

**Homeland Security Beyond Our Borders: Examining
the Status of Counterterrorism Coordination Overseas**

**to the House Committee on Homeland Security;
Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Global
Counterterrorism**

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**Statement for the Record
by
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to the United States House Committee on Homeland Security;
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Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Member Souder, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the role of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) in regards to the status of US Government counterterrorism (CT) efforts overseas. My testimony addresses three points: (1) NCTC's overall role in coordinating the US Government's strategic plan for the War on Terror; (2) NCTC's more specific role in coordinating counterterrorism efforts overseas; and (3) how the coordination of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) fits into the U.S. government's larger, counterterrorism efforts overseas.

To begin I would like to summarize very briefly the role NCTC does—and does not—play in coordinating the US Government's efforts in the War on Terror. Doing so is, I believe, especially important given the very innovative and groundbreaking nature of Strategic Operational Planning (SOP)—the rubric under which NCTC operates in this realm.

NCTC, as directed by Congress and the President through the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA), is responsible for strategic operational planning and integrating all elements of national power, for the US Government's efforts in the War on Terror (WOT). Our goal is to translate US counterterrorism policy and strategy into coordinated, actionable tasks for individual departments and agencies. The result of our planning is a landmark document—the National Implementation Plan or NIP, which was approved by the President in June 2006—the first-ever US Government-wide strategic war plan for countering terrorism.

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This war plan does not stand alone. Rather, it complements two types of planning efforts that have long existed and continue to exist—high-level national strategies directed by the President and the National Security and Homeland Security Councils, and very granular and tactical department and agency-specific implementation plans. By filling this void between high level strategies and the efforts of individual departments and agencies, NCTC's efforts, and the NIP in particular, are designed to fill a gap that previously hindered interagency coordination at a strategic level.

Let me briefly describe five of the most critical characteristics of the NIP. First, the NIP groups all of the nation's efforts into four components: protecting and defending the Homeland and US interest abroad, attacking terrorists and their capacity to operate, countering violent extremism, and preventing terrorists' acquisition or use of weapons of mass destruction.

Second, and of significant importance to both providing a relatively granular "playbook" and requiring accountability, each of these four component capabilities is supported by strategic objectives and specific tasks. Each of the tasks is assigned to a Cabinet-level officer for action and other Cabinet officers for support. Each department or agency is responsible for generating an individual supporting plan, which is to articulate how that element of the Government will execute the individual tasks for which it is assigned a lead role. In the cases where there are lead and supporting agencies, the lead agency is given the task of deconflicting each agency's plan.

Third, our efforts do not stop at the planning stage. Rather, we also seek to ensure the coordination, integration, and synchronization of joint departmental operations, and monitor the combined impact of multiple agencies engaged in implementing the plans and tasks. As part of our responsibility, we assess how our plans are impacting the enemy so we may tailor them accordingly in the future: NCTC oversees a monitoring process requiring lead and partner

departments and agencies to submit status reports on the execution of tasks, the level of interagency coordination, the identification of impediments, and adequacy of resourcing.

Fourth, the NIP helps to guide resource allocation. Specifically, NCTC and the Office of Management and Budget have provided guidance to departments and agencies to ensure their budget requests (for FY-09) align with and will adequately resource priorities identified in the NIP, including a number related to USG efforts to expand foreign partnerships and partner capacity in the War on Terror.

Finally, an important part about what the NIP—and the NCTC more broadly—does not do: Neither directs specific operations. In fact, the IRTPA specifically prohibits the Director of NCTC from “direct[ing] the execution of counterterrorism operations.” This final note is of critical importance, for although NCTC is responsible for strategic operational planning, we must ultimately rely on individual departments and agencies—those organizations with explicit statutory authorities and responsibilities, as well as the greatest expertise and experience—to execute the tasks and activities necessary to execute the War on Terror.

With that background, I would like to move to how NCTC participates in the coordination of overseas counterterrorism efforts in general and how we view Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) coordination more specifically.

As the lead agency for coordination, integration, and synchronization of all US Counterterrorism (CT) efforts, NCTC puts the highest priority on the strategic coordination of overseas counterterrorism efforts in order to combat terrorism worldwide and, more specifically, to protect American lives. Although we and our allies have had tremendous successes in the War on Terror, we face a determined enemy. Protecting the homeland from another catastrophic attack

requires more than simply a hardening of our borders; rather, we must work closely and tirelessly with foreign law enforcement, security, and intelligence agencies to identify, deter, detain, and prosecute terrorists operating within their domain.

