

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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**“Denying Terrorists Safe Havens: Efforts to Counter Threats from Pakistan,
Yemen, and Somalia”**

**House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management**

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Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Keating, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee today. Denying terrorists safe haven plays a major role in undermining terrorists' capacity to operate effectively and forms a key element of what we're doing in the State Department on counterterrorism. Terrorists operate without regard to national boundaries. Safe havens allow terrorists to recruit, organize, plan, train, and claim turf as a symbol of legitimacy. Physical safe havens usually straddle national borders or exist in regions where ineffective governance allows their presence. Examples include the Pakistan/Afghanistan border, Yemen, the Trans-Sahara region, and Somalia.

To effectively counter safe havens, we increasingly operate in a regional context with the goal of shrinking the space in which terrorists operate. Through the Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), we seek to build regional cooperation to constrain terrorist activities. Under Chief-of-Mission authority, we bring Embassy officials, Military, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence agencies together to collectively assess the threats, pool resources, and devise collaborative strategies and action plans. We have established nine RSIs covering South East Asia, Iraq and its neighbors, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Mediterranean, East Africa, the Trans-Sahara, South Asia, Central Asia and Latin America.

I'd like to note that there are examples of success against terrorist safe havens, particularly in Southeast Asia where we formed our first RSI. Terrorists traveled freely among the nations of the region by sea. So, through the U.S. military and

Coast Guard we worked with the nations of the region to improve maritime security first in the Straits of Malacca, then in the Sulu Sea terrorist safe haven area. With combined U.S. military and development assistance, the Government of the Philippines now has increasing control of the island of Basilan and is beginning to create stability on the island of Jolo. Both areas are exploited by Indonesia-based terrorist group Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and the Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf Group.

Improved law enforcement and criminal justice also works to shrink safe havens as we have seen in Indonesia. After the 2002 Bali bombings, Indonesia enacted new anti-terrorism laws and established a special police force working together with trained prosecutors. As a result, the police have successfully disrupted operations, such as the Aceh terrorist training camp in February 2010, captured terrorists, collected intelligence, and arrested additional suspects based on that intelligence. Since 2003, over 500 JI operatives have been captured. Since its formation in September 2006, the special prosecutor task force has conducted 166 prosecutions, secured 133 verdicts, including those responsible for the 2009 Jakarta hotel bombings, and is currently prosecuting 36 defendants with additional cases being prepared for prosecution. We also embarked on a program with the Government of Indonesia to diversify the curriculum of religious schools, with math and science, so children would develop the skills needed in a global economy.

I. Key Terrorist Safe Havens

The State Department defines terrorist safe havens as ungoverned, under-governed, or ill-governed physical areas where terrorists are able to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, transit, and operate in relative security because of inadequate governance capacity, political will, or both. This definition includes consideration of both political will and the capacity of host countries.

[Here you may want to say something about what makes safe havens different from places from which terrorists operate that are not safe havens, and what, if anything, State does differently for/to/in safe havens compared to non-safe-havens. To DHS, for example, the designation does not matter: we screen against terrorist threats based on intelligence but whether a given country is or is not a safe haven is not part of our targeting methodology. In addition, the section at the end would seem to go better here.]

Pakistan/Afghanistan

I'll begin our discussion of terrorist safe havens with the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Al-Qa'ida (AQ) cannot be allowed to maintain its safe haven and to continue plotting attacks. After he took office, President Obama launched a thorough review of our policy and set out a clear goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat AQ, and prevent it from threatening America and our allies in the future. In pursuit of this goal, the USG is following a strategy with three mutually reinforcing tracks – three surges: a military offensive against AQ terrorists and Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan; a civilian campaign to bolster the governments, economies, and civil societies of Afghanistan and Pakistan to undercut the pull of the insurgency; and an intensified diplomatic push to bring the Afghan conflict to an end, and a more secure future for the region.

Since 2009, we have worked with the Government of Pakistan and its people at all levels. Secretary Clinton was there in late May. Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism many times in the last few years. At the same time, we are looking forward to Pakistan launching its own inquiry as to how Usama Bin Ladin was able to live in Abbottabad for more than five years.

We are working closely with the Government of Pakistan on a range of counterterrorism-related capacity building projects. These include numerous training courses for Pakistani police, which are administered by the State Department's Diplomatic Security bureau. Our Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement also works closely on border security and other law-enforcement matters. It routinely provides Pakistani security and police forces with equipment to counter extremism. And it is truly a whole of government effort. For example, the FBI and Department of Justice work with their Pakistani counterparts on investigatory, prosecutorial, and training matters. Treasury and DHS are also interacting with Pakistan on several important matters relating to terrorism finance and improvised explosive devises, respectively. Through USAID we are assisting the Pakistanis with delivery of basic services and improved governance in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Even as we've endured serious challenges to the relationship, some of which continue to make headlines, we've continued civilian and military assistance throughout the country and solidified our cooperation.

