

Statement for the Record
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Senate Armed Service Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities
March 10, 2010

Chairman Nelson, Senator LeMieux, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to this important hearing.

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) defined:

I am pleased to be here today to express the Department of Defense view on the US Government's strategy and efforts to counter violent extremism and radicalization, and to describe in part the US military's role in these efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the world.

Countering Violent Extremism is described in our national strategy and policy as the collective efforts of the United States and its partners to diligently undermine the spread of violent extremism and impede the radicalization process around the world in an effort to deny terrorists the next generation of recruits. The Administration has emphasized the importance of engaging Muslim communities comprehensively even as we focus on countering violent extremism. The challenge we face is that the radicalization process has been developed, refined, and some might say mastered, by al Qaida and its allies.

While poverty, repressive regimes and lack of opportunity play a role for some people in the appeal of violent extremist groups, we must not lose sight of the role of ideology in attracting new recruits – and we must find appropriate ways to counter the ideology that drives violent extremism.

Enabled by 21st century technology, extremists have optimized the use of Internet chat rooms, Web sites, and email chains to spread their virulent messages and reach a global audience of potential recruits. What was once a lengthy process of establishing contact, exchanging ideas, arranging meetings, providing training, and developing attack plans can now be condensed into a much shorter timeline, across multiple international boundaries, and beyond the reach of any single law enforcement agency or military task force. It is this highly evolved radicalization process that enabled al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula to make contact with a wealthy Nigerian student living in London, recruit, train, and equip him in the remote tribal regions of Yemen, position him in the Netherlands, and ultimately dispatch him on a suicide mission to the United States, all

within a period of weeks. By contrast, the 9/11 operation took about 2 ½ years to develop from the time Osama bin Laden approved it in April 1999. The condensed timeline of the December 25th attempted terrorist attack over the United States underscores the critical need to get in front of the radicalization cycle sooner, and more effectively, than ever before.

National Efforts:

As the President said in Cairo, violent extremism is the first issue we must confront if we are to resolve sources of tension that fuel the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas. The Administration has emphasized that the primary goal of countering violent extremism is precise: to prevent extremists from becoming “violent extremists.” Framing our overall interaction with the rest of the world, especially with Muslim communities, through the lens of counterterrorism or countering violent extremism can be counter-productive. This is why the United States is committed to engaging Muslim communities broadly – based on mutual respect and the pursuit of mutual interests, as the President said in Cairo – and not just around counterterrorism. There is no doubt that this broader engagement also helps further marginalize violent extremists by contrasting our positive vision with al Qaeda’s commitment to murder, violence, and destruction.

For those involved in the counter-radicalization process, the phrase “actions speak louder than words” has new meaning in that it takes both the right words, and the right actions, to achieve our desired effects. Actions and words are interdependent: what we say must be supported by corresponding actions, and our actions must be highlighted and accurately characterized through our words. Some refer to this as avoiding the word-deed gap, or as “the battle of the narrative.” The Obama Administration understands that getting the right message out is equally important as doing good deeds, and has strengthened the global outreach capabilities of the US Government in several important areas.

The implications for DoD have been significant. In June 2009, to facilitate effective strategic communication and ensure that efforts to counter violent extremism are appropriately addressed across the Department, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy created the Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee. One core function of this group is to ensure that countering violent extremism is adequately addressed in long term planning and strategy documents, doctrine, and other Department of Defense directives and instructions. In fostering interagency coordination, members represent the Department at the National Security Staff’s Strategic Communications Interagency Policy Committee, or IPC, the Global Engagement IPC, and the Counterterrorism

Security Group (CSG). Also, the Department participates in the countering violent extremism Interagency Coordination Group and Senior Interagency Support Team, chaired by the National Counterterrorism Center.

In terms of interagency coordination, DoD's relationship with the Department of State is particularly strong. The Secretary of Defense has made a commitment to work closely with our Department of State colleagues to ensure that the Department provides them all of the requisite support possible in Washington and in the field. In numerous key locations, the Department provides the US Ambassador with a tailored military information support team that works through and with the host nation to promote effective strategic communications to counter violent extremism. Here in Washington, we are in regular dialogue with the office of the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and with the Ambassador At Large for Counterterrorism, as well as with regional bureaus on challenges specific to their area of responsibility.

The Defense View:

The Defense Department understands, perhaps better than anyone, the limitations of military firepower in the complex global security environment. As Secretary Gates has said many times, we cannot capture or kill our way to victory in war against al Qaida and its affiliates. Although we will continue to take immediate, necessary actions to protect the United States from terrorist attacks, our long-term focus is on working through and with partner nations to build their security capabilities, reverse the momentum of insurgents and extremist groups, create conditions that promote development opportunities, and disrupt the forces of violent radicalization that provide terrorists and extremists with new recruits.