Last year's foiled United Kingdom aviation plot showed how vital the role of foreign partners are in preventing terrorist attacks on Americans. In that case, it was only with our foreign law enforcement and intelligence partners that we were able to monitor and track effectively terror plotters developing plans against the United States overseas. In the process, our foreign partners must perform a very difficult, but essential, balancing act: providing us with key intelligence on the advancement of plots while allowing for eventual detainment and successful prosecution of the plotters, all while providing the appropriate protection for civil liberties.

The NIP directs both lead and partner departments and agencies to work together in a coordinated, integrated, and synchronized manner in order to cooperate with, and assist foreign partners in, a multitude of diverse ways. Expanding foreign capacity furthers each of the four NIP components. In simpler terms, expanding foreign capacity is a baseline capability that permits each of the four component strategic objectives to be achieved.

Although I cannot go into extensive detail in open session as to the types of tasks that comprise this area within the NIP, I would like to offer several examples where developing foreign capacity is particularly important.

As this Committee is well aware, countering the violent extremist message is of utmost importance to winning the War on Terror. In this regard, the NIP includes several tasks that relate to the need for US departments and agencies to work with foreign partners—LEAs and beyond—to combat extremist messaging and counter radicalization.

The NIP also directs departments and agencies to help foreign partners build their capacity to limit terrorist travel, including crossing international borders. In addition, it seeks to ensure that these capabilities, as they are developed, link appropriately to US capabilities.

Finally, I would note that the NIP highlights the importance of strengthening not only our foreign partners' capabilities, but also the willingness of those foreign governments to use all means at their disposal, to include economic, regulatory, and criminal sanctions. This point may seem obvious, but developing a capability serves little purpose if there is not an accompanying will to use that capability.

Within the broader category of expanding foreign capacity falls a subcategory of activity—coordinating the overseas efforts of LEA's. As is the case with most of the NIP tasks that require overseas activity, the State Department is as a general matter charged with directing, managing, and coordinating all US Government efforts to develop and provide counterterrorism capacity within each host nation. The State Department—partnering with the law enforcement elements of the USG0—is the best positioned department to lead our overseas coordination efforts.

Every country has a unique intelligence and law enforcement structure. Domestic police and intelligence functions may be shared by a single entity or separated in a variety of organizational constructs. Moreover, the different foreign partners and their components have varied preferences as to how they desire to partner with the United States and its law enforcement and intelligence elements. The decision on how to cooperate must literally be made on a country by country basis. State serving as the lead for these tasks ensures that Chiefs of Mission around the world can fully and appropriately guide all US activities within the host nations.

Within the broader mission of working with overseas partners in the War on Terror, the NIP recognizes the importance of US LEAs. Again, the NIP—in many of its specific tasks—gives lead authority to the State Department to coordinate the efforts of organizations like the FBI, DEA, ICE, CBP, and Secret Service to achieve the NIP's strategic goals. For example, the NIP focuses on building partner nation capacity to deny terrorists access to resources that facilitate travel. Thus, several agencies are tasked to work with foreign partners to identify and close down alien smuggling networks and document forgery cells. In this instance, as in most tasks associated with foreign partners, the State Department has the lead, but is partnered with the law enforcement agencies that bring the expertise and resources to carry out the NIP task.

For greater specificity on how various LEAs coordinate their efforts—both overseas and in Washington—I defer to my colleagues here today. Their Departments work together in a variety of contexts on a day-to-day basis, conducting operations and developing foreign partner capacity critical to combating terrorism.

None of what I have said here should be understood to mean that we no longer face real and significant challenges. We recognize the need to continuously monitor our progress, objectively evaluate our success, openly acknowledge our failures, and do all that we must to improve and mature our strategies, plans, and procedures in order to support an enduring counterterrorism capability. This is true for the broad mission of working with foreign partners, as well as the narrower mission of coordinating LEA activity.

In closing, I would reiterate we have come a long way in the last two years. For the first time, we have a cohesive strategic plan that assigns individual cabinet departments action on an enormous array of tasks, many of which focus on working outside of the US with our foreign partners. In doing so, we aim to have

a system wherein US LEAs can, where permitted, pursue operational activity with their foreign partners, as well as help those same foreign partners develop their own capabilities. And as core elements of government power, we at NCTC are committed to ensuring that LEAs—acting under the guidance of Chiefs of Mission all over the world—take coordinated action to protect the US, US interests, and our allies.