It is no secret that we have not always seen eye-to-eye with Pakistan on how to deal with its terrorist threats or on the future of Afghanistan. But as a result of U.S. and Pakistan counterterrorism cooperation and Pakistani military operations aimed at eliminating militant strongholds in the FATA, the AQ core has had significant leadership losses – including the recent demise of Usama bin Laden –

and is finding it more difficult to raise money, train recruits, and plan attacks outside of the region. Although the AQ core is clearly weaker, it retains the capability to conduct regional and transnational attacks. In addition, AQ has forged closer ties with other militant groups in the region – for example Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Haqqani Network –providing the group with additional capabilities to draw on.

While Pakistan is making some progress on the counterterrorism front, specifically against TTP, the challenge remains to make these gains durable and sustainable. To this end, Pakistan must sustain its efforts to deny AQ safe haven in the tribal areas of western Pakistan. And we must continue to press Pakistan for increased action against Lashkar-e Tayyiba and terrorist groups that undermine the security of Pakistan, the region, and beyond. Secretary Clinton just concluded a trip to Islamabad and discussed in great detail our cooperation with Pakistan to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat AQ, and to drive them from Pakistan and the region. We will do our part and we look to the Government of Pakistan to take decisive steps in the days ahead. Joint action against AQ and its affiliates will make Pakistan, America, and the world safer and more secure.

Yemen

While the AQ core has weakened operationally, the affiliates have become stronger. Consequently, the broader AQ threat has become more geographically diversified. At the top of the affiliates list is al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), based in Yemen. It continues to demonstrate its growing ambitions and strong desire to carry out attacks outside of its region. AQAP is the first of the AQ affiliates to make attacks against the United States homeland a central goal. As you know, the group made its debut in this regard with its December 25, 2009 attempt to destroy an airliner bound for Detroit. Then, in October 2010 it sought to blow up several U.S.-bound airplanes by shipping bombs that were intended to detonate while in the planes' cargo holds. As those efforts and AQAP's failed attempt in August 2009 on the life of Saudi Arabia's Assistant deputy interior for security affairs minister demonstrated, the group is trying to evade existing detection capabilities.

Obviously, we are talking here about a country in the middle of a political crisis, that we see in the headlines every day. But to put things in perspective, let me back up a bit. The gravity of the AQAP threat was clear to the Obama administration from day one, and we've been focused on Yemen since the outset. In the spring of 2009, the administration initiated a full-scale review of Yemen

policy that led to a whole-of-government approach to Yemen. As part of that approach, we strengthened our engagement with the Yemeni government on counterterrorism. We also increased our efforts to coordinate with other international actors. Our strategy seeks to deal with imminent and developing threats at the same time that it addresses the root causes of instability in Yemen to improve governance. Central to this is building the capacity of Yemen's government to be responsive to the Yemeni people, delivering the security and services they require.

Given that Yemen's political, economic, security, and governance challenges are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, U.S. policy must be holistic and flexible to be effective in both the short and long-term. U.S. strategy in Yemen is two-pronged: (1) strengthen the Government of Yemen's ability to promote security and minimize the threat from violent extremists within its borders, and (2) mitigate Yemen's economic crisis and deficiencies in government capacity, provision of services, and transparency.

To help meet immediate security concerns, we have provided training and equipment to particular units of the Yemeni security forces. In coordination with our security efforts, the USG has also increased development assistance to Yemen significantly. Development and stabilization assistance for Yemen went from roughly \$9M in FY 2008 to \$75M in FY 2010.¹

While we are in a period of uncertainty, I'd stress that our shared interest with the Yemeni government in fighting terrorism, particularly defeating AQAP, does not rely solely on one individual; we are hopeful that any future Yemeni leaders will be solid counterterrorism partners.

The Trans-Sahara

Before I talk about Somalia, I'd like to talk about West Africa, where no group has made a bigger name for itself in the kidnapping for ransom business than al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM has raised tens of millions of Euros in the past several years through kidnap for ransom operations. We believe much of this ransom money goes to logistically sustain the organization but there is plenty as well to build truck bombs, which have been used in Mauritania and Niger with limited success. AQIM has attacked and ambushed military forces in

¹ This includes funding from bilateral programs funded by DA, ESF, and GHCS accounts, funding from regional and global programs/accounts that were attributed to/spent in Yemen (CCF, TI, MEPI, and DCHA funds), and Sec 1207 transfer authority funds from DoD.

Mauritania and Algeria recently as well as others in Niger and Mali; the group is also working to increase its operational reach in West Africa.

