been in existence since 1972, would transform into the Bureau of Counterterrorism. According to the State Department, this elevation was natural, as the office's responsibilities had outgrown the coordinator title.

When reported to Congress, the State Department noted that only existing funds would be required to create the new Bureau and that any changes in personnel would be, in their words, "marginal." Well, for this fiscal year, the Bureau is seeking to increase staffing by 17 percent, which is a rather unorthodox definition of "marginal."

The State Department would like for this new bureau to be headed by an Assistant Secretary, and specifically by Ambassador Benjamin, our witness here. The Department could have made this move on its own, but it chose to take the heads of its new Energy and Post-Conflict Bureaus' Assistant Secretaries instead and appoint them instead. Making that choice, and now facing a statutory cap for Assistant Secretary positions, the State Department is seeking legislative relief to allow the Counterterrorism Bureau to also be headed by an Assistant Secretary.

Most Members of Congress probably think that the State Department can be run quite well by the 24 Assistant Secretaries and the dozens of special envoys it already has, and that is why we have raised this point before, our suspicions about this, and we indeed have found ourselves in this same conundrum with circumventing the cap.

But more critical than title, it is the control of resources that will seal this new Bureau's fate. While we have a few hundred million dollars in counterterrorism assistance money flowing through the State Department, less than half of it—less than half that amount is controlled by Ambassador Benjamin's bureau. Posts and regional bureaus control the rest of the funds. If the Bureau of Counterterrorism is to play as robust a role as envisioned—and, by the way, we on this subcommittee support that role—that equation has got to change in terms of control of those funds.

The counterterrorism landscape has changed substantially since the Ambassador's testimony 1 year ago. Osama bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki are now dead. But senior Obama administration officials have gone so far as to declare that the United States is—and I am going to quote the administration—"within reach of strategically defeating al-Qaeda."

Yet just weeks before bin Laden's death we heard testimony before this subcommittee—Ambassador Benjamin mentioned at the time—"we continue to see a strong flow of new recruits into many of the most dangerous terrorist organizations." So we will hear if that is still the case today. But a year has brought other changes as well.

Radical elements have Egypt looking into the abyss, armed militias have Libya deeply factionalized, there are concerns over foreign fighters in Syria. It is hard to see how some of these developments have not harmed U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

Other regions, like Africa and the Western Hemisphere, are of concern. Earlier this year this subcommittee moved legislation focused on Iran's growing role in the Western Hemisphere, and we have got groups like Boko Haram, which means education is sinful, carrying out attacks across Nigeria, creating mayhem there.

Pakistan, specifically its security services, and their backing of an array of militant groups, is a perennial concern for us. Just the other week, the State Department announced a reward for information leading to the conviction of Hafiz Mohammed Said, the head of the "army of the pure," or as they are also called, Lashkar-e-Taiba. That group was the outfit that carried out the attacks on Mumbai.

That this individual continues to operate freely today inside Pakistan certainly is an indictment of Islamabad as a counterterrorism partner. Unfortunately, there are many other such individuals that are loose and maybe did not commit that particular rampage but are planning the next one, that are operating freely in Pakistan today as well.

We look forward to discussing these and other issues with Ambassador Benjamin, and I will now turn to Ranking Member Sherman for an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Royce follows:]

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
Bureau of Counterterrorism: Budget, Programs, and Policies
Opening Statement - Chairman Ed Royce
April 18, 2012

Today, we welcome Ambassador Benjamin back to the Subcommittee for our yearly look at the State Department's handling of counterterrorism issues. While al-Qaeda has taken major blows in the past year, the terrorism threat remains very real.

Late last year, the Committee was notified that the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism – in existence since 1972 – would transform into the Bureau of Counterterrorism. According to the State Department, this elevation was natural, as the office's responsibilities had outgrown the "coordinator" title.

When reported to Congress, the State Department noted that only existing funds would be required to create the new Bureau, and any changes in personnel would be "marginal." Well, for this fiscal year, the Bureau is seeking to increase staffing by 17 percent. Seventeen percent is a rather unorthodox definition of "marginal."

The State Department would like for this new Bureau to be headed by an Assistant Secretary, specifically, today's witness. The Department could have made that move on its own. But it chose to make the heads of its new energy and post-conflict bureaus assistant secretaries instead. Making that choice, and now facing a statutory cap for Assistant Secretary positions, the State Department is seeking legislative relief to allow the Counterterrorism Bureau also to be headed by an Assistant Secretary. Most members of Congress probably think the State Department can be run well enough by the 24 assistant secretaries and the dozens of special envoys it already has.

But more critical than title, it is the control of resources that will seal this new bureau's fate. While a few hundred million dollars in counterterrorism assistance money flows through the State Department, less than half is controlled by Ambassador Benjamin's bureau. Posts and regional bureaus control the rest. If the Bureau of Counterterrorism is to play as robust a role as envisioned, which I support, that equation must change.

The counterterrorism landscape has changed substantially since the Ambassador's testimony a year ago. Osama bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki are now dead. But senior Obama Administration officials have gone so far as to declare that the United States is "within reach of strategically defeating al-Qaeda." Yet just weeks before Bin Laden's death, Ambassador Benjamin testified to this Subcommittee that, "we continue to see a strong flow of new recruits into many of the most dangerous terrorist organizations." We'll hear if that's still the case today.

A year has brought other changes. Radical elements have Egypt looking into the abyss. Armed militias have Libya deeply factionalized. There are concerns over foreign fighters in Syria. It's hard to see how some of these developments have not harmed U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

Other regions, like Africa and the Western Hemisphere, are of concern. Earlier this year, this Subcommittee moved legislation focused on Iran's growing role in the Western Hemisphere.

Pakistan – specifically, its security services' backing of an array of militant groups - is a perennial concern. Just the other week, the State Department announced a reward for information leading to the conviction of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the head of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the group that carried out the Mumbai rampage. That this individual continues to operate freely inside Pakistan certainly is an indictment of Islamabad as a counterterrorism partner. Unfortunately... there are many others.

We look forward to discussing these and other issues with Ambassador Benjamin.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Royce, for holding this important hearing. In November 2011, the Congress was notified that the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, which had been in existence since 1972, would be upgraded to the Bureau of Counterterrorism. On July 4, 2012, the new bureau was announced. For Fiscal Year 2013, the administration has requested $238 million to fund various antiterrorism programs with the Bureau.

In Fiscal Year 2011, actual spending for these programs was $286 million, and in Fiscal Year 2012 the likely amount will be $268 million. So the administration is actually seeking a significant decrease in funds available for antiterrorism programs at the State Department.

I would like to hear from our witness how the transition from an office to a bureau has aided our counterterrorism efforts. I would like to thank Ambassador Benjamin for his service and look forward to his continuing service in this difficult global environment.

I am considerably less skeptical than the chairman of the Bureau of Counterterrorism being in fact a bureau and not an office. And even if the administration was seeking an increase in funding for the Bureau, I, given the importance of your work, would be supportive. But it appears from the statistics I just went over that the administration is able to function without seeking an increase.

One program of particular importance is the Countering Violent Extremism, CVE Program, that aims to prevent at-risk youth from turning to terrorism to contest militant propaganda and persuade terrorists to renounce violence and to renounce their affiliation with terrorist organizations.

The State Department has identified five CVE priority countries—Algeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, and Pakistan. I especially want to focus on Pakistan, where I think it is very important that we reach out through the Voice of America, not only in the Urdu language but in other languages that are commonly spoken in Pakistan.