At the same time, we will continue efforts within the Department of Defense to balance capabilities essential to success in a counterinsurgency environment. These include expanding our language training programs, developing regional expertise, improving partnering skills, adding more Civil Affairs units, and recognizing the importance of knowing the "human terrain" as well as we know the physical terrain. Strengthening our capabilities in each of these areas enriches the contacts and relationships our forces have with local populations.

Although our efforts to counter violent extremism are tailored to each specific region, they all rely on the concurrent execution of counterterrorism operations, partnered counterinsurgency, training and equipping local security forces, increased intelligence

collection, and tailored civic action programs linked and nested with those of our interagency colleagues and international assistance organizations.

Finally, in these efforts to persuade and influence, DoD is a supporting agency. We take guidance and focus from the Department of State, and work in close collaboration with the country team. Our campaigns and products are reviewed and approved by the US Ambassador. And what DoD does and how our efforts are framed in conflict zones is necessarily different from our efforts elsewhere.

Afghanistan/Pakistan:

In President Obama's December 1, 2009 address to the nation, he announced the strategy the Administration will pursue to bring the war in Afghanistan to a successful conclusion. He described the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region as an "epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al-Qaeda" which poses a serious threat to the United States, and endangers the people and governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Accordingly, our engagement strategy views them as one theater of operations, in which our actions must be synchronized and coordinated on both sides of the border.

In Afghanistan, the most significant military-related recent development in the realm of countering violent extremism is the emphasis we are now placing on providing security for the population. As Secretary Gates has said, "Defeating al-Qaeda and enhancing Afghan security are mutually reinforcing missions. They cannot be un-tethered from one another, as much as we might wish that to be the case." Our new approach in Afghanistan has several key supporting elements. First and foremost, our revised close air support procedures have signaled to Afghans that we care deeply about civilian casualties. This carefully considered modification, and just as importantly, the manner in which our forces announced the change in policy, has had a tremendously positive effect on gaining popular support for NATO-ISAF. It has undercut the enemy's powerful propaganda enterprise, and sparked a wave of counter-extremism in areas only recently under strong Taliban control. We have also made significant changes to our driving policy, to be more careful of Afghan civilians on the roads. We also implemented an over-arching Tactical Directive which provides guidance and intent for the employment of force in support of ISAF operations. It is designed to gain and maintain the support of the people, restricts the use of night raids, and establishes guidance on entry into Afghan medical facilities to respect and protect innocent civilians.

The Tactical Directive has re-baselined our methodology for engaging with Afghan National Security forces in what is best described as "partnered counterinsurgency." This

equates to a significant rise in combined military operations in which the Afghan forces are increasingly put in the lead, going door to door in villages, reassuring civilians, and rousting insurgents from their sanctuaries. The ongoing operation in Marjeh, in Central Helmand province, illustrates the value of partnered operations in countering violent extremism. Strategic messaging in the weeks before tactical operations began informed Afghans of the impending assault, and set favorable conditions for the advance of Afghan and coalition forces into the populated areas. Strong involvement by Afghan officials in decision making leading up to the operation strengthened the legitimacy of the Karzai government, and despite an early misstep by US forces that led to a rocket strike that caused civilian casualties, popular support has been maintained.

Clearing areas from enemy control is only the first step in countering extremism in Afghanistan, and clearing alone will not set the necessary conditions for long-term stability. Therefore, it is essential to follow quickly with the personnel and resources that support holding a cleared area, and facilitate introduction of public and private ventures that promote economic and social development programs. The “hold phase” is crucially important. The host nation must provide security, and essential goods and services, to the “at risk” population. By so doing the government demonstrates that it is a viable alternative to extremist control, strengthens its own legitimacy, and debunks the enemy’s narrative. The Defense Department supports these efforts by deploying Civil Affairs capabilities, fielding medical and dental assistance teams, conducting information support operations, and by manning and leading Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

In Pakistan, where our access is significantly limited, we provide equipment, training, and assistance to Pakistan security forces to help improve their capabilities to defeat al-Qaida and its extremist allies in their country. Our Office of the Defense Representative for Pakistan serves as the central hub for DoD engagements with Pakistan, and synchronizes the delivery of assistance, training, and other supporting activities. Expanded engagements with Pakistani security forces, facilitated by fusion centers and border crossing centers, have fostered new relationships among tactical units that portend a future of improved trust and cooperation between the armed forces of the US and Pakistan. Using resources and authorities, which have been granted through DoD’s Pakistan Counterinsurgency Fund, and which will now migrate to State’s Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund, the Department of Defense will continue to work closely with the State Department and our Pakistani allies to identify the capabilities they need to counter violent extremism and provide them with the training and equipment needed to succeed.