A moment ago I mentioned the importance of operating in a regional context in our efforts to counter terrorist safe havens. The United States created a regional partnership in North and West Africa, the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) in 2005 with the following strategic goals: to build military and law enforcement capacity; foster regional cooperation; and counter violent extremism. We want the region to lead counterterrorism efforts, rather than have those efforts be led by a group of Western allies. TSCTP is working to enhance a range of military and civilian capabilities in the Sahel and Maghreb. It is also facilitating cooperation between Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Burkina Faso and our TSCTP partners in the Maghreb – Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

We believe this program is beginning to pay off with partners taking a greater than ever role in counterterrorism operations in the region. We have also seen positive signs of greater regional cooperation among these countries, particularly between Algeria, Mauritania, and Mali. Moreover, select Allies, such as Canada and France, have also joined to bolster TSCTP efforts with their own programs that complement our own.

Given all that is going on in Maghreb, successful democratic transitions in Tunisia and Libya will be the best bar to inroads by violent extremists in both countries and in North Africa more broadly. In the short term, however, the instability in Libya and the transition in Tunisia may provide AQIM with new openings, and we must continue to adjust our strategy in response to evolving conditions, work with our partners in the region to preserve the gains we've made through TSCTP and bilaterally, and ensure that we remain on track to achieve our goal of containing and marginalizing AQIM.

Somalia

The chronic instability in Somalia and the fragile hold on power that the Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) exert, combined with a protracted state of violent insecurity, long unguarded coasts, and porous borders, have made Somalia an appealing location for exploitation by terrorists, criminals, and other nefarious actors. The terrorist and insurgent group al-Shabaab and other anti-TFG clan-based militias exercise control over strategic locations in south and central Somalia. Al-Shabaab is composed of a range of groups with varying motivations

and interests. Some of al-Shabaab's senior leaders have links to al-Qa'ida and are interested in waging a global struggle, while other members have a purely Somali agenda or simply are in it for the money. Al-Shabaab's widening scope of operations makes it a continuing threat to East Africa and U.S. interests in the region. Last July, we saw it conduct its first major attack outside of Somalia when it claimed responsibility for twin suicide bombings at the time of the soccer World Cup that killed 76 people in Kampala, Uganda. In addition, al-Shabaab has a cadre of Westerners, including fighters of ethnic Somali descent drawn from the global Somali diaspora and American converts, which make it a particular concern.

The United States continues to pursue a dual track approach to create stability in Somalia. On track one, we support the Djibouti Peace Process, while continuing to encourage the TFG to reach out to moderates that support peace and stability in Somalia. On track two, we are broadening our outreach to include greater engagement with Somaliland, Puntland, and regional and local anti-al-Shabaab actors and groups throughout south-central Somalia in order to broaden security and stabilization efforts throughout the country. We are also reaching out to diaspora communities and civil society to foster dialogue and peaceful reconciliation.

Additionally, the United States actively supports the African Union Mission in Somalia, AMISOM. The recent offensive by the combined AMISOM and TFG forces has shown some promise in fighting al-Shabaab in Mogadishu. Outside of Mogadishu, Ethiopia- and Kenya-supported militia in the western regions of south central Somalia are having some success in reducing al-Shabaab's territorial control. However, a great deal more work remains to be done to translate the success of the offensives into political gains through the consolidation of political control in these newly liberated areas.

We are also engaging with regional partners to build and sustain their counterterrorism capabilities to address the threats emanating from Somalia. The Partnership for Regional East African Counterterrorism (PRACT) is the USG's program for long-term engagement and counterterrorism capacity building in East Africa not only in Somalia, but also its neighbors to shrink terrorists' ability to transit the region. PRACT has an expanded set of strategic objectives and program indicators to more effectively systematize and streamline interagency contributors and resources to support the program's counterterrorism capacity-building objectives in East Africa.

How We Are Addressing Terrorist Safe Havens

To begin with, we are working with our various interagency partners, such as homeland security, USAID, the military, and the intelligence community to keep Americans safe and our interests secure. With this whole-of-government approach, we are comprehensively strengthening our partnerships around the world by ensuring that all U.S. government assistance providers are working from the same playbook...making sure that our assistance is more balanced to improve both immediate security and long term governance and rule of law. Helping our partners more effectively confront the threat within their borders is both good counterterrorism and good statecraft.

What we are doing in Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere is balancing military programs with robust civilian efforts that include rule of law, political and fiscal reforms; better governance through competent institutions, reduced corruption and civil service reform; economic diversification to generate employment and enhance livelihoods, and strengthened natural resource management. I'd like to note that many USG programs and activities simultaneously contribute to various foreign policy goals. Governance and economic reform are not specifically designed to counter terrorist safe havens but indirectly serve that function and should be considered an essential part of the assistance package we provide for a truly whole-of-government approach to shrink terrorists' operating spaces.