This should not be interpreted by the Pakistani Government as being an effort toward separatism. If you are trying to sell products in Los Angeles, you wouldn't dream of having your advertising program being in only one language. Walmart is not trying to separate any part of California from the United States, but they are trying to sell a product to people that speak a variety of languages.

We have captured or killed most of the world's dangerous—many of the world's dangerous terrorists, but we have not been fully successful in the war of ideas and stemming recruitment. I know the creation of the CVE program was a priority for Ambassador Benjamin, and I would like the Ambassador to comment on the effectiveness of this modest program, which is now at $15 million, and whether it needs to be expanded either in amount spent in each country or to add more than five priority countries.

To defeat terrorists long term we must take steps to reduce recruitment from—of young Muslim men into extremist, violent, and Islamist organizations. I agree that one of the most important missions of the Bureau of Counterterrorism will be to lead U.S. Government efforts to counter violent extremism by delegitimizing the extremist narrative and developing positive alternatives for young Muslims vulnerable to recruitment.

Now, I do have one area that I would like to—where I differ from State Department policy, and that is with regard to the MEK and Camp Liberty. The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in 2010 that the State Department made procedural errors in reclassifying this dissident group as a terrorist organization.

The court opinion said that the State Department failed to accord the PMOI the due process protections required by law and needs to review the status. We would like to see the State Department act. I realize that Ambassador Benjamin is not in full control of this entire process. To consider an MEK petition for a writ of mandamus, an extraordinary remedy not often granted by the courts, especially not in the foreign policy area, the court has scheduled an oral argument for May 8, 2012.

Ambassador Benjamin, your predecessor, Ambassador Dell Dailey, has recommended the MEK be removed from the list of terrorist organizations. I am not aware, and I got the classified briefings, of anything this group has done in recent years that would justify continued designation.

I will note later in this excessively long opening statement that the Haqqani group has not been designated, and one has little difficulty identifying acts that the Haqqani group has committed. That should justify putting them on the list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The State Department should not list groups as terrorist organizations and just leave them there. The purpose of the designation is in part to force the organization to change its behavior, and whatever behavior caused the MEK to be listed, and even that is subject to dispute. No one asserts that they have not identified—that they have taken action in recent years that would cause them to be put on the list, and of course the contrast to the Haqqani network is extensive.

I have gone on a little long. I will make a few more opening comment remarks when I am called upon for questions, and that means I will have even less time to hear from the witness, which is why I am going to listen to him so intently during his opening statement.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Poe.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ambassador Benjamin, it seems to me we still have a continuous problem. Iraq does not want Camp Liberty to be a permanent camp for MEK residents. You can look at the camp and see that that is obvious. The conditions, in my opinion, are deplorable. Rudy Giuliani says it is not a camp; it is a concentration camp.

The MEK residents who were all but forced out of their homes in Camp Ashraf don't want to be in Camp Liberty for a long period of time either, and the United States, I don't believe, wants them to stay for a long period of time and risk possibly another assault and massacre by the Iraqi Government, who I think gives into Iranian pressure.

The problem we have is no evidence that the MEK residents will have anywhere to go once they are determined to be political refugees. There are 1,600 residents in the camp. After 4 months from when one transition—the transition process began, no one, not one

person, has been resettled to a third country or even been declared a political refugee.

Until people in the camp start being resettled to third countries—third party countries, why should Camp Ashraf residents view this as a temporary home? The center of this whole issue is the designation by our Government, specifically the State Department of the foreign terrorist organization of the MEK.

Our country may be willing to take some of the refugees. But as long as we call them "terrorists," we are not going to take them, and third party—or third party countries aren't going to take them either. The fact is, Ambassador—and correct me if I am wrong—we know of no country as of today that have taken or are willing to take MEK residents. I believe it is all because of the designation.

I hope you can explain why it is that the reevaluation of the MEK's FTO designation is taking so long. Secretary Clinton told us back in February that she has folks "working around the clock on this." And I admire her if that is true, and I believe it to be true. But what is the hold up? Is there new evidence that is to be considered? Confusion about what the law is? Is this country worried about the mullahs in Iran and what they will think? What is the problem? Why is there no reevaluation?

The FTO designation is not just some side issue. It is the one thing that affects the people in Camp Ashraf and progress being made to move those people to other countries in the world. I, as Ranking Member Sherman has said, have seen all of the evidence that we can be given about the FTO designation. It is not compelling that the MEK should stay on the FTO designation.

I am willing to see any evidence. I suggest, and strongly urge, that the State Department, who is stonewalling this, show us the evidence or delist the MEK. That is what they need to do. We need to treat the people in Camp Ashraf like Human beings. They should not be confined to a concentration camp, as Rudy Giuliani has said.

It is interesting—today we heard in the Foreign Affairs Committee from not the government officials but private officials that North Korea should be an FTO designation, but they are not. I think the little fellow from the desert, Ahmadinejad, he should be designated as a foreign terrorist organization, but not the MEK. Show the proof or delist the MEK.

And I will have some more questions later. Thank you for being here. I yield back.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Judge Poe.

We are joined today by Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, the State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, and head of the Bureau of Counterterrorism. Ambassador Benjamin has been the Senior Counterterrorism Advisor to the Secretary of State since 2009. In the late '90s, Mr. Benjamin served on the National Security Council as Director for Counterterrorism in the Office of Transnational Threats.

Before entering government, Mr. Benjamin was a foreign correspondent for Time Magazine and for The Wall Street Journal. Ambassador Benjamin was the co-author of "The Age of Sacred Terror," a book that won several awards. So we want to welcome you back to the committee.

Your complete written testimony, of course, is going to be entered into the record. So we would ask that you give us a 5-minute summary here, if you could, and then we will go to questions. Please begin.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DANIEL BENJAMIN, AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM, BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Sherman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. And as you mentioned, I have submitted testimony for the record that provides additional details about the Counterterrorism Bureau's policies, programs, and budget.

Since I appeared before this committee the last time, my office was upgraded to full bureau status, fulfilling one of the key recommendations of the quadrennial diplomacy and development review. This change will strengthen the State Department's ability to carry out its civilian counterterrorism mission around the world.

In coordination with Department leadership, the national security staff, and other U.S. Government agencies, the Bureau develops and implements civilian counterterrorism strategies, policies, operations, and programs. Our efforts constitute what we refer to as strategic counterterrorism. It is an approach that Secretary Clinton has championed, and its basic premise is that United States CT efforts require a whole of government approach that must go beyond traditional intelligence, military, and law enforcement functions.

As the national strategy for counterterrorism released last year makes clear, we are engaged in a broad, sustained, and integrated campaign that harnesses every tool of American power—civilian, military, and the power of our values, together with the concerted efforts of allies, partners, and multilateral institutions to address a short-term and a long-term challenge.

Our tactical abilities, as exemplified by the extraordinary mission against bin Laden last year, answer a critical national need, but they are only one part of our comprehensive CT strategy, which also includes concerted action to reduce radicalization, stop the flow of new recruits, and create an international environment that is inhospitable for all forms of support and activities required to sustain international terrorist organizations, including fund raising, recruitment, illicit travel and training. And while these activities may not grab the headlines, they are wise investments against the long-term counterterrorism challenge.

Achieving these ends requires smart power and the integration of all of our foreign policy tools—diplomacy and development, together with defense, intelligence, and law enforcement capabilities. Only this way can we empower our partners to deal with the threats within their borders and regions, so that they can address local and regional threats before they become global ones that demand a much more costly response. The State Department has a prominent role to play on the strategic side, as these elements of our CT work are civilian-led activities.