Iraq:

As extremist organizations in Iraq continue to be degraded and as we implement the responsible drawdown, our focus on countering violent extremism is increasingly more strategic. Iraqi forces are leading tactical operations, advised and assisted by US forces who generally provide intelligence, command and control systems, forensics, and other enabling capabilities. As the transition in Iraq progresses, our support to Iraqi security forces and the US Department of State will continue to shift towards public affairs and public diplomacy.

Other Areas of Interest:

Outside Iraq and Afghanistan, DoD is in a supporting role for US and Coalition efforts to counter violent extremism. The level of effort and intensity of these activities varies by region, and the pace of operations is generally set by Department of State, working through the host nation government.

In Saharan Africa, we support the Department of State's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which is a multi-year US interagency program aimed at defeating terrorist organizations by strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security forces, promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and reinforcing bilateral military ties with the United States.

In the Horn of Africa, our long term strategy is led by Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, which employs an "indirect approach" to counter violent extremism, conducting operations to strengthen partner nation security capacity to enable long-term regional stability, prevent conflict and protect U.S. and Coalition interests. Across the continent, USAFRICOM collaborates closely with the Department of State to ensure that countering violent extremism activities are coordinated and deconflicted based upon the objectives and security situation in each country.

In the Arabian Peninsula, the Department of Defense cooperates closely with Yemeni security forces to increase their capabilities to prevent cross border arms trafficking and regional foreign-fighter flows, develop competent counterterrorism forces, and mitigate the threat of improvised explosive devices. We anticipate continuing a high level of commitment to developing Yemen's military and counterterrorism capacity in the future. In addition to counterterrorism cooperation, the Department will continue security assistance and training exercises to expand the capacity of the Yemeni Coast Guard and Navy to counter regional maritime security challenges, including smuggling, trafficking-in-persons, and piracy. Through a broad array of bilateral and multilateral initiatives, the

Department supports U.S. government efforts to address Yemen's political, economic, and humanitarian concerns.

In South Asia, our efforts are anchored by the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) and are supported by other training and assistance engagements throughout Southeast Asia. The mission of JSOTF-P is to support the comprehensive approach of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their fight against terrorism in the southern Philippines. At the request of the government of the Philippines, JSOTF-P works alongside the AFP to defeat terrorists and create the conditions necessary for peace, stability and prosperity.

In each of these endeavors our approach is to improve the capabilities of our partners – not just of their kinetic forces, but also their general ability to provide security. When the host nation can counter the threats to its security posed by violent extremists, and increase its legitimacy in the eyes of its population, we are on the road to successfully countering violent extremist messages of intolerance and hatred.

Summary:

Effectively countering violent extremism requires a fully integrated national and international approach that addresses the problem in three dimensions: 1) the message, 2) the media, and 3) the messenger. Getting the right message requires in-depth understanding of the people, the culture, and the social dynamics at the village, district, national, and regional levels. We clearly have more work to do in this area. The US Government, including the military, lacks the depth of expertise to operate in the areas of the world where violent extremism poses the greatest threat. Although programs across the US Government programs are underway to strengthen our knowledge of the most important issues, it will take continued long-term efforts to build the depth we need. Leveraging the various forms of media is equally important, and also requires both micro and macro understanding of the information landscape.

On one end of the media scale, low-power portable transmitters, delivered to key leaders in remote villages, help reduce the ability of violent extremists to intimidate and mislead local civilians. On the other end of the spectrum, al-Qaeda's use of highly advanced Internet technology, including social network sites and mass messaging, is one of the reasons for our development of media sites that promote positive, truthful messages that provide an alternative narrative the narrative of the violent extremists. We recognize, however, that in many cases messages propagated and delivered by US officials have limited impact on our intended audience. For this reason, it is essential that we involve

our partners and allies as the primary messengers in their struggle. Ultimately, it is local officials that must shoulder the burden of governance, and provide their people with a credible message of vision, hope and pride.

Defense Department contributions to countering violent extremism will vary by region, and will be driven by the political circumstances at hand. We recognize that our most effective work will be done in support of broader interagency initiatives, and be implemented through and with partners. To that end, we continue to build our capabilities that improve the quality of our interactions, promote mutual understanding, and inculcate a counterinsurgency mindset across the force. We are continually looking for ways to be adaptive and progressive in our efforts to counter violent extremism. I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss countering violent extremism from the Department's perspective, and I look forward to your questions.