Since coming into office, the administration has been emphasizing a more strategic approach to counterterrorism. The United States has made great strides in tactical counterterrorism – taking individual terrorists off the street, disrupting cells, and thwarting conspiracies. But at the strategic level, we continue to see a strong flow of new recruits into many of the most dangerous terrorist organizations. Addressing the factors that drive radicalization – a mixture of local grievances and the global terrorist narrative – is necessary to further diminish terrorist safe havens.

One emphasis of strategic counterterrorism is building our foreign partners' capacity. The heart of these efforts is to improve the rule of law and governance. Ultimately, counterterrorism and rule of law goals are closely aligned and reinforce one another. We are working to make the counterterrorism training of police, prosecutors, border officials, and members of the judiciary more systematic, more innovative, and more far-reaching. We are addressing the state weaknesses that

terrorism thrives on – helping our partners to more effectively counter the threat that they and we both face.

One of our most effective capacity building programs is the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) Program, the primary provider of U.S. government antiterrorism training and equipment to law enforcement agencies of partner nations. Last year, in Fiscal Year 2010, \$215 million in Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related programs (NADR) funds supported approximately 350 ATA courses, workshops, and technical consultations that trained almost 7000 participants from 64 countries. In FY 2010, the ATA Program also completed 23 capabilities assessments and program review visits. These on-site assessments looked at critical counterterrorism capabilities and served as a basis for Country Assistance Plans and the evaluation of subsequent progress.

The ATA program is most effective where countries have a combination of political will and basic law enforcement skills to be most receptive to the advanced training ATA provides. This relatively successful formula has been especially evident in Indonesia, Colombia, Turkey, and parts of North Africa. Through an emphasis on train-the-trainer courses, we are working with partner nations toward the goal of institutionalization and self-sustainment of capacities. We also are moving toward giving advising and mentoring an importance similar to training and equipping. Finally, we ensure that our programs are based on long-term strategic country and regional plans, integrated with other providers of security sector assistance at the State Department and in the interagency.

In Colombia, ATA training of civilian and police law enforcement has paid particular dividends, as Colombia now uses the lessons learned to help train more than 20 countries (11 of those in the Western Hemisphere). USAID has supported efforts enabling Colombia to establish an effective reconciliation and transition program for those willing to lay down their arms. These efforts along with the Colombian military's success in identifying the location of terrorist safe havens -- which we have assisted -- has resulted in significant progress in reducing the FARC's operating space in Colombia.

All of this work goes on in the context of vigorous diplomatic and multilateral engagement. While we work in regional fora, I'd also point to our bilateral engagement, which remains important. We have formal bilateral counterterrorism consultations with numerous countries. Among them are Australia, Canada, China, Israel, Egypt, Japan, Pakistan, Algeria, Russia, and India; 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.

Before closing, I want to mention one other area of activity where we are innovating – namely in our program to counter violent extremism (CVE), a key part of our strategic counterterrorism work. Compared to capacity building work, which has been going on for many years, this activity has a new focus. CVE focuses on three main lines of effort that will reduce terrorist recruitment: delegitimizing the violent extremist narrative in order to diminish its “pull”; developing positive alternatives for youth vulnerable to radicalization to diminish the “push” effect of grievances and unmet expectations; and building partner capacity to carry out these activities. We are working with the interagency to develop programs that address the upstream factors of radicalization in communities particularly susceptible to terrorist recruitment overseas. Efforts include providing alternatives for at-risk youth, encouraging the use of social media to generate local initiatives, and enhancing the resilience of communities against extremism.

Research has shown that radicalization occurs primarily at the local level. To be effective, CVE work needs to be driven by local needs, informed by local knowledge, and responsive to the immediate concerns of the community. Furthermore, programs owned and implemented by local civil society or government partners have a better chance succeeding and enduring. These initiatives can enable communities to address recruitment and radicalization, and can help deny terrorists avenues to create ideological safe haven in such communities.

In conclusion, the threat is formidable but we are making progress. I firmly believe that countering violent extremism, multilateral engagement, and building local capacity – through our various programs and with our Department and interagency partners – provide us with the tools to make lasting progress in our fight against terrorism. Al-Qa'ida is having a tougher time now more than ever, although AQ and its affiliates are still extremely dangerous and capable of attacking the United States and our allies. In the race to protect the United States and to stay “one step ahead” we should ensure that the tools of civilian power continue to serve National Security interests. This is an enduring challenge. Staying sharp, improving our offense, strengthening our defense and maintaining our intellectual edge – these are all essential. I believe that we are on the right track. Thank you again for providing the opportunity to testify.