Let me now speak about capacity building. Weak states serve as breeding grounds for terrorism and instability. When states have the political will, we can assist with capacity building programs to build law enforcement capability and good governance. Our key capacity building programs are the Antiterrorism Assistance Program, Counterterrorist Finance, and TIP/PISCES.

Lessons learned from our ongoing capacity building efforts have demonstrated that sustained donor attention, partner nation political will, and sizeable investments make a difference.

Let me talk about countering violent extremism. What sustains terrorist groups is the steady flow of recruits who replace terrorists who are killed or captured. We must undercut the ideological and rhetorical underpinnings that make the violent extremist world view attractive, while also addressing local drivers of extremism.

To delegitimize the narrative of al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and its adherence, the CT Bureau helps stand up the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, the CSCC, an interagency body that works with communicators in the field to counter terrorist narratives and misinformation. It draws on the full range of intelligence information and analysis to provide context and feedback for communicators.

The CSCC challenges extremist messages online in Arabic, Urdu, and Somali on forums, blogs, and social networking sites, and also produces and disseminates targeted, attributed videos.

Successful CVE involves more than messaging. We are also developing programs to provide alternatives for at-risk youth, including social media programs to generate constructive local initiatives. And we are supporting skillbuilding, youth leadership activities, and mentoring efforts.

Let me turn, finally, to multilateral engagement, and in particular the Global Counterterrorism Forum. Strengthening partnerships is at the heart of our strategic counterterrorism efforts, and one of our key initiatives is building the needed international architecture to address 21st century terrorism, and thereby to fill a critical gap; the lack of a nimble, multilateral platform to allow counterterrorism policymakers and practitioners to share expertise, experiences, and lessons learned; and of course to mobilize resources and political will.

To this end, the Bureau created the Global Counterterrorism Forum. At its September launch, Secretary Clinton was quite clear. "We don't need another debating society," she said, "we need a catalyst for action." In this spirit, two deliverables announced at the September launch demonstrate its action-oriented nature. The first was approximately $100 million contributed by several members to develop rule of law institutions.

The United Arab Emirates announced the second deliverable—its intention to host the first ever international center of excellence on countering violent extremism, which is slated to open in Abu Dhabi in the fall of 2012. The center will initially support research, dialogue, and training to strengthen the emerging international CVE community.

I see that I have already gone over my time, and so with that in mind I will now conclude my remarks, and I look forward to your questions.

Thank you very much.
[The prepared statement of Ambassador Benjamin follows:]

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

AMBASSADOR DANIEL BENJAMIN
COORDINATOR FOR COUNTERTERRORISM

THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM: BUDGET, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE

APRIL 18, 2011
2:00 pm

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Sherman, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. The establishment of the Bureau of Counterterrorism and our work on strategic counterterrorism are important steps forward for the Department of State. These two steps, taken together, have significantly increased the State Department's contribution to our worldwide effort against terrorism and terrorists.

As many of you know, the Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT) was established early this year. Establishing the Bureau fulfilled part of the agenda set by the QDDR, the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. The QDDR is at the heart of Secretary Clinton's effort to make the State Department more effective and to respond to the changing dynamics of the world.

Secretary Clinton is committed to "smart diplomacy" and to civilian power. The underlying principles of the QDDR are about interagency cooperation, breaking down silos, and tapping institutional capacity wherever it exists. As an organization, the State Department is critical to maintaining and extending American leadership in the world, and will be called on to do more, in more places, more frequently – with limited resources.

But let me speak specifically about the Bureau of Counterterrorism. In recent years, largely through the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, the State

Department has assumed a growing role in counterterrorism. Frankly the Department's role is considerably different from what it was 40 years ago when the office was established. We have moved well beyond "coordination" and into policymaking and programming.

In brief, the new bureau's mission is to lead the Department in the U.S. Government's effort to counter terrorism abroad and to secure the United States against foreign terrorist threats. The bureau has a number of concrete responsibilities. In coordination with Department leadership, the National Security Staff, and U.S. Government agencies, it will develop and implement civilian counterterrorism strategies, policies, operations, and programs to disrupt and defeat the networks that support terrorism. The bureau leads in supporting U.S. counterterrorism diplomacy and seeks to strengthen homeland security, counter violent extremism, and build the capacity of partner nations to deal effectively with terrorism.

All of these efforts taken together constitute what we refer to as strategic counterterrorism. It is an approach that the Secretary has championed that takes as its basic premise that US CT efforts require a whole-of-government approach that must go beyond traditional intelligence, military, and law enforcement functions. As the National Strategy for Counterterrorism released last year makes clear, we are engaged in a broad, sustained, and integrated campaign that harnesses every tool of American power – civilian, military, and the power of our values – together with the concerted efforts of allies, partners, and multilateral institutions to address a short-term and a long-term challenge. Our tactical abilities – as exemplified by the extraordinary mission against bin Laden last year – answer a critical national need, but are only one part of our comprehensive CT strategy that also includes concerted action to reduce radicalization, stop the flow of new recruits, and create an international environment that is inhospitable for all the kinds of activity that precede terrorist violence. That includes stopping training, fund-raising, recruitment, illicit travel and other forms of support and activities that are required to sustain international terrorist organizations.

Achieving these ends requires smart power and the integration of all our foreign policy tools – diplomacy and development with defense, intelligence, and law enforcement capabilities. It requires advancing our values and the rule of law. Only this way can we empower our partners so that they can deal with the threats within their borders and their regions – so they can deal with local and regional threats before they become global ones that demand a much more costly response.

The State Department has a prominent role to play on the strategic side, as these elements of our CT work are really civilian-led activities. They are about building the capacity of partners to counter the CT challenge themselves, while maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law. And while our counter-recruitment programs are still in their early stages, we've spent an extraordinary amount of time and energy ensuring that new and innovative Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) work is a focus for the US interagency and our allies and partners overseas.

Our ability to oversee and implement civilian counterterrorism capacity building programs was strengthened by the establishment of the CT Bureau. The CT Bureau still reports directly to the Secretary for critical threat and operational issues, but is also now housed within the J Bureau family. Being housed under the civilian security umbrella will allow for a more effective implementation of our strategic counterterrorism agenda. For instance, the co-location of the CT Bureau together with the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) Bureau helps ensure that our mission is well coordinated with the law enforcement programs run by that bureau. This more effective organization allows CT and INL, as well as the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Overseas; the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and others, the opportunity to work together even more efficiently.

As part of our bureau standup, we are reorganizing and taking steps to make the new bureau effective across a wide range of policy and program activities. For example, we reduced the number of Deputy Coordinators to make the organization flatter and more efficient. We also created a new Strategic Plans and Policy Unit to improve our ability to plan strategically, and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. Finally, we have made changes that will tighten coordination between country-level policy and programmatic issues, and are doing more to improve program implementation.

As you know, looking at last year's numbers, CT manages nearly $300 million in foreign assistance related to counterterrorism. Our ability to oversee and implement the various CT capacity building programs mentioned earlier in this testimony, which covers everything from police training and combating terrorist financing to countering the AQ narrative, will be strengthened as a bureau. For one thing, we now have our own internal budget office. We control a bit less than half of these resources directly, and Embassies and regional bureaus control the other half. We work together, of course, to make sure that CT resources are directed in the right places and meeting U.S. interests.

I want to emphasize that the CT Bureau used existing resources in FY12 to establish the bureau. New requests we've made for increases in FY13 are unrelated to the establishment of the bureau per se – these are for areas of our mission that have expanded over time and have been chronically understaffed. For example, the request for twelve new FTE positions, a 17% increase in FY2013, will allow us to be more effective in addressing the civilian counterterrorism challenges that I mentioned earlier. These will support our various programs, such as designating Foreign Terrorist Organizations; regional policy coordination and program oversight; monitoring and evaluation programs; and Homeland Security coordination.

We have advanced our agenda in a number of ways, over the past few years.

1) Building Partner Capacity. One element of our strategic counterterrorism effort is building partner capacity. One of the central challenges to our security is that weak states serve as breeding grounds for terrorism and instability. When there is a recognition that these gaps exist, we can help with specific capacity building programs. Through many programs we are working to build effective law enforcement capacity, good governance, and fair and impartial justice and the rule of law around the world. Our goal is to increase the ability of partners to address threats to public security by improving security sector capabilities, reforming the justice sector, strengthening regional linkages, facilitating compliance with international standards, and connecting these efforts to existing multilateral initiatives and forums. This involves helping countries develop their law enforcement and legal institutions to do a better job tracking, apprehending, arresting, prosecuting, and incarcerating terrorists, while at the same time respecting human rights and securing their borders.

Our flagship capacity building program remains the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program. While one of the goals of the program certainly is to build relationships with partner nation law enforcement, we have been working hard to ensure that ATA is most active where there is a nexus of CT threats, U.S. interests, and our partners' operational needs and political will. The ATA program is most effective in countries which have the combination of political will and basic law enforcement skills to be able to effectively use and ultimately sustain the advanced training ATA provides. This formula has been especially successful in Indonesia, Turkey, Colombia, parts of North Africa, and Jordan.

2) CVE. Countering violent extremism is also at the core of a strategic counterterrorism policy, and is really about interrupting the flow of new recruits.

We have to address both the drivers of extremism pushing people toward violence, and the AQ propaganda – their narrative – that pulls people into the fold. To counter terrorist propaganda, the CT Bureau helped stand up the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), an interagency operation, housed under the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The CSCC takes the lead in coordinating, orienting, and informing whole-of-government communications activities – particularly online activity – directed at overseas audiences to counter violent extremist messaging, particularly that of al-Qa'ida (AQ) and its affiliates. The CT Bureau works closely with the Center and I sit on its executive board.

CSCC's work in confronting terrorist narratives and extremist activity online is critically important. CSCC offers a moderate voice in a space dominated by extremist ideologues, and works with key embassies to combat AQ's propaganda. While we can't fully prevent the existence of violent extremist websites and narratives, we can work to reduce their impact and effectiveness.

Another pillar of our CVE strategy works at the local level, emphasizing micro-strategies customized for specific communities at risk of radicalization and recruitment. When programs are owned and implemented by local civil society or government partners and address specific local drivers, they have a better chance of succeeding and enduring.

Finally, we must build partners' capacity to counter radicalization themselves. In this vein, the CT Bureau is sponsoring an initiative on prison radicalization and the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists led by the United Nations' Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the International Center on Counterterrorism - The Hague (ICCT). This initiative provides a forum where policymakers, practitioners, independent experts, and multilateral organizations can share best practices. Through this initiative, countries can also request technical assistance from UNICRI in addressing issues of violent extremism within their prisons.

3) Bilateral and Multilateral Diplomacy. Moving into the 21st century, it was clear to us that counterterrorism diplomacy required an effort to reshape the international architecture to take a truly strategic and action-oriented approach. There were already plenty of venues for diplomats to meet, but we wanted to create a platform for counterterrorism practitioners and experts from different regions to engage over the long term and develop innovative solutions to the common challenges we face.

To this end, the Bureau of Counterterrorism created the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the Obama Administration's signature initiative to strengthen the global counterterrorism architecture. The Forum is filling a critical gap in the architecture, while complementing and reinforcing the efforts of the UN and other regional organizations. Our goal is to make the GCTF the international "go-to" venue for pursuing innovative civilian-led counterterrorism cooperation and capacity-building initiatives.

The GCTF brings together counterterrorism coordinators, prosecutors, judges, police, border control, and prison officials from our traditional allies, emerging powers, and Muslim-majority countries (29 countries plus the EU) to identify threats and weaknesses, devise solutions, mobilize resources, and share expertise.

From the beginning, we thought it was crucial to underscore the action-oriented approach of this new body. The September launch produced two significant deliverables in the core areas of the GCTF mission: strengthening rule of law institutions and countering violent extremism.

The rule of law deliverable was that GCTF members had already mobilized some $100 million to support the training of prosecutors, judges, police, and prison officials in countries seeking to shift away from repressive approaches to counterterrorism. This will assist countries transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy as they draft new counterterrorism legislation and train police, prosecutors, and judges to apply the laws in keeping with universal human rights.

The Countering Violent Extremism deliverable was that the United Arab Emirates is going to sponsor and host the first-ever international Center of Excellence on countering violent extremism. We are working closely with the Emiratis to develop the center, which is scheduled to open in Abu Dhabi later this year. Its target audience will include government policymakers, police, educators, media and on-line communicators, and religious and other community leaders from around the world.

Besides working with the UN, the GCTF, and other multilateral organizations, we have formal bilateral counterterrorism consultations with many countries. These consultations have strengthened our counterterrorism partnerships so we can complement one another's efforts in pursuit of a comprehensive approach to our common challenges.

The CT Bureau marked the preceding year with two additional milestones.

1. In 2011, the Department of State took concrete efforts to degrade the capabilities of the Haqqani Network by designating a number of key leaders under E.O. 13224, including Badruddin Haqqani, Sangeen Zadran, and now captured Haji Mali Khan.

   2011 marked the highest number of new Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and Executive Order 13224 designations carried out since those authorities were originally conceived in 1997 and 2011, respectively. CT's Office of Terrorist Designations and Sanctions completed the domestic designation of 20 organizations or individuals under FTO and/or E.O. 13224 authorities; eight of which were also listed internationally at the UN's 1267/1989 al-Qa'ida and 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committees. Over the past two years, CT has designated a total of 36 organizations or individuals, more than the preceding eight-year period combined.

   From our perspective, as I will discuss at greater length below, this is a powerful illustration that while al Qa'ida core is seriously degraded, the threat we're facing is still a serious one, and we must remain vigilant in our CT efforts.

2. A total of thirty countries have signed arrangements or agreements to exchange terrorism screening information, pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6 (HSPD-6). Such information sharing is a requirement for continued participation in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). So far, 24 of 36 VWP countries have signed HSPD-6 agreements, and we are currently in or will soon be engaged in negotiations to complete the remaining agreements with VWP countries.

Global Threat Environment

Now I'd like to back up and take a few minutes to briefly outline the global threat environment. As we look back at the last year, there is no question that Usama bin Ladin's departure from the scene was a landmark in the fight against al-Qa'ida. Bin Ladin was an iconic leader whose personal story had a profound attraction for violent extremists, and he was the prime advocate of the group's focus on America as a terrorist target. The loss of bin Ladin – and many other key al-Qa'da lieutenants– puts core al-Qai'da in Pakistan on the path to defeat and that will be difficult to reverse.

These successes are attributable, in large part, to global counterterrorism cooperation, which has put considerable pressure on the al-Qa'ida core leadership in Pakistan. But despite blows in western Pakistan, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents remain adaptable, have shown resilience, retain the capability to conduct regional and transnational attacks, and thus constitute an enduring and serious threat to our national security.

For example, we have seen al'Qa'ida use Iran as a core pipeline through which it has moved money, facilitators, and operatives from across the Middle East to South Asia. In July 2011, the United States designated six members of an al-Qa'ida network headed by Ezedin Abdel Aziz Khalil, a prominent Iran-based al-Qai'da facilitator, operating under an agreement between al-Qa'ida and the Iranian government.

As al-Qa'ida's core has gotten weaker, we have seen the rise of affiliated groups around the world. Among these al-Qa'ida affiliates, al-Qa'ida in Yemen represents a particularly serious threat. Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula had taken control of territory in southern Yemen and continues to exploit unrest in Yemen to advance plots against regional and Western interests.

In the Sahel, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has historically been the weakest of the AQ affiliates. Yet in the last couple of years, the group has managed to fill its coffers with ransom from kidnappings. These newfound resources together with its efforts to take advantage of the recent instability in Libya and Mali have raised concern about this group's trajectory.

Earlier this year (February), al-Shabaab's emir, in Somalia, and al-Qa'ida's Ayman al-Zawahiri released a joint video to formally announce a merger of the two organizations. However, with the assistance of both the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somalia's neighbors, the Transitional Federal Government made significant gains in degrading al-Shabaab capability and liberating areas from al-Shabaab administration over the last year. Yet much work remains to be done in this region to continue reducing the threat of terrorism while working to provide humanitarian assistance safely, including to those in al-Shabaab-controlled territories who are denied access to outside aid.

With the United States withdrawal of its final forces from Iraq, Iraqi Security Forces have continued to confront the al-Qa'ida affiliate there, showing substantial capability against the group . Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) has suffered leadership losses, and remains unable to mobilize a Sunni community that turned

decisively against it after the carnage in the previous decade. However, AQI is resilient, as noted by its intermittent high-profile attacks in country, and is likely to carry out additional attacks into the foreseeable future. In fact, towards the end of 2011, AQI was believed to be extending its reach into Syria and seeking to exploit the popular uprising against the dictatorship of Bashar al-Asad.

For all the counterterrorism successes against al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, al-Qa'ida-like ideology and rhetoric continues to spread in some parts of the world. While not a formal al-Qa'ida affiliate, the group known as Boko Haram launched widespread attacks across Nigeria, including one in August against the United Nations headquarters in Abuja that signaled its ambition and capability to attack non-Nigerian targets. The Sinai Peninsula is another area of concern. A number of loosely knit militant groups have formed in the Sinai, with some claiming ties and allegiance to al-Qa'ida – though no formal links have been discovered. Last August we saw a group of heavily armed militants who entered southern Israel through the Sinai and conducted a series of coordinated attacks against Israeli civilian and military targets near Eilat, killing eight.

We remain concerned about threats to the Homeland. In the last several years, individuals who appear to have been trained by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates have operated within U.S. borders. Najibullah Zazi, a U.S. lawful permanent resident, obtained training in Pakistan and, in 2010, pled guilty to charges that he was planning to set off several bombs in the New York City subway. And on October 14, 2011, Nigerian national Umar Abdulmutallab pled guilty to all charges against him in U.S. federal court in Michigan regarding his unsuccessful attempt on December 25, 2009, to detonate an explosive aboard a flight bound for Detroit, Michigan at the behest of al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula. While these individuals had direct ties to international terrorist groups, so-called "lone wolf" terrorists also pose a threat to the U.S. homeland – one that can be difficult to detect in advance.

Al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and adherents are far from the only terrorist threat the United States faces. Iran, the world's leading sponsor of terrorism, continues to undermine international efforts to promote peace and democracy and threatens stability, especially in the Middle East and South Asia. Its use of terrorism as an instrument of policy was exemplified by the involvement of elements of the Iranian regime in the plot to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, a conspiracy that the international community strongly condemned through a UN General Assembly resolution in November. We also suspect Iran was behind

recent operations and disrupted attacks against Israeli interests in Georgia, Thailand, India and Azerbaijan.

Despite its pledge to support the stabilization of Iraq, Iran continues to provide lethal support, including weapons, training, funding, and guidance, to Iraqi Shia militant groups targeting Iraqi forces. Iran also provides weapons, training, and funding to Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups. Since the end of the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict, Iran has provided significant volumes of weaponry and funding to Hizballah, in direct violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701. Furthermore, the Iran-backed disrupted plot to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. indicates Iran is more willing to support attacks in the U.S. Homeland than previously assessed.

Both Hamas and Hizballah continue to play destabilizing roles in the Middle East. Hizballah's persistence as a well-armed terrorist group in Lebanon – one that is willing to use force and threats to intimidate the Lebanese people – as well as its robust relationships with the regimes in Iran and Syria, continued engagement in international attack planning, involvement in illicit financial activity, and acquisition of increasingly sophisticated missiles and rockets, continues to threaten U.S. interests in the region. Hamas retains its grip on Gaza, where it continues to stockpile weapons that pose a serious threat to regional stability.

CONCLUSION

To wrap up, protecting the United States, the American people, and our interests abroad will remain a challenge in the 21st century. New terrorist threats will require innovative strategies, creative diplomacy, and even stronger partnerships. Secretary Clinton believes we have an approach and a set of tools that are right for the challenge, which is why she upgraded the Office of the Coordinator to a full-fledged bureau within the State Department. This transformation will continue the process of strengthening civilian-led diplomacy as a key counterterrorism tool. Building partner capacity, countering violent extremism, and engaging partners bilaterally and multilaterally are all essential tools for dealing with a changing terrorist threat. As I hope you will agree, we have made a lot of progress. But, there remains much to do. Together, I believe we can accomplish our goals and make the world a safer place for all of us.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you. I am going to go to Mr. Sherman first for his questions.

Mr. SHERMAN. I will pick up where I left off in the opening statement about foreign terrorist organization designation. I have advocated for well over a decade that you and your predecessors—for any listed terrorist organization that evidences a desire not to be on the list, as the IRA once evidenced such a desire, lay out what our expectations are of that organization, and, if they do meet those conditions, to remove them from the terrorist list.

I am concerned that the continued designation of the MEK first doesn't meet that standard in that there weren't clear expectations that we have laid out for the MEK, that they could meet and justify taking them off the list.

The second concern I have is that maybe the process has been influenced by a poorly conceived notion that we will be nice to Tehran and Tehran will be nice to us, and that, therefore, we will list the enemies that they seem to hate the most as a terrorist organization.

And then, finally, I think that the continued designation of the MEK negatively influences the ability of the UNHCR to promptly resettle people of Camp Ashraf, and to prevent violent attacks on them. We have seen the Iraqis justify the violent attacks on Camp Ashraf because of the MEK's designation, and we have seen individuals at that camp unable to get refugee status in Europe, in part because of that designation.

When reviewing potential FTO targets, the State Department considers terrorist acts that the groups have carried out, whether the group has engaged in planning and preparations for possible future terrorism and whether it retains the capacity and intent to carry out such attacks. And the organization's activities must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or our national security interests.

There are times when perhaps we should add to the foreign terrorist list more quickly. We did not designate al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula until days before the attempted bombing of the airline in 2009 by one of its members. Similarly, the Pakistani Taliban was not designated until months after the attack on Times Square.

And we have not yet designated the Afghani Taliban, and I have co-sponsored with Mr. Poe, who was just here, a bill to designate the Haqqani network, which I think the State Department should designate long before we get that bill passed.

So, Ambassador Benjamin, what can we do to make the designation process more nimble, better able to carry out its purposes and act quickly to designate those organizations that are a real threat, and to remove those who either were never a threat or have changed their behavior appropriately?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Ranking Member Sherman, we certainly agree with your desire to be more nimble, or at least to be able to work more quickly on designations. And I would like to point out that in the last 2 years the office, now the bureau, has done more designations than in the previous 8 years combined, and we have significantly stepped up the pace of work.

Mr. Royce spoke before about additional staff. We are trying to build up our staff so that we can do more in this area. We consider it a vital part of our business and an essential part of our national counterterrorism efforts. And I would add that the last year was in fact the most productive year we have ever had.

But having said that, the law, nonetheless, and the practice that has been established by the Department over the last—over recent decades requires us to be extremely diligent, deliberative, and complete—comprehensive in our efforts here, and we have not yet found any shortcuts to providing—to compiling the kinds of baseline analyses and inventory of information necessary both to list and delist.

So I have a lot of people who are working very, very hard on this, but we haven't yet found the work-around that will get us to an instant recognition of whether a group belongs on or off the list. We still have to do the hard work.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. I know your folks are working hard, you have done a lot, appreciate your service, and, at the same time, a list that would list the MEK but not the Haqqani network is hard to justify to my constituents. And I yield back.

Mr. ROYCE. Just for the record, the overall question of elevating to a bureau, as you and I have discussed, we supported elevation to a bureau. The point was that the State Department had the capacity to do that. The point was that the State Department seeked to circumvent the process when there were actually three elevations to bureaus that they were attempting to negotiate. They had two slots.

So at the end of the day, despite assurances in terms of what the overall staffing would be, you now have more personnel as a consequence, including the 17 percent increase. So that was the issue at hand for us, so the overall totality in terms of what the State Department does with its personnel positions and its ever-increasing size and scope.

Getting down to the issues at hand, the one that I wanted to ask you about was a quote from a columnist last week. I don't know the answer to this, but here is his question. "Osama bin Laden lived in five houses in Pakistan, fathered four children there, kept three wives . . . had two children born in public hospitals and through it all, the Pakistani Government did not know one single thing about his whereabouts? Can this possibly be true?" he asks.

I don't know what the answer to that is, but I did want to ask, Ambassador Benjamin, for your judgment on that.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Mr. Royce, if I may, first very briefly just on that 17 percent figure, I would like to just underscore that that figure—that projection had already been established well before the work to become a bureau had been——

Mr. ROYCE. And, Ambassador, you and I don't really have an argument about that. It is the overall decision by the State Department to not live within the constraints put by the Congress in terms of the total number of bureaus. And the easy way for them to get around it was not to elevate you to bureau status within the existing confines—so I just want to explain that. We are good on that.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Okay.

Mr. ROYCE. But it is the agency, it is the Department that I think needs to play by the rules that are set out in terms of the constraints. But go ahead with your——

Ambassador BENJAMIN. With regard to the issue of bin Laden's presence in Pakistan during those years, I can only reiterate what you have heard from other officials. We do find it remarkable, but we still, to this point, do not have any evidence that suggests that the Pakistani Government per se had any knowledge of bin Laden's whereabouts.

And we have certainly looked at this many different ways, and it is certainly the case that there were some people—I think as then-CIA Director Panetta said—there was undoubtedly the case that there were people in Pakistan who knew where bin Laden was. But we have no conclusive evidence that the Pakistani Government knew where he was.

Mr. ROYCE. Let me ask you, in Africa—get your thought here on Boko Haram, and especially its relationship with al-Qaeda as well as Mali and the problems there. After the Easter attacks by Boko Haram on a number of churches in Nigeria, dozens of people were left dead, and we had a high-ranking member of the State Department say that religion is not driving extremist violence in Nigeria.

Then, you had following that the recent military coup in Mali, and Islamist fighters have now descended on the northern part of the country. Top leaders of al-Qaeda's North African branch have been seen in the area reportedly, so I would just ask you, what is the outlook there?

I had a Muslim governor of a northern Nigerian province tell me that he was very, very concerned with the change in the indigenous Islam of Nigeria as imams were being imported always with—you know, they bring a lot of money with them. But there was always an imam from the Gulf states who would then set up shop and begin expressing a different type of Islam than the indigenous Islam that he had grown up with. And he was concerned for his safety, his security, in northern Nigeria as a result.

I would just like your insights here.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Thank you very much, sir. We are deeply concerned by what is going on in Nigeria. And while I would agree with whomever made the remark that religion was not the principal driver, it is certainly the case that extremism in the north and in Nigeria is being expressed in intercommunal and interreligious strife, and there have been lots of attacks on churches. That is obviously the case.

We are deeply concerned about any connections that Boko Haram, which is a loosely organized organization, in fact sort of a cluster of organizations, may have, in particular with al-Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb. And it seems clear that some of their tradecraft, some of their ability to carry out terrorist attacks, was learned from AQIM.

We continue to encourage the Nigerian Government at the very highest levels to also effectively engage communities vulnerable to extremist violence by addressing the underlying political and socioeconomic problems in the north, and those problems are considerable.

The Department is going to work through—together with other relevant agencies, and the Government of Nigeria and international partners, to identify ways that we can erode the capacity of Boko Haram to carry out terrorist attacks against the U.S., against such international targets as the U.N. compound that was bombed, and also to prevent attacks against our friends and their interests in Nigeria as well.

Mr. ROYCE. Well, if I could interject here in terms of putting an end to that, the observations he made to me, the Muslim governor of this northern state, is that as long as you have the importation of religious leaders with the students, according to him, he had been in this particular madrasa, so—which was across the street from the madrasa, so where he was educated, but with a very, very different curriculum.

He said the young men were wearing Osama bin Laden T-shirts. If you indoctrinate and raise a generation of young kids with that type of ideology, just the same issue that we are talking about with Pakistan, as long as these deobandi schools, some 600 of these particular deobandi schools continue to do that in Pakistan, and now that they are doing it in Nigeria and have been doing it for a while, you have got to expect problems from the graduating class.

And you talk a lot about addressing these different factors, but to me it seems that the brainwashing and indoctrination of this type of ideology so early in life, when you are teaching people to commit jihad, and giving them that absolutist viewpoint, which now this particular Boko Haram wants to—you know, if education itself is a sin, and the goal is simply to indoctrinate and brainwash, without solving that problem, without shutting that down, the rest of it doesn't seem too persuasive to me.

Our inability to get the government in Pakistan to shut down those 600 schools over the last generation is something that is beyond me. It is beyond me why the Pakistani Government won't do it, and my concern today over what is happening in Nigeria is the same.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. If I may, sir, you know, the world of Islam is profoundly complex. And there is no doubt that there are elements of—there are groups, individual donors, and the like, who advocate beliefs that involve a strong anti-Western sentiment of the kind that you are describing, who are funding activities far from their own homes, and this is indeed a major problem.

The ability to crowd out or to combat extremist ideologies will depend to some important extent on the ability of those—of countries and of their donors to provide the social goods such as education that will make those schools unattractive.

Mr. ROYCE. All right. But we provided the schools in Pakistan, or helped do so. I went and visited some of those schools the last time I went back. Those schools have been blown up, I assume by graduates of these deobandi schools. All right? So all I am saying is until those schools are shut down by that government in Pakistan, this is going to be a recurring problem for Pakistanis and for the United States.

And certainly for our troops in Afghanistan, for people in southern Russia, for people in Mumbai, for people in the caucuses, for people in Central Asia, it is a problem that is getting exported

today, and the problem is the brainwashing that goes on in those deobandi schools, and the ineffectual effort to get the government to shut it down.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. If I may, sir, just one more point, and that is that we do approach other governments with regularity and intervene with them to tell them about individuals who are supporting extremism in ways that lead to violence and the unacceptable outcomes that it brings with them.

This is an activity that we embrace, and it goes on in a number of different channels. It is clearly something that is going to keep us busy for quite some time to come, because of the considerable amount of churn that is going on out there in that world, and that has led to the kinds of rise in extremism that we have seen in some areas.

But we also know that in particular there are socioeconomic grievances in places like northern Nigeria that do need to be addressed. And as they are addressed, extremists will have much less opportunity to gain a foothold.

Now, I did also want to just mention the issue that you raised regarding northern Mali. I think that it is important to recognize that northern Mali has been a troubled area for many years. It has been the traditional safe haven of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb for a number of years, really since that group was largely pushed out of its traditional reach in Algeria. And it is a very sparsely populated area and was always only barely under the control of Bamako.

The U.S. Government has invested significant resources in helping Mali and its neighbors reclaim that sanctuary and extend the writ of the government there. Unfortunately, those efforts are at a halt now, because of the coup. I would not say that there has been a large new influx of extremists into northern Mali. What here has been is a Touareg rebellion, the latest in a long series going back over a century.

And this has disrupted all of our ability to work against AQIM in that region with our regional partners, and we have a lot of positive successes to report over the last few years in that collaboration. But we are deeply concerned about the situation in Mali and working in particular with ECOWAS and others in Africa to see to it that Mali returns to democracy, and we can return to our collaborative efforts to rid northern Mali of AQIM.

Mr. ROYCE. I am going to go to Mr. Poe. But before I do, the profile of many of these extremists are engineers, they are people who have middle class backgrounds. Certainly, bin Laden is an example of that. The Muslim governor I know came up in a madrasa with 1/100th of the budget of the one that—and he is not a radical.

What has created the radicalism is the fact that we have not stopped these particular people from indoctrinating kids. And until that is done, the problem will expand.

Mr. Poe.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Benjamin, we meet again. It is kind of like Groundhog Day. Every 6 months, a year, we come to the same part of town and discuss the same issues. To my understanding, a foreign terrorist organization has got to do several things to be a foreign terrorist organization.

First, they must be a foreign terrorist organization. They must engage in some kind of terrorism or terrorist activity and have the capability to engage in that terrorist act, and they must threaten the security of the United States or U.S. nationals.

In 2004, the MEK gave up their weapons to the United States military. Since that time, name one terrorist act that the MEK has committed since 2004.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. It is not our contention that the MEK can be—has committed an act since the group was disarmed.

Mr. POE. Excuse me. Let me just—I only have limited time, so you can't—there has not been an act of terrorism by the MEK against the United States since they gave up their weapons to us. Is that right?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. We do not allege that there was such an act.

Mr. POE. Do they have the capability today—2012—to engage in some terrorist act against the United States?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. We have not come to a conclusion on that.

Mr. POE. You don't know whether they can—I mean, you are the guy who is supposed to tell us about terrorism in the world. You don't know whether they—MEK has the capability to commit a terrorist act against the United States?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Mr. Poe, no one has been in to inspect or otherwise investigate what is in Camp Ashraf right now. And we also cannot rule out the possibility that the MEK may have weaponry elsewhere.

Mr. POE. You don't know that. You don't have any evidence that the MEK has a stockpile of weapons someplace. You have no evidence of that, do you?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. I can't go into the intelligence record on this in this setting.

Mr. POE. Well, let me ask you this. Since I have seen all of the intelligence that you have furnished this committee, myself, and Ranking Member Sherman and others, is there any new evidence since the last briefing we got by your department and the CIA? And if there is, are we going to get a briefing on this?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Sir, we would certainly be happy to entertain a request for another briefing from the intelligence community. I think it is safe to say that there is always intelligence coming in. And, frankly, I don't know exactly what was in the briefing you got, which was quite some time ago, but I will say that this is a deliberative process. And we are working hard on it, and we are not finished.

But I do want to emphasize that as the Secretary has said, given the ongoing efforts to relocate the residents of Camp Ashraf to Camp Haria, closure of Camp Ashraf, the MEK's main paramilitary base, will be a key factor in any decision regarding the MEK's FTO status.

Mr. POE. Last year in May when you were here you told me that the State Department was going to, and I quote, "make a decision within 6 months on whether to continue the designation or to delist them." We are a year later. How much longer is it going to be before you all can make a decision?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Well, I certainly regret the fact that my prediction on that was incorrect. I cannot give you a date certain. As you know, the parties are in court on that as well. We are working as fast as we can. And as I said before, and as the Secretary has said, the closure of Camp Ashraf will be a key factor in any decision.

Mr. POE. Without going into any classified information, have you received any new information in the last year about the MEK's activities as a foreign terrorist organization?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. We have certainly collected more information in the last year. And, in fact, we received information from the MEK itself, I believe in June, and had an exchange between our attorneys and theirs over this issue.

Mr. POE. So have you received any information that they are continuing—that they are a foreign terrorist organization? A specific question, not what you have received from them, have you gotten any information in the last year that the MEK, who doesn't have any weapons, is a foreign terrorist organization?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Again, sir, that really does go to the question of intelligence, which I just can't discuss in this setting.

Mr. POE. We will—I am requesting the briefing through the appropriate chairman that had that confidential briefing. May I have unanimous consent for another minute?

Mr. ROYCE. Granted.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very quickly, when I was in Iraq last year with other members of the committee, we wanted to go see Camp Ashraf. One reason that Maliki indignantly refused to allow us to go to the camp, and one reason he claimed he was treating the people at Camp Ashraf the way he was—in a very inhumane manner, in my opinion—was because the United States continues to put them on the foreign terrorist organization.

Is the United States succumbing to the pressure of Maliki and the Iranian Government, the Mullahs specifically, to keep them on the FTO organization list?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Absolutely not. Our decision is entirely going to be on the merits, and we are not keeping them on the list because of anyone else's concerns or views regarding the group.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Poe. Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin, may I ask unanimous consent my full statement be entered into the record?

Mr. ROYCE. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Without objection, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Ambassador Benjamin. The Arab Spring, I just came back from both Egypt and Libya over the break and have some views about what is happening in both of those countries. From the United States' point of view, does the Arab Spring and its outcome so far help or hurt or have no impact on antiterrorism/counterterrorism policy?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Well, it is an excellent question, sir. Let me frame it this way. The Arab Spring, the Arab Awakening presents everyone who opposes extremism with an extraordinary opportunity. And that is to build the democracies in those countries,

countries where people were denied their legitimate rights to build the kinds of democracies that would provide a place where people could express their dissent without turning to violence, where people would have a stake in the society, so that they would not want to turn to violence.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Ambassador, I understand that. My question is really very particular. Are there transitional governments in both Libya and Egypt, and Tunisia for that matter—do you find cooperation is about the same, improved, or actually degraded?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. I would say that in the case of Tunisia it is undoubtedly improved significantly, and in fact my office will be conducting programs under the antiterrorism assistance program there. There is no question that there has been an improvement. We have a better relationship with the Tunis government.

I would say that we have a good but nascent relationship on counterterrorism with Libya, and our counterterrorism cooperation continues with Egypt, which is obviously a state nation going through considerable major events. But we continue to work closely with them, and we are optimistic that that cooperation will continue into the future.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. With respect to Pakistan, I have two questions. One is, first of all, is the United States Government satisfied that after the tragic incident on the border that we are back on track in terms of cooperation and collaboration with respect to counterterrorists?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. As Secretary Clinton has said, this is a very complex relationship that we have with Pakistan. And there is no question that there has been something of a pause, an interregnum, if you will, caused by the tragic incident in Mohmand.

We are hopeful, now that the Pakistani Parliament has concluded its deliberations, that we can continue to build the relationship and to get over the tensions of the past. We know this won't be easy. There are a lot of contentious issues, but we believe that we are going again in the right direction.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Are they cooperating?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. On a number of issues, they certainly are.

Mr. CONNOLLY. On April 12—you mentioned the Parliament. On April 12, Pakistan's Parliament unanimously demanded the end of all U.S. drone strikes in Pakistani territory. What is the reaction of the United States Government to that? And if they are cooperating with us, how does—that seems to fly in the face of cooperation.

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Well, we are still studying the resolution that the Pakistani Parliament passed, and we are engaging in talks with the government to see what the implications of that are. And of course this is a program that we don't discuss in public, so I am afraid I can't really go beyond that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, without discussing the program, let us just discuss the policy. When another legislative body unanimously does something that would suggest that certainly at least on the legislative side of that government they have taken a pretty firm position of non-cooperation, it is not a classified matter that the United States has deployed drones both in Pakistan and across the border.

Should the Congress of the United States not read into that a resolve to end cooperation, at least with respect to the deployment of that technology, without getting into the deployment of that technology?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. My own view, sir, is that the prudent thing to do is allow us to have our conversations with the Pakistani Government, and to see how it wishes to act on the basis of a resolution which I believe is non-binding.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, I know my time has ended, but I do think this is a very important development. And I understand the diplomatic nicety being expressed here by Ambassador Benjamin, but I would simply say for the record that I think this is a grave matter. And I think that while the Ambassador pleads for patience, and he deserves patience, patience is wearing thin I think in the Congress on both sides of the aisle on this matter.

With that, I thank the chair for the time.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

I had one last question for Ambassador Benjamin. And that—just going through your testimony last year before the committee, you testified that "we continue to see a strong flow of new recruits into many of the most dangerous terrorist organizations." And I was going to ask you if that strong flow is still the state of play. What do you see?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. It is hard to measure the flow of recruits, but we have a strong sense that in many different parts of the world the terrorist groups are indeed gaining strength. This is certainly the case in Yemen where AQAP, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, has—now holds territory, as I mentioned in my statement, and where it has picked up membership.

We have seen that what is going on, admittedly not in an AQ affiliate, but in Boko Harem, which you mentioned before, suggests that that group has grown in strength. We do believe that AQIM and the Islamic Maghreb has also probably added some recruits to its ranks.

The exception is probably al-Qaeda core in the federally administered tribal areas. That group is in particularly difficult circumstances, as I think is well known to this subcommittee. But, you know, I believe that our work in strategic counterterrorism, and particularly in countering violent extremism, is as essential as ever, precisely because even though many of the peaks of this movement have been cut off and don't threaten us in the way they did before, there remains a large number of people out there who are committed to violence against the United States, its values, and its friends. And that is why I believe that we need to do what we can to cut off the flow of recruits to these organizations.

Mr. ROYCE. One of the areas where counterterrorism has been pretty effective is with the Philippines. The Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, do you see that continuing as it has?

Ambassador BENJAMIN. Sir, I think that is a question best for the Department of Defense. But I would certainly agree with you that both on the military side and on the civilian side we have had very good results in the Philippines. And I think it demonstrates the kind of advances you can make with a robust capacity building

effort, and robust coordination between our military and our others.

And when I look around the region, in particular of Southeast Asia, I think that we have a strong model of what you can do with robust engagement with these countries, whether it is the Philippines, Indonesia, or others. And I would certainly commend that to the attention of the committee.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you. Thank you very much, Ambassador Benjamin, and thank you for your testimony here today.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:07 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade
Edward R. Royce (R-CA), Chairman

April 11, 2012

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, to be held in room **2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live via the Committee website at http://www.hcfa.house.gov)**:

DATE: Wednesday, April 18, 2012

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Bureau of Counterterrorism: Budget, Programs, and Policies

WITNESS: The Honorable Daniel Benjamin
Ambassador-at-Large
Coordinator for Counterterrorism
Bureau of Counterterrorism
U.S. Department of State

By Direction of the Chairman

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* **Date** *April 18, 2012* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *2:08pm* **Ending Time** *3:09pm*

Recesses *n/a* (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Rep. Ed Royce

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☑
Executive (closed) Session ☐
Televised ☑

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☑
Stenographic Record ☑

TITLE OF HEARING:

Bureau of Counterterrorism: Budget, Programs, and Policies

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Reps. Royce, Sherman, Poe, Connolly

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

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

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

Rep. Connolly

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED _____

Subcommittee Staff Director

Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade Subcommittee

Member Attendance

Republicans

- ☑ Rep. Edward Royce (Chair)
- ☑ Rep. Ted Poe
- ☐ Rep. Jeff Duncan
- ☐ Rep. Bill Johnson
- ☐ Rep. Tim Griffin
- ☐ Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle
- ☐ Rep. Renee Ellmers

Democrats

- ☑ Rep. Brad Sherman (Ranking Member)
- ☐ Rep. David Cicilline
- ☑ Rep. Gerry Connolly
- ☐ Rep. Brian Higgins
- ☐ Rep. Allyson Schwartz

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

TNT Subcommittee Hearing: Bureau of Counterterrorism: Budget, Programs, and Policies
Wednesday April 18, 2012
2pm

Ambassador Benjamin, thank you for appearing before this Committee today to discuss the FY 2013 budget request for the Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT)—the office charged with leading the U.S. Government Counterterrorism Team. The office aims "to develop and lead a worldwide effort to combat terrorism using all the instruments of statecraft." A thorough assessment of the CT office's mission and its programs bolsters the case that the CT office is a vital part of our national security.

With the myriad national agencies and staffers dedicated to fighting terrorism, it makes sense for a bureau within the State Department to coordinate all these efforts. Some of the teams involved in the U.S. Government Counterterrorism effort include representatives from: the White House, the State Department, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and USAID. With all the offices that work in concert with the counterterrorism office, it would be imprudent to slash funding when unrest continues to reverberate throughout the world.

The Bureau's FY 2013 budget request of $19 million reflects the State Department's intent for the CT office to become a full bureau. The FY 2013 request includes an additional 12 positions to support expansions of the bureau. Currently, CT employs 70 direct hires and 30 contractors and is undergoing a transition from an office to a bureau within State. It is notable that the State Department is limited statutorily to its current number of Assistant Secretaries—24. In order to assign an Assistant Secretary to lead the Bureau, as State wishes, another Assistant Secretary will have to end his or her tenure.

The new Bureau has five principal responsibilities: counterterrorism strategy and operations, counterterrorism diplomacy, homeland security coordination, countering violent extremist, and partner capacity building. As the Bureau which serves as principle liaison to the Department of Homeland Security, fulfilling these responsibilities is key in ensuring that the newly formed Bureau is as effective as possible.

When evaluating U.S. national security, observers often lament that information is compartmentalized and there is not enough coordination among various government entities. Sitting before the subcommittee today is a gentleman who is the head of a Bureau that aims to resolve the lack of coordination. Given the mission of the Bureau of Counterterrorism, I don't see how one could justify slashing the budget for such a key priority.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.